



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Learning Writing In The Context of 'Inclusion'

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Discussion of Objectives and Strategies

Introduction

The special education teacher works in a particular context. The children who come to her have a long and deep history of academic failure and personal-social upheaval. School has become a problem for them more than an opportunity. It is our job to turn that around, reveal the enormous learning assets they have, and ameliorate habits that are counterproductive to learning anything! We have to provide them with a setting; a relationship in which they feel safe and trusting in order to take the risks that are necessary to develop opportunities for learning. Learning does not happen in social isolation. It is an interpersonal affair. That is one point of the letter and spirit of the special education law. In this unit I use examples from teaching writing to elementary students who receive special education service in a variety of settings within a context of "inclusion" to make my point.

This unit aims to give a clear understanding of the importance of the quality of relationship to learning writing, especially for students eligible for special education service. Relationships that are friendly and familial are the vehicle for more productive learning. Unfortunately, a lot of what has been done under the name of "inclusion" has not taken this into account with a corresponding impact on learning. It is important to the acquisition of all subject matter. It is the fiber that gives the respective activity body as a human act. Calling attention to the sense of family and community in the learning of all subject matter is amplified in teaching students who are eligible for special education service because of their history of failure, fear and criticism of their attempts to learn. Someone once said it is an opportunity to study learning in slow motion. The quality of relationship impacts the quality of work and all subsequent learning. I refer you to my institute paper from last year, "Working With The Powers of Children, Not Their Handicaps".

Context

There are likely characteristic situations. Sometimes I work with students individually, in pairs or groups of a few or several students in my office, (which has people walking though occasionally), or in one of several

regular classrooms during their teacher's regular lesson to her class, or sometimes in a separate class with a few teachers in small groups simultaneously, each group changing teachers every 20 minutes. Each situation, just as each teacher and group of students requires certain accommodations. Learning to work together is a very complicated affair for teachers, too. I can't say for sure just what I will be doing next year, but all of these and variations of them are predictable. The learning together of teachers is an essential and interactive component of the context.

My teaching position until this year was essentially that of a solo professional, with my own classroom and my own students where I could do what I thought best. This has been changed this year because of a policy referred to as "inclusion". This has very different meanings according to with whom you are speaking. This recent change came about as a result of several recent events, which I will discuss briefly. I have been a spoken proponent of "inclusion" since the early 1970s when I first entered the special education field. In fact I have had "inclusion facilitator" training at the state level and have discussed related issues with other teachers from across the state. As I will note at the end of the paper the consequences of its implementation in New Haven, in my opinion have not been good for the children. I will also note some positive aspects. The recent "inclusion" policy and its implementation in New Haven, has its foundation in Public Law 94-142, which coincidentally is up for reauthorization this year in the U.S. Congress. It's roots stem back to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation case in the U.S. Supreme Court and subsequent laws extending that policy to people in mental health hospitals, giving us the concept of "Least Restrictive Environment". It is in the effort to give every youth the best education we can. It requires "an appropriate education". That law has as a key feature the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The PPT has as its thrust the guarantee of due process to parents, and the IEP specifies a special education program to address the individual needs of that particular child.

The recent major change in the context of special education in New Haven has to do with a long list of events having to do with all aspects of our education system. The U.S. Office of Civil Rights, a widely publicized study from Harvard that placed Connecticut near the bottom of states having to do with the identification of black males as mentally impaired and isolated from the regular mainstream. (It is noteworthy that neither "mainstreaming", nor "inclusion" are anywhere in the legislation of special education). Added to this are recent moves to make the federal government cough up more of the 40% of special education funding they promised in 1974 (they pay about 13%, I think), the switch of Sen. Jeffers, its major proponent, from Republican to Independent thereby shifting the U.S. Senate majority to the Democratic Party, and an influx of articles in the special education literature tantamount to saying that the quality of special education has more to do with the race issue than with anything else.

I used to work with groups of special education students in groups of 1-13, often separate from the immediate context of their regular classroom. I was able to set up a special environment to take into account and capitalize on their powers of learning. I grouped them according to their skill level, subject needs, age or all. There was also an explicit concern with their development as a group for mutual support and respect of their learning styles.

