

Title of Session: Alt/Correctional Education Forum

Moderator: BJ Berquist

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Room: Alt/Correctional Ed Group

BJB2: Linda, I know you're here for this discussion...Vwoj, you are also?

LindaG: This is my first time, so I don't know if I'm doing the right thing?????

VwojGst2: I don't know I was helping Linda get to the right place

DonO joined the room.

BJB2 smiles. Thanks, VW

BJB2 waves hi to Don!

BJB2: you're fine, Linda

DonO is glad to see BJ again.

BJB2: three's a crowd so we can start...

BJB2: welcome to today's Alt/Correctional Ed discussion...

VwojGst2: Are we supposed to see you?

BJB2: a reminder if you are new to Tapped In to go to the Actions menu in the top right of the chat and click on detach

BJB2: Tapped In is only text chat, VW

BJB2: we usually start all discussions with introductions. Please tell me where you are located and what interests you in the topic.

BJB2: I teach remedial communication in a male juvenile correctional facility in Pennsylvania

DonO: I'm in north San Diego county and I'm just curious.

BJB2 smiles. Don, David really appreciated your contributions during the ePortfolios discussion!

DonO blushes

BJB2: he thinks you should lead that discussion as a back up for Joseph ;-)

VwojGst2: I'm a special ed teacher in Wi and was helping my friend get to where she needed to be for a class

BJB2 . o O (Joseph is the consummate absent minded prof)

BJB2: most people in alt/correctional ed are special ed

BJB2 . o O (or should be!)

BJB2: any burning questions?

BJB2 . o O (or smoldering even?)

DonO: Are students required to attend classes inside?

LindaG: I'm a special ed. teacher in Wisconsin. I'm taking a tech. ed. class and I picked your topic as an assignment we have to do.

BJB2: yes, as long as they are under 18 or 21 and have not gotten their diploma or GED, Don

BJB2: thanks, Linda ...I'm flattered

DonO: Linda: do you teach primary or secondary?

BJB2: as a special ed teacher you see many of the kinds of kids we end up getting...

BJB2: usually they just fall through the cracks of overcrowded public school classrooms

LindaG: I currently teach primary, but I've taught middle school with children with behavioral problems

BJB2: do you find that you can spot the needy kids in the very early grades, Linda?

VwojGst2: Yes and often it is reflected in parental non involvement

BJB2 nods sadly.

BJB2: Don, do you have experience with alternative ed kids?

LindaG: We currently have a student that has been in the system, in and out of foster care and shelter. He has a very dysfunctional family. He does well in structured care facilities, but they keep sending him back home

DonO: Do you think parental non-involvement is a cause or an effect of raising a difficult child?

BJB2: excellent observation, Linda

VwojGst2: I think in most cases it is the cause, often families are very dysfunctional, parents don't know how to parent.

BJB2: can be both in my experience, Don. Parents can also be too busy surviving to pay attention to kids

LindaG: I feel left out I'm going to wave to all of you, too!

BJB2: Linda, start the line with a colon. Type :waves

LindaG: gee thanks

VwojGst2 waves

BJB2: good, Vicky

LindaG: I worked at a mental health/addiction facility with halfway houses for eleven years prior to teaching

DonO: When you see students in and out of care, how do you keep up a hopeful attitude?

BJB2: that must have been a real trial by fire, Linda! Elementary school must be a piece of cake

JeffC: As with any underserved population Don, you take solace in your successes.

JeffC: At least I do... take a look at <http://snurl.com/netc1> ...from when I taught at Richmond High.

BJB2: and you learn to measure success in very tiny increments, Don

LindaG: I agree, you need to look at the positive or you'd get burned out

BJB2: I've been teaching correctional juveniles for 23 years

DonO: How does a juvenile stay in a correctional facility?

BJB2: he or she is court adjudicated

DonO . o O (adjudicated?)

