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Philosophy of Special Education

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I believe children; no matter who they are, where they come from, or what disability they may have; has the ability to learn. I think all children have this ability however, it is important as educators, we give all students the equal opportunity to receive quality education. Through education, children can gain knowledge and skills, they can continue to build upon in their lives. Although we are all different with different challenges, every person has a piece to contribute in this life. I believe we, as teachers, should give all children the opportunity to face their fears, challenges, and weaknesses to grow to their potential and find purpose in life.

IDEA and Section 504 has helped open doors to children with disabilities to find their potential and overcome obstacles. These laws provide children with disabilities the rights to be provided with equal education without discrimination as every other student in school. I believe it gives them opportunity to prove they can learn and succeed, too. According to *Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education*, “The law reflects society’s concern about treating people with disabilities as full citizens with the same rights and privileges all other citizens enjoy (Heward, p.11).” Through IDEA, schools provide all children with disabilities with education, non-discriminatory evaluation, free public education catered to their needs through an individualized education plan, least restrictive environments, procedural safeguards, and parent involvement in decision making. Section 504 protects handicapped individuals to also receive a fair education. According to the text, “Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, states that ‘no otherwise qualified handicapped individual shall... solely by reason of his handicap, be

excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance' (p.19).” Even though these children may never be considered what we consider “normal”, I believe these laws are the essential key to helping them accomplish educational and life skills based on their individual needs. I believe these laws could be modified to meet the individual needs of these students a little better in a regular classroom. However, this is the right path to lead exceptional children to success in overcoming challenges. I believe laws, such as IDEA and Section 504, give these children an opportunity to find and expand their talents, skills, gifts, knowledge, and potential that help them feel worthy. I believe that when they expand these values in their lives, they can contribute to their families, communities and overcome any challenge that comes their way.

Exceptional children face obstacles and challenges in their everyday lives. I believe these obstacles to be their learning rate, social and life skills, motivation, behavior, feeling accepted, fear, anxiety and tension. Children with disabilities do have a different learning rate than students in a regular classroom. However, this does not mean they cannot learn the same information. It may take them more time to learn, but I believe we as educators should show them that we see the same potential in them as the rest of our students. Even though, they have a slower learning rate we should not exclude them and push them aside in our classrooms. I have pushed-in classrooms before to help my ELL students and have seen students that I know are SPED pushed aside. I have seen teachers not even pay attention to them because they do not know what to do with them. I have seen the student lose motivation, feel unaccepted, show unacceptable behavior, fear, anxiety, and tension simply because a teacher has pushed them aside. I believe this is not right. I believe they deserve to be included and to feel wanted in the classroom even though they learn differently. According to the text, “research has shown, however, that students with intellectual disabilities,

similar to all learners, benefit from participating in lively paced instruction with frequent response opportunities (p. 115).” As students with disabilities are included, they are motivated to participate and learn. I hope to make sure my student is in the front of the class and be provided with graphic organizers or sentence starters to help them in writing and speaking. I would also want to include them in group or partner activities where they have the opportunity to feel a part of the class. When they feel motivated and feel someone cares about their education, they want to hit and reach goals just as their peers.

A quote I live by in my teaching career is to “teach people not lessons.” I believe I must get to know all my students and their individual needs to be able to teach what they need in that moment. This will allow them to know I am aware of them, but also help them reflect and connect to the material I may be teaching. I believe they need a teacher that knows who they are, what they need, and to be guides to help them reach their potential. For me to know their needs, I must know their IEP goals, modifications and accommodations to support them in my classroom. As I am aware of their goals, I believe we must teach students with disabilities determination to hit their goals. In my classroom, I want to provide my students with positive reinforcements and instructive feedback as they reach their goals and skills. “Teaching self-determination skills to students with intellectual disabilities can help them become motivated, self-reliant problem solvers who act on their world rather than wait to be acted upon (p.116).” I believe these skills will help them feel proud of their accomplishments, motivated to find success, and learn self-accountability.

I believe as we come to know our special education students, we will know what environment is the best to receive their education. An important consideration I believe, would be the students IEP. This is where the team determines the type of instruction and supports the student may need according to the data and assessments. These supports and needs may determine the

teaching environment in which the student may be placed. *Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education* states, “IDEA requires that every student with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (p. 56).” This law protects special education children from being discriminated based on disability. This allows students with disabilities to be included in schools or classrooms with students without disabilities. Furthermore, there are several settings in least restrictive environments. “LRE is a relative and wholly individualized concept; it is not to be determined by disability category (p. 56).” Since LRE is individualized, I believe it is important students are placed in the environment most appropriate where their educational needs will be met.

I believe a special education teacher’s most important role is to provide the support, guide, advocacy and instruction to their student’s educational needs. Special education teachers are there to help the children learn and progress in their lives through their individual needs. I think they are there to help their students find their worth and their potential. I believe that as they work together with the teachers, administration and parents to help reach their goals, these students will be able to purpose in their lives.

As a regular education teacher, I believe they are to be a support system to the students and parents. I believe they are there to make sure they include and meet their students’ needs as well. I believe as a regular education teacher, they need to work as a team with the special education teacher to know how to include the child with their peers and the learning experience. “Special education is a team game (p.47).” As a teacher I do not want to push my students with disabilities aside. I want them to see and know the potential I see in them.

I believe that no matter who you are or what your challenges may be, every single person has purpose and piece to contribute to our world. If we, as educators, learn to “teach people, not lessons,” our children with disabilities will feel accepted and motivated to reach their goals. They

will feel like the kings and queens, that they are, ready to conquer their fears, obstacles, weaknesses and grow to who they were meant to be.

Reference Page

Heward, William L., Alber-Morgan, S. R., & Konrad, M. (2018). *Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education*. Pearson. 2009.