

*Thank You to all those individuals (administrators, faculty, speakers, student club members:  
Access, Achilles, Multicultural, and exhibitors) who gave of their time and  
support to make this such a successful conference.  
All your hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated.*



The Achilles Project  
and the Liaison Committee for Students  
with Disabilities

Presents

**UNLOCKING POTENTIAL:**  
*Cost-Free Strategies to Improve  
Underachieving Students' Performance*

A Conference for Educators

**April 20, 2012**

8:30am– 3:00pm

CCB MPR, 252-253

**REGISTRATION**

8:30am – 8:50am

**WELCOME**

8:50am – 9:00am

**President Donald P. Astrab, Ph.D.**

**Valerie Lagakis, Ed.D.**

**Frances S. Viscovich**

**Bonnie Schinagle, Esq.**

**2E IDENTIFICATION: THE PARADOX OF DUAL EXCEPTIONALITY**

*Underachiever, learning disabled, divergent learner, neurobiologically challenged...and gifted.*

9:00am – 9:45am

**Melissa Sornik, LMSW**

Twice exceptional (2e) students possess a combination of both superior intellectual strengths and learning challenges. They are often among the most challenging both academically and behaviorally. However, with understanding and appropriate motivational and support strategies, they can become enthusiastic and productive contributors in the classroom.

This lecture presents a view of twice exceptionality through a positive lens, shifting focus from disability to ability. It offers a description of the social, emotional and learning characteristics of 2e students, and the implications of those characteristics with regard to behavior and academic performance. It will touch on the emotional sensitivities of 2e students, will explain the impact of asynchronous development on behavior, and provide insights, interventions and strategies for parents, teachers and counselors to support the needs of this unique population of students.

**EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS:**

*Programming, Teaching and Counseling Strategies for the 2e Student*

9:45am – 2:30pm

**FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATING THE 2E STUDENT:**

*Programming, Teaching and Counseling*

9:45am

**Wendy J. Eisner, Ph.D. and Melissa Sornik, LMSW**

The first half of this session describes the holistic educational approach that meets the needs of students with dual exceptionalities. Components of strength-based education with academic and psychosocial supports are identified. "2e teaching tips," addressing both curricular and interpersonal issues, are also discussed. The second half of this session will present two key counseling issues: emotional intensity, and the disparity between intellectual and emotional intelligence. These two issues can present significant challenges for the twice exceptionally gifted student. Emotional intensities combined with asynchronous development impact behaviors and reactions across a variety of situations. This session will provide insights into behavioral characteristics as well as strategies and interventions that can be used with 2e students.

**BONNIE SPIRO SCHINAGLE, ESQ.**

Bonnie Spiro Schinagle, Esq., the parent of a 2e student and hence sensitive to the challenges of family advocacy for this type of student, was instrumental in planning today's conference. Ms. Schinagle is a graduate of Barnard College and Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where she is currently studying for her LL.M. (Master of Laws) degree. Ms. Schinagle was a commercial litigator for many years in New York City. She is currently an extern at Partnership for Children's Rights (PCR) in Manhattan. PCR represents low-income families before the Board of Education to procure special education services.

**MELISSA SORNIK, LMSW**

Melissa Sornik, LMSW is the co-founder and president of Twice Exceptional Children's Advocacy (TECA) a 501(c) 3 organization supporting gifted children with learning challenges and their families. TECA provides information, resources and referrals, to promote the identification of twice exceptional students, and aids the development of programs and services that support their unique social, emotional and academic needs. Melissa is also the Admissions Director at the Lang School in New York City. She has authored and co-authored articles on twice exceptionality including identification guidelines, and conducts lectures and workshops for parents, teachers and mental health professionals at school districts, local colleges and regional and national conferences. Her lecture and workshop topics include the paradox of twice exceptionality, myths of giftedness, visual spatial learners, and the importance of talent development in divergent learners.

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**THERESA VECCHIARELLI**

Theresa Vecchiarelli is an Associate Professor at Nassau Community College in the Mathematics/Computer Science/Information Technology Department. She was a participant in the initial Achilles training and worked with Achilles students in liberal arts math courses. She has been involved with many inclusion projects including a grant with Hofstra University to encourage women to pursue math and science as well as learning communities here on campus to show students how mathematics integrates with other subjects.

