



## Teachers' Corner

**Ann M. Forts, Motivational Speaker  
and Self-Advocate**  
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### My Keys to Opening Doors to Successful Community Inclusion

The following is my favorite list of the 12 most motivating factors that have had the greatest influence on my life, as I learned how to live my life on the “Up” side of

Down syndrome. I urge everyone to remember this list and to use my list at all times so that you will be able to encourage and help people with disabilities achieve a high degree of successful inclusion, without any reservations, in their communities.

1. Develop and maintain a positive, or an “up” attitude, at all times.
2. Make things happen. Don't wait around for someone else to make things happen for you—get motivated!
3. Get to meet and know as many people as you can. Develop lots and lots of friends. We all know that this world can be a very lonely place without friends.
4. Learn how to become independent, with responsibility.
5. Always look for and keep trying new experiences. Remember to always do your very best so you can be proud of your efforts. Don't ever give up!
6. Learn how to speak out and be willing to do so. Before you speak out, listen and learn all about what you want to talk about. Remember that you will not be able to listen and learn if you are doing all of the talking!
7. Get involved! Make things happen! Volunteer! Become active in your community!
8. Be willing to change and learn how to adjust to change.
9. Learn and understand the issues that will help to improve your life.
10. Help yourself by becoming an effective self-advocate.
11. Don't let anyone prejudge the limits of your abilities!
12. Dream and set goals for yourself!

Every item on my list has made it possible for me to live a very happy and satisfying life on the “Up” side of Down syndrome—a life that is filled with lots and lots of friendships, excitement, accomplishments, and acceptance in my community, without any reservations.

I have always been encouraged by my family to be friendly, courteous, independent, and outgoing, and to always try new experiences so that inclusion in school, church, jobs, and community generally would be a satisfying and realistic goal and experience.

The primary focus of my motivational speeches is to help everyone to understand that there is definitely an “Up” side to life for someone with Down syndrome or some other disability. I speak from first-hand experience because I have Down syndrome, which I prefer to call “Up” syndrome. I created the concept of “Up” syndrome to redefine, in a positive way, the image of mental disabilities and to focus on the *ability portion* of the word *disability*.

We must always remember that we who have a disability have the primary responsibility to try our very best to achieve realistic and successful community inclusion, without any reservations.

Our support team, which includes our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and everyone else in our community, can help us achieve successful community inclusion sooner, and more completely, by helping and encouraging us to become responsible and contributing members of our communities.

I feel certain that if all of us regularly make use of the 12 most motivating factors that have had the greatest influence on my life, that you will also adopt my favorite expression, “*I love my life!*”

**Call for Papers**  
**DDD Conference**  
**January 20–22, 2010**  
**Maui, Hawaii**  
**See page 3.**

## President's Message

Dave Smith

In his book, *Bowling Alone*, political scientist Robert Putnam used data on bowling patterns in the United States as a metaphor for the decreasing sense of community in America. He used data on the declining numbers of people who join bowling leagues, although bowling numbers themselves have increased, as a way of looking at the reduction in other community ties and activities such as PTAs and the League of Women Voters. As a title and as a metaphor, *Bowling Alone* proved to be powerful and captivating. Putnam's book was an academic sensation.

What is the point of my discussion on bowling for DDD? I believe that the lessons that *Bowling Alone* offers us are these: The forms that support, encouragement, and engagement may need to take for a new generation of special educators may look very different from those we have previously known and appreciated. What we needed then and what we need now may differ greatly. The forms of support that DDD might provide may differ from the kind of support that may have traditionally been provided by professional organizations. What will best serve us may differ greatly from the kinds of meetings, publications, and services with which many of us "grew up" and have come to feel so comfortable. What do our current members need that is different?

I would like to share with you three other metaphors for providing professional support and encouraging continual professional growth. The first is a character from Charles Dickens. In his novel *Hard Times*, Dickens created a character who was actually a caricature of the educational establishment in 19th-century England. Schoolmaster Thomas Gradgrind insists that all that is important is the teaching of facts: "Facts, teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. . . . Nothing else will ever be of any service to them" (Dickens, 1854, p. 2). That view may be an important piece of what an organization like DDD can do for its membership. It can provide current and accurate information of value. But is that all that the members need from it? I think not.

