

**Title of Session:** Special Education Forum

**Moderator:** Paul Bohac

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Room: Special Education Forum Group

**BJB2:** welcome to today's SPED Forum

**BJB2:** We usually start all our Tapped In discussions with introductions.

**KristenKi:** I live in Houston, and you?

**BJB2:** please let Paul know where you are located and what your interest is in this discussion.

**TinaC:** I live in California.

**BJB2:** I teach communication in Pennsylvania

**TinaC:** We have a very high special education population @ my school. I am a general education teacher, but I mainstream students.

**PaulDB:** I am a retired correctional education administrator with a background in Special Education.

**KristenKi:** In the school district I am in at the moment they mainstream students and I thought it would benefit me

**TinaC:** I teach 5th grade, what about you, Kristen?

**PaulDB:** Well, the topic tonight is assessment and NCLB so lets start with some idea of what Kristen and Tina do in terms of assessment.

**KristenKi:** I am in the process of doing my student teaching. right now I am in 4th grade and then I will be in Kindergarten

**DonnaTr:** I'm student teaching at the moment in a kindergarten classroom.

**OlgaW:** I am in San Diego. Am a principal. I am interested in the assessment of students out of level

**TinaC:** It seems that the special education students are forced to take assessments even though it is not appropriate at all for them.

**TinaC:** Yes, Olga, that's what I mean.

**TamaraGst2:** This is the first time I have ever been in a chat room. So, I'm kind of just trying to see what goes on.

**DavidWe:** I'm David Weksler. I'm a HelpDesk volunteer and I lead a math education and technology discussion (tomorrow at 7:30pm EST) in Tapped In

**DonnaTr:** I was interested in this discussion because I want to know more about the assessment process in correlation with the NCLB

**TamaraGst2:** Thanks! I teach Special Education, K-6.

**OlgaW:** If we test out of level we are out of compliance at this time

**DonnaTr:** what are the compliances?

**OlgaW:** That we have 95% participation in grade level testing

**DonnaTr:** for special education students?

**OlgaW:** For special ed YES

**DonnaTr:** gotcha. Thanks Olga!

**TinaC:** We fail to meet AYP if we do not have 95%

**OlgaW:** I am hoping that the NCLB will be rewritten to allow out of level testing and still be in compliance

**PaulDB:** Talk about "assessment" in the context of your AYP.

**TinaC:** I think we're just referring to the annual standardized tests.

**DonnaTr:** ayp?

**DonnaTr:** sorry all these acronyms...

**PaulDB:** But what does the annual standardized test measure?

**TinaC:** whether the students are meeting standards or not.

**OlgaW:** This year, we are required to have 24.6 meet proficiency. If we have a large special ed population, that may make us miss our AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) targets

**PaulDB:** Most of the time, assessment is used for instruction,

**DavidWe . o O ( 24.6? )**

**PaulDB:** As one assesses, one also teaches.

**OlgaW:** 24.6 need to pass the English Language Standards in California

**DavidWe** smiles

**PaulDB:** Yes, what is 24.6?

**DonnaTr:** 24.6 students?

**OlgaW:** 24.6% of 100%

**DonnaTr:** oops

**DonnaTr:** hmm...it's tough...because students in special education all have individual needs..

**PaulDB:** So only 24.6% must pass or students must pass at the 24.6% level?

**DonnaTr:** some may be able to take the standardized assessments

**DonnaTr:** there's so many different scenarios...it's hard to make a general rule.

**KristenKi:** but if they are in special ed and do take a standardized test and if they do not pass it, they can not be held back, right? correct me if I am wrong

**PaulDB:** What is the level and is it a student performance level or a group performance level?

**TinaC:** Some of the students are just not developmentally ready to meet the standards.

**OlgaW:** This year is 24.6%, next year is 35% and then it goes up 10% or so a year. It seems low but if we have second language learners and a large special education population, it can be tough going - Most are not held back in spec ed.

**KristenKi:** that's what I thought

**OlgaW:** It is for both total population and also other significant groups like special ed, Hispanic, ell etc.

**OlgaW:** Are some of you in other states with diff pass rates?

**KristenKi:** TX, but not to sure what the pass rates are

**TinaC:** not sure

**OlgaW:** Goals for passing grade level standardized test

**KristenKi:** student teaching right now, but need to find that one out

**KristenKi:** do you know, Donna?

**PaulDB:** So that means that you assess the individual performance of the youth and then set a goal in the IEP the student is to achieve?