**FRANCES S. VISCOVICH**

Frances S. Viscovich is an Associate Professor at Nassau Community College and worked for over fifteen years in the environmental industry before beginning her tenure at NCC. She currently teaches Environmental Science and Environmental Resources for the Physical Science Department. Professor Viscovich joined the NCC Achilles project during its pilot year in 2006 and has been a dedicated participant ever since. She spent numerous hours training in deferential instruction as well as understanding the various disabilities /abilities of the twice exceptional student. She has used differentiated instruction to redevelop her classroom to make a harmonious learning environment while continuing the college level of education. Professor Viscovich has most recently begun co-chairing the Achilles Faculty-Training Seminar for NCC Faculty.

**BIRGIT WOELKER, PH. D.**

Birgit Woelker, Ph.D. is a full-time faculty member in the Biology Department. She holds a Doctorate in Biochemistry and a M.S. in Biology from the Free University of Berlin (Germany). Prior to her faculty position at NCC, she was a research scientist at SUNY Stony Brook, CSHL and the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics in Berlin. She has been actively involved in the Organic Community Gardens of Huntington, Slow Food Movement, Slow Money Movement, I Eat Green Initiative, Green Sanctuary Project, EarthSave, Organic Consumers Association, Union of Concerned Scientists and Green America. Her dream is to start an Organic Garden at NCC.

### **ORVAL JEWETT, LCSW**

Orval Jewett, LCSW is an associate professor in the Student Personnel Services department at NCC where he is a counselor at The Center for Students with Disabilities. At NCC for eleven years, Orval previously worked in various state social service agencies, mental health clinics and other higher education settings. Orval has published scholarly articles and textbooks and presented at national conferences. He proudly serves as an officer of the New York Mental Health Counselors Association (NYMHCA). He is also an adjunct assistant professor in the department of sociology and anthropology at Farmingdale State College.

### **VALERIE LAGAKIS, ED. D.**

Valerie Lagakis, Ed.D. (Department of RDG/BEP) earned her doctorate and Masters of Education and a second MA in TESOL (teaching English as a second language) at Columbia University's Teachers College. In addition, she earned certification to practice coaching for college students on the autism spectrum at Bank Street College of Education. She has taught in learning communities, paired courses with Reading/ESL and biology and psychology for ESL and mainstream students. She has overseen projects utilizing Total Quality Management and has conducted faculty development (chaired The Achilles Faculty-Training Seminar from 2006-2010) at Nassau Community College (NCC) and peer supervision as well as evaluated course development and instruction in ESL and Reading in the City University of New York (CUNY). Currently, she is the Coordinator of the Achilles Project (a founding member), a program for twice-exceptional students attending NCC.

### **LINDA M. LOPEZ, PH. D., Psychologist, Nassau BOCES**

Linda M. Lopez, Ph.D., is a psychologist at Nassau BOCES where she has worked in a variety of programs in the Department of Special Education during the past 22 years. Her work developing programming and supports for high school students with autism spectrum and related disorders led to increased involvement in transition planning and services emphasizing college preparation. Complementing her work with high school faculty, she has worked closely with faculty and administrators at Nassau Community College to support faculty who serve students with disabilities. Dr. Lopez presents widely on topics related to education of students with autism spectrum disorders, college preparation and transition-related topics. In July, 2010, she and Genette Ortiz of NCC presented at the annual conference of the Association of Higher Education and Disability on the topic, "A High School – College Collaboration to Prepare Students with Disabilities for Success in College." Currently, an adjunct faculty member of NCC, she has also served at NYIT and Adelphi University.

### **KEVIN MATTINGLY, PH. D.**

Kevin Mattingly, Ph.D. is currently the Dean of Faculty at the Lawrenceville School in NJ, a 9-12 boarding and day school with 800 students. He has been a teacher and coach for 35 years and an administrator for 22 of those years. Mattingly has been long affiliated with the Klingenstein Center at Columbia University, where he has taught in their Summer Institute for young teachers and is currently teaching cognitive science in their graduate programs as an adjunct professor. He has also worked with a variety of innovative public and private school redesign initiatives, and was involved with the founding of a school himself. Mattingly's training is in science (Ph.D. and BA in Biology), and he has been significantly informed during his career about how children learn by his 1st grade teacher wife, Kristi.

### **JEAN MILLER**

Prof. Miller came to Nassau Community College in 1990 and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Reading and Basic Education. She has an MS in Reading Education and is permanently certified as a Reading Teacher and Elementary Education Teacher. She is a founding member of the Achilles Project, engaging in the Achilles Pilot Program and originated the student mentoring program. Currently she is the Team E-Meeting Coordinator, Achilles Club Advisor and Faculty Advisor for Achilles students. She is also a certified coach for college students on the Autism Spectrum.