In sharp contrast to the Dickens caricature are the words of Albert Einstein concerning the qualities of a great teacher. Einstein once remarked that "the principal art of the teacher is to awaken the joy in creation and knowledge" (Einstein, 1931, p. 28). It may be that an even more important function for DDD than providing information is the intellectual stimulation it offers its members through their participation in programs and publications. This is also true of the exchange of ideas made possible through friendships forged by membership in the organization. Creating a thirst for new knowledge and providing channels for sharing that knowledge may be one of its most important functions.

My favorite of the three metaphors I want to share with you, however, comes from the story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. Some years ago, while working on a research project in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, I happened on a reference to letters from and to Helen Keller in the Alexander Graham Bell Collection. As I looked through these papers, I became enthralled with them. Here were letters written by Keller, Sullivan, Bell, and others that presented a unique and important view of Helen, her friendships, and her philosophy.

On July 5, 1918, Keller wrote to Bell about the finger spelling method that Sullivan used as a way of teaching a child who was both deaf and blind. I think it illustrates vividly why Keller always called Sullivan "Teacher." I think it also portrays dramatically the epiphany

that Sullivan helped bring about for Keller, who described the moment when she first understood that the movements in her hand conveyed meaning:

*Sometimes I feel that in that supreme moment she thought me into being. . . . My fingers still glow with the feel of the first word that opened its golden heart to me. How everything seemed to think, to live! Shall I, in all the years of eternity, forget the torrent of wonders that rushed upon me out of the darkness and silence? (Keller, 1918, p. 1)*



"She thought me into being." I believe that Keller and Sullivan present us here with a model for the belief in each other that a true community must have. Whether it is as part of a school, university, or professional organization, we must be about the business of believing in each other, of assisting each other in the process of reaching goals and achieving dreams, and of thinking the possible into being.

The need to experience moments of extraordinary vision and comprehension of the possible in our lives is not confined to a few individuals; it is a universal human need. When the textile workers of Lawrence, Massachusetts, rose up in 1912 in protest of working conditions, salaries, and undignified treatment at work, they demanded "bread and roses." Their strike slogan expressed their desire to dream and hope. In fact, it demonstrated that their right to dream was as important to them as food and shelter. And so, members of DDD, we must support each other with both bread and roses for our professional journeys.

### References

- Dickens, C. (1854). *Hard times*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Einstein, A. (1931). *To schoolchildren*. (Available from Albert Einstein Archives, Folder 28, Document 145, California Institute of Technology 20-7, Pasadena, CA 91125)
- Keller, H. (1918). *Letter to Alexander Graham Bell*. (Alexander Graham Bell Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC)
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

### Online Instructions for Accessing Issues of ETDD

As one of your benefits of DDD membership, you are now able to access on-line back issues to 2003 of our DDD journal, *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*. To access the electronic version of *ETDD*, go to **DDD Member Login** located at the DDD Home Page (<http://www.dddcec.org/index.htm>). You will need to type in your CEC username (your e-mail address) and your password (your CEC # ID number). If you are a **current member** this will allow you access to the **ETDD issues**.

[Please contact CEC at 888-232-7733 (toll-free) if you do not know your username or password and to ensure that your DDD membership is current.]



# CALL FOR PAPERS

The Council for Exceptional Children's  
Division on Developmental Disabilities (CEC-DDD)  
is hosting its 12th International Conference on  
Autism, Cognitive Disabilities/Mental Retardation,  
& Other Developmental Disabilities:

## *Research to Practice*

January 20-22, 2010  
Sheraton Maui, Hawaii

The 12th International Conference is both research and practitioner-focused; CEC-DDD welcomes the submission of innovative, evidenced-based proposals within the following topical areas:

- ◆ Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- ◆ Adaptive & Assistive Technology
- ◆ Mild to Moderate Cognitive Disabilities
- ◆ Mental Health & Developmental Disability
- ◆ Multiple Disabilities
- ◆ Transition
- ◆ ABA/IBI & Other Interventions
- ◆ Paraprofessionals

Proposals should include the following information:

- ◆ Presenter name(s), affiliation, contact information (including e-mail)
- ◆ Session title, abstract (50-word maximum), and summary (300-word maximum), including information as to how the proposal addresses diversity
- ◆ Session format — poster session, lecture, or panel presentation

Proposals may be submitted electronically to Cindy Perras,  
Conference coordinator, at [cindy.perras@cogeco.ca](mailto:cindy.perras@cogeco.ca)

**Deadline: June 30, 2009**



## Outstanding DVD and Book on Autism

### **Dream House (DVD)**

Born in the early 1900s in rural Idaho, James Castle was believed to be “deaf, mute, illiterate and intellectually disabled.” Never speaking, he nevertheless produced tens of thousands of artworks using found materials. Today his behavioral and communication characteristics would likely be interpreted as consistent with autism. This Idaho Public Television-aired video documentary uses Castle’s art (drawings, constructions, books) and exclusive interviews with Castle’s childhood friends, family, and art experts to tell his unique story, helping the viewer to see the world as it might be experienced by a gifted artist with autism.

