

Title of Session: Special Education Forum

Moderator: Paul Bohac

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Room: After School Online

KirkeE: HI, BJB...I'm here for the special ed forum

BJB: great, Kirk

KirkeE: should I call you BJ?

BJB nods. Everyone does.

BJB: Paul is the leader of the discussion. Hopefully he will be here in the next 5 minutes or so

KirkeE: I'm a general ed English teacher, but I teach team-taught English 10

BJB: I like the idea of team teaching. How do you like it?

KirkeE: I like it...it does have its challenges, though?

BJB: yes...you need a really collaborative team

BJB: no different than working with a special ed teacher in a reg classroom

KirkeE: Our big problem this past year has been just finding time to plan together

BJB . o O (at least that is how it's supposed to be!)

BJB nods.

BJB: Perhaps you want to create a group here in tapped In for that planning, Kirk

BJB: you could use the threaded discussion board for asynch discussions

BJB: and if you have time to get logged on together you can chat in real time

KirkeE: cool...how do I do it?

BJB: you mean create the group room?

KirkeE: yeah...I just joined TI last week

BJB: ok..let me explain a bit about groups first...

BJB: only tapped in members can join a group and only group members can enter a group room and post to the discussion board...

BJB: you may want to start off by meeting in your private office first...

BJB: because anyone can go to your office

BJB: . o O (including guests)

KirkE nods

BJB: once you sell the team on the idea, then they can all get TI memberships and you can create the group

BJB: to create the group, go to the Tapped In tab

BJB: then the subtab GROUPS

BJB: at the top of the page is a place to create a new TI Group

BJB: just follow the prompts

KirkE: . o O (sounds great!)

BJB: I recommend that you make the group public/moderated

BJB: not private or helpdesk won't be able to see the group and help people to join

BJB: Paul is in the Special Ed room...would you like to join him there?

KirkE: sure

BJB: do you know how to join someone?

BJB: click on the ONLINE tab to the left of this chat

BJB: then click one time on Paul DB

KirkE: I see Paul DB under the Online tab

KirkE: I just click there and then click on the door icon, right?

BJB: and then the door at the bottom of the frame

BJB: right

KirkE: okay...here goes

KirkE left the room.

Room: Special Education Forum Group

BjB joined the room.

PaulDB: Hi Kirk

KirkE: HI, BJ

JeffC joined the room.

BjB waves hi to Paul

PaulDB: Hi BJ

PaulDB: Welcome back Jeff

BjB: Paul, I thought we should discuss the festival and get any participants today to join the group if they haven't already

BjB . o O (unless you had another topic?)

PaulDB: Okay, why don't you lead that part of the discussion?

BjB: let's start with introductions since Kirk is new to Tapped In

BjB: and...Kirk, go to the Actions menu in the top right of this chat window and click on DETACH

KirkE: actually...I've done that

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

BjB cheers...my kind of guy! You're too smart, Kirk!

PaulDB: I'm a retired Florida correctional educator.

KirkE: and I'm an English teacher in Virginia

PaulDB: At what level?

BjB thinks Jeff is multitasking

KirkE: English 10, where I team teach with a special ed teacher...

PaulDB: Are we talking "team teaching" or collaborative teaching?

KirkE: I also teach Advanced Placement Language and Composition

EmilyW joined the room.

PaulDB: Your plate is full!!

PaulDB: Hello Emily

KirkE: hmm..what's the difference between TT and collaborative teaching?

EmilyW: Hi

KirkE . o O (dumb question, probably)

PaulDB: Yes, that is a topic I would like to discuss at some point.

BjB doesn't think it's a dumb question

KirkE . o O (whew!)

PaulDB: Actually, it is a very good question, worthy of discussion when special education kids are involved.

JackiliGst7 joined the room.

PaulDB: Hello Jackili

BjB: Hi, Jackili. We've just done introductions. Can you please tell us where you are and what you teach?

KirkE: This past year was my first year with my partner...

KirkE: our "team teaching" really consisted in trading teaching...

KirkE: Becky taught one lesson, I taught another

JackiliGst7: I'm a special ed. teacher in Alexandria, VA. I teach English.

PaulDB: Sounds more like a collaborative approach.

PaulDB: And at what level do you teach English?

KirkE: If you say so, Paul

KirkE: Hi, Jacki

KirkE: but I would like to work more closely with Becky...

KirkE: maybe split up portions of the same lesson

JackiliGst7: I teach 11th grade English to LD and ED students. I teach at TC Williams HS in a very urban environment.

PaulDB: Now we are talking "team".

KirkE: Jacki, I teach at Westfield High School...

KirkE: We are practically neighbors

SusanR joined the room.

PaulDB: Hello Susan

JackiliGst7: Cool. What population do you teach?

EmilyW: I am a web designer, interested in educational tech, just checking this group out. I am also a helpdesk volunteer at Tapped In. I hope to be in the DC area soon.

KirkE: 10th and 11th graders...regular 10 and AP Lang

SusanR: Hi Paul

SusanR: I am Sue from Ottawa, Ontario

KirkE . o O (we've got a full room now)

PaulDB: And what do you teach, Susan?

