

Title of Session: Special Education Forum

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BJB2 waves hi to Jeff

JeffC waves

PaulDB: I saw Dr. Platt's response to your email regarding a discussion about the teacher survey. I will follow his lead in terms of when we go on-line. A Thursday session can be arranged in terms of my schedule.

PaulDB: Hello Jeff.

JeffC: Hi Paul. Going online with what?

BJB2: Paul and John Platt are going to be guest speakers for one of my alt/correctional ed discussions

PaulDB: I am working with a University professor in developing a grant application for juvenile justice educators.

PaulDB: We have developed a survey instrument that is being delivered on-line.

PaulDB: BJ has asked us to discuss the survey instrument and the rationale for the items included in the survey as part of a Tapped In discussion.

PaulDB: We have been trying to coordinate a schedule for both of us to be able to discuss the project.

JeffC: interesting

JeffC: this is a survey instrument different than what I'm used to (surveymonkey, surveykey, etc.)?

PaulDB: Well, it is being administered through a third-party agency.

PaulDB: More importantly, the 3rd party agency is directly affiliated with the public schools system.

JeffC: ok... I'll bite and play devil's advocate... what does it matter who administers a survey?

PaulDB: Bringing that entity to the table and the Department of Juvenile Justice agency along with the University as cooperative members of a grant application has been an experience.

PaulDB: In Florida, the majority of juvenile justice facility operations are provided through contracts between DJJ and private for-profit or not-for-profit entities.

PaulDB: Education programs in those facilities are provided either through the local school district where the facility is located or is provided through a contract between the local school district and a private provider.

PaulDB: To conduct a survey across all of those functional lines of authority and responsibility requires finesse.

JeffC: for reasons of privacy? politics? other?

PaulDB: Relying on a public school-related agency generates support from within the local school districts, reduces conflict with the juvenile justice facility contractors, and eliminates direct involvement by DJJ in the process.

JeffC: what kinds of questions will be asked of whom?

PaulDB: Because the purpose of the survey is to generate data to be used to develop a grant application that will provide inservice training and pre-service training for teachers in juvenile justice facilities, the need to keep the focus on the needs of the grant reduces the possibility for turf-control conflicts.

JeffC nods. I'm just trying to understand what the survey will entail.

PaulDB: Survey questions are rather limited to ensure focus on the grant application but every member of the juvenile justice educational population is being asked to participate and complete the survey.

JeffC: so... you're going to ask the kids questions.

BJB2 thinks the survey is for the educators, not the educatees

PaulDB: No, just the staff. Because the intent is to better understand what the staff consider to be the deficits in their professional preparation to work as teachers or educators in general, in juvenile justice settings.

JeffC: about what and in what way? just an aside... I saw a "gang worksheet" that kids were supposed to fill out (if they were caught involved in gang activities). it was a complete joke, aimed completely at getting them out of their gangs. it didn't even begin to address the reasons why they were in a gang in the first place. ok... so... just the adults.

BJB2: who issues the grant monies?

PaulDB: BJ can tell you that she was not "prepared" to work in a juvenile justice setting.

BJB2: Jeff, most people in correctional ed just kind of 'fall' into the position

JeffC nods... yeah... I can imagine! of course, my days at Richmond high were kind of like being in a juvenile justice setting quite often.

PaulDB: During her period of employment, she began to learn what she needed to know to work in that setting.

BJB2: there is little if any training or preparation in the kinds of social, emotional, and mental issues that the students are showing

BJB2: add learning disabilities and all the other baggage that these kids bring with them

PaulDB: Actually, there are two sources of grant money we are pursuing: federal money through OJJDP and state alternative ed money.

BJB2 nods to Paul

BJB2: Jeff, another twist to the problem is the NCLB Highly Qualified Educators

PaulDB: On top of the effects of IDEA, NCLB, 504 of Voc Rehab, there are the various state requirements such as Sunshine State Standards, and the local school district issues.

JeffC: don't get me started on NCLB!

BJB2 nods solemnly to Jeff

BJB2: and the standards testing that correctional facilities are required to provide

JeffC: I can't even get credentialed in Oregon (even though I'm credentialed in California) because of NCLB "Highly Qualified Educators" standards.

