

## West 40 Presents the Maximizing Learning for Low Achieving Students Conference

### Register Now for "Differentiated Instruction: Making a Connection With Every Student"

*Tuesday, November 28, 2000*

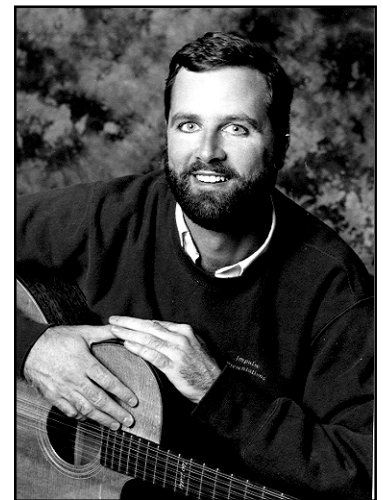


**E**very educator whose goal it is to reach all students will benefit from the third annual West 40 Maximizing Learning for Low Achieving Students Conference—"Differentiated Instruction: Making a Connection With Every Student." Mark your calendar for Tuesday, November 28, from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. The conference will be held at the Donald E. Stevens Convention Center, Rosemont. Participants will take home proven techniques and strategies for enhancing differentiated learning.

Keynote Speaker **Jerry Mills**, in what many educators have called, "The most powerful workshop they have ever attended," will present "**Don't Doubt the Dream.**" Through a dynamic multimedia experience blending live music, graphics, and data-driven research, Mills inspires audiences to look deeper, to find understanding and strategies and to rethink what they see when they are faced with challenging young people. Most importantly, he provides tools educators need to immediately begin making positive changes in the lives of youth.

A childhood spent dealing with an "unnamed" learning problem led Mills to become a teacher. While teaching, he discovered the real cause of his life-long struggle. The discovery changed his life and the lives of many others. Mills, a nationally recognized educator, is an inspiring leader in the effort to train those who work with challenged youth.

**Patricia Woodin-Weaver**, Ed.D., will present "Where are You On the Road to Differentiated Instruction?" Woodin-Weaver is the developer of the self-analysis tool for differentiated instruction. Based on the individual results on the self-assessment, she will provide recommendations for improving differentiated instruction. She will also demonstrate proven strategies for differentiated instruction.



*Keynote speaker Jerry Mills.*

Breakout sessions focusing on the content, process and product components of differentiated instruction will help teachers connect with students. The final session of the day will present a synthesis of the day's learning and recap major themes and strategies.

Everyone involved in education—parents, teachers, school board members, school superintendents and other administrators—will benefit from this important conference. The cost is \$95 per person, which includes parking and lunch. For registration information, please call West 40 at 708/447-6070. ■

*Meet the West 40 Staff:***Introducing Linda Rogers**

**A**lthough Linda Rogers' prime focus is that of assistant coordinator for the West Cook Regional Safe Schools Program, she wears many hats—and wears them well. As a member of the West Cook Safe Schools team, she coordinates the collection of data on all area students who are enrolled in Regional Safe Schools. This is no easy task, since the program serves about 300 students. The State of Illinois requires this information in reports that Linda completes and files twice per year. West 40 and the Center for the Study of At-Risk Students (C-STARS) at the University of Washington developed a software program to compile this information. Linda collects very detailed information on the students' demographics and on Individualized Optional Educational Plans (IOEPs) which are required for each student. She also goes on site to work with personnel at all of the West Cook Safe Schools to teach the software, how to use it to help develop IOEPs, and how reports and other specialized information can be generated through the software.

Now this sounds like a lot of work—and it is—but this is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Linda also monitors the budgets and processes expenses for the West Cook Safe Schools. She also develops procedures and guidelines the schools can use to apply for additional funding.

Linda is part of West 40's Safe Schools administrative team, which is responsible for making sure the Safe Schools programs comply with the state guidelines. Linda and the West 40 team also help find professional development opportunities that further teachers' knowledge of how to work with at risk students. This year, a series of programs is planned for which Linda and the team will help identify presenters.