SusanR: and K to 3+ Great Resources facilitator here at TI

SusanR: K to 8

SusanR: prefer k to 3

PaulDB: I can imagine!!

EmilyW: I also own the Web Design group on here

PaulDB: The hunger to learn is so much more prevalent in the young.

KirkE: Any fans of middle school in the room?

BjB: I work with middle school age, Kirk, and high school

EmilyW: I have found a website that has information about designing web content for people with learning disabilities

JackiliGst7: What is it Emily?

EmilyW: <http://www.ld-web.org/>

BjB wonders if Paul had a specific topic he wanted to discuss this evening?

SusanR: my last teaching assignment was grade one..what a joy!!

KirkE . o O (Emily's web site sounds cool)

PaulDB: Well, I did want to spend a few minutes talking about how we decide when and what to individualize.

JackiliGst7: Thanks, Emily.

EmilyW: sure

BjB listens to Paul

PaulDB: I keep suffering from the demands of NCLB

BjB nods

PaulDB: But, maybe we should start out with the information about the festival BJ?

KirkE: NCLB and IDEA seem to be in conflict with each other

JackiliGst7: One good thing to come out of NCLB is the dual certification for special ed teachers. ALL teachers need to have a strong background in content.

KirkE: But I think that there should be special ed requirements for general ed teachers too...

KirkE: speaking as a general ed teacher, until I took a special ed class...

BjB: which introduces the topic of Highly Qualified ...

KirkE: I had no idea what you people were up to

PaulDB: I am not sure that I dual certification is beneficial.

JackiliGst7: Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. OR we could just get paid more... But seriously, all regular ed teachers have special ed kids in their classes. Knowing how to meet the needs of "special" learners is just good teaching.

KirkE: . o O (more money sound good)

EmilyW: I used to have a learning disability (not that bad though)

PaulDB: Content knowledge is critical if the outcome is knowledge mastery.

KirkE: I was (still am, really) ADD

PaulDB: But for some kids, getting to content mastery requires first being able to acquire the skills to learn.

KirkE: Paul, how do you assess "learning skills?"

JackiliGst7: A combination of standardized and informal testing.

PaulDB: Let's talk about what is required to learn.

PaulDB: Yes, it will be a combination of standardized and informal assessment.

KirkE: Well, I'd say one prerequisite would be being able to read

JackiliGst7: Those Mighty SOL's.

PaulDB: Okay, what is SOL?

BridgetM joined the room.

PaulDB: Hello Bridget

BridgetM: hi. sorry I'm late

JackiliGst7: In VA we have the Standards of Learning. They are a thorn in everyone's side. A good idea initially, but twisted and perverted to kill all creativity in the classroom.

PaulDB: But what are the prerequisites to reading Kirk?

KirkE . o O (thinking)

PaulDB: Jackili, we have the Sunshine State Standards as well as the Florida Comprehensive Academic Test.

SusanR . o O (experiences; knowledge of letters and their sounds)

SusanR: readiness to read

KirkE: Well, aside from decoding text, you need strategies for comprehending what you are reading

BridgetM: oral language skills

PaulDB: Kirk, back up a little, letters, and sounds are initially abstractions.

JackiliGst7: You need background knowledge.

KirkE . o O (hearing all this, but not sure what Paul is driving at)

PaulDB: Okay, so we agree that background experiences are the starting point, that developing the ability to match letters with sounds is necessary and we agree that these are initial skills to be learned before one can begin to develop reading skills. Yes?

KirkE nods

JackiliGst7: Yes,

PaulDB: My point is that if we were to go down the list of all disciplines we could develop such an approach for teaching. But, could we use the approach for all kids?

JackiliGst7: NEVER. The goals might be similar, but the approach would be entirely different.

PaulDB: My question and my direction is focused on the question of when and what do we individualize in the context of the IEP.

BridgetM: I don't think so

BridgetM: attend to learning styles

JackiliGst7: We need to individualize (differentiate) instruction. Students should be able to choose (to some extent) how they will be assessed.

PaulDB: Okay, let's go with that for a minute.

BridgetM: work through strengths

PaulDB: If we believe that the purpose of special education is to allow the student who has an educational handicap to achieve maximum benefit from participation, how do we make the decision as to what we will individualize?

PaulDB: Strengths are vital, but how do we decide what are the strengths?

BridgetM: assessments, portfolios, observations

KirkE: Don't we have to base the decision on what content (standards) these kids are having trouble with?

PaulDB: How do we marry a strength-based approach to SOL's for example or Sunshine State Standards?

JackiliGst7: All assessments should be individualized... and of course modifications.

PaulDB: How do we know that it is the content of the standard and not something else?

BridgetM: well, we prioritize objectives - write those to allow access to curric

PaulDB: I guess where I am trying to go is to think very carefully about the assessment tools we use.

KirkE: Well, we have to find the cause of the problem, but we use the standard to identify the problem

PaulDB: We all know that we use particular tools for specific purposes.

