

Title of Session: Special Education Forum - ESE Mental Health

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Room: Special Education Forum Group

PaulDB: Hello BJB

PaulDB: I am in a good mood tonight!!

BJB2 smiles...wonderful!

BJB2: any special reason for the good mood?

BJB2 . o O (I'll announce your session in a minute)

PaulDB: My dissertation has been accepted and I received a bound copy last week!

BJB2: Congratulations!

BJB2 applauds wildly for Paul

PaulDB: I should be awarded my ED.D by the end of this week.

BJB2: so now we have to call you Dr. Paul?

PaulDB: I hope not!

BJB2 winks...that is a fabulous accomplishment, Paul. Your family must be so proud

PaulDB: It was dream that had to wait until I retired to fully pursue.

PaulDB: Yes! But I think they are more happy that it is over rather than anything else.

BJB2 nods solemnly

PaulDB: Hello Jeane

JeaneG: hi there

JeaneG: thank u

BJB2: let's start with some intros, Paul. Jeane, you have the breaking news about Paul!

BJB2: I'm a retired art and communication teacher located in Pennsylvania

PaulDB: I am a retired Correctional Education Administrator with a background in Special Education.

JeaneG: I am a Senior Education Major at University of Texas Pan American..Edinburg,TX

BJB2 . o O (I haven't quite maximized my retirement as Paul has ;-)

BJB2: congrats, Jeane.

PaulDB: Are you thinking about working in Special Education Jeane?

JeaneG: Thank You.. My Professor has introduced us to the world of Tapped In and I am so grateful

JeaneG: it is possible..right now I am Early Childhood Education Major. Ec-6

PaulDB: If you become a "regular" user you will find it very helpful!

JeaneG: yes.. already finding that out..thanks

PaulDB: Well, as an Early Childhood major you will have a key role in the identification of possible ESE students.

PaulDB: Have you been introduced to RTI yet?

JeaneG: No not yet..

PaulDB: You will!

BJB2 . o O (RTI = Response to Intervention)

JeaneG: I wish our program offered courses on the specialty of ESE..but it is only offered to students specializing in it

PaulDB: However, if you think about it, you will also find that it is nothing more than good teaching-planning but with an increased level of sophistication.

JeffC joined the room.

PaulDB: Hello Jeff

BJB2 sighs...a shame since all teachers need to work with sped kiddos

PaulDB: You are so right BJB!

JeaneG: I agree.. so that is why I chose this group tonight...

BJB2: Jeane, there is a folder on RTI resources in this room.

JeffC once told his principal at Richmond High that since about 80% of my 9th graders read at the 3rd grade level... wasn't I in fact a SPED teacher?

JeaneG: I will look into it.. thank you

PaulDB: Well Jeff, that is probably because you see each student as a unique one of a kind individual and will automatically make accommodations as needed.

JeffC: true... I did make 150 each year IEPs when I was there.

PaulDB: Last month we were talking about mental health issues in the special education population.

PaulDB: Do we want to continue on that topic or is there something else we should discuss?

PaulDB: Jeane, is there something specific that you would like to discuss?

BJB2 . o O (mental health issues in the regular population?)

JeaneG: I am not prepared to ask for anything specific just yet.. sorry

PaulDB: Or maybe we should talk about how regular class teachers participate in the IEP development and delivery activities?

PaulDB: For example, as an Early Childhood teacher, you will focus on helping kids learn to read by grade 3 so that the child may read to learn afterwards.

BJB2 . o O (I've also been running across several posts on resiliency)

BJB2: Teaching children how to be more resilient can improve children's outlook on life + be better learners : <http://bit.ly/XugWr>

PaulDB: What about the child that does not seem to master the skills as quickly as his/her peers.

PaulDB: You raise a good point BJB regarding resiliency.

PaulDB: If children can learn how to overcome obstacles, they become more competent as students and as individuals.

PaulDB: Given that teachers only see a child for a limited number of hours per day, it is crucial that teachers, especially early childhood teachers, become more sensitive to children's needs.

PaulDB: Sometimes a lack of performance can be due to factors other than academic skill deficits.

PaulDB: Sometimes academic deficits are associated with special education issues, or maybe developmental delays, or possibly home-community influences.

PaulDB: A key component of resiliency training is developing the capacity for generalization.

JeaneG: this is interesting because with the way "the world is turning " now with an increase of living standards..(money, power) teachers are struck with the obstacle of teaching kids with this annoyance on their minds...

PaulDB: So maybe the child does not perform because the teacher does not teach?

PaulDB: Good point!

JeaneG: teaching students to be resilient in this day and age is an obstacle for the teacher

PaulDB: Teaching is both an art and a science.

PaulDB: Actually, it's not that big an obstacle if you keep in mind what it is you are trying to accomplish.

JeaneG: I think that teachers are forced to battle the growing desire for kids and adults to be paid more, accepted more by society.. these "higher standards" pose a threat to kids and their mental health..

PaulDB: For example, if a student is constantly doing poorly, it pays to determine why and that usually means a task analysis (if the teacher has time), maybe a change in instructional strategies (to include auditory learning, visual learning and tactile-kinesthetic learning opportunities).

PaulDB: Higher standards is a serious issue in the academic environment.

BJB2 . o O (interesting article on age of onset for any disease involving mental health issues: John Medina on the teenaged brain. Peak age of onset for any disease involving mental health is 14 years <http://bit.ly/5CFA1>)

BJB2 . o O (Medina wrote Brain Rules)

PaulDB: And the evidence suggests that kids who will experience problems in school can be identified as early as 4th grade.

