

**Ten Penny Players – A Report on our Partnership with Island Academy,  
2005-2006, Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel, Co-Directors**

**#1: Our work with students**

It's always noisy in the jail. Rikers Island is close to LaGuardia airport. The rush and grinding whine of planes in the air passing several times an hour over the barbed wire topped fence cuts through the voices of teachers providing instruction, the poetry performed by a visiting artist, the curses of an angry disabled Black teen placed for 'protection' in a classroom of illiterate Spanish speaking teens whose skills are many grade levels below his, and the gimlet eyed Correction Officers going from room to room while calling out of class the students who need their daily meds or session with a therapist.

Instead of providing professional development to teachers from all 6 Island Academy sites, access to our roster of Teaching Artists and publication for all interested students as we had planned for this 3rd year of our ESP partnership, we had been told by the principal, Frank Dody, to provide service during the 05/06 school year at the Annex. This is the program for special education male students at Island Academy. Although such a move would not strengthen the intent of the ESP implementation grant to provide for whole school change through the arts, the move made some sense in light of Handberry v. Thompson and Federal District Judge Constance Baker Motley's ruling in 2000, "that the City had unlawfully failed to provide schooling for all prisoners entitled to it. She initially allowed the City to employ its own remedial plan, appointing an expert in correctional education as a monitor. In August 2002, Judge Motley found that the City had not even kept the promises in its own plan, failing to provide even the minimal three-

hour school day, failing to provide enough escorts to get students to the school programs, failing to provide individualized instruction for special education students, failing to provide necessary assistance to visually and hearing-impaired and non-English-speaking students, and providing only a "pathetic" level of educational services for prisoners in segregation units. She ordered the City to correct these deficiencies and to take other significant actions such as providing libraries for the students.”<sup>1</sup>

In his May 2005 Principal’s report to the staff Mr. Dody wrote:

“The field of education has undergone significant change both locally and nationally. No Child Left Behind is making its mark on districts across America and in New York City the Children First initiative has prompted significant change in school operation.

Island Academy has generally been less impacted by these changes due to the uniqueness of correctional education and our small size. The most significant impact on Island Academy, which began in the summer of 1995 and continues to be a strong presence in determining policy and practice, is the Handberry litigation. The settlement of this litigation is our single greatest challenge. As most of you know, our attorney was in the school recently and noted that we are making positive visible changes but that we continue to have areas needing improvement. The areas include strengthening our orientation procedures, ensuring that all Special Education students receive services, ensuring that all students are aware of discharge options, and establishing a uniform curriculum.”

While disruptions to scheduled instruction, curriculum, educational process are inevitable in any school, they are endemic problems to a school sited within an carceral unit. You cannot plan for a security lockdown, when no one is allowed on or off the island. Access – egress becomes moot.

Because admittance first to the jail and then to the school must be approved by the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) our teaching artists and evaluators without DOE credentials are not always given access even after the school has been told they had received clearance. There are educational and budgetary consequences when this

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Criminal Defense Practice

happens. Our window of opportunity to teach students is short. Youths rarely stay in the school for a full term. Some students are moved to another site or are released to their home community after one day in class. Thus each lesson must be delivered in one class. The student that is given an assignment or that has forgotten to bring his poem or drawing to class the day our TAs are present might not be on register when we return. The learning disabled student that seemed to understand the lesson delivered one day might need to go over the same ground again with the TA who hadn't been able to return to the school because of a lockdown or the DOC denying admittance. Of course TAs and our Pace University evaluator that show up for work and patiently wait for admittance in the same grim holding area as prisoner's family members coming for a visit are paid for their time even if they don't get admitted.

Under ordinary conditions only our staff members Richard Spiegel, Barbara Fisher and Thomas Perry were assured access as they all had been fingerprinted and issued DOE picture identification cards with red backgrounds indicating security clearance.

Because our consultants were not always able to achieve access in the 2004/2005 school year, in order to assure continuity of service we began the school year at the Annex with a program of workshops for students and professional development to be provided at the school by our co-directors.

The students included youths with a wide range of learning and emotional disabilities, in protective custody and later in the year, a class of ESL disabled youths that were illiterate in both English and their native language, Spanish. Several of these youths

however also were gifted visual artists who received daily instruction from art teacher Bennie Daniels with whom we had been working for years.

In his June 2005 principal's letter Frank Dody wrote:

"Our 5th Annual Art Show was hugely successful - despite the last minute changes due to library reconstruction. Our committee consisting of art teachers and content area teachers - who were recognized on May 27th - created a show that clearly displayed the talents of our students. This event has become a school wide opportunity to engage students and bring together staff, families and students to recognize the strengths of those we work with. The event, again, is in line with our role as advocates for correctional education."

In the same letter he said:

"With the help of Waterways we have initiated a picture book curriculum and a web site. Students are creating their own illustrated books on specific subjects. Our web site is currently under construction with links to our history, professional organizations, professional development, and students' work. Site plans include resources for teachers, parents and alumni."

"The Professional Development committee - a newly formed group of concerned and dedicated staff members - made the obligation of PD an event that brought the sites together and provided information and meaningful discussion of the best practices in our field. The PD committee consisted exclusively of our own teachers who have many years of successful teaching experience. The planning for PD next year will again be "from the teachers," "for the teachers."

#### **Workshops for students:**

**Thomas Perry** made his first visit to the school on September 28 for a planning meeting with the Assistant Principal, Dolores Jefferson. From September 28 – June 23 she was his on site supervisor, mentor, and made the decisions as to which class he would visit. He made 38 visits to the Annex and generally worked with 2 separate classes at each visit. He was at the school 2-3 days a week. Although the Principal dissolved the ESP partnership following the April Common Ground Conference at which the principal had presented on a panel along with Richard Spiegel to discuss our partnership, Ms.

Jefferson informed the principal that her teachers expected Mr. Perry to work with them through the semester and so he continued working with classes through June.

