

It is with a great deal of pride that we
have this opportunity to share with you the
experiences, successes, and knowledge the
Challenge Grant has provided our students, staff,
and the community.

-Jenison Public Schools Staff

Life Skills Institute's first graduate eyes diploma, working world

1986-87

By Ann Fisher

The Grand Rapids Press

The community is Tom Vronko's campus.

Vronko, who will be the first graduate of the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District Life Skills Institute when he turns 26 in April, is already breaking into the "real world" with his work at a 7-Eleven Food Store in Holland.

"Our philosophy is one of integration and having students interact with nonhandicapped students," said Carol Gray of the institute, a program for autistic students at Pinewood Elementary School in Jenison, where she teaches and develops community training sites.

"What I stress with Tom and the Seven-Eleven is that it's a training site. He is learning community work skills and vocational skills with a skill coach," said Gray.

Vronko, the son of Annabelle and Jerry Czachorski, of Coopersville, has

also worked in the high school cafeteria, where he has gained many friends and, recently, recognition by the Jenison Schools Board of Education for his exemplary performance as a student.

"Tommy has a kind of personality they want to get out into the work world," said Annabelle Czachorski of her son.

"He's very outgoing and he loves people. But he loves mostly grownups. He figures he can wheedle more out of grownups than children. By going to the school, he learned to socialize more and learned to get along with people besides mother and dad and his brothers."

"He's just a nice person who happens to have autism," said Gray, who nominated Vronko for the honor.

'Our philosophy is one of integration and having students interact with nonhandicapped students.'

— Carol Gray

Autism is a biological disorder characterized by abnormal responses to sensations, the absence or delay of speech and language withdrawal, isolation and an over-reaction or lack of reaction to surrounding events.

The program started in 1976 as the Key Center, with three students, one teacher and one aide. In 1985, the name changed to Life Skills Institute, which now has 19 students enrolled, four teachers and five aides. Gray said the name change corresponded with more focused goals.

"At that time (1985), our students were getting older. We were looking at the future and asking, 'What next?'"

Gray said that — traditionally — 95 percent of the people who are autistic are institutionalized by the time they reach 26.

"We're trying to change that because we're finding they can work quite well in the community when they have a good match," said Gray.

For Tom, who lives in a group home in Holland, his impending graduation holds increased challenge and a heightened sense of independence, said Gray.

"I think he's aware that things are going to change, that he's going to graduate," she said. "He's risen to that quite well instead of walking away."



Sentinel photo

Tom Vronko at Holland's Seven-Eleven.

Program aids autistic student

By Chris Christophersen

Sentinel staff writer

Hardly anyone in today's society would oppose the widening of hallways and doors, the addition of ramped entrances and the reserving of parking spaces for the physically handicapped.

But the non-physical barriers — often erected out of good intentions to shelter handicappers — remain for others in our society.

Recently, and in keeping with efforts to normalize life for the developmentally disabled, educators have been working to remove some of those barriers. And for at least one autistic resident of Holland, that has meant the opportunity to take a real job outside the classroom.

Thanks to a Supported Employment Challenge Grant through the Jenison School District, Tom Vronko and other autistic students throughout Ottawa County Area Intermediate School District have had the opportunity to gain work experience and increase their independence. For

Vronko, this has meant a job at Holland's Seven-Eleven store, mopping floors and cleaning the parking lot. He continues in this position through May 23.

While that may not be the lifelong dream of others, for Vronko it's been pure bliss, according to Carol Gray, a teacher of the autistic at Pinewood Elementary School of Jenison where the 26-year-old is a student. "He takes a lot of pride in what he does," she said.

Because of their generosity in helping out the program and employing Vronko, Holland Seven-Eleven owners Muriel and Ron Robinson were among the first to be honored recently for their support. Their store is one of the first of such training sites. Evergreen Commons, Bil Mar and the Georgetown Library are also working with students. A total of 10-12 students are eligible to work through this situation in three- to six-month-long sessions.

