

Title of Session: Issues in Special Education

Moderator: Heyentah Holzman

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Room: After School Online Room

BJ: Let's get some housekeeping chores out of the way first

BJ: if you are new to Tapped In, click on the Actions menu in the top right of the chat window and highlight DETACH

BJ: that will make your chat window larger and easier to read

BJ . o O (you can also make your font larger if you have old eyes like mine)

LydiaO joined the room.

BJ: we usually start all discussions in Tapped In with introductions

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania. I work in a juvenile correctional facility where 80% of the residents are LD or special ed

ChristyB: 5th grade classroom teacher in Georgia, working toward my master's!

AshleyH: I am a kindergarten teacher in GA working towards my master's too!

LydiaO: working towards my master hope to teach Math in high school

CynthiaHL: I also teach in Georgia. I will be teaching Kindergarten this fall. I am also working on my masters.

JamesWC: I'm a secondary math teacher working on my masters degree in Georgia

BreesaBC: I am an 8th grade mathematics teacher in GA working towards my masters as well

BJ . o O (I thought I recognized a lot of southern accents!)

LydiaO: Like mine

Heyentah joined the room.

BJ cheers...now that is perfect timing!

Heyentah: Hi everyone! Are you here for the Special ed discussion?

AshleyH: yes

ChristyB: yes

BreesaBC: yes

Heyentah: Yeah!!!

JamesWC: yup

BJ: Hi, Heyentah! We JUST finished introductions

Heyentah: Sorry, we are doing remodeling and the electricity is shut off

Heyentah: Had to get the neighbor's wireless laptop

Heyentah: WHEW!

BJ appreciates Heyentah's extra effort to be here for everyone

Heyentah: Anyone have any questions before we start?

BJ: No one is a special ed teacher, Heyentah

Heyentah: AH!!

BJ: but all are classroom teachers

Heyentah: Well, let me ask the first question

BJ: so they probably have to deal with lots of special ed issues

Heyentah: Has anyone seen a movie entitled F.A.T. City, How tough can This Be?

ChristyB: No

AshleyH: No

LydiaO: No

BreesaBC: I haven't

CynthiaHL: No

Heyentah: Okay,

JamesWC: No, I only sing and dance

Heyentah: LOL

Heyentah: Much of what you have to do with kids with special needs IS all song and Dance!

BJ agrees

LydiaO: really

Heyentah: Well, in a manner of speaking

BJ . o O (with a healthy dose of theater)

Heyentah: Let me address that comment first

Heyentah: Many times, special ed teachers feel like general ed teachers have a difficult time in fulfilling the expectations for Education Plan Goals

CarolGst2 joined the room.

Heyentah: We try to do what we can to help, but a lot of what we hear is through the grapevine

Heyentah: So my first emphasis for all general ed teachers is COMMUNICATE with your SpEd folks!

Heyentah: Greetings Carol

ChristyB: I can agree with that.....

BreesaBC: I agree that communication is the key

Heyentah: No intervention is effective if the teacher has difficulty fulfilling it

Heyentah: RIGHT

AshleyH: right!

BreesaBC: right

PamelaT joined the room.

CarolGst2: I also agree. I find that our Special Education teachers are a wealth of knowledge about how to work with our special students.

Heyentah: But, a lot of the time, you have to do a song and dance for the kids and for the parents AND for administration --

Heyentah: Keep the kids' attention, song and dance

Heyentah: Get the parents involved song and dance

Heyentah: Keep administration and paper work song and dance

BJ groans about the paperwork

Heyentah: Anything to add to that BJ__ I am still all aflutter from running around

Heyentah: Yeah!! Paperwork is a BEAR

BJ: with all the singing and dancing you sometimes lose sight of the real issue...the CHILDREN

Heyentah: EXACTLY!

AshleyH: I totally agree!

Heyentah: And that is what this discussion is all about

LydiaO: that's true

Heyentah: Well, let me tell you what F.A.T. stands for

Heyentah: F = frustration, and fear

Heyentah: A = anxiety

Heyentah: T = tension

Heyentah: This is what kids with disabilities experience on a daily basis walking into school

LydiaO: It takes patient to handle that

BJ chuckles...I thought you were talking about the TEACHERS!

Heyentah: Many times poor behavior is used as a coping strategy for kids with undiagnosed learning disabilities

ChristyB: Me too...

Heyentah: OH-- well, that too!!

CarolGst2: I agree. They see all the things that come naturally to the other students and wonder why they just don't get IT.

JamesWC: Heyentah, what are rational expectations for a Sp Ed Student?

Heyentah: It is also true for kids who have gained a "rep"

Heyentah: Well, James, there really is no one answer

AshleyH: How can you tell if it is a behavior problem or something deeper?