He worked primarily with Ms. Harris, the skills teacher, to provide one on one writing instruction to students with minimal literacy skills. Because he is not a licensed teacher, a licensed teacher had to be in the room when he worked with students. At the request of other teachers, Ms. Milza, Ms. Powell, and Mr. Rosado, he also visited their classes and assisted them at the less formal Friday afternoon clubs.

**Richard Spiegel** made 10 visits to Mr. Rosado's classroom from November - March. His students had better skills than those in Ms. Harris' class. Attendance generally varied between 8 and 16. Several were self-motivated and would bring to the class poetry they had created in the students' living area. The students were very hyped however. Classes were often disrupted because of the negative dynamic between African American, Dominican and Latino youths and by outside events. For example, we went to Rikers on December 14 after Stanley Tookie Williams' execution in California. There was a stronger uniformed presence of armed officers than usual in all areas leading to the school. We had our hands stamped and once through the metal detector exchanged our DOE Id's for visitors' passes that we inserted in the blue Summer Seminar Id holders we'd received in 2004. The temporary passes didn't have clip on holders so we were unlikely to lose them by securing them this way. Holding on to your pass is critical to affirming your identify in the jail and helps assure your ability to leave. When the door to the prison clanged open we walked briskly down the corridor passing through several other sets of gates that were opened for us after we flashed the yellow visitors' passes.

We moved fast to avoid eye contact with CO's with attitude accompanying adult prisoners going to commissary.

The door to the Annex is downstairs from this corridor. The students in the entry area leading to the doorway were single file leaning against the wall with arms outstretched and hands flat against the wall. They were frisked by the CO's before being admitted to the school. Strange as that seemed we knew that frisking happens all the time although we usually weren't witness to it. Particularly spooky was the short Corrections Officer, female, in full riot gear, black clothes, vest, baton and white helmet with bars shielding her face and covering the nose and mouth area. Whatever she was prepared for had nothing to do with us as no one stopped us from entering.

We hung our coats in a closet in the Assistant Principal's office. Water flowed musically over the rocks in a tray housing a miniature desk garden that was placed at the near edge of Ms. Jefferson's desk. Classical music was playing as usual on her stereo; the computer screen displayed the words of the 95th Psalm overlaid on a spring like pastoral setting. We commented to Ms. Jefferson that it was beautiful, as it was, and she said that it set the day up for her and helped keep her peaceful. She's a minister of a Brooklyn church. Ms. Jefferson has daily bible readings for staff members and CO's in her office that Thomas often attended. She is married to a Correction Officer assigned to another part of the school, a decent guy that has attended the all day professional development workshops we had given in previous years,

All the CO's we passed on the way to our first class greeted us warmly. 'The happy family' is what they generally called us. Mr. Rosado introduced us to his class. Richard distributed chapbooks of Pablo Neruda poetry and also copies of the Rubyat.

The kids wanted to write love poetry we'd been told by Mr. Rosado the previous week and so we'd planned what to do. It went very well. Lots of sneezing and sniffing. Appropriate for the season. Pretty cold there actually. They turn off the heat in the building about 3:30 am we were told by one of the teachers later and don't turn it back on until around 7:30 shortly before the students arrived. And it hadn't come up yet. Actually we were lucky, one of the other school sites in the prison had no heat at all and a third had burst pipes that flooded half of the school. After reading the Neruda in English and Spanish and a little of the Rubyat, Richard talked to them about music, rhythm, beat and meter. The kids started writing. By the time we left we had 6 poems and planned to return with a small chapbook the following week.

While at the school we distributed to other teachers 'Snowmen in Jail' a picture book anthology we'd printed for Ms. Milza's students, and a chapbook of poems for a student of Ms. Powell who was in court and hoping to be released before Christmas.

Later when we met with the Principal he said that the kids worry only about their own court cases and weren't as affected by the execution as we'd been. Not totally true, Thomas worked with a group of kids in the afternoon and they spent the entire time talking and writing about the death.

In the January 2005 Principal's letter to the school he had written:

"The latest edition of *Keeping It Real* is in the school. This student publication is a fabulous piece of literature for our classroom libraries. Students who read the work of their peers are encouraged to write their own stories/poems/plays. What better way to increase literacy than to share the work of other students?"

The picture book curriculum is another example of published student work. The growing group of teachers and students involved in this project are pleased with the results. These small, in size only, books have large impact upon the authors and readers."

On Jan 10, 2006, at 9:40 PM, Mr. Dody wrote:

“The next time you visit annex - approach ms colon - esl teacher - for picture book - she is very good and working with esl class.

thanks  
frank”

Barbara responded 11 Jan 2006 07:34:14 -0500

“We'll be there on 1/17. Yesterday, Ms. Jefferson mentioned Ms. Colon as a possibility also. Ms. Harris thinks it's a good idea too. She's been trying to assure that her room's perceived as a safe haven and has started them doing crafts projects - painting of pine cones - all different. She says that they're so taken with that project they're starting to put their names on them. So she liked the idea of picture book. I showed her what Ms. Milza had done with integrating the pictures with the work from the SS African American book. Thomas will bring her more curriculum on Friday. I'll put together a packet to show Ms. Colon next week.

Barbara”

He answered, January 11, 2006 7:35:38 PM EST

“yes - the players will change but the project is good - kids are responding well so it will prevail.

thanks  
frank”

**Barbara Fisher:** From January 24th – March I provided 7 workshops for the Dominican, Puerto Rican and Mexican students. There were about 8 students at any given session but some of the faces changed. Most of the students attended consistently. 2 were in the class only once and then were released or transferred to an upstate facility. The ESL teacher, herself a visual artist, was warm, nurturing and easy for me to partner with although I had never worked in her classroom and I don't speak Spanish.

On January 24th after Rich had done a workshop on Claude McKay and the Harlem Renaissance we met with her and she introduced me to the class. I gave her a copy of the 'Picture Book' curriculum and sample publications. This meeting was truncated when the smoke detectors went off to be followed by a downpour of water from the sprinkler system. The students were sent back to the housing area.