Now it is very different, with some rather small exception, which is changing radically as we speak. That is, I have had to work with each student in their respective regular education class at almost all times, decided by the principal, to correspond with subject matter being taught by the regular teacher to her class, while I "modify the regular education curriculum" and teach while the regular lesson is being conducted. There is also an hour daily when the special education students who are low in reading skill are included in a class, prescribed by central office, in which the 25 poorest learners in reading in grades 2 and 3 meet and circulate

in groups of 5 for 20 minutes at a sitting to stations manned by 3 paraprofessionals, a regular teacher and myself, in which I am to teach what they prescribed for me to teach (“sight words”) and I actually get to directly work with those special education students about twice a week, for those 20 minutes. This latter setup has been ineffective for the lowest of the groups and they have now assigned me to work with them separate from the regular class setting

Strategies

I have a repertoire of strategies employ in this highly individualized instruction that is only roughly predictable. I often engage students in writing by writing. I write notes to them within their reach (with a stretch), I promote and develop their writing notes to each other, their family members (I use phones, and personal speaking in conversation to develop dialogues, too). They use email to correspond with distant relatives, compose letters to go home, envelope and all. They are allowed, even encouraged to write notes to the principal to *voice* their concerns, be heard and engage the principal with them personally. We could form a newspaper. But basically I am looking for ways to encourage them to learn to want to write better, connected with what they are interested in doing and learning.

The quality of relationship is bedrock in the sense that unless the teacher is keenly aware that his or her job is to make the child feel safe, in terms of what you can talk about, what questions you could ask, and that it’s alright not to know something or even to do it wrong. Unless a teacher in a sense structures the relationship so that this is more than words, you just reduce the likelihood of learning anything. This assumes you know something about the child and where the child is coming from. The most egregious misconception in education and in teaching in particular is that you can separate a curriculum from the person that is implementing it. That includes the teacher and the students. When a physicist is tracking an atom in a cloud chamber the personality of the physicist plays absolutely no role in it, but that’s not the case when you’re dealing with a face-to-face transaction. Just as there are parents who do not know how to make a child feel safe, there are teachers who don’t. There are a variety of ways I make writing important for my students. For instance I might pass a note to them.

“I’m Chet Atkins and I’m gonna’ pick like Chet Atkins”, said the world famous guitarist. He was an artist. I aim to give the same to my students. To do otherwise would be to waste their or my time. I tell them, “When I read what you write I want to read you! You are more important than the words. At least to me you are. I want, care to have you, not a bunch of words on a paper.” Writing takes place inside a relationship. It is in the context of improving learning that relationship develops and holds together. Artistry is evolution. Yo Yo Ma recently referred to the genesis of his major project, “The Silk Road”, as “friends talking together, raising the question, “Can we talk together across cultures?” At the same time his highest acclaim for a product of work was that, “It touches a silent place.” We are reaching for this context of productive learning. As John Dewey said, “School is not preparation for life, it is life itself”, or at least it should be.

For instance, I encourage students to write little notes to each other (they carry this over at home), correct each others spelling, proofread as a consequence, etc. In this way they can develop a group sense of resources and exchange of working together; a collective learning. Some of the techniques I use to sustain the development of their writing are, correspondences with family members, with each other, with me, with other teachers in the school, encouraging others to correspond with them through writing such as parents leaving notes for them on the refrigerator and their writing back, letting them speak with each other to find out what is on their mind, what they have to say and them somehow incorporating that in the lesson activity. I try to make plain to the children that they have abilities to learn writing and to apply it in a variety of situations

including various subject matters.

Bedrock to a teacher, especially those in special education, is to understand the past history of failures you can assume these children have had, personal and intellectual, and since minorities are represented disproportionately in special education classes, that just adds insult to injury, so to speak. This is what we are dealing with. I can assume before they come to my class for the first time that I know approximately what they have been through. They have failed and they feel they have failed, and the teacher has got to adapt that knowledge to each individual child, and by “adapt” it doesn’t mean to do the same thing with every single child. In the mainstreaming law 94-142, they came up with the PPT process where each child is discussed as an individual. That it may leave a lot to be desired is another story.