Heyentah: It depends on the student, and their disabilities

PamelaT: Sorry to enter late but to add my 2 cents the problem with a rep is it follows you everywhere

Heyentah: Welcome, Pamela

Heyentah: You are right

LydiaO: what is rep

Heyentah: reputation

LydiaO: okay

Heyentah: When kids have a reputation as a problem child, they'll live up to that reputation

ChristyB: That is very TRUE

BreesaBC: Very True

AmyYB: Yes it is - they get attention that way.

PamelaT: when a teacher has a tough student everyone knows it and the kid is marked at that school and doomed to be that way ongoing

Heyentah: Anyway, one of the best ways to tell if a behavior problem is something deeper than just acting out is to really establish a good rapport with your kids

BreesaBC: I agree

CynthiaHL: Ashley asks a good question - when I was in elementary school, the "bad" kids were probably those who would be diagnosed with learning disabilities in today's schools.

LydiaO: can student change for better in future

Heyentah: This past year, I had a student who had such a bad reputation that he was on his way to a non-public school, but they really couldn't figure out exactly how to get him there

AshleyH: I guess in kindergarten it is so hard to tell since it is their first "formal" experience and we have nothing else to go by

Heyentah: He just promoted from the 8th grade with straight As and all excellent behavior marks

ChristyB: I had a student that had a bad rep last year, and he turned out to be one of my favorites!!

AmyYB: I taught first last year and it was evident then.

Heyentah: Once you establish a good rapport with a student you can ask the student if something is making class hard

Heyentah: BUT

AmyYB: Me too, Christy. He was tough to handle, but I loved him.

BJ waits for the BUT...

Heyentah: The biggest trick is to call all the parents within the first few days of your first contact with the student and tell them what a wonderful kid their kid is

Heyentah: (sorry, kissing hubby hi)

Heyentah: Tell the parent in front of the kid if possible

AshleyH: I do that after the first day of school to let them know how they did

ChristyB: I agree, if you establish a positive relationship with parents.....it helps!

AmyYB: It is important to set up a good relationship with the parents so they don't feel you are attacking their child.

Heyentah: Then keep telling the kids you know they want to do well and that you are going to help them do that

ChristyB: exactly

Heyentah: True Amy!

PamelaT: the rewards of reaching the hard to reach are real but the frustration of parents that won't help is tough

BreesaBC: e-mail works great for communicating with parents

Heyentah: Many kids with disabilities won't be able to tell you anything is bothering them, but some can

JamesWC: My attitude is the same as my blood type B positive

Heyentah: Yes, e-mail is great, but let me tell you, your first contact really must be in person or on the phone!

AshleyH: yes-it is more personal

Heyentah: James, you will have the kids eating out of your hand with that sense of humor

Heyentah: Right Ashley

PamelaT: personal contact is important

AmyYB: I've found most of my problem kids have the parents who don't get involved.

AshleyH: me too

Heyentah: That is true

Heyentah: I kinda "force" my parents to get involved

PamelaT: my experience too

AmyYB: They are also the ones that I want to take home with me.

Heyentah: YEP!

BreesaBC: How do you force them

LydiaO: that is the worse case

AmyYB: I was wondering that too.

PamelaT: they usually need parenting themselves

AmyYB: BINGO

Heyentah: Well, when a kid is acting out, I'll call their parent right then and there in the middle of class and let the student talk to their parent at work

Heyentah: Pamela, too true

AmyYB: I've done that too. It seems to work for a little while with them.

Heyentah: Parents don't like being disrupted at work, but then you have the parents who have no job and no phones

LydiaO: Work a great deal but some are defiant

PamelaT: nothing works unless you reach them and touch them somehow

Heyentah: Defiance is an issue that is a myriad of tangles

AmyYB: Nothing works for all parents...each one is different.

AmyYB: Just like their children.

Heyentah: Yes ... to all of you!!

PamelaT: the parent who refuses to get their child help for fear of labeling them is tough

Heyentah: thinking

JamesWC: I try to send a Progress Report to all the parents of my Sp Ed children at least every two weeks.

Heyentah: ABSOLUTELY Pamela ... are you SpEd??

PamelaT: no I am Math

Heyentah: That's great James

Heyentah: You sound SpEd, and I MEAN that as a compliment ...

Heyentah: OKAY, so back to F.A.T. City

PamelaT: I am always searching for another way of trying to let them see the math any suggestions

Heyentah: This is a video produced by PBS that I HIGHLY recommend everyone try to get 'hold of and see.

