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**CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR INCLUSION: WAYS FOR TEACHERS
TO ENCOURAGE POSTIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TYPICAL AND
SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN**

**BY
LAUREN STEVENS**

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
Of
The College of Education
At
Rowan University
Jun. 22, 2011

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Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandmother, Joan Moran, who always dared to be different.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents. They have always believed in me and helped me to be my very best. Thank you for all the support, listening to hissy fits and the occasional much needed tough love.

Second to my friends who have had patience, ears always ready to listen regardless of the time of day or night and more encouragement than I even knew was possible.

Third I give thanks for my amazing fellow Co-teach majors. Over the past five years, we have created a family who supports each other. Over this thesis process especially, I have been amazed of the support and encouragement we have all given each other to get us through. We have finally made it!

And last but certainly not least, I give thanks to Dr. Madden. Thank you for all the helping me completely rework my thesis and giving me the reassurance that everything will turn out for the best.

Abstract

Lauren Jean Stevens

CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR INCLUSION: WAYS FOR TEACHERS TO
ENCOURAGE POSTIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TYPICAL AND SPECIAL
NEEDS CHILDREN

2010/11

Marjorie Madden, Ph. D.
Master of Science of Teaching

The purpose of this conceptual thesis is to create an outline of professional development workshop model to be implemented at a later date and time. This professional development model is designed to teach fifteen to twenty inclusion teachers how to create a safe and accepting learning environment where students are accepted regardless of ability levels. The five two-hour workshops focus on discovering teachers' own biases about people with special needs, working with and incorporating parents as important members of the learning community, understanding the formations of children's perceptions and creating the learning community by listening to students.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning

Introduction

Thoughts of a fourth grader about a student in her school with special needs

There she is again! She kinda reminds me of Quasimodo cause he was weird looking too! I don't get why she is so weird. There is a girl..Well..I think it a girl I'm not sure it might be a boy...but anyway I think it is a girl..and she wears a helmet all the time. Like during lunch and while she is walking in the hallway, but she isn't even riding a bike. I would never wear a helmet when I am just walking around cause it is especially in school 'cause you can't ride a bike in the school. Mrs. Elms, our principal will get angry and not let you come to school anymore. And then you will never see your friends again and that would be the end of the world. But she needs the helmet 'cause she is always walking into walls. She walks really funny and she never stands up and just walks. She always has a helper teacher with her that has to help her walk like she is a baby all the time. My three year old cousin walks better than she does. Maybe the girl is a baby or something that was just born really big. But then why would she be at our school instead of a school for babies. She does weird things with her arms too. During lunch, she will sometimes get angry and throw her arms around and hit the helper teacher for no reason. One time I even saw her run into a wall with her head. But nothing bad happened 'cause she was wearing her helmet thingy. I get scared when I see her get mad. I just don't get why she is so weird. I wonder if she knows she is weird. I wonder

who is her best friend. I couldn't be her best friend 'cause I wouldn't wanna get hurt if she attacked the wall again.

- *Based on a journal entry by Lauren Stevens, 1998*

Purpose statement

In education today, classrooms are increasingly diverse which reflects the United States as the world's "Mixing Bowl" of cultures coming together, working together while still holding shape of their own characteristics. But with the movement of inclusion, cultural diversity is not the only type of diversity in the classroom. Diversity of abilities is also playing a role in day to day life in the classroom (Hollingsworth, Didlot & Smith, 2003).

Lessons can be differentiated to fit the needs of the students' instructional needs which allow students with special needs to be in the classroom; however, there is more to a classroom than just the instruction. School is often the main social outlet for a child, but how does a child with a disability fare socially in the inclusion classroom? Research shows that children with disabilities are generally not the choice playmate for children who developing typically and they tend to score lower on scales of social acceptance. Children with disabilities may have difficulties understanding social norms, which can lead to the social isolation and teasing from their peers.

Teachers are the main guiding force in the classroom environment to foster acceptance of all students. Research has shown that giving students realistic and honest information is the best way to teach children about disabilities. Ronald (1977) suggests that teacher and parents use questions asked about persons with

special needs as teachable moments to dispel misunderstanding and confusion and to give the children factual information. The information must be given in an appropriate manner for the developmental age of the students because children perceive, recognize and have an awareness of disabilities in others in different ways as they grow older. For example, kindergarteners tend to only recognize physical and sensory disabilities but not cognitive disabilities.(Smith & Williams,2001).On the other hand, fourth graders can recognize physical, sensory as well as cognitive disorders and may have a deeper understanding of the disability, such as it is something the person was born with or causes certain limitations. (Conant & Budoff,1983)

In addition to providing realistic and honest information about persons with disabilities, teachers need to involve students with disabilities in all areas of the classroom environment as equally as the typically developing students. Research (Maras & Brown 1996; Diamond, 2001; Favazza & Odom, 1997; Peck, Carlson and Helmstetter 1992) has shown that children who are developing typically and who participate in inclusion programs tend to have a more accepting view toward all persons with disabilities, not just their peers with disabilities.

