



N.Y.C.D.O.E.

TRAVEL TRAINING NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT 75

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A “**BIGG**” STORY FROM JEFFREY M. RAPPORT SCHOOL FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE BRONX!

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By Dudley Biggs

Teacher: PS 754X @ Kings Harbor Multi-Care Center

I'd like to give a "Special shout-out" to the Travel Trainers of district 75 who generously gave the students and staff of Kings Harbor Multi-Care Center their best effort and optimum services for the past several months. More specifically, kudos to coordinator Steve Gallo and his team: Sandra Mahase-Zawadzki, Kevin Keels, Maria Rodriguez, Ebelina Mata and many other names that presently escape me but whose services I will always remember: teaching travel skills, providing opportunities to learn in real-life situations, and following (anonymously) to determine if students could handle the situations that occur while traveling. I was reminded that we are all stakeholders sharing a common goal that is to equip our students with the tools to successfully integrate into the community with the least amount of difficulties. Thanks to the dedication and expertise of the travel trainers this typically complex transition was made easier.

Prior to this year I had no idea of the enormous logistics that went into teaching a student how to travel alone. How difficult a task

could it be? Many years in the classroom had a tendency to give me a myopic perspective and a tendency to think that "Only classroom staff, was essential to the teaching of our students".

Steve's team changed my perception. They are primarily responsible for my education and enlightenment. I'm very grateful to have had the opportunity to not only collaborate with them but to have been able to combine our skills in a



Dudley Biggs, Teacher PS 754X @ Kings Harbor

way that served the students' best interests. Being clueless on what travel trainers did actually created a positive beginning. I had no idea that travel training is such a comprehensive program, consisting of not just picking the correct bus or train, but also teaching students skills to solve problems when confronted with a variety of challenges that typically occur when traveling. This is not a small feat to say the least. For example, one of my students cannot recognize that there is a difference between any numbers, or the ABC's. It is unbelievably that this student is using the MTA independent of any assistance. Another student has the tendency to talk to strangers, a

definite recipe for disaster. This student is also traveling alone, refusing to speak to strangers or friends while traveling. Placing the importance of independent travel and travel training in perspective I have to say one of my students was considered for a position at Kings Harbor this past summer but was not selected because he was a bussing (school bus) student. Coincidentally, the one travel trained student we have now is a full time employee at Kings Harbor.

Thanks to the Travel Trainers dependence on a school bus for transportation is no longer an obstacle to most hiring opportunities for my students. We went from a site where only one out of ten students was travel trained to nine out of ten students being travel trained. Why was travel training so important to us? Because one of our goals is to facilitate the integration of our students into their community. This mission was certainly accomplished with the students learning to travel and use public transportation independently. It allows them to feel like their peers.

THANK YOU BRONX TRAVEL TRAINING

To who it may concern,

This letter is to compliment your staff for a good job. I would like for you to thank Mr. Steve Gallo

for his professionalism in helping me

with getting my son, Marcus C. travel

trained. Also Travel Trainer Lola Omo-

jayogbe in assisting Marcus in his training. She did a great job.

I cannot go without saying you have a great

staff. Please convey my thanks and ap-

preciation to Steve and Lola.

Sincerely,

Anita R.

Parent of Marcus C.

Bronx Transition Center

"I cannot go without saying you have a great staff".

A SPECIAL SUMMER

by Edwin T.

721M @ Stuyvesant



Edwin T. Student from PS
721M @ Stuyvesant HS

7/19/07

We planned to go to St. George Staten Island by Ferry but couldn't go today. It was too late. Instead we took the M20 to a Mexican restaurant "Caliente Cab Co". We got off at Christopher St and walked four blocks to 7th Avenue. It was my first time using my manual chair independently on a bus and on streets. I feel nervous. I learned that I need to look first for curb cuts on both sides of the street. I have to also look for cars in two directions, then turn my head; and then move quickly to finish my crossing. On the

bus I had to move my chair in the right spot. I also needed to lock the chair and remember to ring the bell.