## **DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES**

10:30am – 11:30am

### **INTEGRATING MATHEMATICS AND AMERICAN HISTORY**

**Theresa Vecchiarelli and Marynita Anderson, Ph.D.**

The topic of this talk is how to use semester projects to integrate concepts from both mathematics and American History. A series of projects developed by Theresa Vecchiarelli and Marynita Anderson will be discussed as well as two models in which they were implemented.

### **ZOMBIE IDOL SHOW**

**Jason Gorman**

Students choose their role in a video production during class for this team project. Possible responsibilities include: performance direction, writers, actors, lighting crew, camera work, sound editors, music production, video editors, graphic artists and special effects artists. Each student is responsible for a several areas of the project including recording a video of themselves performing an audition for a role as a zombie and their chosen task. Each student works on different segments of the Zombie Idol show and then the segments are edited together for the final presentation.

This assignment differentiates in a teacher-dependent manner by way of content, process and product as the instructor is addressing different skills with students, to producing different parts of the project with completely different ways in terms of processes involved. The assignment also differentiates in student-dependent ways as some students have varying background or skill levels appropriate to different tasks and also they can choose roles that either Interest them or that correspond to individual learning profiles such as preferred modalities. The assignment addresses the following strategies of differentiation instruction: alternate modalities, interest groups, real-world problem solving, flexible grouping and independent projects.

#### **Guidelines:**

Zombie Idol Show – Widescreen aspect ratio (format of video). Record video of yourself acting like a zombie to serve for the purpose of an audition for a zombie movie geared to a target audience between the ages of 17-30. Final video must be thirty seconds two one minute in length with sound. You may shoot a few takes to be edited into one clip. After the shoot you will be given the video clips from all students and additional clips to create an episode of Zombie Idol, a popular TV show.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE?**

**Birgit Woelker, Ph.D.**

This project was designed as a Service Learning Project using Differentiated Instruction. Bio101 and Bio109 students (non-majors and majors, respectively) had to work for two hours at the Queens County Farm, an organic farm in the heart of Queens and watch the movie Food Inc. In addition, they were asked to produce a four to five page essay on the benefits of sustainable agriculture, comparing sustainable organic farming methods with conventional methods. In their essays, material from the course needed to be incorporated, analyzed and correlated. The students really enjoyed this assignment and reported back that after working on the farm the subject matter they were exposed to in the classroom finally made sense. By doing, they learned much more than by listening in a traditional classroom setting.

### **LUNCH & EXHIBITS**

11:30am – 12:30pm

### **NEUROSCIENCE AND TEACHING THE 2E STUDENT**

12:30pm – 1:30pm

**Kevin Mattingly, Ph.D.**

## **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

1:30pm – 2:30pm

### **The Lang School**

**Ms. Micaela Bracamonte and Melisa Sornik, LMSW**

### **The Roslyn Middle School Model**

**Wendy J. Eisner, Ph.D.**

This presentation, based on Eisner, Wendy J. & Altman, Jen B. (June 2005) Roslyn Middle School: A Model for 2e Education, The 2e Newsletter, Issue 11, describes the features, components, and short- and long-term outcomes, of IEP-based 2e educational programming in a public middle school. A case study approach is used. Important features include: a holistic view of the student, trusting student-staff relationships, student responsibility, and home-school consistency. Components include: a 2-sensitive IEP, staff and peer training, a dually differentiated curriculum, social/emotional supports, and behavior management characterized by positive discipline, a cognitive approach, and preventative intervention. The case study analysis reveals consistent progress/ success in academic, behavioral, and social/emotional domains at the middle school, high school, and college levels.

### **The NCC Achilles Project**

**Valerie Lagakis, Ed.D.**

An overview of The Achilles Project, Nassau Community College's program for 2e students (high-potential with learning challenges and pronounced discrepancies between the two), will be provided by addressing program design, interventions (differentiated instruction, teaming, academic and personal counseling), goals, admissions, with focus on social-emotional component in form of "club."

