

**Title of Session:** Special Education Forum

**Moderator:** Paul Bohac

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Room: After School Online Room

**BJB2:** Welcome, everyone, to the first Special Ed discussion! Our discussion leader is Paul Bohac...

**BJB2:** He's looking forward to hearing your ideas of what you want this group to be

**BJB2:** can each of you please give a brief introduction?

**BJB2:** I'm an art teacher in a juvenile correctional facility in Pennsylvania

**NancyKa:** Hi, Paul. Thanks for meeting with us. I'm Nancy. I work in WI at a state prison. I teach Adult Basic Ed.

**NancyKa:** Hi BJB, too!

**JaceyD:** I am Jacey and I teach 7th grade in San Diego (resource students)

**RaeCGst2:** I am a student in a Teacher Credential Program @ SJSU

**BJB2:** Rae, what are you getting your credential in?

**NancyKa:** Thanks for the reminder!

**RaeCGst2:** Elementary Ed.

**BJB2:** great. You also will want to join the K-3 discussions...lots of resources for you

**RaeCGst2:** thanks

**BJB2** hands the virtual floor over to Paul

**PaulDB:** Well, since there are five of us here, I am a retired Correctional Educator currently pursuing a Doctorate at the University of West Florida. My background includes certification and teaching experiences in both juvenile and adult corrections. I am open to any sort of discussion regarding special education in any of its forms. We are here to learn from one another!

**BJB2:** sounds wonderful, Paul.

**BJB2:** my experience is that preservice teachers do not get enough information about special needs students

**PaulDB:** Jacey, you work with 7th graders, what are your biggest concerns with that group?

**BJB2:** and that most classroom teachers are not familiar with working collaboratively with sped aids

**PaulDB:** Perhaps there are some issues that Rae needs to be aware of in her educational endeavor.

**JaceyD:** Motivation, and behavior management.

**RaeCGst2:** Yes, anything that you can pass on....

**BJB2:** I think we all have motivation issues, Jacey!

**PaulDB:** BJB, what can you offer regarding motivation of that population?

**BJB2:** I think the most important motivator is making the students take ownership for their learning...

**NancyKa:** Before working in the prison, I subbed for 6 years in middle school LD rooms. The school used stickers and rewards a lot. I disagreed with the practice. Any comments?

**BJB2:** and have the learning experience be authentic

**BJB2:** anyone familiar with Punished by Rewards?

**PaulDB:** Extrinsic rewards can be very productive but it requires a graduated system to be effective.

**JaceyD:** No I am not.

**NancyKa:** No

**RaeCGst2:** no

**BJB2:** book by Alfie Kohn

**BJB2:** It's much more productive to encourage intrinsic rewards (pride in a job well done, etc.)...

**NancyKa:** Paul - do you mean graduated downward?

**BJB2:** but it's difficult to do.

**BJB2:** I think intrinsic rewards are part of developing a good work ethic...which is sadly lacking in many students

**JaceyD:** I use a point system in my class. It lets students get immediate feedback for their behavior. I just have those 2-3 students that change the whole dynamic of my room and because of them I must have a system in place

**BJB2** wonders if Rae has had any instruction on providing rewards?

**RaeCGst2:** not yet.

**JaceyD:** I can tell my students how smart they are everyday but at this age they have been told different for so long that they really don't care (a few of them anyway) and some of it comes along with the age

**PaulDB:** Extrinsic rewards are given for work performed. It is based on the work for money principle. However, school work is not employment so as student performance increases, extrinsic rewards diminish and are replaced by those intrinsic rewards such as BJB spoke of previously.

**PaulDB:** Using contingency management principles can invigorate a student by allowing immediate benefit from work performed.

**JaceyD:** Rae are you student teaching?

**RaeCGst2:** no. I just was accepted into the program. School starts in 2 weeks. I am taking a tech. II class now, hence my reason for checking out this site.

**PaulDB:** However, the points are not the focus, rather they are the tools used to focus on the work.

**BJB2:** Rae, you also might want to join the PreService teachers group...a great support group for student and first year teachers

**RaeCGst2:** Thanks, I will.

**NancyKa:** My heart hurts every time I hear one of my adult students say that no one ever believed in them. I'm sure it's accurate for some but not for others. Sometimes what we say isn't heard and it's the opportunities that make the difference between success and status quo.