When I returned the next week for our first class on Symbols a Mexican student very excitedly told the teacher that I looked familiar. He lived on Staten Island in a building across the street from our veterinarian and had seen me either on the street or at the nearby branch of the NY Public Library. The book we later published for him contained pictures of our Stapleton community. Like the other ESL students he didn't have a grasp of written Spanish or English and had to dictate his story. He was in the country illegally and his writing spoke to the issue of his sadness that his release would be followed by deportation.

The 8 students were Mexican, Dominican or Puerto Rican except for one African American youth that had been placed there for Protective Custody. He had good literacy skills. He talked about his writing and desire to be published. He talked a lot. The fact that his skills were so much better than the other students was a problem because he had very limited impulse control and a hair trigger temper. I had to individualize the work I gave him, read and critique what he was doing while at the same time trying to help the other students with their alphabet and writing. His physical disabilities made his gait irregular; one eye wandered and he was frequently the target of other students' jibes. Ms. Colon and I tried to keep his temper in check before he had a flare up that would bring COs in to the classroom. Music CDs helped create a more comfortable atmosphere for everyone. Ms. Colon told me that Gary did have many pages of writing but he didn't produce the bulk of the material until he became acquainted with Mr. Perry and trusted him enough to part with what turned out to be very clear, detailed journals about his life before coming to Rikers and while incarcerated.

I had brought with me examples of pictographs and some of the picture books that I had written and illustrated for young children. Among these was 'Jolly Molly Molar' a book I had done as part of a nutrition curriculum I'd created for Community School District 2 in 1979 with funding from the US Department of Agriculture. I'd written the book for K-2nd graders but it had been used in a New England school with 5th grade

learning disabled ESL students too. The book worked well with older ESL students because it had a lot of drawings; the vocabulary was basic; the sentence structure was simple; and the story presented a real problem and factual information about nutrition.

Serendipitously, Ms. Colon was working that week on a nutrition unit with the students and they'd been studying teeth. We together read the book, stopping to talk about my illustrations. There was much laughter and joking about teeth, food, and the difference between what they ate in the jail and what life was like at home. Together we created a list of words and symbols related to eating, nutrition, dentists, and teeth. And before the class ended the students made drawings that later were included in their publications.

It was slow going because of their literacy deficits and disabilities. One youngster could retain information only briefly and needed much repetition. Another wanted only to draw because his illiteracy frustrated him. As he is a very talented artist we let him use his artwork to relieve his anxiety about reading. In every class at the school there are some days when at least one youth wants to sleep. The nights at the jail are long and dangerous. Sometimes there is no rest until they come to class.

There were interruptions in every class by COs appearing in the door way to call out the names of students that needed to go for meds, for exit counseling, or to talk to a therapist. There were moments of tension when the young man in protective custody felt someone had dissed him because of his appearance. He'd jump from his chair, get ready to hurl a punch, had to be talked down. One morning a fight was averted when Ms. Colon quickly put a salsa CD on the machine. We were at opposite sides of the room, grinned at each other, and both of us did a quick dance step. It broke the tension and one of the boys snapped his fingers, pointed, and laughed about teachers being able to dance.

At the beginning of the spring 2006 semester when we were beginning to plan the following year with the teachers we had a request from Frank Dody, the principal, who

wrote on February 11: “please stay focused on the Annex - we have over the years given less outside support to this site and the staff and AP are good.”

## **#2 Professional Development**

Like romance between two humans a match between an outside arts provider and a school system or school is a delicate thing. Several years ago, before the various sites of Island Academy were consolidated under one umbrella, Richard was at the Eric M. Taylor Center, the original main site of the school when Cesar Roquez, one of the teachers, asked about publishing the faculty. Cesar said, “Heed the rumbling of the rocks. There is an earthquake in the distance.”

It has been our practice since 1978 when Barbara Fisher received a US Dept. of Agriculture grant to develop an arts based nutrition curriculum for PS 41 in Community School District 2 that teachers would together with us cooperatively develop lesson plans, maps, sharing tools and insights with parents and local community agencies. For that matter, the professional development of parents and partnership with local community agencies was the basis for the Saturday workshops we gave the parents of disabled children without charge from 1979-1982 at United Cerebral Palsy headquarters in Manhattan. These programs were led by among others two of our present Board members, Dr. Michael Mendelson, then chair of the District 2 Committee on the Handicapped (as it was called at that time), and Hannah Nadler, clinical social worker for District 2, and also an exhibiting ceramicist. At those workshops and continuing into this century we have advocated along with teachers, parents and clinicians that arts language and goals need to be included in the Individualized Education Program of all persons

with disabilities ... even for those that are incarcerated. This subject was one of many treated at an October 2005 Face to Face panel that Richard Spiegel moderated with two of the 6 panel members being Sara McCullah one of Island Academy's social workers and Barbara Fisher.

The map is a tool. "The map is not the territory," is a general semantic axiom. The map needs to be shared with others. The wanderer, or nomad, did not only bring goods to the market, but also maps. The maps could lead those who followed them. It could enlarge the understanding of the world for those who did not travel. With a map in your hand, you are not taking the voyage alone. The map is your guide. Possessing a map doesn't mean that you will travel every road. You may gather an understanding of the territory for which the map is a symbol. The mapmakers began with the rudiments of line and direction. They attempted to communicate their journeys and their observations to us. Why would they want to talk to us? We have shut them out of our lives. Are we curious? Will they hurt us if we let these wandering mapmakers into our world?

This concept informed a series of photographic 'journeys from home to school' created by immigrant youths attending class at the Frederick Douglass Literacy Center in Brooklyn in 1999.

It was the underlying premise of 'Maps of Our Difficult World', the conversations at STREAMS on LINE, (SOL.org), our distant learning program, that we added to the project in 2002 and allowed students and teachers from many schools to share concerns.