What is the primary goal of the teacher in his or her personal relationship with their students? It is, one, that the child feels accepted and the second, the child feels safe, safe to talk, safe to fail, that they feel understood. If those two goals are not approximated, you are not going to get very far. How can you write about teaching in any field without saying that? I will give examples of that, including students, writing notes, humor, children helping children, correspondences with family members, use of email and word processing, etc, with embodying the learning of writing in a personal relationship that one has with their students.

The present concern is understandable since special education students were isolated in schools, where there was such a disproportionate presence of minority students and special education was almost the leper colony in schools. But I will bring out in discussion a quality teachers need, that in considering learning, relationship is the body of the work and relationship is the point. Learning writing and the acquisition of other skills are mightily influenced by the quality of that relationship.

As Gattegno said, “I don’t look at them as if they were a sounding board or expected to respond to my stimuli. On the contrary, I look at them as people who can generate in their minds the necessary mental structures with all the dynamics that go with it so that they can own mathematics, languages, or spelling. It becomes part of them and not something they have retained by repetition. Repetition is reduced to a minimum...because it is dulling.” (p. 65, 1971.) This is a difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and techniques.

Speaking to Writing

I will just start writing to the student rather than speaking with them, or begin speaking with them and transfer it to writing, even if it is a complaint, I allow it, acknowledge it, respect and encourage their statement, but then get them to write it to the appropriate party, and deliver it. I might enable them to record on an audio recorder and then transcribe their speech. Or we play secretary and I dictate a letter to them. Or ask students to take over the role of teacher to test their learning.

Take for example a recent case in point with J.D., a third grade student who was completely illiterate at the beginning of the school year (was not able to read two-letter words). Last year she was absent one-fifth of the school year, has had depression and feared exposing her inability to read even in front of other illiterate students with special education service. (It is a different story today). Recently, she was complaining of a stomachache and wanted to call her mother to ostensibly take her home. I know her (and her mother) well, and I did not think this child was sick. I couldn’t get her to write much of anything. She was however asking to call her mother because she was “sick”. I could tell she was not really very sick. I asked her to write me a note asking to

call her mom. We wrote back and forth in conversation. The exchange back and forth was a beautiful sight. She smiled, laughed and she then wrote more, a story with an illustration. We did call her mother, and the child was fine. Over a long period of time I had learned how to work with this child, and established a very good working relationship with her parent.

C.M. was refusing to write. What he wanted to do was play bingo and a computer game. I asked him to write his request on the computer. He did it immediately. We worked on spelling, grammar, used the dictionary, read it to fellow students, printed it and he took it as a prize, to show his mother and send to his cousin. He had learned, I had given him instruction, he behaved appropriately and was more cooperative thereafter. This is just one small example.

Children need to have something to say. I remember J.C. who refused or resisted writing. Try teaching with that! It seemed like pulling teeth. It was difficult and I felt almost lost. One day his class went on a trip to a play at a theater. It was a dance troupe as I recall. When he came back you could not stop him from writing about it. He gave us a lot to work on, and he was different from then on, with regard to writing.

D.C. entered school one day talking excitedly about an event she had just seen involving two birds flying "beautifully". I encouraged her to write about it, and it led to my suggesting we form a newspaper in school. It became impractical logistically given that there were many changes to my schedule. This coming year I hope to hit the ground running with a newspaper project. I think it is a great opportunity. I have discussed it briefly with teachers and the principal. Children can discuss what we will have in it, they could write, we can go over it, etc. This would be intrinsically interesting to the students. It gives the opportunity of saying, "This is a first draft. In what ways do you think you can make it better". It's not a matter of them writing what I tell them to write. I need to be alert to opportunities to make it important for children to want to write? How I use that to get them to improve their writing, without making them feel like a failure is my responsibility. The safety issue is important.