The program has meant more than a "field trip" kind of experience and this is important for au-

tistic students who need a variety of learning environments to generalize and master life skills, according to experts in this area. Students through Jenison's Life Skills Institute have been given jobs near the Life Skills Institute or near their home where they are given opportunities to interact with non-handicapped people.

All students are accompanied by a job coach from the LSI who remains with them at all times on the job. The job coaches gradually phase out their involvement while increasing student independence but never leave the student all alone.

All this is in keeping with a movement to stop sheltering the developmentally disabled and to get them into mainstreamed life. Many autistic persons have "splinter skills" — advanced abilities in specific areas while other areas of development are delayed. Autism can also occur by itself or with other physical disorders, commonly with mental retardation, experts say.

(All students in training sites have a complete set of objectives that follow this format. Here are a few samples...)

Objective 12

_____ a) will determine if video machines are dirty and/or dusty and need to be cleaned and will b) clean the machines using a method approved by the manager with _____ prompts.

Date Assigned

Time Frame

Evidence

Documents

Daily diary of skill coach

Data

Data on objectives. Objective completed when performed for _____ consecutive days.

Monitoring

Availability of all documents on site

Objective 13

Objective 11

Given the direction to do so, _____ will fill and fasten ice bags for the cooler with _____ prompts.

Date Assigned

Time Frame

Evidence

Documents

Daily diary of skill coach

Data

Data on objectives. Objective completed when performed for _____ consecutive days.

Monitoring

Availability of all documents on site.

_____ will change syrup tanks on the machine using a method approved by the manager with _____ prompts.

Date Assigned

Time Frame

Evidence

Documents

Daily diary of skill coach

Data

Data on objectives. Objective completed when performed on _____ consecutive days.

Monitoring

Availability of all documents on site

Objective 14

_____ will price products using a pricing gun with
_____ prompts.

Date Assigned

Time Frame

Evidence

Documents

Daily diary of skill coach

Data

Data on objectives. Objective completed when
performed on _____ consecutive days.

Monitoring

Availability of all documents on site.

Objective 15a-b

_____ will a) use a snow shovel to shovel the front walk of the store and/or b) sprinkle "appropriate" (as determined by manager or skill coach) amount of rock salt on the walk with _____ prompts.

Date Assigned

Time Frame

Evidence

Documents Daily diary of skill coach

Data Data on objectives. Objective completed when performed for _____ consecutive days.

Monitoring

Availability of all documents on site.

(Filled out by teacher after each visit to a training site.)

SITE VISIT REPORT

DATE:

EMPLOYEE:

LOCATION:

CONTACT PERSON:

REASON FOR VISIT:

VISIT OUTCOME:

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS REQUIRED:

DATE COMPLETED:

Adapted from Virginia Commonwealth University
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center.

(Excerpts from Skill Coach and Teacher diaries. Also a few from students)

Excerpts from Diaries

How it feels to be "Challenged"...

Georgetown Library, Jenison

"...He said hi to me, but did not use my name. I asked him if he could tell me what my name was and he said, "Yes, Mrs. Buning." I told him it would be nice if he would call me that when he arrives in the morning or he needs me for something." -Eunice Buning, Skill Coach

"He said hi to me, but is not using my name yet." -Eunice Buning, Skill Coach

"He greeted me, but no name." -Eunice Buning, Skill Coach

"I am afraid that if I use their names, I will trip over a cord or something." -Joel, Student

"At 11:20 I found him and told him to hurry up and get ready for the bus, which he did. I told him that he had checked in a total of 194 items in all and that I thought he had done just a great job. He told Eleanor when he went to get his coat that he had checked in 194 things, and Eleanor said that she was very proud of him, too. He smiled from ear to ear and then said, 'Let's all tell Cheryl'." -Eunice Buning, Skill Coach

"Watching students in the training sites, I've come to regret every objective I've ever read, or written, that begins with the word 'Given...'. In educating the severely impaired, nothing should ever be given except the chance to get it themselves. How will they ever know where anything is? Why is it the non-handicapped get to make all the mistakes? The severely impaired should be allowed to spill milk also." -Carol Gray, Teacher

7-11, Holland

"Today Tom, Carol, and I went to the 7-11 store in Holland where Tom will be working. Tom received his very own 7-11 shirt which he is very proud of. Also his own nametag. He looks like a real 7-11 employee!" -Sheryl Rinks, Skill Coach

"Tom was presented with the award for STUDENT OF THE MONTH for Jenison Public Schools. His parents and brother were there, along with alot of his friends from school- staff members and one student. Tom did beautifully and we were all very proud."