BJB2 . o O (but no district wants to take ownership of the special ed kids because they bring their scores down)

PaulDB: Well, add to those requirements the need for "safety and security of the institution", the responsibilities for reducing delinquency and the related desire to reduce recidivism and you can begin to see what kind of a mess the ed juvenile justice teacher is in as soon as s/he walks in the door.

PaulDB: What is most surprising is the number of teachers who work in both juvenile

and adult correctional education programs.

PaulDB: Yet, there is only one program that provides any real professional preparation for correctional educators.

JeffC: interesting

BJB2: is that the CEA program? What about the one Dr. Platt designed?

JeffC: what is it? what's the url?

PaulDB: As BJ already mentioned, so many of those who work in the correctional setting just fell into it. They were looking for a job, the correctional program had a vacancy....

BJB2: <http://ceanational.org/hcqe.htm>

PaulDB: It is the one offered through the CEA. The program that Dr. Platt initiated has been stymied because of a lack of support to add a correctional education endorsement to the teacher certificate. It is hoped that through this planned grant, we can build the local support for such an endorsement.

BJB2: I took a few courses with Dr. Platt's program, Jeff...excellent

BJB2: Paul was one of my teachers ;-)

JeffC: cool

JeffC: pretty amazing that there isn't that sort of endorsement in place.

PaulDB: More importantly, we are also hoping that as a result of the planned project we will be able to demonstrate the need for a common core group of classes to be offered as a part of every teacher preparation program that is accredited by NCATE.

BJB2: one thing that I think is changing rapidly, Paul, is that there are more and more online courses of all kinds being offered. People are not quite so afraid of them.

PaulDB: Jeff, correctional education is the red-headed step-child of the educational community.

BJB2 nods sadly

PaulDB: I agree BJ, I am teaching for the local community college and we are doing it on-line.

BJB2: unfortunately, just as in regular education, you have to engage the community to raise the child...the community has to also take responsibility for at risk children

PaulDB: I presented at a statewide meeting of juvenile justice educators down in Tampa during the early summer to talk about the on-line program through the community college.

PaulDB: But the advantage of on-line courses is that it expands the definition of "community".

PaulDB: I make it a point to tell my students about TappedIn and to provide them with the URL so that they can join.

BJB2 smiles. Yes, in a way...but you still have to eliminate abuse, sexual abuse, poverty, drugs, learning disabilities have to be identified earlier, and teachers have to be more proactive

BJB2 . o O (as do parents)

PaulDB: The one thing that we need to do is to help the public learn how to see through the media hype.

PaulDB: While the problems of delinquency and criminal behavior are pervasive, they are not insurmountable.

PaulDB: We need to develop a constituency that will be supportive of approaches proven to be effective if provided time to implement in a meaningful fashion.

JeffC: I wonder what those approaches are.

PaulDB: All too often, people expect miracles in much too short a time-period.

JeffC: What I see (in my limited experience) are attempts at "remediation." I don't buy into that.

BJB2: education is one, Jeff. Kids who graduate or get a GED are less likely to recidivate

JeffC: right... i'm thinking along the lines of how that education happens.

BJB2: another is transitions programs that support the offenders entry back into the community

PaulDB: Well, I can tell you Jeff that research has shown the value of education for both juvenile and adult offenders. But the public reacts to spending money for correctional education if it means that public school children are "deprived".

BJB2: that education happens in correctional facilities

PaulDB: As BJ says, the other part of that process is transition.

JeffC: I'm thinking about education... and how the "system" just doesn't work for a lot of students, and how when I go into an alternative ed setting and see "remediation" in process... that it's a waste. students need something much different if they're to succeed. is that something that is looked at with your project, Paul?

PaulDB: I was Title I coordinator for Florida's juvenile justice education program back in the early 1970's. We were a part of a national study of the Title I project. One of the findings from that study was that delinquent kids who returned to the public school after release from the juvenile justice facility did not stay long in the school setting.