Heyentah: It can be purchased at <http://ldonline.org>

BJ: cool. Thanks, Heyentah

BJ: o O (you can click on the url to open a new window)

Heyentah: But many school districts or universities have it in the library

BJ: if you have a pop up blocker, you may need to hold the ctrl button down

PamelaT: ldonline has been a great resource for articles on sped in math for me

Heyentah: Yes, they are great

Heyentah: I also highly recommend <http://cec.sped.org>

Heyentah: and schwablearning.org

PamelaT: not familiar with that one?

Heyentah: CEC is the Council for Exceptional Children

Heyentah: WONDERFUL resources

Heyentah: Do you all know about ERIC?

LydiaO: yes

PamelaT: I'll try it. I refuse to purchase the videos on principle

BreesBC: yes

AmyYB: Yes

JamesWC: yes

Heyentah: That is through CEC

PamelaT: I always start my research for articles with Eric

Heyentah: Pamela -- I understand. This one is responsible for me becoming a SpEd teacher

Heyentah: I watch it at least once a year and I cry every time

AmyYB: ERIC can be a wonderful resource. I am using it for several of my graduate classes.

Heyentah: SOOOOO

Heyentah: When kid are acting out

Heyentah: it is usually to hide something

PamelaT: what is the specific title?

Heyentah: F.A.T. City: How Tough Can This Be?

PamelaT: good

PamelaT: love that title

Heyentah: We have to remember that all kids (yes even high schoolers!) want to succeed and do well

PamelaT: I am high school math

LydiaO: that is true

Heyentah: So, Pamela, You can attest to that -- kids enjoy earning the A, right?

Heyentah: \

AmyYB: I don't think anyone wants to do bad.

Heyentah: You're right Amy

PamelaT: teenagers suffer so from their hormones it is hard to tell if it is behaviour or what

Heyentah: So we go back to that good rapport

Heyentah: LOL

PamelaT: what is LOL

AmyYB: I think it is hard to tell with all students-no matter the age.

Heyentah: For kids who have trouble with learning, or it APPEARS so to you, your best line of resource is the special education teacher

Heyentah: Pamela LOL= Laugh Out Loud

PamelaT: by high school you are pretty well stuck with them, no extras unless previous diagnosis

Heyentah: TRUE, but you can get ideas from your special ed teacher

JamesWC: The finest qualities of our nature like the bloom on fruit are preserved only with the gentlest of handling , yet we do not treat ourselves nor those around us with such kindness

Heyentah: Arranging questions in advance with some students, or problems that they can demonstrate on the board

AmyYB: Early elementary is also hard because you are the teachers who are supposed to catch all the problems. It is overwhelming-especially to new teachers.

PamelaT: I was under the impression from them that if they aren't diagnosed or you aren't applying don't bug them

Heyentah: AMY, you are so right. Actually, it is really hard with all ages ... sometimes a disability won't show up until high school or college because the kid has great coping skills

Heyentah: Common coping skill (that tend to draw a teacher's attention) are acting out

PamelaT: what do you think are typical coping skills

Heyentah: avoiding tasks

Heyentah: not doing classwork or homework

PamelaT: always a problem in high school

Heyentah: getting into enough trouble they can be sent from the room so they don't have to deal with anything uncomfortable

Heyentah: it is easier to fail because I never tried than to try and fail in front of peers

AmyYB: I see all of this in elementary-even first grade.

AmyYB: So true!!

PamelaT: suggestions for group work

Heyentah: Amy, Please let me recommend that you especially emphasize reading and writing!

Heyentah: Okay, group work

LydiaO: keep them busy

Heyentah: They teach us to group heterogeneously, right?

PamelaT: peers are problematic so how do I group them

Heyentah: (I give up on spelling tonight)

AmyYB: Give them important tasks-but make them tasks they can do.

LydiaO: no idle time

PamelaT: not usually in math I do it by process understanding so I can spend time with those who need it

Heyentah: RIGHT! Tasks done somewhat independently must be tasks they are 99% successful on independently

Heyentah: Good, I really much refer homogenous grouping

AmyYB: I think you really need to know your students-beyond paper and reports before you try to group them for a major project.

Heyentah: The "smart" kids don't get stuck doing everything and the "dumb" kids don't get made to feel dumber

PamelaT: I don't want to label but I want those who need me to get more

Heyentah: RIGHT

Heyentah: EXACTLY right Pamela

Heyentah: When kids trust that you are not going to embarrass them, they feel much freer to ask questions

LydiaO: true

Heyentah: Other coping strategies, that are very common but not so eye catching are sitting very quietly,

PamelaT: if the group is hetero they are bound to feel inadequate

AmyYB: I like to spend the first few weeks of school setting up our community classroom so that we all trust and feel comfortable with each other.