7/26/07

Today I used my power chair to travel. My other chair is broken and getting repaired. We used the M 22 to go to my house. I feel not nervous at all. I knew the bus would take me home and back to school. I see that the driver will stop and help me. I am happy and excited.

8/02/07

This summer my class has been doing a time line of past, present and fu-

ture. This summer is my first time using a city bus. I am independent in my power chair. I feel good about beginning Travel Training. At first I was nervous about curb cuts. I'm not nervous anymore. I try to focus and that help me feel confident. In the Fall Michael Lee will travel train me. I will be independent in traveling to home and school.

*Edwin was travel trained when school began Fall 2007. He completed Travel Training successfully October 2, 2007

MY TRAVEL TRAINING EXPERIENCE

By Troy R. @ 721M @ 400 1st Avenue

Written November 20, 2007

Hello, My name is Troy R. and I've been in the Travel Training Program for a few weeks now and it's been good. I've learned to get from 106th Street to 23rd Street and back and it's easy. I can now take the bus or the train without any problem. I am shy about asking the driver for directions. I used to be shy about asking for help but I had to do it

three or four times so I am used to it. It is fast and easy. Everything is going good so far. I am crossing the street looking both ways and looking for turning cars. The only problem I've had in travel training is keeping my Travel ID on me. I don't have a problem with showing or having the ID, it's just that I misplace it. Sorry about that! Other than that everything has been great. I am glad to say that I am almost done with travel training. All that is



Troy R. PS 721M

left is the spy test, the test I am not supposed to know about. Oh well! Thanks to all the people in travel training. Everybody has been nice and friendly. Thanks to Florence (Shomer-Tuchmen) and Velky (Montesdeoca). Thanks for the lessons.

As of November 28, Troy successfully completed Travel Training and now travels independently.

THANK YOU QUEENS TRAVEL TRAINING

My son Tommy graduated from a New York City public high school this past June 2007.

School years for Tommy have been both difficult and challenging as Tommy has visual perceptual difficulties. Due to his poor visual perception, he sees things very differently. As doctors had advised, Tommy's judgment is inaccurate and his poor perception would hinder his ability to measure the distance between cars, and he was transported back and forth to school via the door-to-door school bus.

In grammar school he had no complaints about traveling on the school bus. However, as he became older and started high school this became a terrible issue for him. He was truly embarrassed, as a teenager, to have to be on that bus with younger children. That is why, the day we learned about the Travel Training Program, in his last semester at high school, was truly a day that he had a new beginning.

A few days before he was to get started with the program, Tommy expressed his anxieties to me, but as soon as he met Mr. Steve Garcia, Travel Training Teacher, these anxieties quickly ended. Mr. Garcia met with Tommy and I individually and fully explained the Travel Training Program as well as its goals. More importantly, Tommy expressed to me that he felt right away that Mr. Garcia was the kind of teacher, who really cares and he wants the students of this program to be successful.

Success only touches on the brink of how being able to travel independently has changed my son. Not only does he feel successful but he now has new independence, better self esteem and he feels much more confident in his abilities.

Not only did he receive travel training going to and from high school, but during Tommy's last few weeks of high school, Mr. Garcia guided him through a difficult travel route to begin college

in the fall. Tommy now attends Queensborough College and commutes back and forth on three city buses. He does not find this,

as most of us would, to be a burden, but instead he takes pride in the fact that he travels independently and successfully on three buses. He has come from being a student who traveled door-to-door on the school bus to a student who now takes three city buses to get to school. This new confidence in himself has truly helped him to grow as a young adult, and we will always be thankful to Mr. Garcia, his staff and the Travel Training Program.

Mary D.

Mother, Thomas D.



Thomas D. and his Travel Trainer, Naresa Gueverra

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

By Peggy Groce

Supervisor, Office of Travel Training

I was ready to go into the world of independents to search and find interesting places....Linsa

Dear Friends and Supporters of Travel Training:

Welcome to the latest edition of the Travel Training Newsletter! "Congratulations" to the 2008 graduates and their families from all of us in the Office of Travel Training.

