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EDPC 610 – Foundations II
Assignment Five

Journal Reflection – High Incidence Disability

It may be hard to believe, but 5% of the school population has a Learning Disability (Salend.) What that means is that today's classroom isn't the same as it used to be. Or maybe it is, maybe some of these students were always in our classrooms. However, today we are more aware and are better equipped to adapt our classrooms to assist these students. You can compare students with High Incidence Disabilities to today's diverse multicultural classroom; these students are just as unique. High Incident Disability students may fit in one of the following categories: learning and academic disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD,) Mental Retardation, Mild Emotional/Behavioral disorder, or Speech and language impairments. However, since they are all unique, they each of their own characteristics that hinder their learning in some way. This is why IEP's (Individualized Education Programs) are critical to a student's success. IEP's are the window into a student's strengths, everyday challenges and goals, as well as, how we can use technology to use the student's strengths to overcome their challenges and meet their goals.

The first step in adapting our everyday classroom is to be aware of the individuality of each student in order to facilitate the learning needs of each student. Many students with Learning Disabilities (LD) have difficulty paying attention. Teachers must be aware of this factor, and rather than punish the student for this, adapt his or her teaching methods to accommodate these student's needs. Other characteristics of students with Learning Disabilities are poor organizational skills and retention as well as difficulties in reading, writing and math. While a student with Speech, Language and Communications impairments will have difficulty with tasks such as "learning new vocabulary, following directions, understanding questions, pronouncing and rhyming words and expressing their needs, (Salend)" students with ADD have a list of traits that are obstacles for a student with High Incidence Disabilities. Like LD students, students with ADD may be disorganized and have poor motivation, however, they may also be distractible, talkative, immature, impulsive, uncooperative, overly shy or forgetful. In order help this type of student success in school, teacher can vary the teaching and learning methods and activities, provide structured motivating lessons, use visual aids, provide

clear directions verbal and written and provide opportunities or situations for these students to release their extra energy such as hands-on learning activities.

Another type of High Incidence Disability student is a student with some type of Mental Retardation. A student with an IQ between 50 and 75 is considered mildly retarded; between 30 and 50 is considered moderate and students with IQ scores below 30 severe and profound. While this type of student has specific learning needs, they often show a steady but slow rate of learning. This slow rate of learning may cause frustration, low self-esteem in Mental Retarded students. And while some of these High Incidence Disabilities are more obvious then others, you still may of some students in your class with these disorders that are not classified as such. One type of High Incidence Disability that is typically under-classified is students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. These students may be categorized as mildly or severely disturbed, and according to Salend, may show poor academic performance and self-control, little on-task behavior, reduced frustration tolerance, poor self-concept and low social skills. You may see students with disorders such as OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder,) bipolar disorder, or separation anxiety. Each of these students has specific needs in the classroom. In order to minimize challenges for these students teacher can build relationships with students and their families, establish and following a daily routine, use motivation as an instructional tool, allow opportunities for students to make their own choices and constantly try to build students self-esteem. And while, these adaptations will help assist students with High Incidence Disabilities, all students will benefit from these instructional methods.

Keeping in mind the individual learning needs of each type of High Incidence Disability student, teachers must provide an environment conducive to learning that adapts to the needs of each student. There are different factors that one must consider including Biological Factors such as temperament / neurological, Environmental factor and Experiential Factors such as cultural, linguistic, economic background. Some High Incidence Disabilities are caused by biological factors. For example, a student with mild retardation may be cause by a genetically based syndrome such as Down Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, Prader-Willi Syndrome or Williams Syndrome. But, for a High Incidence Disability, like ADD, there is no definite cause. With a student with Behavior and Emotional Disorder, environment is a big factor. The environment in

which you place this type of student in can cause these students with engage in specific behaviors (Salend.)

Everyday activity in the classroom must be modified to meet the needs of these special students. Assistive Technology (AT) is essential in this modification. When choosing AT keep in the mind the SETT Frameworks, meaning Student-centered, Environmentally-useful, Task-focused, Tools system. And always "Try before you buy." With the development of the Internet teachers have access to a multitude of resources, available at their fingertips. Sites such as [ATTO Assistive Technology Basics](#) can give teachers lesson ideas for students with High Incidence Disabilities. Also, sites such as [Abledata.com](#) provide teachers with Assistive Technology for students needing to locate different types of Assistive Technology. In an article from [AT Access.org](#) titled, "Assistive Technology – What you need to know," the Alliance for Technology Access, provide people with disabilities with information on any "service that directly assists a person with a disability in selecting, getting or using and assistive technology device." The article suggests that you use expert opinion to decide on which Assistive Technology device is right for you, keeping in mind the product, cost and ease of use. These experts can be rehabilitation engineers, vendors, or consultants. Finding these experts can be a difficult task. It is the person or families job to research this "expert's" credentials. With regards to choosing which AT is appropriate for the student, the article lists several considerations: personal considerations, training considerations, access considerations, and repair and maintenance. Students should ask themselves if the AT is a right fit physically, is it ready to use, where do I get training, where can I use it, where can't I use it and is it easy to repair? The goal of AT is to help students live, learn and work independently.

Today's classroom is as diverse as ever. Each student is different. Teachers will have students from every walk of life. Some will be from different cultural backgrounds, some will be gifted and talented, other students will come from different socio-economic background and some with have a disability. 94% of students with disabilities are High Incidence Disabilities (Salend.) Each of these students is special in their own way. And you class as a whole will only benefit from adapting the current curriculum to meet the needs of these students.

Works Cited

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