-Sheryl Rinks, Skill Coach

"Tom was by the coolers when he was going to rinse out the mop and raised it up too high. It hit the clock on the wall, came down and hit him on the head."

-Sheryl Rinks, Skill Coach

"Professionals talk about prompting, fading prompts, physical and verbal prompts, etc.. I think we need to distinguish prompts from efforts to prevent a mistake- mistakes that need to be made. Today Tom knocked three boxes of cat food off the shelf at 7-11, and while putting those back up, proceeded to knock off others. The pattern continued, until three rows had been knocked to the floor, and put back. By the time Tom was done, he was replacing dropped boxes to the shelf very carefully, so others would not fall. His skill coach monitored the situation from four or so aisles over, and did not intervene to help. I hope we can develop a curriculum where we can teach as that skill coach did- from far, far away."

-Carol Gray, Teacher

and kids, a chance to 'Cuddle and I

Pete's
Day

y Pete
eMaagd



35 youngsters in grades kinder-
n through eight at St. James Catho-
school are busy this week tracing
roots with the help of their moth-
and fathers.
is one of several projects they have
e works as they celebrate Catholic
ols Week in Our Town.
acher Dave Sipka told me that, in
king old church and school records,
same family names keep popping
"We discovered that the parents,
dparents, even great-grandparents
ome of our kids went to St. James

School. So we decided to have the stu-
dents do a family tree of ancestors who
attended here."

Also this week, the girls and boys will
be buying paper hearts for a quarter. On
each heart, they'll write the name of a
schoolmate they would like to have
treated with flowers or candy or other
gift on Valentine's Day. Winners' names
will be drawn next week. All of those
quarters will be turned over to the
Catholic church's program to feed the
hungry kids of Third World countries.

On Thursday, the girls and boys in the
upper grades will serve as big sisters
and big brothers to the little ones, hav-
ing lunch with them, helping them with
their studies, spending recess with
them.

And all week, in the various class-
rooms, the pupils will be writing thank-
you notes to their parents for providing
the means for gaining their education in
the Catholic schools.

Speaking of thank-you notes, here's
one from yours truly to the gals and guys
in the Life Skills Institute at Pinewood
School, the special education program

for autistic young adults that trains them
for independent living.

Once a month these students, who are
in their late teens or early 20s, operate a
restaurant they call "Chances." They
choose the menu, prepare and serve the
food. They also clue you in on what the
program is all about. Carol Gray is the
teacher in charge of the institute and
"Chances." She does a fantastic job; so
do the autistic students who are working
on compensating for their various im-
pairments in speech, learning, social
graces and the like.

The students fixed a casserole of
green beans, mushroom gravy and
french fried onions; sliced cucumbers in
sour cream, a tossed salad, two kinds of
homemade rolls and cheesecake with a
choice of topping — cherries or blueber-
ries. And it was delicious; A-rated all the
way.

So applause to Carol & Crew at
Pinewood and a thank you to my friend,
Rose Gillisse, for taking me to
"Chances." A chance on a luncheon
such as that I'll take any time. Rose, by
the way, is a member of the Jenison
Public School's Board of Education.

Students, fac
other staff pers
Public Schools
Soup and Salad
the benefit of t
The supper will
Middle School,
36th Street SE.

Tickets may b
— \$2.50 for ad
under 12 years
Mike Martin Pa
by the school
GHPS. He has
their children w
a car-train crash
child was killed

Alumni of G
another fund
garner more
rium-seating pro
faculty will pay
dia All-Stars at
the school. Tick
for students. En
torium cost \$7
chase a mem
942-8324 for more

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH BUILDING

EAST LANSING · MICHIGAN · 48824-1117

11/26/86

Carol Gray

~~2216 Pleasant~~
~~Ann Arbor, MI~~

Dear Carol,

Enclosed is the information regarding vocational training and Department of Labor issues.

