

Personal Philosophy Paper

Students I Desire to Serve

I desire to serve upper elementary school students that have autism spectrum disorder. Although I want to be a general educator, I plan to be in contact with my students' IEP team and provide the best education and classroom that meets their needs. I plan to use various resources, strategies, and techniques to help them achieve their education and individual goals. I have two relatives who have autism that were not appropriately supported in their classrooms therefore, motivated me to get into the field of education to be that person who supports them and their educational needs.

Instructional Strategies

An instructional strategy that will be used with students with autism are visual aids. Visual aids are helpful in the classroom because they can help children with autism gain independence from their teachers and their aids as well as provide structure, routines, and aid in transitions (Heward et al, 2022). An example of visual aids in the classroom are printed and laminated steps that are displayed within eyesight to help students see and understand what comes next when a step is already completed. In a 2018 study (Cohen and Demchak,2018), three male students Will, Seth and Jose ages 8-11 with disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, and Kabuki syndrome were all prompted with 10-step visual aids to complete tasks independently. At the beginning of the study, Will, who had Down syndrome averaged at 23.4% independence throughout his typing activity prior to having visual aids, but after having visual aids, he averaged at 90% to 100% of independent tasks completion. Seth, the student with autism, averaged at 38% independence throughout his silent reading activity prior to having visual aids and ended with an average of 90%-100% in independent tasks completion after

receiving his visual aids. Lastly, Jose, the student with Kabuki syndrome, averaged at 39.2% independence throughout his lunch routine prior to having visual aids and ended the session with at 90% in independent tasks after visual aids. Although the study was conducted with students with disabilities other than autism, it shows that visual aids can benefit others as well.

Another instructional strategy that will be used and helpful for students with autism are social stories. Social stories help explain social and expected behaviors that are in an understandable manner for both children and adults with autism (Heward et al, 2022). An example of social stories in the classrooms are drawings or verbal stories that are used to help a student understand a social situation and the feelings that are involved. For example, I would share a social story with a student who does not comprehend why their friend is upset that they are yanking on their sweater. In a 2021 study, 10 children, 8 boys and 2 girls ages 7-11 on the autism spectrum who were verbal and understood English participated in the study. The students were being prepared to attend their schools summer camp and their teachers conducted a survey about each child to evaluate what social skills and behaviors they weren't comprehending or felt afraid of and decided to include digital Social Stories™ as part of the intervention. Based on the survey that the teachers completed, the students then were asked to rate how they felt about the social situation or social activity that was presented to them with a smileyometer. A week before summer school started, the students watched on their iPad their own Social Story in preparation for the camp. Teachers evaluated each student when they were participating in summer school activities and evaluated each student's behavior during the camp. At the beginning of the camp the students were asked to rate how they felt the topic of their Social Story, the mean rating was 3.45. When the students were asked at the end of the camp how they felt about their Social Story prior to the camp, the mean was 4.15. This

study comes to show that social stories are beneficial for students with autism because they can visually show situations in which they can relate to and learn strategies that can help them in those situations. They can also help with anxiety and improve behaviors related to an event (Heward et al, 2022).

Extended Professional Skills Desired and Plan for Acquisition.

I want to be a general education elementary school teacher but also understand that I need to prepare myself and a classroom for a diverse group of students including students with disabilities. I plan to attend seminars and workshops that will teach me how to use visual supports efficiently in my classroom to help elementary school students with disabilities including those who are not, become independent and self-sufficient. I also plan to attend an online training on how to integrate social skills and social stories as part of classroom instruction. By integrating social skills and social stories as part of classroom instruction, it poses as a natural way to teach the class as whole about situations and understanding other people's viewpoints and perspectives. This way, I know that everybody in my classroom has been exposed and taught certain social skills and have been explained situations through social stories that are understandable especially in elementary school so that they become aware as they get older.

Personal Philosophy of Education

My personal philosophy of general education is that all students regardless of background, financial status, and disabilities have a right to receive the same education and opportunities. As a future teacher, it will be my duty to advocate for my students and provide the best education and care to all my students equally where they can grow mentally, emotionally, and socially. As a Latina woman who never saw herself in her classrooms growing up, I take it upon myself to create a safe place where every child feels seen and included no matter who they

are. I will serve my diverse classroom of students by adapting to my students' needs, being responsive, being mindful, and being inclusive.

References

Cohen, A., & Demchak, M. (2018). Use of Visual Supports to Increase Task Independence In Students with Severe Disabilities in Inclusive Educational Settings. *Education & Training in Autism & Developmental Disabilities, 53* (1), 84-99

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