BJB2 . o O (alternative ed teachers don't get any special training either)

PaulDB: That is the other part of the problem Jeff, who defines "alternative education"?

PaulDB: Kids released from juvenile justice facilities are ostracized in the public schools, the administration watches their every move so as to avoid an incident and when something happens, the kid is suspended or expelled very quickly.

PaulDB: A transition program would go a long way towards reducing the conflict between the youth and the school by making it possible to discuss and plan before the event occurs.

BJB2: most kids are sent to alternative schools rather than back to the public schools. So they're being set up for failure from day one

PaulDB: Much like in the alternative setting, knowing that there might be problems is not the same as developing a plan for addressing potential problems.

BJB2: there are no easy answers, Jeff.

PaulDB: Again, this is an area where understanding the relationship between assessment and evaluation has real value.

PaulDB: If we were to assess kids, using assessment instruments/procedures related to what we want the kids to learn (reading writing, social skills, career development interests) we might be able to develop the plans for providing effective programming and instruction.

BJB2 . o O (and add to that drug counseling, mental health counseling, etc., etc., etc.)

PaulDB: Of course, BJ, I was just trying to suggest that assessment offers more than just an academic orientation or focus.

BJB2 nods to Paul

PaulDB: I am looking forward to the discussion you want Dr. Platt and I to lead BJ. I suspect there will be some lively exchanges between and amongst the members of your group!

BJB2: I think another thing you mentioned that is lacking in most treatment programs is time.

BJB2: It looks like that discussion will be February 21 at 9pm EST unless I hear differently, Paul

BJB2: I'll be sure to do some publicity on the CEA listserv

PaulDB: In a perfect world, there would be a professional program to prepare students to become correctional educators. Such a program would incorporate many of the elements of any teacher preparation program but would emphasize some areas more than other components.

PaulDB: Where I think the most important focus would be directed would be in the area of teaching methodology.

BJB2: quite a few juvenile justice programs...for probation, etc.

BJB2: seems logical that there should be education/teaching methodology

PaulDB: While every classroom has divergent learners, the population in a correctional setting or an alternative education setting is almost entirely composed of divergent learners.

BJB2: great discussion, Paul!

JeffC: right... you'd think that within a correctional setting you'd need the most innovative approaches to education... but I think that it's more remediation than anything else, and that students for the most part would tend to just tune out and continue to drop out.

PaulDB: Most teacher training programs mention such learners but do little to prepare teachers for helping such learners learn how to learn.

BJB2: Jeff, you think we have problems getting regular educators to use tech....

PaulDB: Jeff, I cannot argue the question of remediation, because that is the predominant thinking among most teachers who work in that setting. It is so, not because it is true, but rather because the teacher operates from a faulty paradigm.

BJB2: most correctional facilities do not allow any kind of tech or online connectivity for

safety and security reasons

JeffC: I agree Paul.

JeffC: and bj... if they could use word processors, they could still collaborate online with the teacher's help... a bit awkwardly perhaps, but doable.

BJB2: part of the remediation problem is that many kids have missed a great deal of school for a variety of reasons

PaulDB: True BJ, but remediation assumes there is some level of prior learning. In truth, if we approach the teaching responsibility from the perspective that learning has been splintered (picked up bits and pieces but not in any sequence so as to understand in a developmental fashion), we would teach to the student rather than to the perception of what the student should know.

BJB2 nods about doable...I did it with the Civil Rights Forum and am doing it with our blog

PaulDB: I believe that every correctional education program could develop and implement an intranet operation.

BJB2: I would like to continue this discussion next month, Paul

PaulDB: By confining the connectivity through file servers operated within the correctional facility, no outside access would be possible, yet everything that can be done on the internet could be accommodated via the local in-house intranet.

PaulDB: Yes, by all means BJ!!

PaulDB: My goodness, I didn't realize the time!

BJB2: excellent. I get into a rut and forget some of the important stuff...does me good to review

PaulDB: I have been having so much fun the time has passed much too quickly.

BJB2: thanks, Paul. See you in January

PaulDB: Thank you BJ, see you next year!!

BJB2: have a safe and happy holiday.

PaulDB: Thank you and the same to you and yours.