PaulDB: If we can agree on the standards, how does that accommodate individual kids?

KirkE: We're assuming we have the same target...

JackiliGst7: I do think standards can be somewhat similar, but we should all be able to choose HOW to get to our various destinations.

PaulDB: I am not trying to be difficult, I am truly trying to find a way to better understand the NCLB-IDEA conundrum.

KirkE: It's just that some kids need more help than others hitting it

PaulDB: And how do we help those kids in trouble make progress?

JeffC: How about integrating IEPs into an online portfolio? <http://theospi.org>

PaulDB: It would seem to me that not making a standard is the outcome.

KirkE: How are these content standards get determined anyway?

PaulDB: But I also have to wonder if the standard is really critical for the future success of the kid.

BridgetM: ? I don't understand, Paul.

PaulDB: What is the difference between school and education?

KirkE: I think I see...the goal is to help these kids become productive, happy adults

PaulDB: What is it that we really want our kids to accomplish?

KirkE: That can mean different things to different people

JackiliGst7: Helping kids in trouble has always been part of the equation, but I have more trouble with the idea of "who gets to decide what the standards are?"

PaulDB: Yes, and no.

PaulDB: Jackili, you have touched on the question that drives me!!

KirkE: I suppose the original idea behind standard was to set a minimum level of literacy (mathematical, linguistic, etc.) that we as a society expect an "educated" person to have

PaulDB: Special Education is not a curriculum, it is a strategy to enable students to acquire knowledge and skills.

PaulDB: The focus of the strategy is the development of knowledge and skills considered appropriate to facilitate content mastery.

JackiliGst7: Paul, you should try private school. In the Dc area most are wonderful, creative places that allow teachers to teach what they are passionate about (within reason) and there are no lesson plans to turn in and no SOL's. And take a look at test scores in these schools; they are usually much higher than in public schools .. Although I suppose that part of the reason for this is that these kids are socioeconomically advantaged and have involved parents and are probably well dressed and cute too.

PaulDB: However, content mastery is not a fixed target for special ed kids. It is always dependent on the individual kid.

BridgetM: what are the resources in DC public schools?

JackiliGst7: DC is a disaster. Suburban MD and VA has a lot of great schools

Kirke: I suppose the original idea behind standard was to set a minimum level of literacy (mathematical, linguistic, etc.) that we as a society expect an "educated" person to have

Kirke . o O (that's not what I wanted)

PaulDB: Knowing when to individualize the focus is a product of what is expected, what the kid can actually achieve and what resources are available to facilitate achievement.

PaulDB: It gets back to the assessment tools.

Kirke: Who's to say what a kid can achieve? Isn't the goal of special education is to help these kids exceed societal expectations?

JackiliGst7: Great point Kirk

BridgetM: I like your thinking Kirk

PaulDB: I don't think "exceed" unless you mean that there is a perception that the kids cannot achieve.

BjB . o O (brings us full circle back to NCLB and IDEA)

BridgetM: that's what I was thinking - low expectations

PaulDB: My issue is to ensure that the youth is able to achieve to the fullest, but I also would like to avoid creating additional failure.

PaulDB: When we look at the youth's performance, do we also look at the prerequisites that the kid has or has not mastered?

Kirke: We still haven't gotten around the question of "Who decides how good is good enough at what?"

BridgetM: well written objectives help

BjB: I hate to be a wet blanket, but our hour is about up...

BjB: can we continue this discussion next month? Or on the discussion board?

Kirke: It's been a good discussion I think

BjB: if you want to post to the discussion board in this Special Ed room...

BjB: you have to join the group

BjB: to join the Special Ed Forum, click on the SEARCH tab then the subtab Groups

PaulDB: Who decides how good is good enough? I would think the teacher, the youth the parents and the local school have a major say so in that.

BjB: enter Special Education Forum

BjB: click on the match and then join the group at the top of the group ID page

BjB: The next Sped meeting is August 15

PaulDB: I think it has been good as well. If for no other reason than we have tried to look at what we do in the context of what we individually believe.

KirkE: Thanks Paul...Thank BJ

PaulDB: I agree with you Bridget that good objectives help because they represent a concerted effort to target instruction.

KirkE: yes, but I'm not sure whether I'll have time to drop in or not...I'm in class 5 hours that day

BridgetM: I'll have to miss next month but will look for discussion

BjB nods to Bridget

PaulDB: BJ, tell me how to post this on the discussion board (again) please.

BjB: Paul, do you have your chat detached?

JeffC: Click the Discussions link on the left Paul, then Post a New Topic

PaulDB: yes, I am detached.

BridgetM: I'm off to reception. night!

JeffC . o O (aren't we all!)

BjB . o O (if you have the chat detached, then attach first so you can see the blue menu on the left above this chat window)

JeffC: reattach your chat... just close the window (click the X in the upper right).

BridgetM left the room.

BjB: got it, Paul?

PaulDB: I think so. I am trying to formulate the message in the box.

KirkE left the room (signed off).

BjB nods. I'm off to another meeting. Thanks for a very lively discussion!

BjB left the room.