BJB2: average stay for our facility is 6-9 months

BJB2: sentenced by a judge

VwojGst2: Thanks for the info, I will visit again. I've never been in a chat room before.

LindaG: Do you have a lot of back up when you need to restrain?

BJB2: nice meeting you, Vicky

VwojGst2: Have a nice evening:)

BJB2: Linda, good question...

VwojGst2 left the room (signed off).

BJB2: if a teacher needs help they get on the intercom and holler and the cavalry comes running

BJB2: but the staff is pretty experienced...

BJB2: and has learned to spot trouble before it escalates

DonO: I'm a substitute teacher. I was encouraged to try the court schools. I was told they were better behaved than many HS students.

BJB2 agrees, Don. You have better admin back up too

DonO: What are the student attitudes like?

BJB2: kids aren't allowed to swear and they can't bring weapons to school ;-)

DonO laughs

LindaG: I ask that question because we often have students who make threats to hurt themselves and the parents are in denial, so they don't get the appropriate intervention. Lots of these kids will end up in correctional facilities because they do not get the appropriate mental health support. It really frustrates me. I'd mortgage my house for my child. Lots of parents are not willing to do anything.

BJB2: actually, the kids love school. It's often their first experience with success in an educational setting for a number of reasons

DonO: What is your magic?

BJB2 nods to Linda. Another example of 'falling through the cracks.'

BJB2: no magic...lots of hard work learning how to engage students in a way that guarantees success

BJB2: most teachers individualize lessons

DonO: Linda: I think a lot of parents give up by the time their children are teenagers. I notice lots of parents in K, but very few involved in HS.

LindaG: I agree, you guys do magic with kids. Lots of times all these kids need is structure and consistency.

BJB2 nods to Linda.

BJB2: the trick then is the transition part...

BJB2: going from an institution back into the community

BJB2 . o O (successfully)

DonO: Isn't this the key in special ed - structure, structure, structure?

DonO: DO you see them after they leave?

BJB2: I don't. We rarely hear about students who have left unless they are killed

BJB2 . o O (no news in this case is good news)

LindaG: How can that work when the family situation stays the same and the child is going back to that chaos. I don't feel anyone can create that type of magic.

DonO can't imagine students dying

BJB2: right, Linda. The child has to be given the tools to find solutions ...support in the community

BJB2: Don, almost EVERY one of my students has seen someone die

DonO: That must be hard on a teenager

DonO: Is the military a good option when they get old enough?

BJB2: that's another factor...many are suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome

BJB2: for some the military is an option...depends on their mental health

BJB2: and their ability to tolerate discipline and structure

LindaG: We see, at the primary level, kids at risk. Don't you think more should be done at that level? Early intervention?

BJB2 cheers for Linda YES YES YES!

LindaG: How?

BJB2: again, the reality is that this won't happen until we don't have to do standardized testing up the wazoo, can individualize lessons to meet the needs of the students, and can have small classes

BJB2: we need to start earlier with having the students be in control of their own learning...to nurture lifelong learning

LindaG: Wow, you hit the nail on the head. I feel like I'm stressing my kids out. They have enough issues in their lives without having to test the life out of them. Also makes teaching quite boring

DonO: If a student is identified and has an IEP a lot can be done, but if the parents don't cooperate ... nada

BJB2: yes, the cliché that it takes a community to raise a child is still true

LindaG: Even when the parents do sign the papers, they often do nothing different and the child continues to have the same issues.

LindaG: I often feel like I'm a mom, a teacher, a nurse and a therapist at work.

DonO: Linda, but the schools can bring resource appropriate for the child to help

DonO: Yes, Linda you are - after all you're licensed! There is not license required to be a parent.

BJB2 chuckles...true, Don

LindaG: As a special ed. teacher I'm usually in the reg. ed. classes a lot, and I intervene prior to papers. It's too hard for me to watch a child fall deeper and deeper behind. Many cut-backs have decreased a lot of those resources.

