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EDPC 610 – Foundations II
Assignment Five

Journal Reflection: Low Incidence Disabilities

Students with Low Incidence Disabilities make up 6% of all students with disabilities (Salend.) Low Incidence Disabilities make be classified as Physical, Sensory, Multiple or Significant. In addition, each one of these categories can be described as Mild, Moderate, or Severe. Teachers may find that they have students in their class with low-incidence disabilities with a variety of physical and health needs such as Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Asthma and Allergies, Tourete Syndrome, Diabetes, Seizure Disorders, students treated for Cancer, Medically Fragile Students, Traumatic Brain Injury, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or a combination or multiple disabilities. Other students may have sensory disabilities including students with hearing impairments or visual impairments. Each of these students has a different type of special learning needs, the key for teachers is to investigate and become knowledgeable on the specific needs of the LID student in their class. Not only can they become knowledgeable. But, they can also make their class knowledgeable as well. Sites such as Kidshealth.org are available for students to learn more about these types of disabilities in a kid-friendly environment.

Instead of thinking about what Low-Incident Disability students cannot do, focus on what they can do. Be patient. Provide challenging goals just as you would any other student. Meet regularly with a Low-Incidence Disability student's family. Family plays such an important role in the lives and education of Low-Incidence Disability students and facilitates their learning in a general education classroom. According to Salend "students with low-incidence disabilities can learn and

participate in the general education curriculum.” Keep in mind that teachers must analyze the curriculum to identify to what extent Low-Incidence Disability students can participate. The teacher must also establish a rationale for the instructional goals and teaching methods which will be used for that particular student. It is important to be aware of and to include Individual’s Education Program or IEP goals into the curriculum and adapt all lesson plans to differentiate instruction to accommodate the learning needs of all students. And, just as you should for all students, teachers should use a variety of assessment techniques, including formal and informal, assessments and using the assessment results to adjust the curriculum on a daily basis. Especially for Low-Incidence Disability students, it is imperative to make the classroom more accessible to students, keeping in mind the idea of Universal Design in the way teachers present the material, instructional goals, classroom arrangement, and instructional materials.

According to an article titled, “Curriculum Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities: The Promise of UDL” published by CAST: The Center for Applied Special Technology states:

“Physical facilities, technology, media and materials, and human resources all contribute to the quality of what transpires in schools. Yet there remains great disparity in quality from community to community. And these disparities, in turn, yield uneven results for students from community to community. Such unevenness is particularly troubling when observed in communities with high concentrations of students from poor families, English language learners, or members of racial minorities. Also troubling is the achievement gap observed between disabled and non-disabled student populations.”

The article then goes on to emphasize the importance and necessity of standards-based and curriculum reform. The CAST organization also defines “A quality education for students with Low-Incidence Disabilities will be a blending of curriculum designed to address

disability-specific or unique needs and curriculum designed for optimal functioning in a democratic society.” And, that is the question...Is today’s curriculum designed to address the specific needs of Low-Incidence Disability students, keeping in mind the idea of Universal design?

Salend also states that “Some learners with low-incidence disabilities also may benefit from access to a functional curriculum that teaches them the skills they need to function independently in inclusive schools, their homes, and community settings, and provides them with the social and communication skills to access the general education curriculum.” Low-Incidence Disability students each have unique needs and chronic conditions. Inclusive classrooms teacher usually have the assistance of physical therapists, hearing specialists, orientation and mobility specialists, speech and language professionals and paraeducators. Another invaluable aid for inclusive classroom teachers is Assistive Technology. In addition to assisting Low-Incidence Disability students with “daily living skills, supporting, stabilizing, and protecting body parts, moving from one location to another and participating in leisure activities,” assistive technology can enhance instruction for Low-Incidence Disability students. These assistive technologies may range from software that is purchased district wide or simply using existing adaptations in programs that are used by the entire class such as the accessibility options in Microsoft Windows. Whatever Assistive Technology a teacher chooses, be sure to include the student and the student’s family in the decision making process in order to establish what is best for the student.

And that applies to all aspects of the learning process. When considering the education of a Low-Incidence Disability student, teachers must consider a variety of teaching methods, materials,

assistive technology and curriculum, while involving other professionals, the student and the student's family in other instructional goals of this particular student. This is a challenge for teachers, however Salend states that "teaching these students can be a rewarding, enjoyable and fulfilling experience and that they can success in your classroom."

Works Cited

CAST. Curriculum Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities: The Promise of UDL. March. 2006. The Center for Applied Special Technology. 12 March 2006 <http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_lowinc_section5.html>.

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