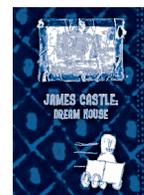
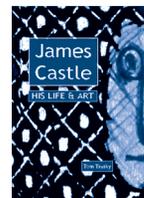
**Member Price:** \$16.95; **Nonmember Price:** \$19.95. Order from CEC Publications: [http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC\\_Store&pc=D5902](http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC_Store&pc=D5902)

### **James Castle: His Life and Art (book)**

James Castle’s primary form of communication was the thousands of drawings and illustrations he produced during his lifetime. Houses, domestic scenes, family members, and friends were endlessly rendered in what some have termed a primitive folk art style from crude tools and supplies: ink made from soot and saliva; pens fashioned from twigs

or sticks; and canvases scavenged from scrap paper, cardboard, books, and the many catalogs that flowed through his parents’ general store and post office. Castle left behind more than 20,000 artworks. In retrospect, his behavioral and communication characteristics are consistent with what would be seen as autism today. His haunting artwork as provided and commented on in this biography offers unique and unparalleled insights into how the world might be perceived by a gifted artist with autism.

**Member Price:** \$21.95; **Nonmember Price:** \$24.95. Order from CEC Publications: [http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC\\_Store&pc=D5901](http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC_Store&pc=D5901)



### **Package Price for Castle book and DVD:**

**Member Price** = \$35.95; **Nonmember Price** = \$39.95. Order from CEC Publications: [http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC\\_Store&pc=D5903](http://www.cec.sped.org/ScriptContent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?section=CEC_Store&pc=D5903)

## Student’s Corner

**Angie Stone-MacDonald**  
*Student Governor*

### **Exciting Times to be a Special Educator**

I hope everyone enjoyed the CEC conference in Seattle this year.

This summer is an exciting time. We are preparing for the first full school year with IDEA fully funded after 34 years of advocacy by dedicated parents, teachers, and people with disabilities, among others. In February, I received a CEC email announcement that President Barack Obama signed the bill to give IDEA full funding. We do not know what changes this will bring to our local schools, but I’m excited that programs will have greater opportunities to meet students’ needs. With new funding, new ideas and initiatives are possible. Whether you just graduated and are preparing to start your first job or have just started your program and will be occasionally visiting schools, I challenge you to find a way to make a difference in the lives of the people with whom you work and to bring creative ideas to the classroom. An easy way to do so is to be aware of the research and current evidence-based practices for your specialty. Know what they are and how these techniques can benefit students; encourage your colleagues to do the same. For example, the email from CEC included links to an article on how to involve students in their IEP process, an example of current practices to promote self-determination for students with disabilities. Last year, I saw a really cool multimedia presentation by a student with Down syndrome for his transition planning meeting. He created it by incorporating different types of technology. His teachers helped him know what kinds of information to include, but he chose the specific details and how to present them to his teachers and family. Helping students

to self-advocate through music, computers, and other technologies can be empowering for the students, you, and your colleagues.

I am about to start my last year as a doctoral student and will soon be looking for a job. I am very excited that I will be starting as a professor when the next generation of special educators will be entering a new phase for IDEA. Preparing those future teachers means that I must be aware of the latest developments and evidence-based practices in special education so that I can share that information—and how to use it—with my students.

In the next issue, I will announce the winners of the five free DDD/CEC memberships for this year.

## DDD Establishes Liaison to the Diversity Committee

**Rosa Lockwood, Co-chairperson**  
*DDD Diversity Committee*

DDD continues to demonstrate its commitment to diversity within the division. The Executive Board is designating the immediate past president as liaison to the Diversity Committee, with specific language unique to the role. The liaison will facilitate connection opportunities between the Diversity Committee and other DDD committees. Two specific objectives for the liaison are:

- Act as representative of the Diversity Committee on DDD’s committees.
- Determine with various committee members the expertise that the Diversity Committee can provide for selected projects to expand the committee/division’s work to be inclusive of diversity.