

Project CHOICES

Children Have Opportunities in Inclusive Community Environments and Schools

An LRE Initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education

Cognitive Coaching: Make Thinking Happen

It has been said that the only person who truly welcomes change is a wet baby. In addition, some say that adults can withstand a change of 2%. Yet if you look at the literature today regarding change and educational reform it appears change is a goal everyone wishes to achieve!

So, from the words of the popular song, Change Change will do you good! Let the change begin!

Project CHOICES is a collective group of individuals whose work centers around helping school districts and individuals within those districts facilitate change regarding the education of students who may approach learning in novel ways. Several years ago on a hot summer day in suburban Chicago, we came together to examine how well we as a Project do what we do, and we realized we had to change as well. Questions began to race around in our heads. Where do we begin? With whom do we begin? How will the change impact outcomes for students?

As a Project, we decided to take what we knew about change and make that a part of how we provide services to schools. We knew change was best if it came from within. We truly wanted to change what we did and how we did it. Not simply to change for change sake, but to increase successful outcomes for students. So, would we need to restructure the way we deliver services? The answer was, Yes, and from that came the CATS (Collaborative Agreement for Technical Support) that we now use with school districts.

In addition, we asked how would our own Professional Development have to change? We knew Professional Development was most effective if it had a reflective component, was long term and targeted specific skills. Therefore, if we wanted to be part of the change that is created within schools and districts, what additional tools or skills would we need to best facilitate that process?

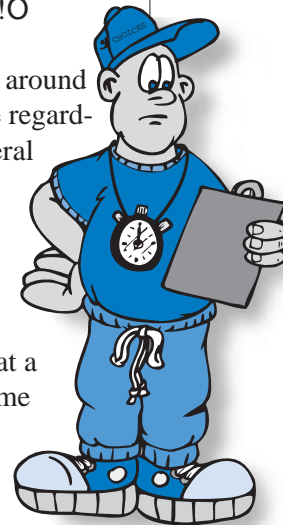
We began looking at the literature from Professional Learning Communities and reworked our mission and vision. It was a start. How could we assist teachers, administrators, and parents to examine their thinking and help them to construct the meaning of what they identified as outcomes for students? Out of what we learned from PLC, we began looking for information and tools that would help us with the new process.

We knew how to consult, but we wanted something more. Something that increased the likelihood of establishing a longterm relationship with the individuals with whom we were working. Something that built capacity within them to maintain the change once we were no longer involved. We believe we found it in Cognitive Coaching!

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■ "Cognitive Coaching"

written by Pandora
Taylor
Project CHOICES
Team 4



January — 2004

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Self-Determination Speaking on Behalf of Yourself

The following three pages contain stories of three remarkable young people. Lisa, Barry, and Bridget were presenters at the Project CHOICES Summer Institute last July, 2003. Each of the presenters told their stories of challenges and successes, and they have summarized their individual presentations for our newsletter. If these success stories whet your appetite to learn more about them, please join us for this year's Summer Institute on July 14 and 15, 2004 (see article on back page of this newsletter) where they are back by popular demand! This year their presentation is entitled, *Empowering our Children.*

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Lisa's Story

My name is Lisa Cesal. I have quadriplegic cerebral palsy, visual impairments, and I have some cognitive challenges in some areas. I am in my fourth year at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater. In 2005 I will graduate from college with a degree in Women's Studies and a minor in Family Health. At college I made a lot of friends and I have learned how to be more independent.



Life is good but it wasn't always that way.

In grade school I was in a self-contained classroom. We had the same curriculum but we just worked at a slower pace. In fifth grade my parents built a house two blocks from our junior high school hoping that it would give me the opportunity to make friends in the new neighborhood. I went to the new junior high for fifth grade and I was very happy there. I was doing well at school, had a lot of interaction with other students, and I was learning to make new friends. Unfortunately the program closed and I was bussed 45 minutes away from my neighborhood to another school in a different district.

I was put into a program for the mentally challenged, in a closed classroom in a segregated wing of the school. In one year I went from a sunny, happy, learning environment to a closed, dark and unhappy one. I spent the next three years learning life skills and was denied any formal academic education. My mother begged the teacher to do some reading and math with me but the teacher said she would lose her job if she altered the program. At the IEP meeting my mother would ask why they were spending so much time on life skills, like doing the laundry, grocery shopping and cooking, because these were activities that I would never be able to do. I was so unhappy that I got sick a lot and had to be hospitalized more than once. By the time I got to high school I was so far behind that they never even considered mainstreaming for me. Someone made the dangerous assumption that I could not learn and they took away all of my opportunities for success at a very young age. So I decided to prove them wrong.