Graduation has a tendency to make us think about how quickly "time flies." It seems like yesterday that this year's graduates entered secondary school, beginning that part of life's journey that goes from adolescence to adulthood. And what a journey it is! Let's take a moment to think back to when our graduates first entered high school. They were young teenagers, probably experiencing a bit of excitement mixed with anxiety about going to a new place where so much was unfamiliar. Yet, they met the challenges of new environ-

ments, making new friends, taking new classes, interacting with different people, and learning new skills. All of these challenges helped our students develop confidence in themselves and their ability to live independently in the community.

Now, they are facing an even bigger challenge. Leaving the familiar world of school, they are entering the world of adulthood. During their years in public school the students and their families were accustomed to choosing from a menu of special services that would best serve their needs.

"Some students and families even say that travel training changed their lives."

Continued Page 4

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

This concept of entitlement to services does not extend into the adult world. This necessitates a change in relationships and ways of thinking. We believe that our young people can enter this new phase of their lives with confidence in the skills learned and the abilities acquired in their years with us.

A major factor in our belief in the future of our young people is their ability to access opportunities that exist in the adult world. Access requires motivation, initiation, determination, hard-work, and a fundamental belief that "I can do it."

We have seen these qualities displayed by our students in various situations. But nowhere are these qualities more evident than when our students are faced with the challenge of learning to use public transportation independently. Years of travel by school bus has a tendency to create passengers who are passive, requiring no personal responsibility, decision-making or initiative for reaching a destination. Going to school/work-site on public transit is direct entry into another world, a world where people decide how to meet their daily transportation needs. To enter this world of independent travel many of our young people need systematic training. Travel training, then, is one of the essential instructional opportunities offered to our stu-

dents during their transition from school to post-school opportunities and adult living.

Personnel in the Office of Travel Training are specially trained in the competencies considered essential to effectively teach persons with disabilities how to travel and use public transportation safely and independently. Embedded in these competencies is the belief that individuals with disabilities have the same rights to access, opportunity, and independent living as all our citizens. Our personnel have rigorous and

elting independently. We do not take our task lightly but we do enjoy it thoroughly!

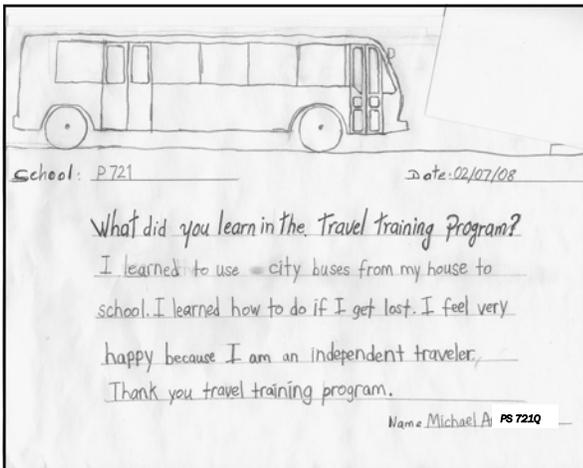
The primary reason for travel trainers' enjoyment in their work is the knowledge that they have made a major difference in the lives of the students and the students' families. Some students and families even say that travel training changed their lives. A very special relationship develops between a travel trainer and a student, one that each respects and values. The quote at the beginning of these *Thoughts and Reflections* is an expression of one young woman's experience. This young lady kept a journal while learning to use public transportation and travel independently. The journal also gives an indication of how important a travel trainer can be to a student. I'd like

to share some of her reflections with you.

Linsa wrote, "But when Naresa (travel trainer) came, I wasn't scared. I was ready to take the challenge." She shared her way of looking at the freedom and independence that she was gaining. One day she wrote, "I will be happy walking alone and feeling the air of freedom when I am outside of my house."

