

Title of Session: Special Education Forum

Moderator: Paul Bohac

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Room: After School Online Room

BJ: Welcome to the Special Education Forum, everyone

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

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

MargaretTK: I'm a librarian working for a special ed in a district in south Louisiana.

BJ: thanks, Margaret

JillRK: I am a first grade teacher in CA and the parent of a special needs child.

BJ: thanks, Jill.

SheriGst23: I am a pre-service teacher studying at the University of Houston.

JeffC: I volunteer on Helpdesk here... and am the class clown.

BJ: what do you hope to teach, Sheri?

SheriGst23: that's a tricky question

BJ . o O (watch out for Jeff, Paul. He's your demo person)

PaulDB: Okay

MargaretTK: BJ, do you have any SPED certification or are you just K12 certified?

BJ hands the virtual floor over to Paul

SheriGst23: I hope to teach elementary

BJ: I'm working on SPED certification, Margaret

BJ . o O (Paul is one of my instructors)

PaulDB: Margaret I have an M.ED in Special Education

BJ . o O (and an EXCELLENT instructor, I might add)

JeffC . o O (way to kiss up to the prof BJ)

PaulDB: You are too kind BJ

BJ smirks at Jeff

BJ: Paul, did you want to address anything specific during tonight's discussion?

MargaretTK: In Louisiana, Art teachers & Librarians don't need SPED certification because we are K12 certified

PaulDB: If we can, I would like to make sure that everyone is aware of a link I posted earlier this evening regarding the TIP system

BJ: interesting, Margaret

BJ: where did you post that link, Paul?

PaulDB: Is the K12 certification heavily oriented towards elementary education?

MargaretTK: I did have to go back & get a certification in secondary English as my primary certification.

PaulDB: The link is on the Special Education Forum opening page.

JillRK: What is the TIP system?

JeffC: Could you paste it in here Paul?

PaulDB: That is representative of some of the effects of NCLB

BJ: <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu/>

BJ: Paul posted the link in the Special Education Forum group room

BJ checks to see if everyone got the link?

MargaretTK: Librarians, art teachers, and supervisors are all K12. People with all their initial education & experience often get elementary principal jobs.

PaulDB: TIP represents Transition to Independence Process system developed for youth with disabilities and their families.

BJ: if you are not a member of the Special Education Forum group, I suggest you join so you can access the resources posted there

PaulDB: So, how can we help you in terms of Special Education?

BJ wonders if everyone is aware of the Transitions requirements for SPED students?

MargaretTK: How do we join?

PaulDB: Is there any interest in the recent posting regarding success irrespective of means?

MargaretTK: I found out about a really neat transition site.

BJ . o O (I'll give you directions to join the group at the end of the discussion, Margaret)

SheriGst23: I would like to know how to join also?

BJ: please explain success irrespective of means, Paul

MargaretTK: Yes, please do

BJ: Sheri, you have to be a member of Tapped In to join a group

PaulDB: Well, I was alluding to the comment that success was important regardless of the bureaucratic means to achieve.

BJ: how do you measure that success? and what is success based on?

PaulDB: My concern is that there appears to be some confusion regarding the impact of NCLB on the testing of Spec Ed kids and I thought we might want to discuss that this evening.

BJ thinks that is a major understatement, Paul!

PaulDB: NCLB requires each school district to define Annual Yearly Progress.

JillRK: What is NCLB stand for please?

JeffC: No Child Left Behind

PaulDB: Such progress must be defined within the context of current educational performance within the district but must also identify a level of progress to be achieved

PaulDB: The target is 100% achievement by 2013 in the areas of math, language arts, science and I believe history.

JeffC: It's the fed mandate that really screws up teaching (imho)... places a bunch of unfunded standards... makes all public schools basically teach to tests... saps the will to learn (as if that wasn't already a problem in school).

BJ: does this definition align with IDEIA?

PaulDB: Yes and no.

SheriGst23: IDEIA?

MargaretTK: There's a really great article about this in the KAPPAN, "Waving at Ray Charles."

PaulDB: Yes in the sense that NCLB includes reference to special education youth and how they will be "accommodated", but the process is still under development.

PaulDB: IDEA

BJ: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

SheriGst23: okay

JillRK: Our current difficulty with NCLB is in combination with the state standards. A special ed student is required to have content standards material, but that is not always their instructional level.

PaulDB: Which volume of KAPPAN?

PaulDB: You are correct **JillRK**

PaulDB: It is that disconnect that seems to be the problem.

JillRK: How do you see it evolving?

MargaretTK: You are right, Jill. I am a librarian & in charge of SPED materials.