**JaceyD:** Well good luck with it. Try to get as much out of it as possible because having your own class is a world of difference:)

**BJB2** chuckles. All good differences, right, Jacey?

**JaceyD:** RIGHT!

**BJB2** agrees with Nancy that students are often programmed for failure

**RaeCGst2:** programmed for failure?

**BJB2:** they have failed so often and been told that they can't do something...

**BJB2:** that they don't even try.

**NancyKa:** Did anyone check out the new Time Magazine. Dedicated entirely to Joy. It discusses resilience.

**BJB2:** why bother trying if you're just going to fail

**PaulDB:** Involving students in school work helps to reduce behavior problems. Finding the point of interest for the student and then building upon that is critical. Special education teachers have more options than regular teachers because of the individual nature of their interaction with the students.

**PaulDB:** Developing resilience is dependent upon a sense of control.

**BJB2:** Paul, that is why it is so critical for the sped teachers to COLLABORATE with the regular classroom teachers

**PaulDB:** Such a sense of control comes from repeated success.

**JaceyD:** I think we should have the parents come to class with the students:) Over the past few weeks I have had many of my students who are in the general ed classes come to me and say that their parents can't do the work. This sort of thing goes along with the failure success thing

**PaulDB:** Success comes from that collaboration because it transcends any individual setting.

**BJB2** nods. But it has to be real success...students don't appreciate insincere compliments

**NancyKa** agrees wholeheartedly!

**PaulDB:** That is true to a point, but first the student has to learn to accept compliments.

**BJB2** nods solemnly

**PaulDB:** Choosing something to compliment is an art

**PaulDB:** continuing to offer compliments is a matter of trial and effort.

**BJB2:** complements on behavior are helpful...I like the way Jimmy is sitting quietly and paying attention

**PaulDB:** Sooner or later a compliment will be offered that causes the student to stop and think. Now you have a starting point for moving the youth from a negative view to a more positive view.

**BJB2 . o O** ( I like the way Jane has put away her papers and is ready for the next lesson )

**PaulDB:** Exactly BJB!!!!

**JaceyD:** It is a lot of never giving up even when the students want you to

**NancyKa:** Even with cynical 40-year-olds who read at a 5th grade level

**PaulDB:** YES!!!

**NancyKa:** I don't think my students want me to give up. I think they feel like an imposition.

**PaulDB:** We are teachers, we never give up. We simply change our tactics.

**NancyKa:** They ACT like they want to be left alone, but they really do appreciate every bit of assistance, good faith, and act of kindness that is expressed.

**PaulDB:** However, make sure that you establish some sort of expectation that the youth is to meet.

**PaulDB:** Learning is a shared responsibility between the teacher and the student.

**PaulDB:** We do not want to create dependency, we want to promote independence.

**BJB2 . o O** ( taking ownership for their own learning )

**PaulDB:** YES!!!

**PaulDB:** But we must also be sure that we do not ask more of them than they are capable of providing.

**JaceyD:** I am not sure where my students have gotten the idea that they can't do anything but if they feel like something is too hard then they say "we are special ed" we can't do that. It just drives me nuts!

**RaeCGst2:** Please explain how to have students take ownership of their learning

**BJB2:** ahhh...that is a fine line, Paul.

**PaulDB:** Students take responsibility for their learning when they recognize that they do not know something but need to learn.

**BJB2:** ownership for learning means that the students are using higher order thinking skills

**PaulDB:** Students take responsibility for their learning when they recognize that they need help.

**BJB2:** ahhh...another good point. Asking for help is very difficult

**PaulDB:** Student take responsibility for their learning when they seek assistance.

**BJB2** . o O ( and the sped cop-out is very annoying )

**RaeCGst2:** most special ed kids ask for help? Aren't they afraid to ask?

**NancyKa:** Posturing is common with adults and I assume kids do it, too. For a person to admit needing help, they need to make themselves vulnerable. It's easier for them to do if they can trust that you're a partner with them. Always have their best interest at heart.

