

Title of Session: Special Education Forum

Moderator: Paul Bohac

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BjB : Hi, Paul!

PaulDB: BJ, Thank you for posting the poem on this screen. Every time I read it, I am reminded of how important it is for teachers to understand that their choice of occupations is not about money but about people and the future.

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WHAT TEACHERS MAKE

A poem by: Taylor Mali

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued: "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

He reminded the other dinner guests that it's true what they say about teachers: "Those who can...do. Those who can't ... teach."

To corroborate, he said to another guest: "You're a teacher, Susan," he said. "Be honest. What do you make?"

Susan, who had a reputation of honesty and frankness, replied, "You want to know what I make?"

I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could. I can make a C+ feel like a Congressional Medal of Honor and an A- feel like a slap in the face if the student did not do his or her very best."

"I can make kids sit through 40 minutes of study hall in absolute silence."

"I can make parents tremble in fear when I call home"

"You want to know what I make?"

"I make kids wonder."

"I make them question."

"I make them criticize."

"I make them apologize and mean it."

"I make them write."

"I make them read, read, read."

"I make them spell definitely beautiful, definitely beautiful, and definitely beautiful over and over and over again, until they will never misspell either one of those words again."

"I make them show all their work in math and hide it all on their final drafts in English."

"I make them understand that if you have the brains, then follow your heart...and if someone ever tries to judge you by what you make, you pay them no attention!"

"You want to know what I make?"

"I make a difference."

"And you? What do you make?"

teachmath.net/WhatTeachersMake.html

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MaryannDu joined the room.

PaulDB: Hello Maryann

BjB: Maryann leads the Assessment discussions in TI

MaryannDu: hi

PaulDB: So you lead the assessment discussion?

MaryannDu: me??

MaryannDu: I lead the classroom assessment discussion. am visiting here

MaryannDu: how are you?

BjB: nice opportunity to collaborate, Paul

PaulDB: Maryann, have you been looking at the possible revisions of NCLB and what that might mean to the whole high stakes testing issue?

MaryannDu: some

PaulDB: I am well, a little excited about you being with us tonight.

MaryannDu: though I don't think the changes will change the high stakes testing issues

MaryannDu: ohhhhhh.....

PaulDB: Well, perhaps it will re-direct the focus.

MaryannDu: lol

PaulDB: Come on now, be optimistic!

MaryannDu: I am an independent consultant in Chicago, focusing on program evaluation and research to practice. I am really focused on classroom assessment

MaryannDu: actually I am pretty optimistic

PaulDB: That is my area of interest as it relates to what is being done in the special education classrooms

MaryannDu: but then I am kind of out of the box and not dealing with the issues schools are

JeffC: I have some shocking news. The Oregon State Report Cards came out yesterday, and for some inexplicable reason the SPED students didn't do very well.

PaulDB: Wonder why?!?

JeffC: like I said... it's inexplicable!

MaryannDu: lol

PaulDB: I like your style!

MaryannDu: where are you Paul?

PaulDB: Shall we do introductions?

JosephineN: Hello! I'm fairly new to Tapped-In and was lost as to how to get here

PaulDB: Thats okay, you are here now

BjB: glad you figured it out, Josephine!

MaryannDu: I get lost all the time

BjB: Paul, why don't we officially start the discussion?

BjB: Welcome to today's Special Education Forum.

BjB: We usually start the Tapped In discussions with introductions

BjB: please let Paul know where you are located and what brings you to the discussion

PaulDB: I am a retired correctional education teacher and administrator with a background in special education.

MaryannDu: k. I am in Chicago. I am a program evaluator and interested in research to practice and classroom assessment

JeffC: I'm in Oregon, on Tapped In Helpdesk.

JosephineN: Ok. Well, I'm Josephine from Houston, TX. I am currently a pre-service teacher.

MaryannDu: Josephine, are you interested in sped?

PaulDB: Last month we were going to talk about assessment within the context of NCLB as it relates to special education programs.

JosephineN: Yes, I am a Special Ed major.

MaryannDu: ok

PaulDB: We covered a lot of ground but never quite got to the assessment portion.

MaryannDu: does that mean state testing and how do sped students fit in?

PaulDB: Apparently there is some confusion about assessment and the difference with testing.

