*Philosophy of Special Education*

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The term exceptional child has become near and dear to my heart. Learning about the different disabilities, obstacles, and special education as a whole has completely opened my eyes, not only as a future teacher, but as a human being. I have been enlightened by the complex and unique minds of those who are effected by exceptionalities. I believe that God has a plan for everyone he’s put on this Earth, and that he has created them in his image. Personally, I feel as if we are all blessed by the children he’s given special gifts to.

I believe every child has the ability to learn, provided the necessary materials and support for what they’re learning. I believe that a child with a disability has the *right* to learn, like any other child. It takes an understanding and patient teacher, as well as an encouraging school family to make sure that the child with the disability is as comfortable as possible in all learning environments. Just because a student is restricted in one subject or learning environment, it doesn’t mean they will be that way in all learning environments. There are different ways for a student to be disabled. A student could have an intellectual disability, learning disability, emotional or behavioral disorder, autism spectrum disorder, communication disorder, deafness or hearing loss, blindness and low vision, a physical disability, a health impairment, or ADHD. A student could also be gifted and talented. Whatever the exceptionality, I believe every child can learn.

The impact that the IDEA and Section 504 have had on children with disabilities is magnificent. The IDEA stands for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The purpose of the IDEA is to: 1. Ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education, that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. 2. Ensure the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected. 3. Assists states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities. The major principals of the IDEA are zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, free appropriate public education, least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, and parent participation and shared decision making. The IDEA has changed the in so many ways how schools see and help the students with disabilities. Without the IDEA, there would be no way for students with disabilities to effectively receive a public education. 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”. This means that schools can’t discriminate against children when it comes to participation of any kind. It requires that there be the necessary aids for students with any sort of impairments. The impact of these two programs has positively changed the way children with disabilities are included in school activities as well as non-school related activities.

Students with disabilities face a variety of obstacles, ones that can and should be combatted with different instructional strategies. The obstacles obviously vary depending on the disability, but some obstacles include, but are not limited to, reading problems, social skill deficits, fluency disorders, hearing loss, blindness, and physical impairments. An IEP, individualized education program, can be used to combat the learning obstacles. Expanding core curriculum, using assistive technology, using total communication, defining curriculum goals, using content enhancements, and applying behavior analyses are a few educational approaches to use when helping children overcome the difficulties they face.

Some of the most important considerations regarding where students with disabilities should receive their education revolve around location, price, and support. Just because a student has a disability, doesn’t mean they should have to go to an expensive school, miles away from their home, and away from their support systems. In my opinion, it is so important for the local communities of these children to support them. Which includes welcoming the students into their schools, into their clubs and programs outside of the classroom, and providing them any help they may need. It takes a village to raise a child and I honestly believe that.

I believe the most important role of a special education teacher is collaboration. I feel like this is most important, because it includes everyone involved in the situation. Collaboration makes it easier to diagnose and solve learning and behavior problems in the classroom. The special education teacher should collaborate with the regular education teacher and the parent of the child, as well as anyone else involved. This is important because special education as a whole is a team effort. The team that better communicates, plans, evaluates, and supports the child is a team closer to success.

The role of the regular education teacher in the instruction of students with disabilities is to ensure early intervention, to be patient, and be understanding. In the very beginning of this class, we watched a video that portrayed what it is like to be a child with a learning disability in a regular classroom. The video tugged at my heart strings with the insensitive truth that is the misunderstood mind of a child with learning disabilities. It showed the teacher blaming, shouting, and giving up on the child. Since watching that video, I believe it is the duty and role of the regular education teacher to be understanding, have patience, and start the intervention process early when it comes to the instruction of students with disabilities.

I believe that every child, especially those with exceptionalities are able to learn. The IDEA and Section 504 have paved incredible pathways in education for children with disabilities. The children with disabilities face many obstacles, however different instructional methods can help those children overcome their disabilities. The most important consideration regarding where students with disabilities should receive their education are location, price, and support. The most important role performed by the special education teacher is collaboration. The role of the regular education teacher in the instruction of students with disabilities is to be understanding, patient and to begin early intervention for that child.