Zachary S. Rossetti, Ph.D. | Assistant Professor of Special Education

RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Facilitating Friendship Opportunities between Students with and without Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder

My work is guided by the evidence that all people, including those with severe disabilities, can experience belonging, develop friendships, and fully participate in their school and community settings, and that educator expectations and supports play a critical role in these outcomes. My primary research program examines the contexts and dynamics of friendship opportunities between students with and without ID and ASD. What do friendships look like when one person experiences ID or ASD, and in what contexts do such friendships develop? Based on knowledge from this first objective, which includes ways that educators help or hinder the development of friendship opportunities, the goal of my research program is to design and evaluate professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals to facilitate friendship opportunities in inclusive settings. It is clear that inclusive education alone does not lead to friendships. My research addresses how to support development of these friendships.

Collaboration with Families and Siblings of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Federal mandates require and extant research strongly supports the importance of family-professional partnerships in the special education process and post-school outcomes (adult living, employment, and post-secondary education) for individuals with ID and ASD. My research investigates family-professional collaboration by examining perspectives of both parents and siblings. In my research with families I develop collaborative portraits of culturally and linguistically diverse families with children with ID and ASD in order to understand their experiences and needs and to better prepare pre-service teachers for cultural competence and family collaboration. My research with siblings examines sibling relationships, roles, and support needs. Family supports from schools and community agencies usually focus on the parents and the individuals with disability but not the sibling. Thus, this work has important implications for policy and practice related to expanding the focus of family supports.

Biographical Sketch

Zachary S. Rossetti, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Special Education. His work has appeared in such publications as Remedial and Special Education, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Inclusion, and Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities. He co-authored Seeing the Charade: What We Need to Do and Undo to Make Friendships Happen (2006) and co-directed My Classic Life as an Artist: A Portrait of Larry Bissonnette (2005), an award-winning video documentary about an artist with autism. More information about Dr. Rossetti’s work and publications can be solicited directly from him at zsr@bu.edu.