**PaulDB:** But perhaps what is equally important is when a student latches onto something that interests him/her and begins to study on his own.

**BJB2:** yes, Rae, they often are afraid....it's difficult to overcome that fear

**PaulDB:** Being vulnerable is an essential element in the classroom. Teachers must be people that others can trust.

**JaceyD:** I think it depends on the students. I have a student with Asperger's syndrome who hates to ask for help but many of my students don't mind asking for help because they are really not intimidated in my class. I know it is harder in the general ed classes though

**JaceyD:** they might seem like they are looked at as dumb

**PaulDB:** Help in this sense is another fine line.

**PaulDB:** To provide help requires recognition of what was required to ask.

**BJB2:** sometimes small group work is a good way to get students collaborating...and draws on individual strengths

**PaulDB:** If the focus is on the task and not on the student, it is easier to address the need without compromising the student self-identity.

**NancyKa:** Yes! I've found this true! Never thought of it this way...

**PaulDB:** Cooperative work projects are excellent ways for special education students to acquire new knowledge and to further develop social skills.

**PaulDB:** Grouping youth with similar needs helps maintain task focus.

**PaulDB:** Individualized instruction is not individualized isolation.

**BJB2** agrees. Unfortunately when you have a mobile population, that is the path of least resistance for the teacher

**PaulDB:** Individualized instruction refers to the instructional strategies and techniques that a teacher uses to help a particular student.

**PaulDB:** Grouping youth who have similar instructional needs can be very effective because it creates a shared sense of involvement.

**JaceyD:** this is extremely important when the students are in the general ed classes. This lets them be more successful ( I think)

**PaulDB:** In a similar vein, cooperative learning activities allows the individual strength of students to shine through and reinforces a sense of self.

**PaulDB:** You are correct Jacey.

**BJB2:** may I interject a comment?

**PaulDB:** Take advantage of every instance where kids want to work together, just make sure that you have some clearly defined expectations.

**PaulDB:** Yes.

**BJB2:** we've got about 20 minutes left...

**BJB2:** since this is the first time this group has met...

**BJB2:** perhaps you would like to talk about what you want future sessions to look at?

**PaulDB:** I am willing to entertain any topic of interest or concern of the group.

**BJB2:** The next sped discussion is February 21

**BJB2:** . o O ( pending Paul's confirmation )

**PaulDB:** That sounds fine to me.

**BJB2:** any topic suggestions? Testing? mainstreaming?

**BJB2:** resources for sped?

**RaeCGst2:** how about the role that Technology plays in Sp. Ed?

**JaceyD:** maybe if anyone has any good ideas on how to deal with the teachers who do not enjoy having the sped students with the gen ed (if you know the type)

**JaceyD:** Is this for a class Rae?

**JaceyD** smiles

**PaulDB**: Assessment? instructional strategies?

**RaeCGst2**: yes

**BJB2**: I think this group can be beneficial not only to the sped teachers, but also to the classroom teachers with sped students

**PaulDB**: I would like to think so as well.

**BJB2**: technology is a good topic, Rae

**PaulDB**: we are in it together so we need to act and work accordingly.

**BJB2** nods to Paul

**PaulDB**: technology assistive or otherwise has many elements.

**BJB2**: yes.

**BJB2**: I'm interested in aural learning for sped students

**RaeCGst2**: Is any one using the Alpha Smart or other devices for their Sp. Ed students?

**JaceyD**: yes

**JaceyD**: I have about 5 students with them

**BJB2**: if a child misses the patterns and rhythms that are taught ...how does that affect their reading comprehension

**RaeCGst2**: Do you think it helps?

**JaceyD**: I think it helps a lot but only when the students have some typing skills.

**JaceyD:** I have them use a typing program in class when they have free time. I think it helps some of them get over the writing issues that they have

**NancyKa:** Do you think it might work with adult students who use Black English?

**JaceyD:** alphasmarts?

**RaeCGst2:** black English?

**JaceyD:** Ebonics?

**PaulDB:** My wife is ASHA certified Speech and Language Pathologist and I can tap her for additional information regarding the whole field of speech and language.