But wait! There's still more! Linda is instrumental in producing the thrice-annual West 40 Professional Development Catalog. She also troubleshoots Filemaker Pro™ and Microsoft Word™ software for the West 40 staff and produces fliers and financial reports.

Originally, Linda came to West 40 to help with "Project Invest," a two-year grant funded program, and she managed the now defunct state software buy.

Linda earned a degree in elementary education from Eastern Illinois University with a minor in math. She worked with an educational publishing company for ten years before coming to West 40.

She and her husband, Larry, have been married 13 years and have three children. The Rogers family lives in suburban Lindenhurst. This early bird begins her workday at 6:30 AM, which gives her some quiet time to accomplish many work objectives. Linda can generally be reached in the morning or early afternoon at 708/447-6070, or via email: [lrogers@w-cook.k12.il.us](mailto:lrogers@w-cook.k12.il.us) ■

**Save These West 40 Dates****2000**

**November 28** Maximizing Learning for Low Achieving Students Conference

**2001**

**January 24** Writing Talent Search Manuscript Deadline

**February 3** Junior Math Olympiad

**February 10** Speech & Drama Festival

**March 7** School Citizen of the Year (SCOTY) Awards

**Educators' Accolades**

*Have you reached a milestone in your career? Did you recently earn an advanced degree, present at a conference, win an award, develop a new software program, publish an original work in a magazine or book, OR...? If so, please share your accomplishments with approximately 7,000 educators in the West Cook area through this newsletter.*

*Fax information—your name, title, school, district and a description of your accomplishment—along with a phone number or e-mail address where you can be reached to Educators' Accolades at 708/447-6732, ATTN: Kay Poyner Brown. Or e-mail your information to Kay at [kpoynerb@w-cook.k12.il.us](mailto:kpoynerb@w-cook.k12.il.us) WestWinds will print as many as space allows.*

*Don't forget: All educators in the West Cook area—teachers, principals, deans, curriculum coordinators, board members, etc., are invited to participate.*

**Visit the West 40 Web site at [WWW.W-COOK.K12.IL.US](http://WWW.W-COOK.K12.IL.US)**

## Regional Safe Schools Program Continues Expansion

*Since its inception four years ago, the West 40 staff has administered the Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) for West Cook County schools. RSSPs were created by the Illinois Safe Schools Law (PA 89-383). RSSPs are small, alternative schools or after-school programs uniquely designed by individual school districts to meet the needs of students at risk, generally, expelled or multiply suspended students who have the desire to succeed. In just a few short years, RSSPs have been successful in meeting their goals: At the high school level earning a high school diploma or GED; at the middle school level helping students overcome difficulties in order to succeed in school.*

**W**est 40 administers the program in West Cook County working in conjunction with RSSP directors, educators, community resources, parents and students as a resource and advisor. West 40 Executive Director Gretchen Alexander is a member of the Alternative School Work Group that helped create the RSSP guidelines.

Most high schools in West Cook now have an RSSP located off-site in a classroom setting complete with teachers, an on-site director, social service providers, and a computer lab. Two middle schools have also implemented RSSPs for their at-risk students. The degree of West 40's administration depends on the needs of the individual school. This year, two new programs are underway in West 40:

A regional middle school that will serve sixth through eighth grade students from the region and a new safe schools program for Oak Park and River Forest High School students.

### The New West Cook Regional Middle School

Plans are currently under development for the new West Cook regional middle school to serve sixth through eighth grade students from 31 West Cook school districts. The idea for the school came about through calls made to West 40 by local school superintendents looking for an alternative educational experience for multi-suspended and expelled middle school students. Research from the 1998-1999 school year revealed that 38 middle school students from the region were expelled.

