

Application Homework Assignment #1

Introduction:

In this Application Homework Assignment, I will be detailing my observations of children with disabilities during my time in public school, the teacher-student interactions and the learning environment of these students. I will then discuss methods that could have improved their educational experiences.

Body:

Noticing Kids Who Are “Different”:

I believe that I began to notice kids who were “different” when I was in elementary school. The individuals had no identifiable disabilities like what many people who associate with special education students, but to my fourth/fifth grade mind these children could have had mild learning disabilities that were displayed in their grades, test scores, and group designations for many learning activities. It seemed as though many of these particular kids were always grouped together when it came to group assignments so that the teacher(s) could give them more time, attention, and instruction to complete assignments whereas for me (being tested as gifted), was put in group with other individuals who need little to no help completing tasks assignments.

I began to notice children with more apparent disabilities in middle and high school. Some of the children had down-syndrome and other disabilities. I had very limited interaction with them outside of riding the bus with some of these students in high school. Occasionally I

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would see them in the hallways taking walking trips within the school. This concludes my observation of noticing children who were considered “different” or disabled.

Peer and Teacher Interactions and Treatment:

1. Peers

In elementary school, I (as their peer) interacted with them and try to have mini tutoring session to the best of my ability to help encourage and enhance the academic knowledge. Otherwise their other peers and I treated them fairly and practiced inclusion. If anything, I was often picked on and excluded from certain groups because of my strabismus and gifted status but that is a story for a different assignment.

As a fellow peer of these students in middle and high school, I was respectful to them whenever I was in their presences but never really interacted with them because we did not run in the same social circles and never shared classes together. This would be a sentiment shared by many of their peers but there were some individuals who would say horrible things about those students with disabilities and shared/ displayed attitudes of intolerance non-inclusion.

2. Teachers

The teachers throughout my years of school were always kind and if interacting with students that were “different” or displayed signs of disability, would help in any way that could offering up more precise and clear instructions, giving more time and attention and providing the resources necessary to enhances those students learning abilities.

Classroom Environment

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In elementary school, to my knowledge, these students would have been educated in the same classrooms as I but may have received additional education and instruction in a back corner learning area by another teacher or specialist or would have gone to a separate room for a little while to then rejoin the class later. In middle school I was enrolled in a gifted school that also housed a special education wing because of the building that we were in so we had very limited contact and never occupied the same classrooms for any purposes. In high school, I knew of three students who were in general population classes but the rest of the students were for the most part isolated in their own individual classes in a small section on the first floor. To my knowledge they never were educated or participated in events and activities with the other general population kids.

Improving Education Experience:

There would be two things that I would improve: 1. For the elementary school level, I would increase resources and the ability to dedicated more time and attention for the students who are “different” and/or have disabilities; 2. for the middle school and high school levels, I would increase the amount of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general population.

1. For those students who have disabilities, it is important to get them on the right type of plan to map out their education process and be provided with the resources need in both the educational aspect as well as outside of it (Salend, 2016). It is also important to the parents, especially those growing up in low-income communities to be able to have access to the resources for their children with disabilities or to determine if their children are eligible and are in need

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of assistance. Understanding the each child's strengths and weakness will help the teachers and others in the community develop a way to aid the students on all areas of growth, including educational aspects (Salend, 2016). The teachers, especially those teaching in lower-income communities need to have access to resources the could help be engaging to students who have disabilities in order to facilitate a better learning environment for the students and have the time to work with the students on a more personal level or have teachers come in to help the students. Another method to aiding in education development on the elementary school level for students with disabilities is to the have smaller class sizes so that the students can have more of a guarantee to receive more personal instruction and attention. The students will still be inter-mingled with the other students but smaller class sizes, the ratios would allow for a small decrease in outside teachers and specialist coming outside of the teacher assistants (if there are any). The only issue that would need to be constantly addressed is making sure the students are truly in need of these resources and display evidence of disability other than just having bad grades. Students with poor grades could just be a reflection of the home life and nothing more and it is important for them to get the attention they need as well but not the type of attention and panning that children with disabilities need (Craft & Howley, 2018). It very important not to group all children with bad grades and/or behavioral issues into the disabilities categories as what had happened in a study observing three urban high schools in the United States. with varying levels of students admitted into the special education programs (Craft & Howley, 2018). Many of the African American stu-

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dent felt that being in the special education program negatively impacted them as they were unjustly put into the program (Craft & Howley, 2018). The study discovered that the traumatic lives that students lived resulted in their poor academics and then to be placed in the special education program that separated them from the general population and their activities (Craft & Howley, 2018).

2. For students who have disabilities and attend middle school and high school, it is so important for them to experience inclusion which it appears these two levels of school lack in. Inclusion in both levels of school would be beneficial for the students with disabilities to have a sense of belonging as well as being able to interact in a social and academic environment with other people who don't have disabilities (Salend, 2016). This would help improve cognitive and behavioral skills that would benefit them in a world outside of the school (Salend, 2016). Inclusion would also be better for the general population students, parents and teachers of the general population students. They would be able to gain a positive outlook on inclusion by building up their levels of tolerance and acceptance (Salend, 2016). They would also be able to improve their social skills when interacting with their peers with disabilities and become more informed of the various classifications of disabilities (Salend, 2016).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is important for children with disabilities to be in the best learning environment possible in order to facilitate their academic growth and well as growth in other such as cognitively and socially and by the community understanding the various types of disabilities

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that can be achieved. It is important for inclusion to as it helps the students with disabilities develop around students of the general population as well as other people but it helps those said people empathize and become more tolerant ant accepting of others.

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Craft, E., & Howley, A. (2018). African american students' experiences in special education programs. *Teachers College Record*, 120(10).

Salend, S. J. (2016). *Creating inclusive classrooms: effective, differentiated, and reflective practices* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.