Philosophy of Educating Students with Special Needs

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Teachers walk into classrooms every morning and teach, but now teachers have a more divers classroom. Students with disabilities are being integrated more into the general education classroom. This means that general education teachers need to be able to teach to all the students in the classroom. That may mean finding ways to accommodate for different students. For students to receive the education that they deserve, teachers must work for excellence. Excellence can be achieved when teachers are responsible for student learning, demonstrate pedagogical content knowledge, and display professional characteristics.

The first thing teachers need to do is to take responsibility for all of their students’ learning. This is for both students in general education and those in special education. Students with mild disabilities will and should spend more time with their peers in the general education classroom. In order to make this time in school meaningful for all students, teachers need to have many different techniques at their disposal, so they can teach to each students’ needs. This includes knowing how to modify or adapt lessons for students. As a teacher, I will also learn how my students learn best and what their needs are. While planning lessons, I will incorporate the extra strategies or materials that may be required. For instance, a student with hearing loss may need me to wear a microphone or have the information written down in front of them, and a student with ADHD may need a cue to redirect their attention back towards the lesson. I will need to pay attention to what techniques work best and alter those that do not work as well. These accommodations may also apply to the classroom. Some students may need an area to relax in, an exercise band on the bottom of the chair, or room to maneuver a wheelchair. I hope to have many ideas that can be tried for different situations.

The second thing a teacher must do is to demonstrate strong pedagogical content knowledge. It is essential that teachers thoroughly understand the material they are to teach. Educators then must be able to pass that material on to the students. In order to accomplish this successfully, a teacher needs to understand the information well enough so break it down in different ways, similar to those previously mentioned can be used. Each student learns a different way. Some need visual cues while others need to physically perform hands-on work to understand the material. For example, an educator needs to be able to teach a lesson to a child that has ADHD that needs to get up and answer questions on the board while allowing student who struggles with writing down ideas to verbally record answers. Having a class discussion with a few students write down the answers for the class to see could accomplish this. Educators must have different activities that incorporate all the different learning styles and can work around different disabilities. Teachers will be flexible and will be able to try something else when the strategy is not working. They Part of having strong content knowledge requires staying up to date on new practices and what is vital in the field. Terms change and better practices are developed. If I want to have a thorough knowledge of what I am to teach, I cannot become passive but need to continue to learn myself. To do this I will read articles, confer with other teachers, take classes, and attend conferences or workshops.

Lastly, teachers need to display professional characteristics. Teachers require strong communication skills. They must be able to work with colleagues and students. As a general education teacher with students who have disabilities, I will need to have open communication with the special education teacher. Then we can make sure the child’s needs are being met. I will do this by ask questions, email, and having conversations with them. Communication leads to positive relationships between colleagues, which are also important, because they create a supportive learning atmosphere. This positive atmosphere can be developed in a classroom that is welcoming to all students. Students who are in special education need to be with their fellow classmates as much as possible. That means that the general education classroom is their room as well, so all students need to feel welcome in said room. To accomplish this, I will use different teaching strategies so the children feel like they can learn and are having fun. Some kids need to learn things visually with a PowerPoint while others do best in groups where they have conversations. Part of a positive environment is one that practices social skills. I will teach social skills through games like Jenga with different questions about social skills written on the blocks, books about skills, and roleplaying.

By implementing an array of strategies and acting amicably towards each, we will all act professionally and feel more welcome. Also, I would like to make students feel like part of the class by being supportive and encouraging to the entire class and displaying their work or posting different things that they like. For instance, at the beginning of the year there could be a bulletin board with pictures of them and their summer activities, and throughout the year art and project can be displayed. This will help show their differences and similarities. Hopefully, by being supportive and inclusive, the students will follow suit and will they will treat each other this way as well. I want the students to feel like a class or team and not outcasts.

Dedication to excellence is what is needed in a teacher and this may seem harder the more diverse classes become. Teachers need to pay attention to student learning, content knowledge, and professional characteristics, in order to attain excellent. Without taking the responsibility for student learning, students will not learn to the best of their abilities. A demonstration of content knowledge is necessary to meet the individual needs of both students in general and special education and for strategies to work effectively. Professional characteristics enhance the educational atmosphere with communication skills, social skills, and class spirit. It is essential teachers walk in every morning and teach all students for excellence.