Math

Math can be a very big problem for students because of the way problems are often worded. In order to surmount this obstacle I typically work with them on rewriting it so that it makes sense to them, and I even have them act it out. Then it is in their language and I have the mathematical concept in their own action. Then I can have them write variations of the problem for practice, individually and as a group. As I said in a presentation to the International Association for Children With Learning Disabilities, "A principle is that ideas can be adequately conveyed only through perception and action. This means that appeal is made to the child's understanding on the basis of his own activity and the operation of his own senses. He is encouraged to experience the validity of every statement he makes, and be the source of his own knowledge. In this way, the child acquires and understanding of symbolic concepts by tapping the reservoir of his experiences." (p.5, 1974) Sometimes this has been as simple as drawing two lines to convey understanding. The proof was that when each of my students took their regular class assessments, they each independently employed the two

lines technique I showed them, to figure out the answers correctly.

Learning To Work Together

Learning to work together as a group *precedes* and is all-important to learning of subject matter skills. At this point I would like to say something about the “behavior” issue of small group interaction of students who have a previous history of failure to learn to read and write, and about the social dynamics of learning. In order to learn there are accommodations to be made for group learning which has some consequences. I tend to make a game of it and try to include the parents. I have often found it necessary to make a game using checks and X’s. I never compare one student with another, but they to themselves. One consequence can be a phone call or note to their parent (sometimes right then in the resource room), reporting their performance as recorded with their improvement or deterioration. Having a telephone at hand helps. I can call a parent, a student may speak with their parent, a parent may speak with their child, or I even fake a phone call, but they know it is fake, but potentially real. I am careful not to abuse this, nor to make it a mechanical response. It is always in the context of relationship building between home and school. In addition, an informal, but explicit by-product I include is that students help each other learn and monitor their writing and social behavior. I even let them take my role and play school, so I can teach them to play it better for practice outside of school, which they all do spontaneously.

The Importance of the Relationship to Teaching and Friendship

“A key ingredient of efficacy is that the therapist possessed qualities which engendered in patients the feeling they were understood and respected, that they could trust the therapist, that they were safe in revealing their inadequacies. It is a highly personal and interpersonal encounter for therapist and client; it is a learning and unlearning experience for both. The effective therapist is one who does not treat diagnostic categories but an alive, thinking, feeling person as aware of the therapist as the therapist is of him or her. Far too many teachers teach subject matter, not students.” (p.190, Sarason, 2001) Subject matter needs to be a part of our students. We need to be able to modify our teaching each step of the way to accommodate our students’ actual learning.

Children carry with them a relationship as well as some skill. Gattegno was an incredible teacher. Piaget is reputed to have told the US commissioner of education that he was the best in the world. His short language courses and demonstrations of insights into children’s learning are legendary. I personally studied with him many years, and we were good friends. However, to just read one of his books can be very difficult and incomplete for really understanding his insights into human learning. Writing may be adequate for some things, but insufficient for others. I regularly taught adults new literacy teaching approaches by teaching them very briefly to speak, comprehend, read and write a little bit of a foreign language in a foreign script. It put them back on themselves in order to grasp the dynamics of learning I was calling to their attention. This basic process of living through it to convey ideas, in unambiguous terms, allows people to recall readily *their* experience of it. So they have it in their flesh for reflection, study and trial, as well as evaluation in terms of making sense of it or not. This conveyance of an approach is practical, eminent, game like and can place learning on the front burner. It is a way of working that draws upon common sense and capitalizes on what we have learned before with creative learning powers that it puts in evidence (such as learning to speak our native language, walking, etc.

Relationship that is friendly and familial is crucially important to what I do. This is the character I endeavor to provide and engender with my students and colleagues, and insert learning in there, whether it’s learning of writing, or whatever, it is in that context, and that includes my other personal friendships as much as possible

outside of the extreme context of NHPS. For instance, I have familial friends who are students at Yale who I have known since they were little. Perhaps I could get them and my students writing to each other. We are a community, first and formally. The quality of school without friendship is far less educational. The quality of relationships we make with friends are trustworthy, highlights of our daily activity and sources of endless *education*. Trying to convey this through writing without video is difficult, indeed. Doing it without friendship is completely out of context for me, as it is important to learning. Inclusion works two ways. I will invite students to invite their friends to attend sessions out of their regular classroom with me, regardless of their skill level. I have found trials doing this motivational for the students and productive for learning.