**TinaC:** I just know that 95% of the special education students need to take the Test in Calif.

**PaulDB:** Tina is that by policy, law or local school standards?

**DonnaTr:** that's a good idea Paul...if it isn't already in place.

**KristenKi:** Tomorrow we have our state test (TAKS) in fourth grade and the special ed kids in my class have to take the test but it is called SDAA

**DonnaTr:** I believe that students should have individual goals in their IEP and then be held accountable for reaching that goal

**OlgaW:** That is the standard under the NCLB - national

**PaulDB:** My problem is the development of the IEP.

**OlgaW:** The NCLB is in direct conflict with IDEA and goals

**DonnaTr:** why is it a problem?

**TinaC:** Yes, it's federal

**PaulDB:** If the IEP is for the student, then to include something that the student cannot meet is to create both failure on the part of the student and the school.

**OlgaW:** how do we reach those who will change the policy?

**PaulDB:** The purpose of the IEP is to identify what "special education service needs" are to be addressed.

**TinaC:** Well, I think the IEP goals are supposed to be written towards the standards for the grade level.

**OlgaW:** How well is that working for teachers?

**PaulDB:** I am not sure that is entirely correct, Tina.

**PaulDB:** I believe the IDEAAA regulations are specific to the needs of the student, not the system.

**DonnaTr:** but you can put expectations for students in their IEP and compare their results on standardized test to the expectation to see what needs to be done to improve learning for the student the following year

**DonnaTr:** I don't think their scores should be included to meet national goals

**KristenKi:** I agree

**PaulDB:** Right Donna!

**DonnaTr:** but then again, it's the question of full inclusion and fairness...

**TinaC:** I think we need to look at the growth and progress they are making.

**DonnaTr:** you will have parents who will argue that they want their students to be in a "normal" classroom setting etc. etc.

**OlgaW:** For some, it seems okay to test. For others it is way too hard.

**TinaC:** It's the equity issue, isn't it?

**PaulDB:** For inclusion, the purpose is to provide the spec ed student with an educational experience in the "least restrictive environment".

**OlgaW:** Sometimes inclusion works but not if the child is not receiving appropriate instruction

**OlgaW:** or making progress

**TinaC:** Just because the students might not meet the goals, does that mean we do not expose them to the standards?

**DonnaTr:** true...

**DonnaTr:** I think we find ourselves in a loop hole.

**PaulDB:** That is why assessment becomes such an issue.

**OlgaW:** It takes a very talented teacher and also a system that is flexible to make it happen effectively

**OlgaW:** Formative Assessment allows us to see growth along the way rather than year end assessments

**PaulDB:** That or a clear understanding of the various requirements.

**DonnaTr:** I think that special ed teachers should be qualified enough to determine if their students are capable of taking a standardized test

**DonnaTr:** and if they give the okay, then I think the student should be allowed to take the exam

**OlgaW:** What criteria would they use?

**SusanK:** I agree with Paul we set both schools and students up for failure when we don't individualize the assessments to meet the student's needs. . I wish the people who assign these numbers would come into our classrooms and meet some of these students that they are expecting to understand & pass a test that is well over their developmental level!

**DonnaTr:** but are you going to right 20 different assessments for each classroom?

**TinaC:** I agree Susan, it is so individual.

**SusanK:** Each student is INDIVIDUAL!

**DonnaTr:** I wish that each student could take an assessment tailored to their developmental level, but I also feel that it is wishful thinking..

**OlgaW:** What if we allowed them to take the level that they are performing at or their goals are written at?

**KristenKi:** Does your school not have a test that has been revised to meet those students' needs

**DonnaTr:** I'm not against individualism

**DonnaTr:** trust me

**DonnaTr:** I know from these past few weeks that every child learns differently and at different rates

**DonnaTr:** but the reality of the issue is that it's not possible

**SusanK:** Only 2% of students in Special Education are supposed to be able to take the alternative assessment in VA!

**OlgaW:** Not possible to do what?

**PaulDB:** Think about assessment as both a continuous and a periodic process.

**DonnaTr:** I think that the teacher should create assessments tailored to each student need

**DonnaTr:** but I suppose standardized tests are used for data purposes?

**OlgaW:** In our school, the students can take 6-8 week assessments that are pre-made.

**KristenKi:** Not to sure of the rates here but the special ed students in my class have an alternative state test to meet their needs

**PaulDB:** As a continuous process, you are constantly comparing individual student performance against the instructional objectives of the class.

**DonnaTr:** I think it isn't fair that standardized tests can't be modified for special ed. students but what can a teacher do?

