

The Key to Teaching

Both special and general education teachers are the key to the next generation's success. I want to facilitate an environment that works towards a child's full potential. Specifically, in my classroom, I want children to overcome obstacles and become avid workers who are fueled and persistent to better themselves. As a teacher, I want to enrich lives and ignite a passion for learning. I want to show my passion and enthusiasm for education and rub off on my students. I want them to come to class with smiles and a positive attitude and leave feeling proud and successful. The focus of my classroom will not be solely academic, but also help develop social and other life skills to create productive learners and members of society.

I believe all children, even those with a disability, are capable of learning. Students do not learn in the same ways or at the same rate as each other, so I will utilize different methods and strategies to meet the individualized needs of my students. My goal is to always challenge my students, so they will continue to expand their skills and obtain the power of a growth mindset. I will modify curriculum and instruction to fit each student while showing the whole class how our lesson applies to real life (Heward). I will create a safe learning environment that pushes their knowledge and allows them to express their thoughts. I want my students to be curious, observe, ask questions, and always seek more answers. By not being lecture-heavy and showing the importance of content, I believe students will be attentive and experience a drive of internal motivation.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have a major impact on the education of those with a disability. IDEA is a federal grant that influences every school. The law was established to ensure people with disabilities are treated as full citizens with the same rights and privileges as the other citizens. It

was founded on six major principles: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, free appropriate public education, least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, and parent participation and shared decision making (Heward). Section 504 is a civil right law for those with a disability. The law states, “no otherwise qualified handicapped individual shall...solely by reason of his handicapped, 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” (Heward). As a result, new opportunities were extended to both children and adults with disabilities in education, employment, and various other settings.

Students with learning disabilities face many obstacles, such as possible written language deficits, math underachievement, weak social skills, attention deficits and hyperactivity, behavior problems, and low self-esteem or self-efficacy (Heward). To help, I would give explicit instruction, create high levels of engagement with motivating material and activities and provide frequent practice and feedback. In addition, I think it is important to use preventive, remedial, and compensatory intervention (Heward). These are designed to help a student with a disability overcome the obstacles in their path and teach them the knowledge they need as a member of society and a student in the classroom. Besides these, learning strategies will be a focus in my classroom so children will be able to work towards achieving specific tasks or general problems independently.

To best impact a disabled child’s education, it needs to provide special services that aren’t available in a general education class. If there were only general education classes, students with special needs would fall behind quickly and would continue to struggle as the content progressed, because they need to be taught with different resources and methods (Heward). Therefore, to reach the best results, I would teach in a more secluded environment

with few windows and people to provide a minimal amount of distractions. Many parents are concerned about the instructional methods, their child's focus, the teacher's attitude, and the services. To ease parent's concerns, I would include a lot of resources, adapted materials, and teaching methods to fit the needs of my students. Plus, I know children have a hard time paying attention for long periods, so I will implement 15-minute interactive lessons throughout the day to help keep their focus (Heward). I will also break down the information into small and logical parts so children are able to comprehend it easier. My goal is to implement a constructivist approach and let students be active learners while allowing them to learn at their own rate.

The most important role of the special education teacher is to provide instructional based intervention. If I was a special education teacher, the curriculum I would use would teach the students items they would not learn in a general education classroom, such as how to minimize their disability and daily tasks (like hygiene upkeep) (Heward). In addition, I would integrate multi-sensory strategies in teaching and provide different opportunities for students to use a variety of functions. Besides this, I would continually be watching for characteristics which may indicate serious impediments to that individual's development (Heward). I recognize the importance of constant evaluation, so with that, I can find the most effective instructional strategy that yields the best result for each student.

Regular education teachers need to be aware of a student's disability and create a collaborative environment. It is important for disabled children to interact with other children their age and observe their behavior. This will help develop social skills as well as helping the disabled child realize norms, so they can use that knowledge outside of the classroom (Heward). I will create student interaction through peer tutoring, group projects, study buddies, and watch as new friendships are made and carry over to after-school or extracurricular buddies (Heward).

Regular education teachers also need to hold all students to the same high standards and give clear, explicit instructions. I will speak slowly, clearly, and give children time to process what I am saying. I will speak individually to disabled children to try to maximize their experience in the classroom and minimize their frustration, anxiety, and tension.

While there are many factors influencing a child's education, such as the instructional methods and environment, family involvement also impacts a child's education. The best combination for a disabled child to learn is a collaboration between the teachers, special support services, and their family. Family involvement is important for the child to feel supported, loved, and continue practicing what was learned in class that day. Therefore, while children are in charge of coming to class ready to learn, teachers are responsible for making that become a reality. I will help my students identify their strengths, explore new content, help them grow their skills, and have constant communication with their family. To conclude, teachers are the key to unlocking a student's potential and producing successful learners. And while being a teacher may be frustrating at times, there is no greater reward than seeing your students succeed. At the end of the day, when my students leave my room, I want them to know they are valued, unique, and can pursue anything they set their minds to.

References

Heward, W.L. "Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education, 11th Edition."

Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education, 11th Edition / Pearson.