Finally, when Travel Training was completed, Linsa reflected on what independent travel meant to her. "Now that I have finished my travel training I feel like a free person out in the world. I don't have to get up at 6:00 am to wait for the yellow school bus....I could walk with my friends...I could go to the store or library by myself. I feel free to move around and go wherever I please.... I feel like starting a new journey and learning new things while going through the wilderness. My family is so happy that I'm walking alone and taking the city bus."

These reflections may also be meaningful to our 2008 graduates and their families. To all the graduates I would like to echo Linsa and hope that as you go out into the world of adults, you search and find interesting places.



comprehensive on-the-job training before actually providing travel training to our students. On-going professional development is fundamental to maintaining and expanding our professional skills and knowledge. We are very much aware of the nature of the responsibility and the risks involved in teaching young people with disabilities how to make the decisions, initiate the actions, assume the personal responsibility, solve the problems, and manage the risks involved in trav-



PROVING THEM WRONG

By Kimberly (PS 993Q)

When I was on the school bus I liked it but now that I travel on my own I feel free and independent. No one can tell me what to do. I learned three ways to get to school. I know where the conductors board is in case I need help on the

“Some people thought I couldn't do it, but I proved them wrong.”

subway. I know what to do when I get lost, taking public transportation is much faster than the school bus. I love traveling on my own. Some people thought I couldn't do it but I proved them wrong. I thank Mr.

Garcia for sending Desiree Pickens to train me.



Kimberly, from PS 993Q and her Travel Trainer, Desiree Pickens

TRAVEL TRAINING AND THE RAIN

By Marc (PS 811Q @ Francis Lewis HS)

One day I was on my way to a filmmaking program in Brooklyn and I had to take the subway. When I got on the train, everything seemed okay but when I got to Roosevelt Avenue, the train didn't go any further. The reason was because it rained really hard outside and caused a big flood in the tunnels. So, I listened to the announcements and they said the only



Mark C. Travel Trained student from PS 811Q @ Francis Lewis HS.

way to transfer was to take the #7 train on the upper level. So, that's exactly what I did. When I got up there, everything was so crazy. The trains were all crowded and I had no choice but to get on. I took it all the way to the last stop in Times Square. From there, I walked a few blocks to get the "R" train and rode it to 34th Street. From there, I finally transferred to the train I usually take to Brooklyn which was the "F". I was in the subway for two hours. Later I took the subway again heading home and things still

were crazy. There were no trains running out of Manhattan, because the tunnels were still flooded. I listened to the announcements again. I had to take the #7 train again to 46th Street to catch the Q 60 bus. It didn't come until about a half an hour later. It finally came and it was crowded but I got on anyway. The ride was almost an hour long because of the traffic. Then, I finally got home. What a day! It's a good thing that I'm travel trained. If I didn't know what to do, I would've been stuck in the subway all day. I was also able to handle the situation without panicking.

“It's a good thing that I'm travel trained. If I didn't know what to do I would've been stuck in the subway all day”

THE JIGSAW PUZZLE



Andrea Lee, DPT

PS 811Q @ QHST

Collaboration is like a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces share equal importance, and every piece plays an integral role towards completing the finished product. Viewed in its entirety, the puzzle stands more beautiful than any of its individual components. For both the puzzle and collaboration, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

An on going challenge for high school students who currently attend P.811Q@ Queens High School of Teaching (a District 75 program) is attaining as much independence as possible before graduating to The Real World. Independence in communication, personal care, and mobility (with or without assistive technology) all influence post-high school opportunities and possibilities.

It is this quest for independence that originally brought together various disciplines (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, travel training and transition coordination) with the common goal of helping one particular student use his power wheelchair all day, every day, in all environments. At the time, the student had

successfully undergone training, but was limited to using his power wheelchair within the school building. With administrative and family support an environmental assessment of the home, community, school and transportation was conducted by the team.



John H. and his new ramp at home

“Viewed in it’s entirety, the puzzle stands more beautiful than any of its components.