**NancyKa:** I think it's the same as what Ebonics is. The dropping of suffixes or prefixes, etc.

**BJB2:** thanks, Paul.

**PaulDB:** The Alpha Smart can also be useful for youth or others who have problems with fine muscle and motor control.

**JaceyD:** If you are talking about an Alphasmart they have many different programs that you can use with them. If you are interested you should investigate it

**NancyKa:** I would love to find a class or book or something that would help me help my adults to break their habits that keep them writing effectively. Especially verb conjugation.

**BJB2:** Nancy, I think if you can get your guys to write....in any English...the more they do the better they will get

**PaulDB:** Yes, and using a word processor will also help.

**BJB2:** Nancy, you also might want to read to your guys

**BJB2:** model the correct grammar

**PaulDB:** Hearing the language not only helps model the grammar, but also contributes to fluency and speech patterns including articulation.

**BJB2** nods to Paul

**NancyKa:** Thanks for the idea. I try, but then quit. So many different levels. My students range in reading/comprehension between 2nd and 9th Grades.

**JaceyD:** Do you have books on tape?

**BJB2:** Nancy, another idea that I'm experimenting with...there is a place that has books on CD's

**BJB2** smiles...great minds, Jacey

**PaulDB:** Choose a novel from the classics, something they would not have heard or read and do a chapter a day as part of your reading program for example.

**NancyKa:** We have some books on tape, but they're all lower level reading - very low interest for my students.

**NancyKa:** Cd's are a huge no-no. Can't bring in any technology...

**PaulDB:** Reading aloud to a group can be very helpful as a bridge between teacher and human being.

**BJB2:** aackk. Then you'll have to read to them

**JaceyD:** I started going to the library and checking out the books on tape. are you allowed to bring in tapes?

**PaulDB:** I would like to pursue that comment regarding technology Nancy because that becomes a bit of an issue with IEP's.

**NancyKa:** I'll try the chapter a day on tape and just do it without text support. Any ideas for titles?

**BJB2:** I agree with Paul about real person reading...most of our students never had parents that read to them

**PaulDB:** Billy Bud, Two Years Before the Mast, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,

**PaulDB:** Reading also serves as modeling behavior we would want the youth to practice when they become parents.

**NancyKa:** Vocab at the beginning seems to ruin the experience. Okay to read it without making a big fuss over vocab?

**PaulDB:** Yes. Let the student ask for explanation.

**NancyKa** laughs. Many of them are grandparents...I know what you mean, though!

**JaceyD:** I even like doing reading packets that only have 3-5 paragraphs and reading them at least 3 times as a class and discussing them. Especially if they are about topics of interest. I get a lot of good discussions this way. Have them keep their own dictionary and review the vocab periodically

**PaulDB:** Wonderful Jacey!!

**JaceyD:** This is for 7th grade but it could be manipulated to your needs

**PaulDB:** That is a good example of taking ownership for their learning.

**NancyKa:** My students' reading levels are between 2nd and 9th Grade in any one class. Finding any text that they can all read is a challenge. However, listening works better even when the genre isn't quite to everyone's agreement.

**PaulDB:** You open the door, you provide support but you let them proceed with your guidance.

**PaulDB:** It is not their differences that we want to accentuate but rather their shared commonality.

**NancyKa:** Thanks for the reading aloud idea (regenerated. I knew it but shame on me for dropping it!)

**NancyKa:** Time for my son to take over the keyboard. Thanks everyone for your ideas and time.

**PaulDB:** Bye Nancy.

**JaceyD:** I have 3rd -7th grade comp but I still find that even though some of the things we do are over their heads they are still learning

**BJB2:** Thanks so much, Paul, for leading this discussion.

**BJB2:** our time is up, but I hope you all can come back on Feb 21

**JaceyD:** THANKS!!!

**RaeCGst2:** yes, thank you for the great resources!

**PaulDB:** Jacey, students will learn despite what we do. Our job is to help them learn what they need to know.

**PaulDB:** It has been fun and interesting. I look forward to doing it on February 21 at the same time and the same place.