It informed the work of Unity HS social studies teacher Janet Griffith who took the bold step of initiating a paperless classroom and used the Internet for research

and STREAMS on LINE through which students wrote their assignments. Writing about her own 'Aunt Jeanie' in 2002 Ms. Griffith entered the following into SOL:

“Warrior Queen Always saying what she means  
A Queen Mama  
Daughter of Janet and Archie Griffith  
The first one to graduate from college  
Setting the pace for all  
Because of you we stand tall  
Warrior Queen  
Queen Mother  
Mama Africa  
Aunt Jeanie”

It influenced Susan Dell' Arena writing before she graduated in 2003 from Concord HS:

“Together we were one,  
Always having fun  
Now it's only me,  
Never again will it be we...  
I'm left on my own,  
To find my way home,  
You tore my heart...Walked away,  
And it fell apart,  
Alone and on my own,  
I'll find my throne  
To be a queen,  
With great self-esteem!”

It echoes in the 2005-2006 school year when Jose J, one of the ESL students at the Annex, in March dictated the captions for his pictures in his book:

‘My life before 2005 was very nice. I would leave from my home to the school park to play soccer. I would visit my girl friend, and back to my home. My worst nightmare ends in 28 days. I'm finally going to wake up. The sad face I have in prison, also because I'm going to be deported.’”

Or the insight expressed in December by Raymond W, mentored by Richard Spiegel and Mr. Rosado when he wrote 'The Cell' published in 'Works in Progress I'

"Locked in a cage with nowhere to go  
Feeling trapped in my mind as time flies by  
Feeling like a wild animal  
Ready to go crazy inside  
What pain could be greater  
Than to be locked in your own mind?  
Waiting for the day  
That my mind can be released  
Out into the world  
Where I can be free."

The Waterways Project of Ten Penny Players brought books to Rikers and other alternative schools and programs. Our books become maps for students. They describe familiar territories. This is another use of the map. It brings the homesick home. Those who were incarcerated could find stories and poems that reminded them of home. Through our books they could make a connection with the world outside. Sometimes the maps were erroneous or the observations were not clear. The lesson taught is that all maps are in constant need of revision. There is no final say. Harold Bloom described how a poet writes under the anxiety of another poet's influence. A misreading of a good poem may result in the writing of an equally good poem.

Across the ocean, up from the southern continent, there was a slow shift in the ground. When the Board of Education became the Department of Education, the new gatekeepers reorganized the Alternative Superintendency out of existence, and Ten Penny Players lost the support and mentoring of the educational administration that had invited our participation. Although we had worked with Island Academy for almost 20 years, we had become outsiders at Island Academy witness the June 2005 Principal's letter stating:

“The Professional Development committee - a newly formed group of concerned and dedicated staff members - made the obligation of PD an event that brought the sites together and provided information and meaningful discussion of the best practices in our field. The PD committee consisted exclusively of our own teachers who have many years of successful teaching experience. The planning for PD next year will again be "from the teachers," "for the teachers."

...and while the 2005-2006 professional development program of Ten Penny Players and Island Academy evolved from the school's request during our partnership in 2002-2003 that we as NYS licensed teaching artists 'who have many years of successful teaching experience' develop an interactive website for Island Academy, it had become painfully clear that providing professional development and direct student services this year would be an uphill endeavor. Providing PD had been carefully planned but proved to be the least successful part of our collaboration with Island Academy this school year.

Before 2003 it had been our practice, supported by the Superintendents and the principals to provide full day professional development to the teachers, paraprofessionals, clinicians and administrators of our partner schools. For Island Academy we also included those Correction Officers that wanted to participate. This PD enabled us to bring to the schools the diverse skills of the Teaching Artists with whom we work and provided the 'kick off' to each school year. After the Superintendency was dissolved we were no longer invited to partner in this manner with Island Academy, nor have we been asked to present to the full staff at meetings or school conferences.

Dr. Curtis, Assistant Principal at Island Academy, wrote Ten Penny Players into the school's Students Whose Education had been Interrupted Funds (SIFE) 2003-2004 grant proposal. Objective #4 would enable Ten Penny Players to "facilitate the design of the school url. Provide professional development to teachers and parents, and maintain and update Island Academy's Webpage and links for 12 months." The school won the grant; we began our work in collaboration with lrw.net and the \$20,500 DOE paid Ten

Penny Players enabled **Richard Spiegel** with **lrw.net** providing technology support, to purchase a domain name, hardware and software that would facilitate the programming that would become islandacademy.org as complement to Island Academy's curricula. As performance has always been a part of publication we hoped to provide Internet Radio experiences to the students as well as print and on line publication.

The web building activities occurred before the school had identified persons interested in becoming part of the school's Professional Development Committee. Before Island Academy hired persons interested enough and sufficiently qualified to become its Technology or Web Content Committees.

This was decades after Richard Spiegel served as a human bulletin board for all our partner schools carrying disks from site to site while collecting poetry from students. In 1987 Richard Spiegel and our colleague Mel Cohen brought computer technology to break the isolation of students at Island Academy. Richard carried disks; Mel a miniature keyboard that he used with students to create music. Their students also were in anonymous pen pal relationship with students at Humanities HS, were published in limited edition chapbooks and in the 1988 edition of STREAMS. Our annual anthology STREAMS was published in 16 separate editions until the Superintendency was dissolved.

Our Internet work at Island Academy began when the only Internet access was through one computer in the Principal's office and the Department of Correction still wanted to use the cable network on the Island only for surveillance rather than instruction. In 1988 we had brought small press editor Mathew Hejne to Rikers Island Educational Facility, now merged with Island Academy. An expressive writing teacher, editor and technology expert (presently Technology Program Specialist Nassau County BOCES), he created an editorial board of students and began publication of the school journal 'Strictly Business.'



