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SPED 405

**Assignment A: Real World Challenges**

 \* All names have been changed in each section \*

**Challenge related to inclusive education: significantly different reading and writing levels in one class**

In Mrs. Thompson’s 10th grade class, she struggles to unite the classroom as it includes students at a variety of reading levels. Most significantly, her classroom includes students ranging from a 6th grade reading and writing level all the way to students working at a 12th grade level. Although most of the class varies in between those levels, only 2 students are at such extreme ends. Therefore, when Mrs. Thompson plans a lesson based off of a 10th grade reading level, Jenny, who works at a 6th grade level, is quickly lost in the complex vocabulary and not able communicate in her writing as clearly. On the other hand, the student working at the 12th grade level, Adam, finishes far too quickly and then becomes a distraction to the rest of the class. When Jenny becomes lost in class, she becomes defiant and unmotivated to work, resulting in a growing behavior problem for the rest of the class. As Adam finishes his work, his behavior becomes a problem because he begins to talk and distract the other students. Also, since he is able to finish so quickly and fluently, he acts as the class clown by making jokes about the material or commenting on its simplicity. Because of these two students that lie on the outer spectrum of reading and writing levels, Mrs. Thompson is at a loss of what to do.

In this situation, Mrs. Thompson needs to accommodate for the range of skills in her classroom. While Jenny and Adam are the furthest on the spectrum, the other students are also slightly varied in their abilities. Because of the range, Mrs. Thompson should provide a series pre-reading/writing and post-reading/writing activities that provide options for those at lower and higher levels. The pre-reading or pre-writing activities would provide all students with the skills that they need to be successful while also helping Mrs. Thompson assess what level the students are currently working at and what needs to be addressed as a whole. Then, for Jenny and Adam she could provide supplementary items or shape the material to adhere to their needs. Knowing Jenny is likely to struggle on the activities, Mrs. Thompson should provide them to her in advance and work with her more closely individually since she is struggling. Additionally, any resources the school has for aiding students who struggle should also be available to her. When the students read chapters for class, to help Jenny’s understanding, Mrs. Thompson should provide a list of possible challenging words before reading and then also review any new ones with Jenny. However, since Jenny is a 10th grader, she should also strive to utilize these same skills on her own. Throughout the year, I would encourage Jenny and work with her to use skills that help her stay on track and hope that by the end of the year she will have perfected some. As for Adam, since he is likely to be ahead of all students she should provide him with some additional material to do. However, because Adam is likely to negatively respond to receiving more work, I need to modify his activities and increase the expectations for him, which may be best represented through additional leadership roles in the classroom. Preferably, I would love to pair Adam with Jenny during certain activities so that they he can act as a leader while she receives the needed assistance – but this combination would need to be harmonious and non-offensive.

**Challenge related to collaboration or co-teaching:**

In this 7th grade English classroom, students are co-taught by Mr. Biano and Ms. Kistner. Even though Ms. Kistner is the lead teacher who should be learning from Mr. Biano, because Mr. Biano has taught for 12 years, he has the experience necessary to lead the class. For the students their co-teaching strategies have become very misleading because they frequently have differing viewpoints on how the class should be run. As a 3rd year teacher, Ms. Kistner wants to continue learning, but when she plans a lesson, Mr. Biano frequently interrupts and changes some parts of her lesson. Although they are both well intended, the students are losing track in class because they are unsure of the expectations. For instance, last week Ms. Kistner planned the lesson for working a read aloud and then group work. She had the students’ group already picked out with specific questions planned for each group to share near the end of class. However, as she instructed students to get into their groups, they complained as 7th graders do to pick their groups and Mr. Biano modified Ms. Kistner’s instructions allowing them to pick their group and then also the questions.

In this situation, the teachers need to use better communication strategies between each other so that the students are best able to learn. Because it is Ms. Kistner’s classroom, she needs to really stand up for herself and the teaching methods that she believes in when Mr. Biano makes a suggestion; however, any conflicts should be addressed before class. It seems like the teachers should work together better before class to review the lesson plan and what modifications they are willing to make. If they scheduled a time each week to review the lessons for the coming week and discuss their philosophy of education, then they would be better skilled to work together. In this case, Ms. Kistner really wanted the students to work in the groups she created with the corresponding questions. She had planned their groups and questions based on the students’ history in the class and to provide diversity to the groups. When Mr. Biano stepped in to override her instructions, it belittled her importance in the classroom, which as a learning teacher and the lead teacher greatly impacts the effectiveness of any lesson. Then, once the students are instructed to work, they have so many questions about what they should be doing because of the change in instructions. To prevent this from happening, directions need to be clear and concise and listed elsewhere, like on the handout or on the board. Any changes should be modified on the corresponding handout. Additionally, since Ms. Kistner is supposed to be learning from Mr. Biano, perhaps she could take more control of the classroom. Then, by the midway of the year, he would act as more of a support than a co-teacher.

**Challenge related to instructional planning and/or delivery:**

Ms. Willer struggles with classroom management. As the students walk in the classroom they basically mess around with each other and the classroom materials. Students are abusing this lax time by going to the bathroom, getting materials from their locker, or visiting the library. Thus, Ms. Willer is losing anywhere from 5-10 minutes during the first part of class. Then, even once she begins instruction, students continue to talk during her lesson and act disrespectfully to both her and classmates. Now, she has resulted in giving out multiple detentions or referrals a week as a classroom management strategy but the punishments have little effect in the classroom. Although the students’ behavior is not so severe that it results in Ms. Willer being a terrible teacher, her lesson are being severely ruined by the number of interactions and by her growing negative temperament.

Ms. Willer’s best strategy for improving her classroom lies in gaining control of the classroom immediately. She should aim to start new rules or activities at the beginning of the year, semester, quarter, or if necessary, week. In this case, I would suggest her to take a week to list the problem behaviors and find solutions to fixing them over the course of the week. Because she is struggling with simply issues like bathroom and locker visits, she should aim to eliminate those problems as ell as have the students come in focused. By changing the expectation to be on time with all materials and having used the restroom, she encourages students to stop wasting class time. After making her list, she should remind students on Thursday or Friday to prepare for a changing classroom atmosphere when they return over the next we and warn them of some of the changes. Starting on Monday, she should firmly follow through with all of her expectations but be wary of giving severe punishments at this time; however, Ms. Willer, also needs to remain consistent to prove to the students that the rules will last. My main solution would be to start with a probe at the beginning of class that will help engage the students for the coming activity and also prevent them from finding so many other distractions. During the first 5 minutes is when she typically loses control, and so by having a probe she is able to obtain the students’ focus. While designing the probe, she should remember to make it interesting so that students want to participate but also valuable so that it will relate to their education. Ms. Willer’s key to success at this point lies with consistency and her ability to make these new expectations the common theme in her classroom. Perhaps, during the first week of making the new transition, she could ask an administrator or teacher to stop in to help reinforce the expectations, showing her students that these are the new standards to follow.