MaryannDu: could you tell us more.

PaulDB: Statewide testing to measure AYP performance is not necessarily assessment

PaulDB: Assessment has a purpose related to instruction.

PaulDB: Testing determines what has or has not been learned according to some standard.

BjB questions the word "learned"

PaulDB: I know, it is kinda picky but helps clarify the issue.

MaryannDu: yes, and the type of assessment or test and the way that it measures the constructs determines to a great degree what the test or assessment is appropriate for.

PaulDB: Good point BJ, learned as in terms of can be demonstrated via some pre-determined mechanism.

MaryannDu: I find it interesting that districts and schools use accountability testing for individual diagnosis, which is totally inappropriate

PaulDB: Yes!!!

JosephineN: I see that too!

MaryannDu: accountability tests, such as those used for ayp, sample the constructs at such a high level, that you can not diagnosis from them.. they can only point in a direction.

MaryannDu: they are appropriate for accountability, but not classroom diagnosis. only district, grade level, and maybe schools grade level and classroom level

PaulDB: You have further refined the distinction between assessment and testing.

MaryannDu: assessment is broad, and testing is a type of assessment

PaulDB: The IDEA requires an IEP

MaryannDu: testing, is getting a measurement

MaryannDu: assessment may not be a measurement.

MaryannDu: IDEA????

MaryannDu: measurement in terms of scaled data

PaulDB: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

MaryannDu: ok

PaulDB: If we talk assessment we are also talking about instruction.

MaryannDu: totally

MaryannDu: instruction makes no sense without assessment

MaryannDu: in accountability terms that is

MaryannDu: learning for the fun of it is different

MaryannDu: and not part of accountability

PaulDB: What happens is that testing takes the place of assessment.

MaryannDu: how does that change things?

PaulDB: I am not sure it does in the grand picture but I am hoping that if we can understand the role that assessment plays perhaps we can move closer to making it possible to help spec ed kids be more successful in the high stakes testing arena.

PaulDB: For example, every teacher spends their day interacting with students.

MaryannDu: I think that there are several issues that are playing into this.

PaulDB: Please expand.

MaryannDu: whether it is assessment or testing doesn't make a difference.

MaryannDu: what is important is the diagnosis of learning

MaryannDu: and from that designing instructional practices

PaulDB: Learning, learning needs or effective instructional strategies?

MaryannDu: all of those

MaryannDu: but the purpose of the assessment is what is at issue.

PaulDB: But as Jeff already pointed out, Spec Ed kids in Oregon did not do well on the state's test.

MaryannDu: accountability tests are designed to assess across a broad spectrum of information, by sampling in a specific manner

MaryannDu: yes,

MaryannDu: the test was not designed to account for any differentiation in test taking

MaryannDu: even though they may have said it does

MaryannDu: how about timing

MaryannDu: or writing ... could kids type instead?

MaryannDu: take more time

PaulDB: I would suggest that it also did not take into account variations in learning abilities.

MaryannDu: do it orally?

MaryannDu: no it did not.

PaulDB: Most tests do allow for extended times if a need for accommodations has been identified.

MaryannDu: it does not have a base and a ceiling

MaryannDu: and that is critical to be able to say that all students have to have xxx or yyy to have the base

PaulDB: Actually it does because it is usually by grade, if you accept grade levels as a base or ceiling.

MaryannDu: no, that would not be a base or a ceiling in testing terms

PaulDB: There is a progression that is built into most state's testing programs.

MaryannDu: a base or a ceiling would be the minimum number of items or a lowest level that is acceptable.

MaryannDu: no, that is not the same

MaryannDu: most state tests do not have enough items to have a base and a ceiling

MaryannDu: maybe a ceiling

MaryannDu: but not a base

DoralyG: oh so u say they're not the same

DoralyG: you have a point

MaryannDu: a base is more than a grade level division

PaulDB: I agree.

MaryannDu: a base might be enough items correct to form a base

MaryannDu: and it couldn't be the ceiling as well!

MaryannDu: so if I am in 3rd grade and get all my items right, and go on have I hit the ceiling for 3rd grade?

JosephineN: No kidding

PaulDB: But there is a performance level at each grade level that serves to determine if a youth does or does not "pass".