PaulDB: I am of the opinion that there will be some changes to return to the requirements of IDEA.

PaulDB: To accommodate the spec ed kids, the primary emphasis must be instructional

PaulDB: Content is the outcome.

SheriGst23: What kind of changes would you like to see made? How could they be accomplished?

PaulDB: Well, if the intent in the AYP is to achieve progress towards the goal, then there must be some attention paid to the capabilities of the youth to make such progress.

SheriGst23: true

JillRK: If we are going to hold special ed kids responsible for standards based materials, I would like to see those materials available in a variety of reading levels.

PaulDB: It is not enough to say where we are supposed to be going, we must also say how we are going to get there and how we will determine we have arrived.

PaulDB: You are again correct. If the content is the outcome, then the process becomes the means. A variety of reading materials can help achieve the outcome.

PaulDB: It does not matter if the 11th grade text is used to teach American History if all we want to know is if the youth can demonstrate mastery of the material.

MargaretTK: My concern is not just the reading level of what needs to be mastered but the concept load.

PaulDB: We have been teaching American History to the youth since elementary school. Only the level of sophistication in the presentation has changed, not the basic content.

LavaughnR: I think it becomes important if the 11th grade material is what you are wanting demonstrated for American History

PaulDB: But again, what content is to be learned?

MargaretTK: Thank you, Lavaughn

PaulDB: We have just engaged in THE discussion surrounding the issue.

MargaretTK: I think the big problem is that we are dealing with some fairly sophisticated concepts even at the middle school level, not just the overall concept of American History.

LavaughnR: Sometimes we hold our Sp. Ed students to the same level as our reg. students and forget that we need to determine if our sp. ed students are capable of learning concepts in abstract or if they are still concrete learners

MargaretTK: Amen, sista

PaulDB: That is why the issue is so important as it applies to the testing practice.

PaulDB: If the concept is too sophisticated how can it be assessed using a multiple choice or short-term answer or fill-in the blank?

JillRK: Are you speaking of standardized testing or classroom assessment?

PaulDB: Standardized testing only!!

PaulDB: Let us use a simple reading task as an example.

MargaretTK: Check out Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum at <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/ssa/2108.html> It's really got some great ideas for teaching concepts, but we have some kids who are not intellectually able to master these concepts

PaulDB: The basic questions are who, what, when and maybe where.

PaulDB: What makes it difficult is the reading level of the assignment.

MargaretTK: Paul, I don't see too many simple reading tasks in assessment.

EmilyW: what type of reading tasks?

PaulDB: It almost doesn't matter since this is merely an example.

SheriGst23: Paul- what are your feelings on inclusion?

MargaretTK: I have to disagree with you about "simple reading tests." Some passages have a very low readability level & a high concept load.

PaulDB: If the student is given a book at the 3rd grade level, the vocabulary, the structure of the paragraph, the length of the paragraph will be much less complex than a 5th grade reading level.

PaulDB: That is the instructional issue that is recognized.

PaulDB: As the content load increases, the instructional level also increases.

PaulDB: The AYP objectives tend to focus on performance tied to the District's own goals and objectives.

MargaretTK: Are you referring to Lexile levels or traditional grade levels?

PaulDB: My point is that as the school district goes through and establishes its AYP some attention must be focused on the potential for the special ed youth to meet the requirements.

PaulDB: The traditional grade level seems appropriate.

JillRK: Paul, how do you feel about special ed students opting out of testing?

PaulDB: That is a good question.

PaulDB: Opting out can create its own set of problems.

MargaretTK: Yes, we have not expected enough of our students with disabilities. But I think we need to find an appropriate yardstick for them.

SheriGst23: I agree with you on that, it isn't fair to put requirements without giving attention to how they will be met.

PaulDB: The purpose of Spec Ed is to ensure that the youth receives maximum benefit from participating in school/education programs.

PaulDB: That requires that we define what is both reasonable and achievable.

JillRK: Testing is not an educational program that a student benefits from. It is a measure of how well the test is matched to the students needs.

PaulDB: Hence the IEP.

PaulDB: What complicates the issue is that NCLB has selected a yardstick that may not meet the needs of the Spec Ed youth.

MargaretTK: Thank you

PaulDB: Where I am heading with this is to suggest that each of you look at what is being proposed for the AYP in your local school district.

PaulDB: If there is a conflict between the AYP goals and what you know of your students, then it would be wise to revisit the IEPs to determine if they are valid as written or need to be revised.

PaulDB: The IEP is a form of "contract" between the youth, the youth's family and the school system.

PaulDB: If there is a change to be made, there are specific procedures to be followed in effectuating those changes.