TPP's Internet work also has been furthered by a 1998 grant from the Center for Arts Education followed by a Technology grant from NYSCA that enabled lrw.net to design STREAMS on LINE, our secure distant learning program, using Linux opensourceware. The program enabled a 'simulation' of Internet activity for the students at Island Academy able to typeset their expressive writing into computers. To date STREAMS on LINE's security has never been breached by outsiders; the students' safety never compromised; the program never subjected to negative letters from parents or 'bad press,' even when at the height of its use in June 2003, the Web Server Statistics for the program indicated in one 7-day period 134,567 successful requests by 5,524 distinct hosts to use 10,500 files.<sup>2</sup>

Through the SIFE grant Island Academy faculty members were invited to help develop the website through planning, adding content and use of islandacademy.org . Our goal was to develop the site as an instrument to augment and provide professional development opportunities for teachers. We hoped to make islandacademy.org accessible to non-English speaking participants. We wanted to help faculty members reach out to parents and former students to maintain contact with teachers and administrators. We believed the site would make it easier for teachers to examine student work and provide a showcase demonstrating the quality of education that was happening at Island Academy. It was our belief that this work also would help address the Court's concern about providing a continuum of services to students with disabilities. To that end we hoped to collaborate with the teachers at the school that had been identified as skilled in electronic arts and web design to provide classes to the students so that they could add content to the url and also gain entry level job ready skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that Randy Wright, our lead programmer, who designed SOL with Dr. Lucia Wright, is currently involved in CGI projects that join the World Wide Web with database applications. He has a network engineering and operating system programming background and is the lead programmer at New York University's Information Technology Services (ITS).

There was minimal interest in technology on the part of the teachers during the 2004-2005 school year because of limited access to computers and the Internet, although there remained enthusiastic creation of Picture Book and expressive writing chapbooks and teachers attended our monthly professional development to develop student content using our picture book and literacy curriculum.

As part of the Picture Book professional development we offered several entry-level technology workshops to Island Academy teachers in a computer room at the old RIEF site where the Principal's office is located. Scheduling proved difficult because the teachers were coming from separate sites on Rikers Island and the DOE had not yet provided their own van to use while transporting teachers.

The Principal's April 18, 2005 letter to Amy Duggins Pender, NYSCA's Director of Arts Education in support of our 2005-2006 program acknowledges the value of our partnership when he wrote:

"This collaboration has brought our school a wide variety of art based literacy projects that have enhanced our offerings to students. ... Waterways, with a group of teachers who are involved in planning and executing the Professional Development activities for our staff of teachers, counselors and paraprofessionals, is planning to further develop our website. The goal is to create a website that can be and is accessed by staff and other correctional educators interested in sharing best practices and successful teaching strategies in all curriculum areas. We have created a website that represents our school but the next stage is to make the site interactive.

"We plan to engage our teachers in Professional Development to develop the website and to plan activities that encourage its use for the sharing of ideas. Our school is the largest in New York State for incarcerated youth and we have a wealth of information that can be shared via the website with fellow correctional educators.

"Island Academy has been able to allocate a portion of the budget to support our Waterways collaboration. We have funded the costs of professional conferences such as Common Ground and Summer Seminar for our staff. We attend these events as Waterways partners and the experience enriches our work with students throughout the school year.

“The expertise of Waterways as a partner has resulted in the writing of grants such as SIFE to expand offerings for the students in our school. A large portion of the SIFE grant was used to increase our technology for use by both students and staff.

The Waterways/Island Academy collaboration will be effective in the advancement of technology as a tool for Professional Development. All staff will benefit and share in the project.”

Further, in preparation of the 2005-2006 school year the Principal’s letter to the faculty in June 2005 stated:

“The focus on art in the school will continue next year as we enter into a new partnership with the Queens Museum. Representatives from the museum will conduct a workshop on June 28th (the last day of school) to introduce their proposal for ongoing PD with our school during school year 2005/06.

With the help of Waterways we have initiated a picture book curriculum and a web site. Students are creating their own illustrated books on specific subjects. Our web site is currently under construction with links to our history, professional organizations, professional development, and students' work. Site plans include resources for teachers, parents and alumni. “

In light of these encouraging letters Ten Penny Players Professional Development goals for the 2005-2006 school year were:

TPP TA's and Technology consultants will provide the following professional development (PD). Picture Book PD - provided 2 times a month; Technology PD - twice monthly. Teachers who attend PD beyond the school day will receive per session payments from IA. TPP will offer workshops at mandated DOE PD days as well as at IA's regularly scheduled weekly PD. TA's and consultants will model lessons for IA's staff when they work in class with students. Each PD workshop includes time to look at student work (in draft form as well as publications teachers & students complete). Teacher comments will help direct the PD, revises by teachers and students and project planning. Teachers will attend Summer Seminar & Common Ground. The PD will seek to provide answers to these concerns:

- how to ensure that arts resources address needs of IA's inclusion classrooms;
- how to make certain that all students receive academic, arts and technology skills they will need to gain necessary training and preparation to successfully continue their education and enter the workforce.

As it turned out these goals were impeded by the school and PD was impossible to facilitate.

We had been asked by Mr. Dody and Dr. Curtis in July for an invoice in an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for our services over fy05/06. The work would include professional development (technology and picture book workshops), expressive writing and picture book student workshops, web host management and publication. It would fund our own work and that of technology consultants, lrw.net and media consultant, Michele Beck. This income also would provide the matching from the school to our NYSCA ESP partnership grant.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Curtis and Mr. Dody joined our team at Summer Seminar for our Peer-to-Peer presentation. The invoice was submitted to the school after we returned from that conference. Dr. Curtis subsequently called to tell us that the school's budget had been dramatically reduced and that we wouldn't be able to bill anything beyond \$3,500 for Bandwidth maintenance, service and upgrades of the url. August 1, 2005 we submitted a revised bill to the school. Dr. Curtis wrote to Ms. Payne, the person to whom the school's invoices were submitted and asked that we be exempted from competitive bidding.

He had written a similar letter March 9, 2004 to Lou Benevento, Director of Operations, NYS DOE, Division of Financial Operations, requesting \$20,500 payment to us as part of the \$100,000 grant the school had received from SIFE. An email from Dr. Curtis to us on March 19, 2004 indicated a "Positive response from Lou Benevento" and as noted we had been awarded payment during that school year for technology and professional development.