**TinaC:** There does need to be some standardization though.

**OlgaW:** The teacher then can design instruction - and individualize

**SusanK:** I think it is criminal that one of my MR students came within 10 points of passing the regular test and it was considered a failure. I considered it a PASS!

**DonnaTr:** will it go against NCLB Olga?

**DonnaTr:** I agree Susan

**OlgaW:** Yes of course! But here in CA - it helps us make Annual Yearly Progress

**PaulDB:** Folks, if a special education youth can take a standardized test, why is s/he in a special education class?

**DonnaTr:** for other learning disabilities

**OlgaW:** We have many students in resource programs that are so close but not severe enough for a special day class.

**TinaC:** Yes, resources students just need a little extra support.

**PaulDB:** If there is an expectation that performance of a special education youth will be the same as a non-special education youth, what is the need for special education services?

**SusanK:** That's the truth Paul!

**TinaC:** good point, Paul

**OlgaW:** I like the idea that they make progress rather than just meet a standard. & are on target to make significant progress rather than marginal progress

**DonnaTr:** I agree Paul

**DonnaTr:** I see your perspective..

**PaulDB:** A unique process is followed to identify a youth as being in need of special education services.

**OlgaW:** So what assessments do you all use now to measure progress?

**TinaC:** It doesn't help the students' confidence.

**TinaC:** the district assessments, state assessments

**DonnaTr:** but we also have to consider that those students might feel outcaste and want to take the standardized tests to be like their peers

**PaulDB:** Aha!! There is a difference between assessment and testing for evaluation.

**DonnaTr:** I have a student that would be shattered if pulled out of a regular classroom doing daily things with his classmates

**PaulDB:** Assessment serves as a guide for the instructional process. Evaluation testing determines what has or has not been learned.

**PaulDB:** State tests are just that-tests.

**DonnaTr:** ditto.

**PaulDB:** Assessment provides the teacher with a valid, useful informational picture of what the youth has done, cannot do according to the instructional objectives of the class/program.

**TinaC:** They use the test scores to measure progress and if we aren't making progress according to their standards, the state can take over the school.

**PaulDB:** To use assessment as a tool in determining which youth is or is not able to take a standardized test is the first step in the process of helping make such participation meaningful.

**KristenKi:** true

**PaulDB:** Tina, meeting the standard does not eliminate the need to comply with the requirements of IDEA.

**OlgaW:** At this point, we have 1 child who takes the CAPA. All others take the regular grade level tests. I want to have an intermediate test that spans that gap.

**SusanK:** I am learning about a new program called AIMSWeb. It has short probes to assess student progress in many of the academic areas. If a student is at risk or has special needs the probes are more often and interventions are put in place to adjust for positive progress. Does anyone else do that program? I would think this kind of assessment would be more appropriate and help students succeed and feel successful!

**PaulDB:** To have that intermediate step you must first demonstrate the need for it.

**KristenKi:** Never heard of it

**TinaC:** I don't know about it either.

**PaulDB:** Nor have I.

**OlgaW:** Our special ed data shows the need. Our CAPA student passed, the others did not. California Assessment of Proficiency ???

**PaulDB:** I assume it is on-line?

**SusanK:** I'm just learning about it but it makes sense

**SusanK:** yes it is on-line

**OlgaW:** Does it tell you what interventions to use?

**DonnaTr:** hmm. I'll have to look it up.

**SusanK:** It is a great way to keep data on student progress and will demonstrate when intervention is working and when it isn't.

**SusanK:** Not yet but they are working on it.

**OlgaW:** Is it used by your district as a whole?

**OlgaW:** for special ed I mean

**SusanK:** We have many interventions now but we don't know whether they are working or not.

**SusanK:** It will be used for General Ed as well

**OlgaW:** That is the hardest part of education

**DonnaTr:** The only thing my school is doing is keeping a travelling record with students...called a STAR record...it documents scores and such to track student progress and what interventions have been taken and need to be made...

**PaulDB:** Again, the use of assessments would be helpful.

**DonnaTr:** and when the student reaches 3rd grade...a new record is started

**SusanK:** That way we can intervene with some of the students before they need special ed!

**OlgaW:** Great idea - how do you train your staff?

**TinaC:** I agree Susan.

**DonnaTr:** who are you asking Olga?

**OlgaW:** Susan - in regards to tracking students before they go to special ed

**SusanK:** We are working with a team to be trained as trainers before we introduce it to the district

**OlgaW:** We are trying to start the RTI model - Response to Intervention

**PaulDB:** Do you have a web site we can refer to Susan?

**SusanK:** We have 2 day monthly trainings for the rest of the year.

**SusanK:** I'll look for it

**SusanK:** It is a bit like RTI and will work with DIBBLES info as well

**OlgaW:** That sounds familiar.

**TinaC:** What is DIBBLES?

**PaulDB:** Olga, if you are or will be using the RTI model, it would be helpful to look at the various means to determine how well or poorly the interventions are working.