MaryannDu: yes, and how are they determined?

PaulDB: That is a part of the individual state's testing protocol.

MaryannDu: right and most of them are the "norm"

DoralyG: norm, in what sense

MaryannDu: even though we can these tests criterion referenced. they are normed

PaulDB: Usually it is reflective of the standards defined in the NCLB.

MaryannDu: testing standards?

DoralyG: NCLB?

MaryannDu: normed as in what is the mean or the median and it changes from testing to testing?

PaulDB: Most of the standards in NCLB come from the research that has been done by NAEP?

MaryannDu: so say 10 kids take the test, in some states the cut point is predetermined --
- 5 should be correct on a 15 item test

MaryannDu: in some states the norm is the mean

PaulDB: I am not sure if that is the correct acronym.

MaryannDu: above or below

MaryannDu: standards in nclb as in the testing standards? each state has their own learning standards

MaryannDu: NAEP is different

DoralyG: So what you mean is testing is different that is set up by NAEP

MaryannDu: it is research based and is national assessment of education progress

MaryannDu: or something like that

MaryannDu: a test that is given over and over, I am sure with changes

MaryannDu: to see where we are in relation to where we were

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: that is a whole different kind of test and process and purpose for the testing

PaulDB: But the NCLB also looks at where we are while defining where we are to go.

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: but in a different way

DoralyG: how do they define were we go

MaryannDu: NAEP is a way to measure cohorts from year to year. to see if there are changes

DoralyG: oh that interesting

PaulDB: So, back to the role of assessment, it becomes a mechanism of the microorganism of the classroom.

MaryannDu: in nclb, each state defines where they will go, under the guidelines of nclp - like by a year 2010 kids will xxxxx.

MaryannDu: yues

MaryannDu: I believe that teaching learning is a conversation and some of that conversation is assessment

PaulDB: What matters to me is that assessment is required as a part of the IEP.

MaryannDu: what we hear and what we continue to ask or give a formal test of to find out more information to make instructional decisions.

DoralyG: Well I think you have a point were conversation is part of assessment

MaryannDu: yes. and assessment is not bad. just how we define it.

DoralyG: IEP is one and the other is IFSP

MaryannDu: and IEP has objectives, and we want to know if kids can do want we set out to help them do

PaulDB: The assessment result serves as a basis for the development of the IEP

MaryannDu: IFSP????

MaryannDu: yes

DoralyG: well IEP is one but IFSP also is important for the assessment

DoralyG: is it

MaryannDu: formal assessments can help determine the IEP

PaulDB: Yes

DoralyG: ok

MaryannDu: good test, that have good standard measurements and that can give is a good guideline.

MaryannDu: then we teach and continue to measure and find out how we are doing

PaulDB: But ongoing and periodic assessment is also a part of the IEP.

MaryannDu: at the end we know progress has been made and give the formal assessment again as a pre test

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: I don't see anything wrong with assessment, only in how we define it, use it, what we get from it, how the kids like it, and how they use, it. and how it guides our practices

MaryannDu: and maybe ...

MaryannDu: lolol

DoralyG: Well assessment is important

MaryannDu: critical

MaryannDu: but there are all kinds of assessments

DoralyG: on some basis but in some part is how you do the assessment on a child part of their IEP

MaryannDu: some give us a start and point us in a direction

MaryannDu: do you have specific assessments that you give?

PaulDB: Where I am trying to go is to think about assessment in the context of the instructional program.

MaryannDu: as a reading specialist, I would give a profile

MaryannDu: or develop a profile from a variety of basis assessments

MaryannDu: from the profile I would know how and where to focus. but not everything.

MaryannDu: say I found out that the 4th grader I am working with has 2nd grade vocabulary, and 1st grade comprehension.

DoralyG: What would you do in that situation

MaryannDu: I would from the assessment know that vocabulary is critical, and would define some activities for that that the basic word lists, and creating word dictionaries for the child specific to interests and reading to them,

MaryannDu: and for the comprehensions I would begin with oral reading and listening

MaryannDu: and talking about the story

MaryannDu: what do they get, and not get

MaryannDu: then having them read very easy book..... the k -1 book

MaryannDu: and talking about them, what did you see, like, what new words, what did you find out

MaryannDu: what did you like.