I also spoke with [redacted] the Michigan Rehabilitation Services Liason with Special Education regarding community based training. There is an interagency group working on this issue. They will be advocating the following for "Contracted Services for Less than Classroom Size" (community based training):

1. Student not paid
2. Trainer must be a certified vocational instructor or an individual who is authorized annually by the school to be an instructor. This annually authorized person will often be the employer.
3. There must be a contract between the school and training site.
4. The person primarily responsible for establishing the sites, developing a lesson plan etc. must be certified Special Education teacher.
5. Job Coaches can have "aide" status.

These points are not formalized, but likely to be suggested by the Special Education/Vocational Education/Rehabilitation Interagency Committee.

It seems from what I understand of your program that you would be meeting all of these criteria anyway.

Again, I hope this information will be of help.

Sincerely,



Tina

11/12/88

Carol Gray

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Dear Carol:

Enclosed is the information regarding vocational training and Department of Labor issues.

I also spoke with the Michigan Rehabilitation Services liaison with Special Education regarding community based training. There is an investigatory group working on this issue. They will be advocating the following for "CDD-treated services for less than classroom size" (community based training):

1. Student not paid
2. Trainer must be a certified vocational instructor or an individual not in contractual annually by the school to be an instructor. This annually authorized person will also be the employer.
3. There must be a contract between the school and training site.
4. The person primarily responsible for establishing the site, developing a lesson plan and must be certified Special Education teacher.
5. Job coaches can have "aide" status.

These points are not finalized, but likely to be suggested by the Special Education/Vocational Education/Rehabilitation Agency Committee.

It seems like what I understand of your program that you would be meeting all of these criteria anyway.

Again, I hope this information will be of help.

Sincerely,

Tara

Individualized Vocational Training

The Individualized Vocational Training (IVT) program is specifically designed for those handicapped students whose vocational education interests and needs cannot be met in regular, adapted or special education/vocational education programs.

The IVT program model provides a vocational education alternative that allows school districts to expand their vocational training alternatives to community based training sites. The employer and/or his designee become directly involved in the student's vocational education program. To be eligible for this program, the student must be assigned to the case load of an approved special education instructional staff person. The staff person is responsible for the development of the student's vocational education program to include:

- a. Individualized goals and objectives based on vocational education minimum performance objectives in the selected training area;
- b. Identification of the number of hours of training;
- c. Determination of the amount of credit the student is to receive;
- d. Making arrangements for the placement of the student in the community based vocational education program;
- e. Development of an evaluation system to determine if the goals and objectives have been met.

This program is developed cooperatively with the parents and/or student and the employer. Since the student is placed in the community site for the purpose of receiving vocational training, he/she is not considered an employee and receives no wage. As a trainee, the employer (trainer) is not required to provide the usual employer benefits - i.e., Worker's Compensation Insurance, Unemployment Insurance, and/or liability insurance, etc. As a trainee, the student is in a "school" sponsored program. Therefore, school liability covers the student as in any other school program.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to assure that the training program is consistent with the six criteria established by the U.S. Department of Labor to determine when a student is a trainee. All six of the following criteria must apply for a student to be legally placed in an individualized vocational training program:

1. The training, even though it includes actual operation of facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school;
2. The training is for the benefit of the trainee or student;
3. The trainee or students do not displace regular employees, but work under their close supervision;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the trainees or students, and on occasion his operation may actually be impeded;
5. The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the training period; and
6. The employer and the trainees or students understand that the trainee or student is not entitled to a wage for the time spent in the training.

JENISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ON SITE SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM:
CHALLENGE GRANT PROJECT

SKILL TRAINING AGREEMENT

Jenison Public Schools, and _____
_____ Company
_____ have established a cooperative relationship that
will provide skill training for developmentally disabled students
at _____ . This cooperative
_____ Site
relationship between Jenison Public Schools and the Company is
herein referred to as "Skill Training Program".