Yet, although teachers may control the environment in school, parents are the main sources from which children learn their socially appropriate behaviors and derive their attitudes from. Parent opinions are demonstrated to children through direct methods such as verbal comments or indirect methods such as not allowing their child to play with a child in the neighborhood with disabilities. Hence parents' attitudes were considered as a factor in this study. Through surveys, the attitudes of

parents were collected because of their essential contributions to how their children's perceptions of disabilities.

Statement of Research Problem

Since the movement in education toward the inclusion of all students into the general education classroom, children with special needs are spending more time with their special needs peers. But they are not always accepted as part of the social aspect of schooling because they do not always have the skills in social competency to fit in with their peers. Additionally students do not always understand what disabilities are or how to interact with their peers with disabilities. Teachers need to give students in the general education classroom information about disabilities to promote understanding and tolerance. The purpose of this professional development model is to give teachers the resources they need to provide students with honest and realistic information about persons with disabilities. The workshop series shows teachers how to plan lessons in a developmentally appropriate way in order to see how students' perspectives of their peers with disabilities might change.

Story of my question

I have been thinking about what topic I could possibly care about enough to write a thesis about since I was accepted into the Collaborative Education program April of senior year of high school. This thought was always in the back of my mind like a looming storm cloud. But in spite of all of my education classes, I never found

anything that I truly cared about enough to want to research further in the classroom.

By spring of senior year, I was worried. I would never find anything that truly struck my fancy, dooming me to settling on a topic which mildly caught my interest, but was not a passion. Then the topic hit me like a lightning bolt electrifying my mind and setting afire the spark of passion. But this surge of interest and passion did not strike in a defining moment of an once-in-a-lifetime experience, but while babysitting my neighbors, Katie, Ethan, Justin and Greg, a monthly occurrence. We were playing outside and were sitting down on the soft grass, taking a break from an intense game of tag. The conversation somehow turned to kids in special education. I froze. I frantically worried and wondered where this conversation was headed..The fearful thoughts of how this conversation would end raced through my brain at a million miles per hour. I knew both Ethan and Greg are classified. Would they feel strange talking about this? How am I going to steer this conversation in a positive direction when it turned bad because there is no other way it could go?

Memories flashed through my head of the times in middle school and of all the things kids said to and about students with special needs. But my fear and thoughts were put to rest as the kids continued talking. I was flabbergasted and proud all at the same time! The conversation continued about how the students in the special education classes were no different with them, but they just needed a little more help than everyone. Katie likened their disabilities to how she "can't have peanuts cause she will die", but that was ok because everyone can't be the best at

everything. Katie wished she “could join them because they always look like they are having fun.”

I was floored that these children had such an open view of the world and the people in it. I have known these children from the time they were born and there is a trust that comes with living in a close knit neighborhood. So this conversation was a very honest sharing session between close friends. As I listened to the conversation, only inserting my thoughts when asked for them, I wondered how they had such positive opinions of their peers with disabilities. I knew that this was a conversation I would remember for the rest of my life. After the five minute conversation was over, the kids continued with their game completely forgetting they ever had this deep conversation, but questions were still circling around my brain. “How do these opinions form? When do they form? Do children’s opinions change over time? What can a teacher do to support acceptance? How can a teacher create the type of environment where this is the typical thoughts and beliefs of all students?” I could not keep my mind from the whirlpool of questions. It was as if a switch had been flipped and was stuck in the on position.

By the time, the mother had come home three hours later and thanked me for babysitting. I responded, “No, thank you for letting me babysit because your children have given me my topic for my master’s thesis!”

Organization of the thesis

In the following pages, there are the final four chapters. Chapter Two gives a detailed look at the theories and research that contribute to the way children’s perceptions about others are formed. Discussion topics include promoting

acceptance and tolerance and the parental role in the formation of perceptions.

Chapter three outlines a model of a professional development workshop series designed to teach teacher how to create a learning community focused in tolerance and acceptance. Chapter four consists of all the materials used during the workshop.