We have interests in communication. We can say a lot with a few words. Correspondence is far more important, far richer than a writing assignment that does not have any relationship to the student's personal life. Educating is a matter of relationship. (The highest thing I take from my mother is the quality of relationship we had. The most influential teacher of my early adult life, Caleb Gattegno, I referred to as, "my father"). Writing is unimportant without learning. **Relationship is what matters most**. *Relating is the body of the context*. For example, when someone calls and asks how I'm doing, and I get the communication from their voice as well as their act, I can respond in kind with an email to say, "I appreciate your calls very much. Thank you very much for calling." Writing always stands in relationship to other things. Life is fodder for writing for communication. In this case the caller helped a lot. The *person* was encouragement. She went out of her way to help me, even though it was in her role as a seminar correspondent. Again, the difference is in the quality of relationship. That is part and parcel of the communication. I thank her for a friendship.

I still have relationships with students I had thirty years ago. I very recently crossed paths with two of them. We remembered each other by name, with familial affection even though we hadn't seen or spoken to each other in decades, and we will correspond through email, letter, telephone, and /or in person. A year ago a former student who is now 16 years old phoned me at school. I have not spoken with him since he was in kindergarten. I have another student who kept in touch with me since grade 3. He is now 21 and I have a few times year after year spoken with him and his parent, and I have met his grandparents. We correspond through writing, too. Each of these former students was labeled severely "handicapped". The quality of relationship I have with each is by no means less human than I have with anyone else. The relationship carries on. I have many more examples. One former student of 25 years ago, I see occasionally and we go out to dinner together (He is now 40). We are friends in the most genuine way. Two of the above people live in group-homes. Writing has a purpose. We write to correspond with another. "Write like you would write a love letter. Every word counts," my high school English teacher said, and I remembered, because of him. He was a brilliant person by every criterion, and he pointed out to me *my* ability. He made me realize I had something to say of quality, in his responses to my written work. I kept in touch with him periodically until his death.

"I couldn't have done it without you", is a frequent refrain from friends when they or I have accomplished a difficult project. It becomes a by-product and is infused with that quality of relationship we have in doing it together as a friend. It is a manifestation of that act of relating. It is exactly a release of energy of that context of learning in action we call relating. I try to apply and take advantage of the same release of energy in the quality of work I do with students in learning the skill of writing. It often comes as a *function* of talking together. I see this common place in daily activity. Then I know the awareness can carry over to other settings in *their* life. It is functional sometimes to stop, listen and talk together, informally and with a personal engagement that can only be called relating. It is this informal personal thing that is consequential for communicating. It helps to have a friend around.

Regular Education Teachers

First, I will start with the respective regular education teacher. I'll enlist her interest, cooperation and ideas. We will discuss it and I will invite her responses and suggestions. Among the things I do to instill trust with the regular education teacher, one is I speak to their students about *their* obligation to support and respect their teacher and why. I will also report to the principal on very positive things the teachers do and regularly pay them compliments for things they are doing, in front of their students and colleagues. I also confer with them, and elicit their questions and their concerns. I freely discuss things with them and take them into my trust. I listen to them, I am friendly with them deliberately, with a good sense of humor, being available to help readily on anything. I exemplify it with students as well as with teachers. This is not necessarily easy and can be done without imposing yet alerting each other to potential problems or opportunities. I also make sure teachers know that I am intimately aware of demands made upon them as well as particular freedoms I have that we could use together, and vice versa. For instance, their confinement to a particular room without another adult and the psychology of this, that everyone gets tired by noontime, that it is very difficult to give students the activity children their age need, the poor acoustics of a room, where I think administrative demands are unreasonable, etc. There are a wide variety of relationships I have with teachers, but I am obligated to show them respect, care and most of all share the responsibility for all of our students. I will support to them with every student. For example, I ask them if there is someone else in the class to whom they would like me to give special attention for a subject and include the special education students. The quality of relationship that transcends the barriers of the school system are profitable here, too. I will also make suggestions for other ways we might present a respective idea, and try to elicit her ideas for possible alternative presentations that might be an improvement.