### **Transitioning Between School Levels**

**Prof. Orval Jewett, LCSW and Linda Lopez, Ph.D., Psychologist, Nassau BOCES**

In this presentation, several faculty members will talk about things that students and their parents should consider when transitioning to college. Dr. Lopez will discuss the importance of ongoing collaborations between high school and college educators in order ensure a smooth transition of underachieving 2e students to college and prepare them for success. Implications of the change in expectations from high school to college will be highlighted with an emphasis on teaching essential 'college survival skills,' especially self-advocacy skills, as early as possible. Examples will be given of some successful initiatives as well as resources.

### **Student Panel**

**Prof. Jean Miller, Moderator**

**Prof. Jeffrey Frankel, Moderator**

ACCESS Club, Achilles Club, Peer Mentors

### **Legal Obligations of School Districts to Disabled Students**

**Bonnie Spiro Schinagle, Esq.**

If you know where you come from, you'll have an idea of where you are heading. For this reason, it is important to have a cursory understanding of the origins of IDEA and the right to an education. In addition to a brief discussion of the origins of IDEA, this presentation will address IDEA compliance issues, including:

- Child Find requirement that school districts use to identify students in need of special education services, even if the child is in private school.  
Identification and classification will be discussed.
- What is FAPE, anyway? What level of services must be offered?
- Why do we have to have a CSE meeting?
- Our school could have given the child an appropriate education. Do we have to write everything down in an IEP?
- What happens if a parent notifies the district that they have decided to place their child in private school?

## **Q&A SESSION**

2:30pm – 3:00pm

## **ABOUT THE SPEAKERS**

### **MARYNITA ANDERSON, PH.D.**

Marynita Anderson joined the History, Political Science and Geography Department in 1995. She earned her Bachelor of Arts with a double major of Biology and History at St. Joseph's College (Brooklyn) and her Masters, Certificate of Education to Teach at Community Colleges, and Doctorate at New York University. Since she believes the medium is as important as the message, she digitalized all her courses in American History and is the coordinator of all department technology. She serves on the Board of the Center for Catholic Studies, the Board of Editors of the NCC Social Behavioral Sciences Journal, and is the faculty advisor for the student Newman Club and the student Gaelic Society. As an Achilles founding member, she is a DI mentor for junior faculty. She was awarded a research sabbatical, the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence for Service and the national NISOD Award for Excellence in Teaching.

### **MICAELA BRACAMONTE**

Micaela Bracamonte is the founder and Head of School of The Lang School, New York City's first school for gifted and twice-exceptional students. She spent a decade raising and home-schooling her two sons, both gifted different learners, both now students at Lang. At the same time, she was COO of IntuitiveLabs, a software engineering firm catering to the data management needs of Fortune 500s. Before starting a family, she earned a master's degree in journalism from The University of Maryland, was Managing Editor of a European city magazine and freelanced arts coverage for The Wall Street Journal Europe. She is a TECA board member.

### **WENDY J. EISNER, PH.D.**

Wendy J. Eisner, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology at Nassau Community College (NCC) where she has taught general psychology, child development, and psychology of art courses and has received extensive recognition for teaching excellence. Her academic training is multi-disciplinary, including a Ph.D. in psychology (CUNY), M.A. in anthropology (Columbia University), and B.A. in philosophy (Wellesley College). During her 23-year tenure at NCC, she has been an innovative leader in educational programming and faculty development: She was the founding director of NCC's Achilles Project for the twice-exceptional student, for which she received the prestigious Nassau BOCES Educational Partner Award. She has helped train faculty regarding gender equity in math/science education and educational strategies for students with learning differences. She, with Orval Jewett, SPS/CSD, co-founded the Student Management and Retention Committee (SMRC) to help faculty effectively work with challenging students. Finally, Dr. Eisner liaisons with families and educators in the community-at-large through Twice-Exceptional Children's Advocacy (TECA) that she co-founded with Melissa Sornik, LMSW, and publications/presentations on such topics as college readiness, home-school communication, and 2e educational programming.

### **JASON GORMAN**

Jason Gorman has an M.A. and B.F.A. from Long Island University and has worked professionally as a graphic designer, art director and technical consultant. He is an Associate Professor in the Art Department at Nassau Community College and has served on the Middle States Self-Study Steering Committee and its Educational Offerings Subcommittee. He is a founding member of The Achilles Project for special needs students and is co-chair of the Faculty Training Seminars. He was the first Art Department faculty to teach NCC 101, The College Experience course, where he designed a specialized approach for art students. More recently, he has made many presentations to faculty on the topics of differentiated instruction and service learning.