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<sup>3</sup> Amy: please note that some PD related to modeling classes and technology was performed by the staff of Ten Penny Players and lrw.net over the September – April school year of our contract with NYSCA although the school never paid the invoice.

After the new school year began we met with Tim Lisante, who had become acting Superintendent when Bernard Gasoway retired July 2004. We had worked with him for many years, as he'd been Assistant Principal at Island Academy. We explained the situation. He told us that he would speak to the ROC, the DOE office responsible for Island Academy, and tell them to pay the invoice. He said that he wanted us to provide PD at other schools with which he was working. We were not paid, and yet continued to provide professional development, direct service to students, publication, bandwidth maintenance and service as per our NYSCA grant award.

Ten Penny Players is not a contracted agency with the DOE. The rationale that could be used to fund us is covered in the DOE 'Standard Operating Procedures for Schools' when working with Sole Source vendors. It is the same rationale used by the Chancellor when he awarded a "private company with a \$17 million no-bid contract....We used a no-bid contract for several reasons: one, because we had a longstanding working relationship with them. Two, because of the fact that we had a short time window. And three, because we were confident that the pricing was fair, reasonable and defensible."<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the vendor contracted by the Chancellor however, our program had a documented 20 year history with the school system, TPP's Co-Directors hold earned NYS teaching and supervisory credentials, and the amount invoiced by our program was well within the NYC guidelines for issuing a no-bid contract.

Despite the letters cited above from the principal our program and ability to provide professional development role had been marginalized and we were not able to meet the PD goals that we had agreed would be part of this year's program. We had offered workshops using our Picture Book and 7 Heuristic Elements of Poetry literacy curriculum at DOE mandated PD days or at the school's monthly meetings but were not

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<sup>4</sup> Daily News, September 4, 2006, page 10, "Klein: No-bid contract's a boon for kids" by Erin Einhorn

invited to do so. As we had been told to work only at the Annex and teachers were not encouraged to work with us we had a limited pool of persons with whom we could schedule classes. And even then because of the school's own PD schedule, the turf issues that the various school committees had not yet resolved, and conflicting teaching schedules of IA personnel our meetings with Ms. Milza were truncated and then severed when she left the school; Ms. Powell and Mr. Rosado were overwhelmed with work and DOE PD both at the school and off the island.

We at last had a November 28 meeting with the 2 teachers that coordinated the Technology committee and Ms. Jefferson, the AP from the Annex. We discussed providing off sited PD. There was no other way to give to 1-2 representatives from each site access to a computer attached to the Internet. We needed to help the teachers familiarize themselves with the protocols that would allow them to add content to islandacademy.org . Some Island Academy teachers had been sampling materials from web sites available on the Internet. With these they were helping students create pages that were pleasant to look at, presented subject matter relative to class work and easy to navigate. However, they were using other artists' copyrighted pages without permission. These teachers were not skilled in developing original content for islandacademy.org that could be used without infringement of someone else's copyright. The pages and ideas shared with the students were derivative and could not be included in a web side supposed to reflect the artistry of the IA students.

Gaining access to space for PD continued to be a problem. On January 31 we received an e-mail that space had been arranged for 6 workshops to be held in the computer lab at 131 Livingston Street, a DOE owned building. Island Academy would pay the per session fees to the Island Academy personnel.

February 6 was 2-hour introduction to what was already on line at

islandacademy.org. PuTTY<sup>5</sup> needed to be installed in the DOE Dell machines that would allow the teachers full access to islandacademy.org and to maneuver content. Randy Wright and Richard Spiegel facilitated the workshop.

Participants included the Chair of the Technology Committee; her technology colleague; the technology teacher from Rosewood HS, newly hired, tentative in his relationship to the other teachers and not sure why he was attending; the technology teacher from the Annex; a Special Ed AP from the school with very limited technology skills who presumed leadership because of her supervisory position. None had a clue as to how you design an original web site but there was much attitude, jockeying for position and a clear intention to assume responsibility for islandacademy.org.

This was fine with us as long as they were capable of managing the site and the school agreed to assume financial responsibility for the bandwidth and maintenance.

February 10 workshop was led by Dr. Lucia Wright .She distributed passwords and helped begin the process of uploading content. It was a slow, frustrating and minimally successful.

The next February workshop was postponed because of a snowstorm.

February 11 Mr. Dody wrote: “We can support additional workshops - clearly these will demonstrate our commitment to our partnership and be applied to the \$6000 for the sake of the grant.  
Thanks Frank “

We didn't meet again until March 6, again led by Dr. Lucia Wright. The March 10 and March 13 meetings led by Lucia and Richard were painful as the teachers struggled to understand the 'puTTY', Unix commands, and the concept of creating original work. Not all the participants had been at each meeting. The AP tried to flex muscle and presented her own agenda relative to uploading and removing content. Richard suggested that they put things into the staging area but that they all shouldn't be moving content and shifting material around on the public pages because with so many

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<sup>5</sup>PuTTY is a free implementation of Telnet and SSH for Win32 and Unix platforms

persons making changes inevitably something would be inadvertently erased.

The AP said that the school and teachers wanted ownership of islandacademy.org at which point Richard said that the school doesn't own the site, that we did, as we'd been paying all the bills and that they were welcome to the responsibility of ownership if the school assumed the financial obligation for upkeep and maintenance.

One of the teachers entered the fracas and said that the DOE wouldn't let the students post the type of work they create and that they were better off working through our server than the DOE's.

Two of the teachers chimed in saying they wanted more pizzazz in the url ... color, movement, interactivity.

We said that's fine but would require more programming work and if the school would be willing to pay for it we could go ahead and get it done.

The AP spoke up again and said that she hadn't realized we'd been paying for the whole deal and said that we needed a meeting with the principal to clarify what the school would be paying for, who at the school would be responsible for developing content to amplify the various pages and to regularly update factual information.

Until this date all the additions to islandacademy.org – the Principal's monthly letters and examples of student work - had been uploaded by Richard and Dr. Wright.