...the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”.

The home was deemed accessible, with an appropriate ramping system in place. The community had curb cuts and nearby stores, including a pizza place, a Dunkin Donuts and a drug store. As supervision is a safety requirement, his mom demonstrated that she was able to assist with street crossings, curb cuts, wheelchair maintenance and safety. A safety manual was designed by the team, reviewed with mom, and secured to the wheelchair in preparation for when questions arose or troubleshooting became necessary. The team is pleased to report that this student now uses his power wheelchair in school, at home, in church and even drove across the stage to accept his graduation diploma.

The “Travel Training Classroom” refers to the school, home, street, communities and transportation utilized by an individual. The need to evaluate accessibility of this classroom cannot be overstated; that is, without a comprehensive understanding of the environmental accessibility, or the obstacles inhibiting accessibility, independent mobility may never be fully achieved.

Every environment presented new challenges and unexpected obstacles. Each situation provided an unforgettable opportunity for communication and teamwork. And it was the brainstorming, rationalizing, and problem –solving that further developed and strengthened each individual on the team. And, unconditionally, the whole remains greater than the sum of its parts.

Bus Demos and Bus trips with Michele in The Bronx

by Cyndi Fletcher

Teacher, P 811X

Class X03 participated in travel training during the summer of 2007 under the direction of Michele Buto (Teacher: Office of Travel Training). Michele arranged for several classes to experience a city bus demonstration on a lovely July morning. Michele also accompanied several students on a city bus to Arthur Avenue as a follow-up to the bus demonstration. Several lucky students then managed to go on walking trips within the community to Pathmark, McDonald’s and Dunkin Donuts for pre travel training.

Michele conducted several lessons about the importance of carrying a personal identification card daily and the awareness of strangers everywhere. She did the lessons through films, discussions and role playing. The response to all activities was incredibly positive.

More students are carrying I.D.’s, using house keys and crossing streets independently. We truly thank Michele and her staff for all the worthwhile opportunities about travel.



AND MORE PARENTS WRITE...

Dear Steve (Garcia):

We have written an "Emilie" update, with an emphasis on the travel training aspect. If this will be useful in the travel training newsletter, or in other travel training related materials, please use it.

Emilie update: Emilie S. graduated from Francis Lewis High School in June 2007, at age 20. During her last year at Francis Lewis, she completed the travel training program and traveled back and forth from Rego Park to Francis Lewis everyday for the last two months of school. This trip involved two city buses and a transfer, and walking several blocks from the bus to school, and for the bus transfer. From the time she first heard about the travel training program, she wanted to do it. She waited a few years before starting. She was not initially successful at travel training, so she took a refresher course, and then was approved. She was highly motivated to travel on her own, and worked very hard to overcome the areas



Emilie, Francis Lewis HS graduate traveling on the city bus

of difficulty from her first attempts. She was extremely proud of her accomplishments in traveling to school, and also gained the confi-

dence to travel on her own to do local errands and walk her dog on her own. She had not done these before travel training.

During the last few months of high school, Emilie went through a vocational evaluation. This will help determine her employment placement. The ability to travel independently gave her much wider variety for potential employment. After being tested for various employment skills and considering her ability to travel independently, she was approved for "supportive employment". This meant that once a suitable job was found she would have a job coach and a real paying job. The job coach would help with initial interview and job training, and stay "on the Job" with her for a month. The coach monitors her twice

a month and assists with any issues that might arise.

Emilie's parents noticed that a Trader Joe's was opening in Rego Park. They thought this would be a good match for Emilie, since she is interested in healthy foods, and some retail experience during work study at FLHS. When QCP initially contacted Trader Joe's they were told that Emilie would need to be cross-trained on the cash register, and therefore it would not be suitable. Despite this initial set back, Emilie's parents brought her to "application day" at Trader Joe's. Her supportive employment status was disclosed to the interviewers. Emilie filled out an application on her own, and was interviewed by a manager. Upon being asked why she wanted to work at Trader Joe's, Emilie responded, "I like healthy foods it's a new store, a new store is good. Its near my house". The next day Emilie received a call for a second interview. QCP was advised and sent a job coach, who prepared Emilie for the second interview, attended the interview with her, and reviewed supportive employment with Trader Joe's management.