I will schedule a meeting with each teacher every week or other as well as informal daily interaction, to keep up on what we note in our students' performances and upcoming curriculum. A regular interaction notebook will stay with each student that anyone can write a note in, myself, teacher, paraprofessional, principal or parent. A special notebook will go home with the student to and from the parent.

Children

Second, I will meet with the children. I'll explain what we'll be doing about writing. For example, I will write them a note and if they're unsure how to answer me, I'll discuss it with them. I will make them feel safe to say, "I don't know, I don't understand, I don't know how to answer", or ask me a question. I want to make them feel free to ask anything within reason. I will be establishing a climate of sensitivity, by and of listening to each other, concern for each other's needs among students, etc. I'll tell them what they're going to be doing, so they know what to anticipate. They are to be free to write about things that are of immediate importance. I'll try to determine what a student would like to write about, without asking him to do it. I'll write and they write back about something they think is important and interesting. This can be done either singly or in groups.

Every month or so, I will show each student their folder of work done and what changes have taken place. In terms of assessment, in addition to folders collecting work samples of each student which can be assessed for quality of content, elaborateness of vocabulary, complexity of sentences, information included that go together to form a piece, how well a story flows, as well as grammar, punctuation, proofreading, economy of words, we can take two-minute samples of their writing to count the number of words written, the different number of words used, or even parts of speech per minute, to get an idea of how they are progressing according to a changing set of criteria over time, which can be plotted on a six-log cycle chart to determine

the rate of change, as has been done in Ogden Lindsley's "Precision Teaching" out of the University of Kansas. (I used similar charts in my 1974 ACLD presentation to show rates of growth in learning to read). I am especially looking for in and out of school instances of their initiation of writing. Awareness, practice, mastery and application are stages I consciously look for in the skills they acquire, in this case writing.

The mystery of writing is that we can communicate at all with depth. Further, to restrict a beginning writer to words is self-defeating. So I allow and even ask them to supplement writing with drawing. (Drawing is so critical to childhood that chapters in books on the psychology of childhood are devoted to that topic). I do not have a hard and fast rule on what comes first. That is a judgment call I make in accord with eliciting a comprehensive statement, exposition from my students in accord with their inner criteria. "Inner criteria" are ways of knowing the difference between having said something adequately in writing or not. The ways of knowing which we elicit from our students must correspond with the psychological ways of knowing open to them. We should use all the tools available to us to make that connection. Drawing is one of them. A computer word processor with a spelling and grammar checker is another one. So one thing I do is point out to students how they could put writing and reading exercises into visual-action depending on their needs and strengths in accord with their IEP and interests. First I have them act it, then imagine it, then describe it in language and then put it in their own writing.

Parents

Third, I will bring in parents. I want to emphasize that parents have to be part of it because "inclusion" restricts the amount of time I have to work with my students. I'll try to have parents try this with their children. I'll work with a small group of parents to explain to them what I do in the classroom, in order that they could do it once or twice a week. I'll work with parents who could read and write, and ask them every now and then to write notes to their kids. I will try it with a few parents.. I will see them, explain why it is helpful, meet with them to see how it's going and what changes need to be made.

Parents have fears, their own inadequacies, and they are most often fearful that their child cannot learn, will not learn and will be further held back or made to feel bad, lacking self confidence. I will have parents present while I am working with their child (usually after school by appointment) to demonstrate how and why I work as I do with their child, *why* I do what I do, elicit and listen to their ideas and what I can predict will happen as a result over a period of time and what signs of progress to look for. We then keep in touch. I want to generate a sense of working together through learning together. This requires contact and friendliness, a personal relationship. I expect that they will begin to feel more comfortable with their child's mistakes, make their child more comfortable with their mistakes as opportunities to learn, improve confidence in their child's ability to learn and feel that they and their child will be understood and related to personally. They will be kept abreast, informed, and their advice will be sought. They in turn could feel comfortable to do the same, so that we begin to form a partnership, a community of sorts centering on the education of the respective children.