BJB2 nods to Paul

JeaneG: 11 years old?! wow... so much for one at such a young age!

PaulDB: The constant pressure to perform, the requirement that kids be able to read by end of grade 3 or be retained creates all sorts of psychological distress for the child.

PaulDB: Some of that distress comes from the child's family, some from the child's teacher, some from the child's school, and some from his/her peers.

PaulDB: Can you image a 12 year old in the third grade or even a 13 year old in the third grade?

PaulDB: This is where the whole concept of resiliency comes into focus.

PaulDB: A child who is retained in school must not only deal with the fact that his/her friends have moved on, but must also contend with being both the biggest and the oldest student in the class.

JeffC: well... when I subbed last year I saw a whole class of 9th/10th grade ESL students doing 2nd/3rd grade phonics work on the computers... so yeah.... I can imagine it.

PaulDB: But an ESL class is a little different.

PaulDB: They may be more receptive to the lower level work because they do not understand the language.

JeaneG: I think by promoting optimism and teaching the students to think more realistically and flexibly about the problems they encounter.

JeaneG: will help them cope with these new found challenges

PaulDB: As they become more proficient, they will be allowed to progress.

PaulDB: You are so right on Jeane.

JeaneG: is that a word...flexibly??

BJB2 . o O (works for me ;-)

PaulDB: It works in this case!

PaulDB: But now how would you do that?

JeffC: they were on task... but bored... I don't think that doing 3rd grade work is appropriate for 9th graders no matter what level they test at.

JeaneG: I am hoping to learn that this coming year..in my education courses...:-)

PaulDB: Unless the work is disguised as 9th grade work, meaning while content is 3rd grade, context may be more adolescent or adult oriented.

JeffC: right... but like I said... this was a computer program that had basically no context... drill and kill 3rd grade work. this is the type of CALL that many ESL teachers use since they can just sit the kids in front of the computer and leave them alone.

PaulDB: For starters, a task analysis would be helpful in allowing the student to identify the specific areas of difficulty rather than trying to address too much.

PaulDB: All right Jeff, I concede that many times ESL kids are not provided the kinds of assistance that would be most beneficial.

PaulDB: Communication barriers work both ways. However, that imposes a responsibility on the teacher as well as the student.

PaulDB: As Jeane noted, the pressure to do more with less yet still have the same outcome creates a real problem.

JeaneG: unfortunately here in Texas students whether or not ESL are being given the short end of the stick in education.. teachers are having to deal with Taks officials breathing down there necks.. this teaching to the test..is also doing great damage to the mental health of students teachers and even parents

JeffC: yup

PaulDB: So we must find a way to make sense of the situation.

PaulDB: I am opposed to high stakes testing because it does not create the optimal atmosphere in the classroom.

PaulDB: Instead, it defines the teaching-learning paradigm in the context of test performance.

PaulDB: To address the issue, we need to re-think how we will conduct class. For new teachers (not on continuing contract) it becomes a real problem.

JeaneG: yes.. so the teacher must learn to get back to the basics..the basics that actually are more effective than testing..like creative writing?? projects that promote decision making..problem solving

PaulDB: Yes!

BJB2 smiles. I like your thinking, Jeane!

PaulDB: But in response to the emphasis on "test-taking", I would suggest that once or twice a week that the teacher "plan" a testing skill teaching activity.

JeaneG: I am a product of hippy parents that have been teachers for over 30 years... they are all about the keeping kindness, wisdom, old school writing and communication..like actually using a pen and paper to do school work

PaulDB: Your parents sound much like the teachers I had and who influenced me to become a teacher.

PaulDB: Unfortunately, "education" has become a business rather than a learning adventure.

JeaneG: unfortunately..

PaulDB: The idea of a "planned" lesson on test-taking skills is intended to satisfy the inquisitive regarding how you are preparing your students to "take the test". It should also free up some actual "teaching" time that would accommodate creative writing, or classroom discussions.

BJB2: look at this later, Jeane...the url will be in your transcript <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfLYDm2U>

PaulDB: It provides you with some cover regarding the "teaching to the test" mentality yet also allows you to focus not on getting the "right" answer but rather on thinking through the question.

BJB2 agrees with Paul

PaulDB: I do too.

BJB2: the hour is almost up, Jeane...

PaulDB: Well tell us Jeane, how do you intend to address some of the issues you raised this evening?

BJB2: the next SPED discussion will be on September 14

JeaneG: I really enjoyed this chat ... I always knew that the state of a student's mental health was crucial but I am now aware that I need to educate myself and become an expert in this issue in order to do justice for my students...

PaulDB: I hope you will return Jeane.

JeaneG: I will do my best to return and learn !!! thanks!!!

PaulDB: We will again, I hope, address the issue further next month.

BJB2 . o O (I hope you will return and let us know what you've done.)

PaulDB: I will be working with a teacher in a juvenile justice facility providing assistance as she tries to implement an individualized learning program for her students.

JeaneG: oo I hope to be back to hear about your work..

BJB2: Thanks, Paul...I'll look forward to hearing how that works for you and then teacher

PaulDB: I am looking forward to the effort as she has a significant Special Education population in her class of 25 students.

PaulDB: It will serve as a backdrop to our mental health discussion next month I think.

BJB2: excellent!

BJB2 waves goodnight. And congrats again, Paul!

PaulDB: Thanks BJB and good night to you as well.