

# OPINION

## Why Inclusion Is Failing NYC's Special Education Students

by Ewa Bronowicz

Out of the 1.1 million students in NYC's public school system, 160,000 receive some kind of special education services, and enrollment is on the rise. Because those students need additional services, the cost of educating them is at least double of the cost for regular students. Those who pick up the tab—federal, state and local governments—may as well throw the money down the drain in the case of many special education students in New York City.

As the federal law states, each special education student is entitled to free and appropriate education (FAPE), in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment is a classroom where all students, regardless of their abilities, learn together, with extra support services. However, what if the extra support services—special education teachers—don't provide the students with the support they need?

The recent trend in the world of special education is Integrated Co-teaching, which, along the lines of LRE, welcomes students with special needs, up to forty percent of them, into a general education setting. The difference between this classroom and a regular general education one is that there are two teachers: one certified in their content area, and the other one certified in special education.

When integrated into a regular classroom, a process known as mainstreaming, students with disabilities benefit both academically and socially. Or at least they do so in theory.

I was a special education teacher in New York City's public school system. I co-taught five subjects across five different content areas in two different high schools in Manhattan. Realistically speaking, I was a teacher's assistant.

I had become a special education teacher to teach literacy skills to those in need. Many special education students in high school read at sixth, or even fourth, grade level. At my initial job interviews with school principals, I stated I would not teach subjects I had no expertise in and no passion for, such as science and math. English and Social Studies were my areas of preference. As a published short story writer and a journalist, I knew I would be especially effective in raising the students' reading and writing skills.

My first year I co-taught Chemistry, Economics, Living Environment, US History, and Global History. The following year, I accepted a job offer at a different high school because the principal assured me that I would be partnered with English and Social Studies teachers. On the first day of school, the same principal called me into her office and said that due to a scheduling miscommunication, I would be teaching math and science.

Content area teachers make the same money as special education teachers. The salary of a first-year teacher with a master's degree is \$51,000. The government, as well as the taxpayers, would be better of replacing special education teachers like myself with teacher's assistants who earn nearly half less than teachers. True, teacher's assistants are not officially certified in special education, but they are trained to do exactly what I did and what many special education teachers do—provide general emotional and academic assistance in the classroom without an expertise in any given content area.

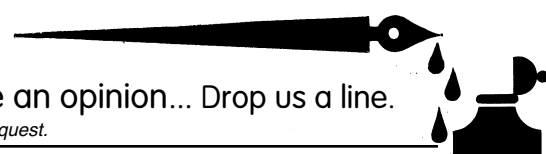
Teachers who don't feel successful at what they do quit. The high teacher turnover also decreases student performance. Before I quit, I confronted my assistant principal. I told him that my knowledge of math and science was not sufficient to provide my students with the extra support services they

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Have an opinion... Drop us a line.

*\*All letters must be signed with address. We will withhold your name on request.*



### You Don't Know What's In The Bill, But Yet You Pass It!

Editor:

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said on 3/9/10 concerning "Obamacare": "We have to pass the bill to find out what's in it."

How in the name of King John Sobieski can anyone vote for her?! The Democrats did!!!

ORZEL KALINOWSKI

*Pro-Life*

P.S. I'm an Independent voter: neither Democrat or Republican.

### Donahue And The Pope Are In Error

To Post Eagle

Letters to the Editor:

Regarding The Catholic League for Religious Freedom and Civil Rights CEO Bill Donahue's March 12 article in support of the Pope's recent homily about threats to Catholicism, Donahue and the Pope are in error when they maintain the "two greatest threats to Catholicism are militant secularism at home and militant Islamism abroad."

The two greatest threats to the Catholic church are its hypocrisy of: 1) the worldwide toleration and protection of pedophile priests, and 2) the use of the Catholic church's tax-free billions, as the world's wealthiest institution, to defend pedophile priests and the church's reputation.

One of the League's main functions is the defense of Catholic priests against accusations of child sexual abuse while the League savages priests' victims, their advocates and attorneys. Were it not for the courage of priests' victims, this tragedy and scandal would have remained hidden by the church.

Among the League's other campaigns is anti-Semitism. Donahue says, "Hollywood is controlled by secular Jews." His organization promotes the beatification of Pope Pius XII, Hitler's Pope, and defends the actor Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic tirades. The only "religious freedom" Donahue tolerates is Catholicism and the primary "civil right" he espouses is the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy.

To date, no pope has held the institution accountable for clergy abuse. The most Pope Benedict XVI did regarding criminal clerical behavior across South America by the Legionnaires of Christ founder Marcial Maciel was to force Maciel into retirement. Pope Benedict's own retirement – the first in 600 years – was the result of his acknowledged weariness from the unabated clerical child abuse crisis requiring a more vigorous leader. Time will tell if Pope Francis is that

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leader.

In general, Catholics appear to be no longer shocked by the international criminal behavior of Catholic clerics and their protectors.

If Jesus were alive today, He would drive Donahue and his ilk out of the temple.

Sincerely,  
PHYLLIS MERRIAM

### Thanks E.F.O.!

Dear Editor:

Like to say what a pleasure it was to listen and dance to the Eddie Forman Orchestra at the Polish American Social Club of Vero Beach FL last month (February).

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800 VAN HOUTEN AVE. • P.O. BOX 109 • CLIFTON, NJ 07015  
TEL. (973) 473-5414 – FAX (973) 473-3211  
email: posteagle@aol.com

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