Jenison Public Schools and the Company agree as
follows:

1. The Company agrees to serve as a skill training site for developmentally disabled students _____ and _____ .
2. Jenison Public Schools shall hold the Company harmless from any liability arising out of activities outlined in the Skill Training Program involving disabled student _____ and/or disabled student _____ and/or skill coach _____ . Neither the disabled students or the skill coach may participate in activities for the Company which are not outlined in the Skill Training Program.
3. Jenison Public Schools will review and correct any condition, situation, or behavior of a student which may be disruptive to the business of the Company. In a case where student behavior is disruptive, and unresponsive to intervention, that student's involvement with the Skill Training Site involved will be terminated.
4. This agreement may be terminated by either party upon written notice at anytime, provided, an explanation of the reasons for the termination is included in the notice.
5. This agreement shall not be assigned by either party hereto without the express written agreement of the other party.

6. Jenison Public Schools and the Company shall not be construed as joint venturers or partners, and neither shall be liable for any contracts, orders, commitments, obligations, acts or omissions of the other party, their employees or agents.

Dated: _____

Company: _____

By _____

Its _____

Jenison Public Schools

By _____

Its _____

Jenison Public Schools
Life Skills Institute

GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING SITE DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT PLACEMENT

Supported Employment Challenge Grant Project
Developmental Disabilities Council
Contract # 86300

Unpaid Training Site Development and Student Placement

Sites will be considered for student placement which meet the following criteria:

- 1) Placed students will be 15 years of age or older.
- 2) Site is free of hazardous aspects for placement of students 15 years of age (i.e. manufacturing, mining sites), and is free of hazardous aspects in the specific training area for all students.
- 3) Placements will be limited to a 3 month duration unless the site is felt to still be of educational benefit.
- 4) New individualized objectives will be in place prior to a student placement extending beyond 3 months.
- 5) Willingness to sign the Skill Training Agreement with Jenison Public Schools if the placement is unpaid.
- 6) Opportunity for skill development in jobs appropriate to the abilities/needs of students.
- 7) Willingness to communicate with teachers concerning observations of student progress, site concerns, and any problems arising from the placement.
- 8) Willingness to use one of the following skill coach arrangements:
 - a) Jenison Public Schools employee, or
 - b) an employee of the site.
- 9) Understanding that training must be consistent with the goals of the individualized education and/or transition plan.

- 10) Assurance by the employer that employees will not be replaced or impaired as a result of student placement.
- 11) Understanding that the employer is to receive no immediate benefit from the student's performance, and in fact the employer's daily operations may be impeded.
- 12) Understanding the placement is for the benefit of the student.
- 13) Understanding the student is not guaranteed a job at the conclusion of the placement.
- 14) Understanding by the employer that the student is not entitled to pay for his or her training.
- 15) Training opportunity exists during school hours.
- 16) No placement will extend beyond school hours.

Paid Training Site Development and Student Placement

Paid training sites will be considered which meet the following criteria:

- 1) Students must be 16 years of age or older.
- 2) Site is free of hazardous aspects in the specific training area.
- 3) Opportunity for skill development in jobs appropriate to the abilities/needs of student targeted for placement.
- 4) Willingness to communicate with teachers concerning observations of student progress, site concerns, and any problems arising from the placement.
- 5) Willingness to use one of the following job coach arrangements:
 - a) A Jenison Public Schools employee, or
 - b) an employee of the site.
- 6) Understanding that training must be consistent with the goals of the individualized education and/or transition plan.
- 7) Training opportunity exists during school hours.
- 8) Placements will not extend beyond school hours.
- 9) Sites employing students at a rate below the prevailing wage rate will:
 - a) possess a Special Handicapped Worker Certificate.
 - b) pay at a rate "based upon the type, quality, and quantity" of an individual student.
 - c) provide "written assurances to DOL that pay rates will be reviewed and changed as needed every six months".