



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

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GRANT TO INCREASE INCLUSION FOR STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION AWARDED TO UNH'S INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY

DURHAM – A four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education has been awarded to the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire to increase inclusion in the general education curriculum for students with significant disabilities.

Dr. Jan Nisbet, the Institute's Director, explained the project's importance, saying: "This grant capitalizes on a decade of work in the area of inclusive education."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 requires that students with disabilities have access to general education curricula, and that "to the maximum extent appropriate" they pursue learning goals that are "consistent with those of students without disabilities." For students who have traditionally been given labels of mental retardation, autism, traumatic brain injury and multiple disabilities, realization of these goals present significant challenges.

Beyond Access: A Model that Promotes Learning of General Education Curriculum Content for Students with the Most Significant Disabilities, is a \$700,000 model demonstration grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs over four years.

Beyond Access – led by Project Director Cheryl M. Jorgensen, Ph.D., and Project Associates Michael McSheehan and Rae Sonnenmeier, Ph.D., of the Institute on Disability – will design, demonstrate, evaluate and disseminate a comprehensive education model that links planning students' instructional supports with professional development designed to improve team functioning.

The model differs from current practice by: encouraging full-time membership and participation by students with the most significant disabilities in the general education classroom; merging instructional planning and curriculum modification with augmentative communication supports; linking professional development and accountability to student performance; and focusing on team collaboration and problem-solving skills as integral part of the educational process.

The *Beyond Access* model will be tested and replicated in three NH schools with 15 students who experience significant disabilities.

The Institute on Disability's mission is to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities. The Institute offers workshops and training sessions, participates in grant-funded model demonstration projects, conducts research and engages in collaborative partnerships with other statewide organizations that are committed to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

For more information, visit the Institute on Disability's Web site at www.iod.unh.edu.

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The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, is a University Center for Excellence, established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.