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Self-Determination (continued from page 1)

Lisa's Story (cont. from page 1)

The first thing I did was attend the Sylvan Learning Center where they taught me how to read, and I raised my reading level from a 1st grade level to a fifth grade level in only one year. I was the DuPage Easter Seals youth ambassador and attended a lot of social activities where I would sometimes be asked to give a talk. I was in a commercial for Enesco during the National Telethon. I learned how to use a computer. I went to Ohio for a two-week training so that I could get a canine companion. Don't tell me I can't learn!

My last two years of high school (I attended 6 years) I got a one-on-one aide and was included in many high school classes.

Well, I had developed so much self confidence doing all of these things that I decided, why not college? Going to college was a big dream that for me came true. I have had a wonderful time at U. of W. Whitewater! Believe me it was not easy! It was an uphill battle every step of the way for both my mother and me, but it was worth it! □

■ **"Lisa's Story"**
written by Lisa Cesal

Barry's Story

Barry is a Cheesehead, a Cardinal fan, a collector of wild and crazy ties, a faithful employee of Hyvee, a presenter, and a great advocate. This doesn't sound like someone who has significant disabilities, but it is.

Barry is 24 years old and works three days a week at Hyvee, a new grocery store in Peru, where he stocks all the frozen treats and ice cream. While working at Hyvee, Barry has developed lots of friends and been able to take advantage of bus trips to the Blackhawk games, trips to the Cub games, golf outings, and parties. Barry lives at home with his parents, Chris and Rich Wasik. Barry has an older brother, Brett, who recently moved to California and is a veterinarian. Barry just returned from visiting Brett in California and loved Ventura Beach and Universal Studios. Barry has also been working with Project CHOICES, joining Team 4 on various occasions to offer his input on inclusion. Barry was in a self-contained classroom for the first 11 years of his education, and was educated in nine different schools within self-contained TMH

programs. But high school brought a huge change for Barry: full inclusion. During his entire high school experience, Barry was in general education. He worked on the floats, attended basketball and football games, dances, proms, plays, and prepared for life after school by job training in the community. Barry helps Team 4 show audiences how his life has changed after being given the opportunity to be included in life! Barry uses PowerPoint as well as his Dynamite speech device to help audiences understand that no matter what your label, there is a place for you in society where in you can participate and be successful. □

■ **"Barry's Story"**
written by Chris Wasik,
Barry's mother



Barry and his boss, Jason

Self-Determination (continued from page 2)

Bridget's Story

I am 17 years old and I just finished the first semester of my junior year in high school. I have Down Syndrome. I was the first person with a disability included in my school and community. I went to preschool with lots of my high school friends! We have been friends for a LONG TIME!

I am still included in all my regular classes at school. Sometimes the work is adapted and I get extra help with my tests. But for the most part I am fully included. My favorite subject is English. We just finished *The Great Gatsby* and I am looking forward to our next novel. I know what kinds of adaptations I need and I ask people to help me if I need it. I also tell people when they are helping me too much.

I love school! It is a lot of work! At my high school I have been involved in the plays, Home Economics club, PEP, SADD, basketball, track, and I am on the speech team. I just finished my third speech team competition. I do original oratory. One of my favorite parts of school is going to the dances. I went to Homecoming with my boyfriend and other friends. We all went out for pizza after the dance. It was fun to have a new dress and dance the whole night. My boyfriend is a very good dancer!

I have a job working for the TOTAL program — a Transition project for Illinois. I am the student representative and I work with high schools and teach them how to help students use person-centered planning to plan for their future. I am proud of this job and I hope I can help a lot of kids find their dreams.

I am learning a lot about self-determination. Self-determination is speaking on behalf of myself. I work hard at speaking with my own voice. I know what I want and what I need. When I meet with a resource teacher I plan what I am going to work on for the day. That is **self-determination!**

This summer I worked at a camp selling candy and ice cream. I love my job! I had to tell the manager my schedule and when I needed some adaptations, like a stool that I could stand on to serve the ice cream because I am so short I couldn't reach into the freezer. That is **self-determination!**

One of my favorite things to do is to present at my own IEP meeting. That is when I can really speak for myself. I don't like it when others are making plans for me because I have a lot of ideas about my life. This is my third year presenting. I do a person-centered planning process and develop the IEP presentation. It is a time when I can share my dreams with people.

First my mom and I sit at the computer and brainstorm. We think about BIG DREAMS. We talk about all the things I want to do and be in my life. We think about my gifts and write a list. I write my own mission statement for the year. We discuss things that I worry about and what I need to succeed. The Action Plan is at the end and I can decide my schedule from that plan.

I make handouts for all the people who come to the meetings and I start the meeting by reading my own personal mission statement. I feel very good about myself when I present at my meetings. People listen to me and respect my dreams for my future.