Chapter five is my personal reflection on what I have learned throughout the process of designing the workshop and implications for teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

Children are not all made the same. They are not robots or machines from a factory made precisely from a blueprint calling for all models to be made in a cookie cutter-like manner. They are human; hence each child brings their own diverse background, abilities and experiences to school. Children of different races, religions, socioeconomic statuses, family structures and vast range of abilities are found in the typical elementary school in the United States (Meadan and Monda-Amaya, 2008). Students come into school with an extensive range of abilities and teachers have the responsibility to encompass students' abilities in a way all students can learn and interact with the curriculum. Inclusion of students with special needs is a major movement in education; it puts students with special needs in classroom setting with their typical peers for at least part of, if not the entirety of, the school day.

But school is not only the epicenter of children's education, it is also a significant arena for the development of social skills (Linter, 2005). Students with special needs may have difficulties fitting in with their typical peers. Conversely, the students who are developing typically may not be accepting of their peers with special needs due to a lack of knowledge or experiences with people with special needs. (Han, Ostrosky and Diamond, 2006) Teachers need to take action within their

classrooms to give all students the tools and knowledge required to feel comfortable and safe, two essential factors needed to create a positive learning community environment.

The goal of this professional development model is to give teachers the tools and knowledge to create a classroom environment of acceptance for all students regardless of ability level.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the definition and the theories of the formation of attitudes. The second section of this chapter discusses the factors which contribute to the development of children's perceptions of their peers with special needs. The third section of this chapter examines the difference in social acceptance relating to age groups, genders and disabilities. The fourth section discusses the effects of social rejection on children with special needs. The fifth section of this chapter looks at teachers' roles in tolerance, acceptance and social competency. The sixth and final section of this chapter addresses six guidelines for fostering positive attitude development toward individuals with disabilities.

Definition of Attitude

What makes up an attitude? How are they formed? Plotnik (1996) defines attitude as "any belief or opinion that includes a positive or negative evaluation of some target (an object, person, or event) and that predisposes us to act in a certain way toward the target" (p. 540). Attitudes are formed by the experience and the thoughts a person holds about and their behavior towards an object, person or

event is directly related to these thoughts and experiences. The definition set forth by Plotnik will be the guiding definition of attitude for this study.

Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development

Triandis' (1971) theory of attitude development defines three specific components to behavior, cognitive, affective and behavioral.

The first is a cognitive component. The cognitive component is how the human mind categorizes specific characteristics into a general category. For example, some people assume that all people who have red hair are of Irish descent, but people from many different cultural backgrounds can have red hair. But this assumption is made based upon a single characteristic of that person.

The second component of this theory is an affective component, which is the emotion connected to a thing, person, place or idea. The emotional connection to a person, place thing or idea is normally derived from past experience. For example, if a child has an extended family member with special needs, with whom they have a positive relationship with, the child is more likely to look positively on another individual with special needs due to the reinforcement received through the relationship with that family member.

The third and final component of Triandis' theory of attitude development is the behavioral component. The behavioral component is the physical manifestations of these ideas. For instance, if a child has a negative opinion about people with special needs, then they will not go as the student in a wheelchair to come join them during lunchtime. (Inglis, 2005) These three components come together to form a person's attitude toward a certain person, place, thing or idea.

Triandis's theory of attitude development is crucial because understanding the factors of attitude development can pinpoint the origin of a person's attitude toward a person, place or thing and how to new experiences or associations can be provided to change the perceptions. In this professional development model, teachers will have to analyze their own attitudes toward people with disabilities before then focusing on making a classroom environment based upon acceptance and tolerance.

Person Perception

People make judgments based upon the impressions of others' characteristics such as physical appearance. The judgments based on impressions are defined by Wyer and Lambert (1994) as 'person perception.'. Persons with special needs may often have physical characteristics which may set them apart and make them look different. Whether a particular set of facial characteristics such as the ones exhibited by people with Down's Syndrome or piece of specialized equipment, and that not only children but people in general may judge people with disabilities mainly on those characteristics prior to getting to know them. The person perception theory is important as a intricate piece of social development for children to learn acceptance of others regardless of physical appearance to create a more tolerant and accepting society

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions

Many factors contribute to the way children perceive people's differences including the age and gender of the children, frequency of exposure to a certain difference, and attitudes of surrounding people, such as family members, teachers

and friends. (Thousand and Burchard, 1990). These components shape the way the children perceive persons with disabilities and must be analyzed to transform children's perceptions.