DonO: Linda: did you work with addicted juveniles or adults?

BJB2 . o O (Linda works in a public school)

BJB2: Linda, it's easy to point out all the stuff that's wrong

LindaG: both, for two years I worked at a half way house with dually diagnosed males(addiction and mental illness)

BJB2: but, you pointed out earlier that you have to focus on what you CAN do. Otherwise you get swallowed alive

LindaG: It's also difficult, at times to remain positive. In this field we really need to take care of ourselves so that we can be good for our kids.

BJB2: this is where I point out that Tapped In saved me ;-)

DonO . o O (interesting, tell us more)

BJB2: we need to take care of ourselves, and we need to be able to meet with colleagues and vent and share success stories

LindaG: That's cute, how do you do that smiley face?

DonO: semicolon dash right parenthesis

BJB2 nods to Don

DonO: ;-)

DonO: BJ - tell us a recent success story

BJB2: I survived my 23rd year!

LindaG: Thanks, hey this place is kinda like a support group for us

BJB2 . o O (wasn't sure I'd make it for a while)

DonO sits in front of the fire and listens

BJB2: exactly, Linda

BJB2: I've found that participating in the Tapped In discussions has also helped me maintain a better perspective

BJB2: all teachers tend to get isolated in their classrooms...

LindaG: I'd agree it would

BJB2: and rarely have the opportunity after some of the fascinating prof dev opportunities provided by the district to give and get feedback on what works and what doesn't work and how to fix it

DonO: Yes, teachers get isolated

BJB2: the weak link in most professional development is the follow through

DonO: Few other professions are so isolated - maybe long-haul truckers...

LindaG: I love working with kids. It's hard to keep a balance at times. Sometimes I'm all worn out before I get home to take care of my own child. ---- This is kinda nice to talk with adults that have similar issues in common.

BJB2 agrees with Linda.

DonO too

BJB2: there is also a special ed group that meets in Tapped In once a month

BJB2: I try not to make the alt/correctional ed discussions a grouch fest...we do accomplish a lot of good things

LindaG: What do you guys do to keep stress low in your lives (especially with the stress level in your job)?

BJB2: maintain a sense of humor, Linda!

BJB2: exercise helps

BJB2: and I volunteer at a day camp during the summer for regular kids

DonO: Do you use systems of rewards for the students?

BJB2: I prefer to use intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards are very short lived

DonO cheers!!!!

BJB2 smiles

DonO: When I sub in a class with a complex extrinsic rewards system, I know I am in for a hard day. :-)

LindaG: Oops! I don't know if you're asking me, but I found that eating lunch with my students or playing with them at recess is a bigger reward than having a reward box to choose from. The kids seem to be coming in more and more neglected, and lunch with an adult is very rewarding to them. I let them pick a dessert and I bring it in that day.

DonO: I can never do it right and when I don't classroom management goes to ...

DonO: I also notice children like to have lunch with the teacher - even the sub ... and the things they tell me are so surprising...

LindaG: It must be difficult to sub in a different class each day and to be successful at classroom management. You'd have to have a lot of tricks up your sleeve.

BJB2: take much of what they tell you with a grain of salt, Don ;-)

DonO laughs and agrees

BJB2: but they appreciate it when someone listens

BJB2 . o O (listening is a communication skill that is vastly underrated)

LindaG: I agree

DonO . o O (If I hear/see anything odd, I always report to the office)

BJB2: good idea, Don

DonO appreciates another hour with BJ

BJB2: our hour has flown!

BJB2: thanks for joining the conversation, Linda and Don!

DonO: Nice meeting your Linda

BJB2: it was delightful.

LindaG: It was great meeting you, too. You guys are really nice!

DonO is called for dinner

BJB2: enjoy, Don. Bedtime for me

BJB2 waves goodnight

LindaG: Me, too

LindaG: Good night, thanks for the great experience!