I am so excited about the future! I would like to go to college and have my own advocacy organization. I hope that all people with disabilities have a voice and can share their hopes and dreams with others so that they have bright futures. My life is so wonderful because I am included. I think it is really important to always dwell in the possibilities!

■ "Bridget's Story"
written by Bridget Brown



Upcoming Conferences



- 30-31: *Intermediate Sensory Integration: Enhancing Outcomes*; Glenview. More info: www.eritherapyseminars.com
 30-31: *Technology for Communication, Literacy & Learning*; Carterville. More info: (888) 732-7462 or www.pecs.com



- 27: *Literacy for the Child with Autism*; Rockford. More info: (888) 732-7462 or www.pecs.com



- 6: *Living in a Social World*; More info: IL Autism/PDD Training & Technical Assistance Project at (708) 354-5730
 9: *Behavior Management Plan: What Do You Need to Know*; Champaign. More info: PROUDD at (217) 351-6764
 11-12: *Autism/Asperger 2004 Chicago*; Chicago. More info: 800-489-0727



- 3: *Autism and Literacy/Autism 101*; Champaign. More info: IL Autism Project at (708) 354-5730
 28-29: *The Arc of IL Annual Convention*; Wyndham Hotel, Itasca. More info: (708) 206-1930 or www.thearcofil.org
 30: *STARnet Family Conference: Building on Strengths*; Holiday Inn, Moline. More info: (866) 625-1077



- 11: *Attention Issues Helping Our Kids Stay Focused*; Champaign. More info: PROUDD at (217) 351-6764



- 14-15: *Project CHOICES Summer Institute* (see page 6)

All submissions to our newsletters are welcome!

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Cognitive Coaching (continued from page 1)

What is Cognitive Coaching? It is simply a way of assisting another person or group to move from where they are to where they want to be. It is self-directed learning. Now is it that simple? No. Cognitive Coaching is more than a set of skills. It is a way of thinking that honors another person. It is asking the questions that facilitate that movement.

So, what is it? It is questions! According to Sandford, the best form of feedback is questions. Questions are framed in one of three types of mental maps that, as a coach, you may use with an individual or group.

The *planning conversation* is used when coaching to facilitate planning for an event, such as a lesson on fractions to be taught. The *reflecting conversation* is used when coaching to facilitate reflection on an event, such as a lesson on fractions that had been taught. The *problem-resolving conversation* is used when coaching a group or individual unable to move past a problem.

But, there is more, so much more to Cognitive Coaching! There is the how to construct questions, how to establish rapport, the use of body language, and choosing when to coach and when to consult.

The goal of this article is to whet your appetite regarding Cognitive Coaching. This goal will be realized if you choose to seek out additional information regarding Cognitive Coaching at www.cognitivecoaching.com or ask one of the Project CHOICES consultants to, **Tell me more!**

It is not the answers that enlighten us, but the questions. **Descouvertes** □

Project CHOICES Summer Institute July 14 & 15, 2004 ¥ Crowne Plaza, Springfield

When dealing with the snowy streets of winter, it's difficult to believe that in six short months we will be enjoying the sweltering heat of July! And synonymous with the month of July, is our annual Summer Institute, "Kids: Our Future." This year's conference is shaping up (ah...that New Year's resolution!) to be interesting, informative, and exciting!



Lisa Murphy

We will begin the conference with a keynote speech by Lisa Murphy, aka "The Ooey-Gooey Lady!" Lisa's keynote is entitled, "What if Today Was their Only Day?" The day is then divided into all-day strands and attendees may select one strand to attend. Some of the topics for the strands are: Differentiated Instruction, Multiple Intelligences and Brain-Based Learning, Multiple Intelligences in Early Childhood Education, Best Practices for Secondary Inclusion, IDEA, and Effective Positive Behavior Supports.

The second day of the conference includes a wide variety of breakout sessions from which attendees may attend two different 90-minute breakout sessions. Some of the topics are: Systems Change, presented by a local school district; Resolving Conflicts between Parents and Educators; the *No Child Left Behind* act; Taking Therapy into the General Education Classroom; Autism; Transition, from the perspective of two adults with disabilities; Paraprofessionals; a Tool for Transition Planning; Disability as a Spiritual Process; Parent Potpourri; and back by popular demand: Transition, from the perspective of three young adults. The conference ends with a luncheon and our keynote presenter, Richard Baker. Richard will speak on overcoming the hurdles of being an African-American teenager in a group home setting and what it meant to him to finally be included in a general education classroom.



Richard Baker

The cost for the day-and-a-half Summer Institute, which includes continental breakfasts and lunch both days is \$130 for professionals, \$30 for one parent/\$50 for a family, and \$30 for full time college students.

Please access our website at www.projectchoices.org in March for more information and to register for the conference. ☐



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