PaulDB: The yardstick is contained in the IEP

BJ looks at the clock on the wall.

PaulDB: Jill, the test is the measure used by the system to determine progress according to the AYP goal.

BJ: Our time is almost up. I'm going to tell you how to join the Special Ed forum group....

BJ: if you are logged in as a guest, please register as a member so you can join the group

MargaretTK: But if a student is a smidgin too high to qualify for alternate assessment, then the yardstick is the LEAP and the iLEAP.

PaulDB: In the classroom, the continuous assessment used for instructional purposes is as you have defined it.

PaulDB: Then the question becomes the appropriateness of the Spec Ed designation.

BJ waits for Paul to finish

PaulDB: Okay.

BJ: any other questions?

BJ . o O (perhaps topic suggestions for next month?)

BJ: The next Special Ed Forum meeting is May 16

MargaretTK: Maybe we need to keep going with this

PaulDB: I am open for any recommendations!!

BJ: It's a frustrating topic, Margaret...

MargaretTK: Paul, check out our Comprehensive Curriculum if you get a chance

PaulDB: Margaret, even if we do not continue through the forum, I would like to discuss this further with you directly.

BJ: the players of the game keep changing the rules

JeffC: When I taught freshman English at Richmond High... about 70% of the students read at the third grade level... the running joke was "what's the difference between English and SPED? Answer: 20 students per class"

PaulDB: I will do that if you will tell me how to access.

BJ: you can also continue the discussion on the discussion board in the group room

BJ: which leads me to

BJ: click on the SEARCH tab in the top right of your screen

MargaretTK: There is a link earlier in the conversation.

BJ: then click on GROUPS

BJ: Enter SPECIAL EDUCATION FORUM

BJ: when you get a match, click on the group name

BJ: you should see the group ID page

BJ: at the top of the page is a place to join the group

PaulDB: Thanks, BJ.

BJ: once you join the group, you can enter the group room and access the resources there and post to the discussion board

BJ hopes Paul does continue the dialogue on the discussion board.

BJ . o O (got several emails from people unable to make tonight's discussion)

BJ: Thank you, Paul!

PaulDB: I will review the transcript from this session and try to move it along a little further.

BJ: great idea.

MargaretTK: was able to join the group

MargaretTK left the room.

BJ: Margaret, the group name will be added to your favorite places menu

SusanR just joined.

BJ: thanks, Sue. wonderful resources in the group room

BJ: thanks, everyone for participating in the discussion

BJ waves goodnight

SusanR: This was helpful

BJ: with inclusion we all are affected by SPED

PaulDB: I hope it will engender some thoughts throughout the coming weeks until our next session.

JillRK: Inclusion would be an excellent topic for future discussions - also IEPs.
Goodnight.

PaulDB: Perhaps the topic of inclusion would be good topic?

SusanR: Although Ontario, Canada does not have a formal

SusanR: NCLB policy

BJ: I'm sure that whatever topic you choose will be gratefully received by educators

PaulDB: Well Susan, Canada does have an interesting take on the role education plays in the development of or the perpetuation of delinquent behavior by youth. Much research in the field has been published.

PaulDB: BJ, the effects of NCLB is most profound in the "inclusive" classroom. Maybe that is where we need to go.

BJ: I'd like to see some structure in the direction we take, Paul

BJ: so that the transcripts will build on each other and serve as a resource for the participants

BJ . o O (sound like a plan?)

PaulDB: I am hoping to move in that direction,

BJ: you are in charge of the direction...inclusion and IEPs are both issues affected by NCLB

PaulDB: Okay, then I will review the transcript and define one, or maybe two strands for the next session. May need a timekeeper though.

BJ smiles...that's my job

PaulDB: I am convinced that the IEP/TP is suffering because of NCLB.

PaulDB: There must be some attention to the inherent benefits as well as conflicts.

JeffC: Wanted to share a link with you Paul... <http://www.theospi.org> ... online portfolio assessment (free).

PaulDB: Maybe we can use this forum as a vehicle for introducing and addressing the issues.

BJ: Margaret, you can use the discussion board in the group room to continue the dialogue we started tonight

PaulDB: Thanks Jeff!!

JeffC: If we really want to do something with education... online portfolios are definitely a step in the right direction... whether for SPED students or mainstream.

PaulDB: Portfolios are the way to go in any situation where authentic assessment is practiced!!

MargaretTK: I've been working with SPED for almost 20 years now. For years, the bar was set way too low. Now they've moved it a bit high

PaulDB: Portfolios also offer a way to address the issue of transition - a key point in the IEP.

PaulDB: Yes Margaret, you have spoken the Truth!!