

Week 1: Introduction & Attitudes

Introduction to the Child with Special Needs

Tuesdays 6:30-9:20 pm, Spring 2014

Campbell Center, Room K62

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I. Highlights

- A. 1 in 5 children has some type of special needs.
- B. You have to first understand typical child development to be able to spot what is atypical. Teachers have to spot it before we can alert the parents and pursue a diagnosis. (Remember that we can't diagnose!)
- C. The earlier we can start intervention, the better the outcome. Before the first birthday is ideal!
- D. Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities. Children with special needs are not in a separate classroom at the end of the school anymore. They're supposed to be included in the general classroom, with support so they can access the material at their level.
- E. Children with special needs have many, many abilities and usually just one disability. Focus on what they *can* do instead of what's "wrong" with them.

II. Homework

- A. Read Chapter 1 by next week.

III. Introduction

- A. Ms. Zarghami
 - 1. Teaching at West Valley for a long time (13+ years) as adjunct faculty, also works a lot at De Anza College

2. Born & raised in Tehran, Iran
 3. Went to England, trained at AMI Montessori (all her instructors were students of Dr. Maria Montessori)
 4. Came to US with family in 1966, started teaching Montessori in a small school in Denver, Colorado (now is one of the biggest Montessori schools in US)
 5. Has her Master's Degree, specializes in multicultural education, the importance of connecting what we do at school to what goes on at home
 6. Dr. Montessori designed her materials to work with children with special needs, especially those who are poverty-stricken. It worked so well with them, why not use it with typically developing children too? So we do and it helps lots of kids, but the original intent (especially for the sensorial materials and practical life/self-help activities) was to support children with developmental delays.
 7. Is a PITC trainer, comes to various school sites to train teachers
 8. Lived in the Midwest for many years, came to California to be with her sons (who now live on the East Coast)
 9. Each son has two kids (4 grandkids total, university age twins, 9 years old, 7 years old)
 10. Is an education counselor for students at De Anza, advocates that all of us have a written education plan, not just taking courses at random
 11. Really loves gourmet cooking and serving food to people she loves
 12. Ideal to recognize children's special needs before first birthday, can make the most impact with early intervention, so it's super important for infant teachers to be very observant and aware of typical developmental milestones
- B. Get to know each other in class: name, ethnicity, why are you taking this class, what do you do for fun. Complete "treasure hunt" worksheet ("Name someone who has the required textbook..." etc.).

C. Review syllabus/green sheet

1. Email is the best way to get in touch with her. Always include your first and last name and the course you're taking. (She teaches multiple courses.) Ask specific questions, not just "What happened in class last night?"
2. The phone number there goes to her voicemail through the school, so it may take a while for her to get the message. Email is better.
3. Class will start exactly on time. We may occasionally leave early, but don't bet on it.
4. You only get credit for being present if you're here for the full course. (No fair skipping off after the break.)
5. If you don't get full credit on an assignment, you can rewrite it within one week. Turn in the original and your rewrite together so she can compare.
6. Textbook: we're using 7th edition because it's cheaper
7. Read the textbook chapter before class each week.
8. Chapter review questions are in the textbook at the end of each chapter.
Choose 3/chapter.

D. 1 in 5 children has some kind of special need. Even a small group of children will include some, so this material matters to all of us.

E. If you want to be a good teacher for children with special needs, you first have to know about typical development. So if your experience (as a parent or teacher) is only with typical development, that's still valuable because it gives you a foundation that helps you spot the atypical.

IV. Early intervention

A. What does "early intervention" mean?

1. Identifying a disability or delay early-on, then provide services/therapy/support/help as early as possible for maximum impact

2. First requires careful observation of child's behavior, speech, movements, etc.
 3. Concerns us when something stands out from typical development: not meeting milestones of development (thus we have to know what's normal first, including individual differences and cultural differences)
 4. Call in coworker. Do they see what you see? Document your observations for 2-3 weeks, including anything you've tried to do to help.
 5. Then ask for a parent-teacher conference. Realize parents may be in denial, may blame you for not knowing what you're doing. They may lie (such as "He walks at home, why do you say he can't walk?") or they may not understand that what they see (such as the child "walking" in a walker but not individually) is not what should be happening by now for typical development.
 6. Have to convince parent the child needs to be evaluated and diagnosed. Can't do anything without parent permission. Good to have director with you.
 7. We are not specialists and CANNOT EVER label/diagnose a child. All we can say is that we see something outside of the range of typical development, so we think the child should be assessed and diagnosed.
 8. Once they have a diagnosis, they can get government support and services.
 9. Services come from specialists. We are classroom teachers, part of the team, but not the whole team. Other people have different training than we do and can offer different kinds of help.
 10. IEP/IFSP team comes together to set goals and evaluate progress at least once a year.
- B. If there is one child with special needs in the family, watch all the children diligently for milestones being met on time. The other children have a higher chance of having special needs than if there were no family history, because sometimes these things run in families. Watch those other kids!

C. Parents often have to fight for the services/support the children are entitled to. Even if it's on paper, the parent may have to go knock on the high school door and push for what they're entitled to. As the child gets older, it can get harder. When children are out of high school, they are entitled to support from the Disabled Student Program office at West Valley, but they have to be their own advocate by then.

V. Why inclusion? Why not put children with special needs in the separate room at the end of the school, away from the other kids, like we used to?

A. Inclusion enables the children to have typically developing peers as role models, gives them the opportunity to build social bonds with other children. They need the opportunity to play with and learn from typically developing children.

B. When kids are separated because of their disabilities, they may come to see themselves as less capable, and we may not expect as much of them as they could accomplish in a typical classroom.

C. The typically developing children become familiar with various disabilities. Empathy requires knowledge. Without experience, stereotypes and stigma and fear can grow instead. If you have a child with vision impairment, have the typically-developing children in the inclusive class walk around with cloudy glasses so they can get the experience.

VI. What is it like to work with children with special needs?

A. They're children first, no different than any other child. Everyone has some kind of quirkiness and unique qualities. Some children without special needs will still give you challenges, and some with special needs will not be as challenging as you expect. These children with special needs may have more intense needs, and may need more from you, but it's super rewarding.

- B. What we do in our field is all about relationships. With children with or without special needs, the first step is to build a relationship. The stronger the relationship, the more successful you can be as their teacher and the bigger difference you can make in the life of the child.
- C. It's impossible to get anywhere with just the child. You also need a relationship with the family. In ECE, we work with young children and their families.
- D. Children with special needs have many, many, many abilities and usually just one disability. Look at all the abilities of the child and build a relationship based on those positives. Then bring in the specialists and help for addressing the special need.