**SusanK:** <http://www.aimsweb.com/>

**DonnaTr:** Thanks Susan!

**SusanK:** It is a reading assessment

**KristenKi:** how often do you do the reading assessment

**SusanK:** I'm not sure exactly one of our schools is piloting it

**BJB2:** <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

**PaulDB:** If there is a specific intervention for a particular learning difficulty, being able to confirm the results of the intervention with an alternative measuring system would be most helpful.

**OlgaW:** Thanks for the web site. The interventions are very difficult to track as we often have more than 1 in place. It also requires pre and post testing. That is why we are trying to come to a standards process.

**PaulDB:** Olga, it might be that a portfolio would also be helpful.

**OlgaW:** We have used REWARDS with all our students. The teacher report good results. We also have implemented 6 min solution. That is helping but not as much as the first. A portfolio will help and we have a partial one online

**TinaC:** I think standardization is important, but we should not over assess the students.

**PaulDB:** Is there a state mandated list of instructional objectives that are to be used in classrooms according to discipline or subject?

**DonnaTr:** I agree Tina

**DonnaTr:** What is a 6 min solution Olga?

**OlgaW:** It is fluency practice and is available at all levels.

**OlgaW:** Another one is Read Naturally

**PaulDB:** It is a part of the reading/literacy program?

**DonnaTr:** gotcha...kind of like guided reading?

**TinaC:** I haven't heard of those

**OlgaW:** Those are separate but there are similar pieces in the adopted texts - they are one minute timed readings

**DonnaTr:** ohhh

**DonnaTr:** how do you determine reading levels? dolch list?

**KristenKi:** or Rigby Test?

**OlgaW:** If they have 95% accuracy and can comprehend then that is their level.

**SusanK:** I have heard that Read Naturally works on fluency by having students read text until they read more smoothly.

**PaulDB:** Is the 95% with comprehension the literacy level or the instructional level?

**OlgaW:** Yes, they practice to gain fluency. Repeated reading is one way to do that. However, we teacher word work like REWARDS and Words their Way to increase word recognition.

**DonnaTr:** Read Naturally...similar to an IRI

**OlgaW:** IRI - ?

**DonnaTr:** Informal reading inventory

**DonnaTr:** it consists of different level word lists

**OlgaW:** Yes - but they also have passages not just for assessment

**DonnaTr:** right

**DonnaTr:** they start by reading the word lists to determine what grade level reading passage they're at

**DonnaTr:** their fluency...comprehension...is all assessed to see what instruction is needed in the class for each student

**DonnaTr:** I did it for a case study once. it's great.

**DonnaTr:** or like a running record...

**OlgaW:** Many students like to compete and better their fluency by charting their progress

**TinaC:** But then again, the teacher can't teach to all different levels.

**TinaC:** So how do we address that?

**OlgaW:** All students can have a different passage at the same time

**DonnaTr:** I believe it is the teacher's job to be able to cater to all different levels

**BJB2:** our hour is almost up, everyone! What a fast discussion

**DonnaTr:** as best possible

**DonnaTr:** indeed.

**TinaC:** I guess reading groups.

**OlgaW:** Thanks for some good info

**DonnaTr:** and that's where guided reading is great

**BJB2:** The next SPED discussion is March 19

**PaulDB:** No, but grouping does offer a viable option for instruction within the class.

**DonnaTr:** yea..I will definitely look up aimsweb

**OlgaW:** me too

**DonnaTr:** thanks Olga, Susan, Paul and the rest of you guys

**SusanK:** Good luck with it

**TinaC:** thanks for the discussion everyone.

**DonnaTr:** great information for a student teacher like myself

**PaulDB:** It has been interesting.

**BJB2:** Thanks, Paul, for leading the discussion.

**DavidWe:** Thanks, Paul. Good discussion

**OlgaW:** Tina - it is definitely a balancing act - but it can be done thanks everyone

**SusanK:** I am looking forward to my next training!

**KristenKi:** Even though I might not of said a great deal, all the information was very interesting and informative

**SusanK:** Thanks Paul!

**PaulDB:** Thanks to every one for an informative, lively session!! I look forward to hearing from each of you in future Spec Ed forums!!