MaryannDu: everything totally about success

MaryannDu: I would do the reading at the first part, the oral reading

MaryannDu: then they would read

MaryannDu: I would be looking for what they are thinking about when I read the book

MaryannDu: what questions do they have

MaryannDu: if comprehension is poor then I think, this child is word reading and not reading for the story

PaulDB: Perhaps introduce some basic writing activities as a part of that process as well.

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: totally

MaryannDu: but if the comprehension is poor they are not thinking about things, just trying to figure them out. so in the writing I would begin by writing what they say

MaryannDu: part of it is the modeling, part is that they can just think, and then get to the skills of writing.

PaulDB: So that they could read what had been written.

MaryannDu: for me it is always about thinking, thinking, asking questions, liking reading and getting it.

MaryannDu: yes,

MaryannDu: then their writing fits right in

PaulDB: What you have just described is an excellent example of assessment in action.

JosephineN: absolutely

DoralyG: that sounds very comprehensive

MaryannDu: yeah

MaryannDu: do we see this a lot?

JosephineN: I've actually worked with some students similar to Maryann's example

MaryannDu: great!

PaulDB: But teachers do that only they don't realize what they have done.

MaryannDu: yes

DoralyG: I have done that with some children I tutor

MaryannDu: I think that we have to know more about what we are doing

JosephineN: I actually did what you've suggested

PaulDB: I agree!!!

JosephineN: of course!

MaryannDu: the more we know what we are doing the more we know how it works and then we do it even better and better

DoralyG: I agree

PaulDB: Which is why the issue of assessment is so important.

JosephineN: Being that these are not my students and I am allowed so little to know about their educational background other than what I observe, that's absolutely right!

MaryannDu: I believe that assessment is everything

PaulDB: Observation is a powerful assessment tool.

MaryannDu: that is the teachers role!

MaryannDu: yes

JosephineN: Indeed

DoralyG: yes I agree on the observation

JosephineN: It's amazing what I'm able to catch what my own mentors don't

MaryannDu: if we assess correctly, then students learn on their own, as we create the environments to learn

MaryannDu: I think listening to kids is critical they tell us so much

MaryannDu: without even knowing it

JosephineN: YES!!!

MaryannDu: and we can document observation, conversation, etc. and make them very valid

DoralyG: Yes and they will even tell you themselves their needs

MaryannDu: yes

JosephineN: Allowing the student to speak gives them ownership of what they learn... which helps them retain it so much better

PaulDB: I see what you mean as different from I understand what you said.

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: kids need to talk more

MaryannDu: I love kids talking

JosephineN: I do too

MaryannDu: they learn to think about what they don't get

DoralyG: You have a good point

MaryannDu: if we are trying to figure it out all the time, they are not learning

DoralyG: children are unique and have much to say

BjB . o O (before it gets too late...we have 5 minutes left. The next SPED discussion will be on April 16)

MaryannDu: I think our role is to guide thinking, problem solving

JosephineN: I am so elated when I literally see the light bulb go off

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: me too

BjB : Paul, do you want to follow up on the topic of assessment?

PaulDB: I think we should.

BjB agrees. Perhaps you can join Maryann's discussion on Classroom Assessment on April 5

PaulDB: We have begun to talk about various forms of assessment this evening and I would like to continue to expand the ideas further.

MaryannDu: sounds wonderful. thank you Paul

DoralyG: sounds great

DoralyG: thanks

JosephineN: Great!

BjB: Thanks, Paul, for leading this discussion.

DoralyG: Thanks Paul

JosephineN: Thank you, Paul

PaulDB: It is my belief that if we can better understand assessment we can begin to look differently at the high stakes testing programs we are all having to deal with.

MaryannDu: great fun

MaryannDu: yes

BjB: and thank you all for participating

DoralyG: yes

MaryannDu: bye all. I have to run.

DoralyG: bye have fun

PaulDB: Thanks to all of you for making this a very lively session this evening!!!

MaryannDu: not a problem, as you see I am not sure myself

JosephineN: Bye! Thank you, all!

DoralyG: thanks you for your wonderful time

MaryannDu: bye

DoralyG: bye

PaulDB: Maryann I am appreciative for your perspective and contributions this evening.

MaryannDu: thank you