Other Special Education Teachers

Also. I will request that there be several meetings during the school year of people in my position to discuss what each of us is doing to elevate writing. I'll make the effort to get the right people to call these meetings. Otherwise I'll arrange informal meetings for 3-5 special education teachers to talk about it. Teachers, like students, need time to read professionally, discuss it and raise questions. This is critically important. What if special education teachers met together once a month.

Conclusion

I want to emphasize that a major change in context, such as this policy and its implementation can test and try the best of relationships, especially where there is an imbalance of power. This needs to be worked through carefully with incredible sensitivity. It is no different than learning to live together: A matter of fact. I have spoken with special education teachers from elsewhere in the district, state and country and their experience is not at great variance from mine. We are faced with predictable problems. The school system still does not address them as learning opportunities, in my assessment. When I speak of “major changes in context”, this includes the sudden inclusion of “full-time” special education students in regular classrooms, some all the time, much less in our school, special education service hours allowed to include service only by a regular education teacher with “consultation” by a special education teacher, and adherence to the regular education curriculum detailed for each grade, each subject and each day for special education teaching, to mention just a few things.

I would like to color this paper with a lot of concrete examples, but time does not allow it.

Friendship is a context for learning because we sense that our interest is being taken into account in it, as we do it for the other. A friendly relationship is critical to establishing a context of learning. Learning together, we can do something presently, not just wait for our students to graduate, etc. The need to use the community as resource, crossing boundaries of communities is very important to the learning process, too.

Activities

We will shift from speaking to writing. We will exchange notes in my office, in their regular classroom, in the cafeteria, etc. Twice a week I'll write each a note to each child and ask each to send me back a note. Also, I'll ask them to write a note to another child. Then I'll ask them to write a note to their parent, or another relative.

I will walk into the regular classroom, position myself so as not to make the special education students feel singled out, depending on our relationship and their relationship with their regular education class. I will make a place, so to speak, where the students I am servicing feel comfortable and start working with them from there. This might be next to them at their seat, with non-special education students, between a special education and a non-special education student, at a table at back of the room with or without regular education students, at a computer, seated on a carpet, etc. Then we will begin to work with where they are (skill wise) in the regular education assignment in their class at that time. It varies from class to class as to the noise level, whether the regular education teacher is lecturing to the class, etc.

Then I will walk around, making myself available to other students as a regular education teacher does, troubleshooting in the classroom as a whole, demanding that nay particular students abide by courtesy, respect and rules of the classroom in accord with guidelines I have worked out with the respective teacher in our working relationship (a key concept), giving particular care to pointing out tot he class as a whole positive features of what any students or their teachers do, giving credence and value to select behaviors modeled *in relationship* in the context of the classroom.

I can sit with students, explain vocabulary they don't comprehend, get them to match their writing against what they were trying to say, or spell, look for opportunities to have students formally eligible for special

education service contribute something to the learning of other students as well as vice versa, teaching them to learn together in effect. Making a more explicit and fuller awareness of learning in the concrete is always at the top of my agenda. So I am going to be silent and let students figure out something together if I sense it improves their learning. It is as important to not get in the way of learning, as it is to generate it. It is part of the same thing. I may take an instruction sheet and have them substitute words and rewrite it so they understand it.

Resources

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Echter, Robert P. "The Application of Gattegno Techniques and Precision Teaching to the Teaching of Autistic and Neurologically Impaired Children." (unpublished monograph). *The Association for Children With Learning Disabilities, International Convention*, 1974. A detailed description of an unusually successful approach to working with the mentioned students.

Gattegno, Caleb. *The Common Sense of Teaching Reading and Writing*. New York: Educational Solutions, 1985. A comprehensive guide to his approach of subordinating teaching to learning in the area of literacy, in ways that capitalize on children's ability to learn their native language.

Sarason, Seymour. *American Psychology and Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2001. Challenges psychology as a field for not taking more of an interest in schools and not including the act of learning more in its evaluation of students abilities.

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