None of the participants volunteered to be the school's point person doing the work. Their school days understandably were busy with teaching or supervisory assignments. If Island Academy was not in a jail where personal security is always an issue, the fact that there are few computers with Internet access would not have been as much of a deterrent to teachers staying after hours to do extra work if they were paid. They wouldn't be paid for doing the work from home.

In any event, Dr. Wright, with a doctorate in Technology studies, and many years teaching and developing content felt that even if there was a volunteer none of the Island Academy teachers or supervisors was yet qualified to do this work unsupervised.



March 20, Barbara Fisher wrote to Mr. Dody

“It was difficult. Ms. Treadwell wants the school to feel ownership, have more control in uploading content and she, Ms. Amos and Mr. Krause want more bells and whistles. Rich reminded them that too many cooks stirring the contents might inadvertently erase work; I don't have budget for bells much less whistles and without Internet access in the school where and when would the teachers (if able) upload the content to the staging area. Lucia is not able to make the meeting on 3/27 and it was agreed that what we need is a meeting with Ms. Treadwell, Mr. Dody, and Ten Penny Players to talk out the practical logistics of who at the school will be responsible to create the descriptive content of the various pages at the site, provide updated content for things like events, 'exemplary' curriculum, fund software and updates that would be necessary.”

March 22 Mr. Dody wrote back:

“My goal is to have IA staff - particularly the tech team - own the web - to add, delete, modify as the school changes we have greatly benefited from your creating the web for us at a time when we had not identified the staff who have these skills - with T McIntyre heading it up - the tech team is strengthening and growing - we are ready to be more independent. The workshops must have as the goal - IA ownership –thanks Frank”

March 22 Barbara responded to Mr. Dody:

“Lucia wrote asking whether or not we would be meeting on March 27. It seems to me that we should not have a web site meeting at which we bring in our consultant until after Mr. Dody, Ms. Treadwell, Mr. Spiegel & I meet to clarify:

which teachers will have responsibility for adding informational content to the various areas that we discussed on Monday; which teacher (s) will be responsible for updates to the calendar and for maintaining accuracy of other information as staff, phone numbers, etc change; who will be responsible for adding the Spanish language content; where will these folks be able to write and upload this content as the online access at Island Academy is so limited; does the school have budget to pay the teacher(s) for this work now or is this a projected expense; are the design updates that were mentioned at the Monday meeting really necessary at this time as there is no access.”

March 22 he answered:

When will you be on the Island so we can meet?

Frank

March 23 she answered that they would be on the Island March 28 to teach.

He wrote:

“ok - so a waterways meeting for tues 3/28 at 11 in my office - to plan the next steps of web site with goal of IA staff having full responsibility  
thanks Frank”

March 28 after teaching classes in the Annex, Barbara Fisher & Richard Spiegel went upstairs to the Principal's office. He was joined by Dr. Curtis and told us

that because they were not able to pay us they would be dissolving our partnership effective immediately.

Nevertheless, the following week, at the April 2006 Common Ground meeting Richard Spiegel, Frank Dody and Dr. Curtis appeared on a panel together speaking about: The Impact of Arts Integrated Education with Incarcerated Adolescents: What We Are Learning.

Lrw.net subsequently put a copy of islandacademy.org content on a disk and sent it to the Principal.

### **#3 Results of our program and method of evaluation**

We didn't have a researcher working with the program over the 2005-2006 school year. Our evaluator had been denied access 3 times the previous year. The school had never assigned a liaison to our program to replace Karen Ward, the special ed AP that had left for another school. She had been an active participant in our work even attending Summer Seminar and had made sure that consultants had clearance, teachers were able to attend our professional development workshops and actively used our curriculum. Without a liaison we didn't want to waste more of our evaluator's time or our budget for her to come to the Island fruitlessly.

Despite the rolling register and a population of special education students the Annex had a reputation for achieving the highest GED pass rate of any NYS incarceral program. We do not know if this year's scores were as good as last years since our partnership ended at the beginning of April and the school didn't share with us the results

of testing. And we also don't know if the students that took the test were the same as those in our writing and picture book workshops.

We are therefore judging affect by the number of students with whom we were able to work, the pieces of expressive writing or graphic art they created in response to the workshops we provided directly to the students, and the professional development given to the few teachers we were given access to work with this past year, and for whom we modeled classes and provided feedback when we observed the way they used our curriculum.

Last year the 8 teachers who had attended PD in our Picture Book curriculum had worked with 191 students in 5 separate Island Academy sites. 38 books were published containing 690 separate examples of graphic art and 438 examples of expressive writing. This year at the Annex 2 teachers used the Picture Book curriculum; 3 prepared expressive writing chapbooks. PD was provided in the classroom when we modeled lessons and follow-up discussions in the teacher's room.

Because the program was truncated in April at the principal's request the access to students and output this year of course is far less than it had been.

### **Teachers and Publications**

#### **Karen Milza**

"On Dec 23, 2005, at 7:52 PM, [FDODY@aol.com](mailto:FDODY@aol.com), the principal wrote:  
Have a happy healthy holiday - Island Academy is better for your involvement -  
did I tell you that Karen Milza will be transferring to OES? - her luck - a site is being  
opened in East Hampton (Phoenix program)  
See you in '06 Frank "

We had provided weekly professional development to Ms. Milza over 2 school years. Although in her own middle years she was a new to the teaching profession, to the

school and to working in an carceral setting. 2004-2005 school year with 76 students she developed 11 separate books that included 126 examples of graphic art and 89 pieces of expressive writing. This 2005-2006 school year she had just begun to demonstrate her own understanding of how to best integrate the creation of pictures and expressive writing into the academic subjects she taught when she announced that she had taken another teaching job. We were sorry that she left Island Academy at the end of the winter term, but of course were pleased that this single mom had a new teaching assignment at a drug program that cut 5 hours a day from her daily commute.