Heyentah: Perfect, Amy and Pam (Is it okay to call you Pam?)

PamelaT: do you have specific task suggestions in groups

Heyentah: A leader, a notetaker

AmyYB: time keeper

Heyentah: a materials manager

AmyYB: speaker

Heyentah: Yep, I call the time keeper "sergeant at arms"

Heyentah: BJ-- How are we on time?

PamelaT: what are some tasks for a math group

Heyentah: Well, that of course, Pam, would depend on what topic you are covering

Heyentah: But say, for Geometry

PamelaT: HS math

Heyentah: you have them explore 3-D shapes and how they differ from 1D and 2-D

BreesaBC: Heyentah,

PamelaT: group dynamics are group dynamics i was thinking of task types

Heyentah: They all work on coming up with ideas, the leader makes sure they stay on task and leads with some questions prepared by the teacher

BreesaBC: What is your opinion on inclusion?

JamesWC: So Heyentah, in a class with Sp Ed students, should I still teach to the middle (understanding) of the class

Heyentah: Breesa -- Topic all its own!!

PamelaT: can a sped kid take on that task as they are so easily side tracked themselves

Heyentah: YEP!!

Heyentah: Middle of the class in understanding

JamesWC: yes

Heyentah: but go to your kids who are struggling and talk with them privately

JamesWC: ok thanks

Heyentah: Chunk information in small bits for everyone

Heyentah: do not use the question "Do you understand?"

PamelaT: chunking is a principle in math

LydiaO: and they catch up with the fast ones

AmyYB: I've found that the majority of my kids know the students who need the extra help and they help them before I ask them to.

Heyentah: Ask instead to have various members of the class re explain what you just covered (small chunk) and have several answer and clarify

LydiaO: That is common

Heyentah: USING ONLY THEIR OWN WORDS

LydiaO: which helps a lot

PamelaT: how do you check for is everybody with me?

Heyentah: Best way to see that everyone is with you is proximity control

Heyentah: also good for behaviors

AmyYB: You have to be out there with them. You can look at what they are doing.

Heyentah: Roam the room look at what they are doing

Heyentah: Have kids that you have pre-prepared explain a topic while you roam the room

LydiaO: ask a question

PamelaT: unfortunately due to presentation devices for calculators etc. I have to be up front most of the time

Heyentah: By pre-prepare, I mean teach one on one to some kid a topic you are going to present at a later date, have that kid practice until mastered then put them to work

Heyentah: Be sure to include kids with special needs

PamelaT: I am always asking please look up if you are with me

LydiaO: then everybody will

Heyentah: As far as the kids knowing who needs help and who doesn't -- that has always been true and the stupid heterogeneous grouping does nothing but emphasize that

PamelaT: how do we encourage them to help each other if they are not hetero

Heyentah: I am not sure that the kids are very accurate (honest?) in self reporting "being with you"

PamelaT: that has always been my concern

AmyYB: They don't want to be embarrassed.

Heyentah: Well, during class time, certainly encourage those who understand better to help those who are struggling, I was still thinking small groups

PamelaT: I believe that may be true any words of wisdom

Heyentah: again, just roam the class and really look at what is going on.

Heyentah: Since you don't have adult aides in class, you have to put your students to work

PamelaT: I see it but roaming is limited until we get to practice

Heyentah: If you have some kids who are very secure and are willing, place them near others who struggle and designate the secure student as the question asker, and they must ask as though it is their own question

BJ: I know Heyentah is using a battery operated computer because her power is out....

Heyentah: Yep, my battery indicator is blinking!

BJ: We are at the end of the hour for her session...and I don't want to lose her if her power is out

BJ: Heyentah, are you going to lead a discussion on July 22?

Heyentah: Whew, we have loads to discuss!!

BJ agrees!

Heyentah: YES! I will be in Connecticut, but I'll be online

PamelaT: thank-you

BJ: great!. I'll make sure you're on the calendar

Heyentah: I hope we covered enough to really be of help!

Heyentah: Thanks BJ!

AmyYB: You did--thanks.

LydiaO: when will the calendar be out

BJ: Thanks, Heyentah. Thank you all for participating in this discussion. This was a lively group!

BJ: Lydia, it's out

Heyentah: Yes!! I loved you all!!!

BJ . o O (click on the TAPPED IN tab, click on calendar)

BJ: and then go to July

BJ: be well, Heyentah and thanks again

LydiaO: thank you

Heyentah: See you all next month, I hope!!

Heyentah: We have a slide show planned for next month

BJ: cool

LydiaO: this was a wonderful presentation I enjoyed it

Heyentah: Thanks Lydia

LydiaO: bye for now

Heyentah: Hope to see you next month

BJ waves goodnight