Further research supported the beginning of a regional middle school for kids who might otherwise "slip through the cracks." Research identifies adolescence as a window of opportunity for intervention practices to meet with success. **Karen Tiemann**, Regional Middle School site director, is developing the program which is scheduled to open in February 2001. Right now, she stated, the biggest priority is to find "an appropriate lease site," that welcomes these children.

Tiemann explained, "The goal of program is to reconnect and empower students to their future. Through the coordination of school experiences, community resources, individual goal setting and family support classes, the program weaves support institutions into the fabric of a student's life. After the student shows significant progress, then a transition is made back to the home school district." Besides education tied into the Illinois State Learning Standards and an interdisciplinary curriculum

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### The West 40 Safe Schools Staff

As RSSPs keep growing, so does the West 40 staff. **Mel Alexander** is the RSSP Coordinator. He assists schools with their specific needs, writes grants, and completes reports that help fund the program. **Susan Reb**, Safe Schools Social Service Coordinator, partners with mental health and social service agencies to provide social and mental health services. **Linda Rogers**, a long-time West 40 employee, completes state required statistical reports and teaches Safe Schools personnel how to maintain required data (see related article). **Kim Allison** is the Regional Safe Schools Community Service Coordinator. In this position, she helps identify and implement cultural enrichment, community service, and outreach opportunities for West Cook RSSP students. Some of the activities she is currently planning include a West 40 RSSP yearbook, literary magazine, and a prom. **Karen Tiemann** is the site director for the new regional middle school. She is currently working at the West 40 administrative office, but will be on site at the regional middle school when it opens later in the school year. **Maritza Guilamo** is the director of BEACONS Academy, the new Oak Park and River Forest High School Safe Schools Program.

## Regional Safe Schools Program Continues Expansion *Continued*

based on the middle school model of education, an emphasis will also be placed on aggression replacement training, social skills, empathy, and community service.

“This will be a unique program,” Tiemann concluded. “It is the first regional middle school in the West 40 area. In creating it, we are emulating the successful RSSP programs currently in place in West Cook. We are following in their footsteps.” For information on the new regional middle school, call **Karen Tiemann** at 708/447-6070.

### BEACONS Academy Serves Oak Park and River Forest

BEACONS Academy is the new Regional Safe School created to serve high school age students from Oak Park and River Forest. **Maritza Guilamo** is the site director. BEACONS

***Karen Tiemann** comes to the Regional Safe Schools program from eleven years as a middle school educator at Grayslake Middle School, a National Blue Ribbon School. She earned a BA from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and also earned a Master's in Organizational School Leadership from the school. She is finding her new position to be very rewarding. "It is a challenge, but a very exciting one. For me, helping to create and run this program is the realization of all I've learned and hoped for at the same time."*

Academy opened its doors in August with nine students in a temporary location at the Oak Park Conservatory. It soon moved to its permanent home, a newly remodeled space, on North Avenue in Oak Park where it can serve 40 students.

Students are required to attend school five days a week from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The program offers a comprehensive curriculum which includes computer-assisted instruction, life skills, reading/writing workshop, job skills and other preparation for further training

and education upon completion of high school. In addition to Guilamo, three teachers, a secretary, and two part-time social workers make up the staff. Instruction via the Internet through educational programs developed for high school students by colleges and universities is also being utilized. Students are required to participate in 50 hours of service learning. Students are required to remain at BEACONS for a minimum of one full semester. Guilamo explained, “We are looking forward to building this program and making it an exemplary one that will be a model for others. It is our belief that we can prepare our students for constructive adulthood and at the same time inspire in them a passion for life-long learning.”

For information on BEACONS Academy, call **Maritza Guilamo** at 708/660-0147. ■

***Maritza Guilamo** earned a BA from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and also studied at the University of Puerto Rico. She holds two Master's degrees, the first in history from the University of Illinois and the second in school administration from Loyola University. In 20 years as an educator she has been a teacher, dean of students, Chapter 1 curriculum coordinator, assistant principal and the director of Newcomers Programs for the City of Chicago. She is experienced in working with at-risk students.*

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