*Ms. Milza* worked with 3 separate classes that produced books:

**‘Jack O’Lantern’** contained pictures from 38 students, 50 copies were distributed. Publication, October 2005

**‘Thanksgiving’** contained 35 pictures and 3 pieces of expressive writing from 36 students, 50 copies were distributed. Publication, November 2005

**‘Snowmen in Jail’** contained 23 pictures and 3 pieces of expressive writing from 23 students, 50 copies were distributed. Publication, December 2005

**‘Black Power’** contained 59 pictures and 24 pieces of expressive writing from 36 students. The chapbook related to a unit of study on Black History and included student reinterpretations of published art that they had seen in a text used as part of the study. 60 copies were distributed. Publication, January 2006

*Ms. Holly Powell* was one of the Island Academy teachers that met with us informally in the hall, in the teacher’s room. She is a singer and a dramatic, often flamboyant, unique force in the school. In years past when we provided daylong arts

professional development for Island Academy she attended our workshops. She mentored **Michael C** as he struggled to create poetry for his own chapbook. He designed the cover art. 50 copies of this book were distributed. Publication, December 2005

**'I'm So Thankful'** was an anthology of 9 of her students that contained 10 pieces of expressive writing. 50 copies were distributed. Publication, December 2005

*Mr. David Rosado's* class of 8 students with Richard Spiegel as mentor produced **'Works in Progress'**, an anthology of 8 pieces of expressive writing. 60 copies were distributed. Publication, December 2005

**'Poems from the Annex'** with Richard Spiegel & Thomas Perry as mentors contained 16 pieces of expressive writing from 11 students. 60 copies were distributed. Publication, February 2006

*Ms. Harris's* class mentored by Thomas Perry produced 2 anthologies.

**'Expressing Ourselves'** included 11 pieces of expressive writing by 11 students. Publication, January 2006

**'Government Poems'** contained 8 pieces of expressive writing from 6 students. 60 copies were distributed. Publication, May 2006

*Ms. Colon's* class produced both picture books and expressive writing.

March 1 Barbara Fisher wrote to the principal, Mr. Dody:

"The students are empathetic. As you know not all are literate even in Spanish and because of their disabilities have difficulty articulating in Spanish as well as English. Those students dictate their ideas to either Ms. Colon or me and we write them and/or help them spell things ... back to phonics"

He responded that day: “I can see the work is evoking feelings and getting early writing - this is good” Frank

‘**Gary A.**’ is a 44-page chapbook by a student mentored by Thomas Perry. 60 copies were distributed. Publication, March 2006

‘**Class Book**’ contains illustrations and expressive writing of 5 students mentored by Barbara Fisher. 60 copies distributed. Publication May, 2006

Of particular interest is the fact that this anthology includes examples of art from 5 separate workshops and the art from 2 students that attended the class only once. Christopher V has 2 examples that show his understanding of ‘transformation’ and story boarding where we “Introduce the concepts of time and transformation in books. Picture books use time. Between the beginning and the end, something changes. Something happens, or something is revealed. “ “Students will: draw a four-panel accordion book about a transformation: think about what the three key changes are, to get from beginning to end. Write the story of a transformation.”<sup>6</sup>

Sergio L’s self portrait was from the second workshop done with the class on ‘Self Portraits’ at which the ‘Teacher will: give an overview of the process of making the books with students, explain what the steps will be, share assessment criteria for the finished books with students (using, rubric as a guide), lead class in looking at some self portraits by other artists and discussion of how a self-portrait communicates. Class looks for clues to character in the pictures. Students will- draw self portraits with mirrors,

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<sup>6</sup> From ‘**The Picture Book**’ by Molly Barker, page 10, ‘week 4: transformation’, published 2000, by Ten Penny Players, with support from the New York State Council on the Arts, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysatl/Art/picturebooks/html/index.html>

using pencils on 8 1/2 x 11 paper”<sup>7</sup> Of course in the prison we are not able to use mirrors and Sergio drew a remarkable likeness of himself from memory.

The work further demonstrates that Ten Penny Players has created and uses arts curriculum meeting the criteria of Handberry v Thompson. Our Teaching Artists are able to present a lesson with a clear learning objective, provide students with a new skill, practice of the skill and resolution within one class period.

**‘Shapes’** is an anthology of drawings and expressive writing from 7 students in response to the 3rd workshop on ‘shapes, rhythm and pattern’ “Teacher will introduce basic shape families and do warm up exercises to get familiar with them; talk about variety, repetition, rhythm, pattern. Students will: practice using these different qualities, make an abstract or representational picture using the basic shapes, either drawn or made from cut paper; write: choose a simple shape: look at it and write about all the things it could represent”<sup>8</sup> The book contains 8 graphic images, 6 examples of writing; 60 copies were distributed. Published, March, 2006

**‘Anthony H’** Picture book of work from 4 separate workshops attended by this student – symbols, place, transformation, self-portrait. 12 graphic images; 2 pieces of expressive writing. 60 copies were distributed. Published May 2006.

**‘Franklin’s Drawings’** Picture book of work from 5 separate workshops – symbols, place, observation, transformation, movement, self-portrait. This is written in Spanish with English translation provided by Ms. Colon. 23 graphic images. 3 pieces of expressive writing. 60 copies were distributed. Published, May, 2006

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 10 ‘week 2: self-portraits’

<sup>8</sup> ibid. page 9 ‘week 3: shapes, rhythm, pattern’

**‘Gary’s Pictures’** Picture book from 3 workshops – transformation, place, self-portrait. 19 graphic images, 5 pieces of expressive writing. 60 copies were distributed.

Published, May, 2006

**‘Jose J’** Picture Book from 7 workshops - self-portrait, transformation, movement, symbols, observation, place, pattern. 60 copies were distributed. Published

March 2006.

*Note: Although Richard Spiegel and Barbara Fisher no longer provided workshops to students or professional development after the partnership was dissolved in April 2006, they published 5 additional chapbooks that were brought to the students and teachers and distributed to the classes by Thomas Perry who at the request of Ms. Jefferson, the Assistant Principal, continued working with teachers and students through June.*