Emilie was hired by Trader Joe's !!!

She is a crew member, working twenty hours per week, getting paid.

She does stock work, bagging, customer assistance and "facing" (keeping the shelves neat and orderly). She went through eight training sessions, and worked a ten-three on opening day, October 26, 2007. She is very proud to be working at this store, and is enjoying it greatly. If you ask her what she likes best about working at Trader Joe's she'll proudly say, "I take the Q-11 to work". And the fact is, if she could not travel on her own, she would not have had the opportunity.

Steve, we could never properly thank you nor the travel training staff for what you have helped Emilie accomplish. We know you will all continue to do this great work, and you should always know how valuable it is, and how appreciated.

sincerely,

Barry and Felicia S.

Parents of Emilie S.

A Travel Trainer Near You!

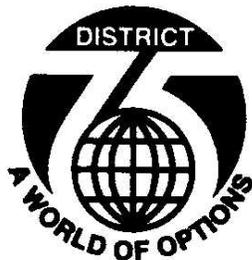
There is a Travel Training Office in every borough in New York City. We accept referrals from any District 75 school and many High Schools. We work with students at various off-sites, worksites and often the agencies of facilities that students will attend after transitioning from school to adult programs and opportunities.

Below is a list of our offices with each address, telephone number and name of the Travel Training teacher.

We welcome your questions, comments, and /or requests for information about the program and its activities. We can arrange bus demonstrations, trips to Safety City, parent and staff development workshops, and of course explain our referral process for students you believe would benefit from our services. We look forward to hearing from you.

<u>The Bronx</u>	<u>Brooklyn</u>	<u>Queens</u>	<u>Manhattan</u>	<u>Staten Island</u>
<i>Michele Buto</i>	<i>Phillipe JeanLouis</i>	<i>Joan Ross</i>	<i>Gerard Grillo</i>	<i>Florence Tuchman</i>
<i>PS 721X</i>	<i>PS 373K</i>	<i>PS 721Q</i>	<i>PS 751M</i>	<i>PS 721R</i>
<i>2697 Westchester Ave</i>	<i>185 Ellery Street</i>	<i>57-12 94th Street</i>	<i>113 E. 4th Street</i>	<i>155 Tompkins Street</i>
<i>Bronx, NY 10461</i>	<i>Brooklyn, NY 11206</i>	<i>Elmhurst, NY 11373</i>	<i>New York, NY 10003</i>	<i>Staten Island, NY 10301</i>
<i>(718) 822-2881 ext. 3012</i>	<i>(718) 782-6800</i>	<i>(718) 760-2930</i>	<i>(212) 477-2454</i>	<i>(718) 727-4938</i>
<i>Steve Gallo</i>	<i>Gus Chaviano</i>	<i>David Abrahams</i>	<i>Florence Tuchman</i>	<u>High Schools (all boroughs)</u>
<i>PS 754X</i>	<i>PS 721K</i>	<i>PS 752Q</i>	<i>PS 721M</i>	<i>Steve Garcia</i>
<i>470 Jackson Ave</i>	<i>64 Ave X</i>	<i>142-10 Linden Blvd</i>	<i>250 W. Houston Street</i>	<i>113 E. 4th Street</i>
<i>Bronx, NY 10455</i>	<i>Brooklyn, NY 11223</i>	<i>Jamaica, NY 11436</i>	<i>New York, NY 10013</i>	<i>New York, NY 10003</i>
<i>(718) 993-5581 ext. 103</i>	<i>(718) 266-0085</i>	<i>(718)322-3500 ext. 4293</i>	<i>(212) 924-8825</i>	<i>(718) 776-3140 ext. 1126</i>

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