Children's attitudes about differences between people are formed during preschool (Diamond, 1994; Sigelman et al., 1986). Kratzer and Nelson-LeGall (1990) found that children tend to classify peers into two the categories of "like me" and "unlike me" and once these distinctions are made it is difficult for a child in the "not like me" category to switch. It is difficult for a child to switch categories is because those children are viewed to be different in all ways from the first child, not just for the initial reason which put them into the "unlike me" category. These categories recognize general differences such as gender as dissimilar to themselves. Maccoby (1988) suggests these categories can be used as an explanation for why preschool aged children tend to have mostly friends of the same gender. These categories also apply to disabilities. If a child who is developing typically sees a wheelchair as reason to put another child in the "unlike me" category, even if they are alike other ways such as interests. But a child with autism can be considered to be in the "like me" category if they both enjoy build towers out of blocks, even though that maybe the only thing they have in common. So a disability is not necessarily a guarantee that a child is put into the "unlike me" category, but it can be major deciding factor.

Diamond and Hestenes' study

During a study of forty-six children who ranged between ages three and six, Diamond and Hestenes (1996) found through interviews that children often explained other children's disabilities as immaturity, injury, and an accident. The

children's explanations of their peers' disabilities were attributed to being one of the ways children organize their thoughts about disabilities. The characteristics of the condition were explained as the disability and the causes are related in association rather than a sequence of or singular event. For example "She can't walk because she has a wheelchair." instead of ""She can't walk because she didn't get enough oxygen when she was being born and the part of her brain that controls her muscles was damaged, so she has to use a wheelchair." (Diamond Hestenes,1996) . The first example is "purely based upon the specialized equipment as the reason the girl is unable to walk, whereas the second example shows the sequence of events which caused the disability.

Frequency of Exposure in Inclusion Programs

Interaction between typically developing children and their special needs peers are considered to yield the most positive attitude or the typical developing children (Maras & Brown 1996; Diamond, 2001; Favazza & Odom, 1997). According to Peck, Carlson and Helmstetter (1992), children who have experiences in inclusive preschool programs are more accepting of people with differences. But the inclusive programs must foster acceptance and understanding among all the students. In inclusion settings, children with disabilities and typically developing peers are all required to be involved in activities to expand the social competency of all the children involved to the greatest extent of their level of ability. This engagement between both groups of children allows for social improvement for each group. The students with special needs are expanding their peer-related skills, while the students who are developing typically are getting experiences which form their

attitudes toward persons with disabilities. (Diamond & Innes, 2001) Also these positive interactions in a classroom setting can lead to children to have positive attitudes toward adults with special needs as well as their peers with special needs. (Staub, Peck, Gallucci, & Schwartz, 2000). Also children with disabilities make more progress in language, cognitive and motor skills development in comparison to their peers in self-contained classes due to the higher level of peer engagement, interaction and modeling. (Lamorey & C Bricker, 1993). Although most studies currently available on the inclusion classrooms focus on an early childhood range, this professional development model will take the information gathered from these studies and use it to help teachers adjust the information for use in their own classrooms.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

While studying the children's perceptions of their special needs peers it is important to keep in mind the difference between intentions and actions. According to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, a person's intention tends to overestimate the readiness to perform the action (Ajzen, 2010) (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). The theory of planned behavior focuses on the idea that people assess too highly their readiness to perform an action. Thus surveys to given to children should also be paired with a chance for the children to perform the action as well. By giving the children a chance to actually interact it will give the research a more accurate perspective. (Roberts, Smith; 1999)

Social Acceptance

Social acceptance by peers does depend upon disability. Smith and Williams (2001) found that a child with Down's syndrome or a child who is blind is considered to have higher ratings of social ability by their peers than a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). Disruptive behaviors tend to be considered less socially acceptable than physical or cognitive impairment. (Laws & Kelly, 2005; Roberts and Smith 1999) For teachers it is important to know which disabilities are less socially accepted by children to point areas to focus on to bring about overall acceptance of all children.

Children's Recognition of Disabilities

"Conant & Budoff (83) found that 3 to 5 year-olds were aware of physical and sensory disabilities, but showed no expressed awareness of mental retardation. Awareness of mental retardation and psychological disturbance appeared only in the late primary school years. This finding suggests that young children can identify the presence of impairments in others and that preschoolers are more aware of impairments that have observable salient cues." (Smith & Williams,2001)

Specialized Equipments Effects on Children's Assumptions

Specialized equipment, such as a wheelchair, is the easiest for preschool-aged children to see and pick out as a sign of a disability because it is a concrete visual of difference. (Laws & Kelly 2005,Diamond, 1994)Also, children as old as twelve perceive people who use specialized assistive equipment as having a cognitive disability as well as a physical disability. (Longoria & Marini, 2006). The association between specialized assistive equipment and children's assumptions

about the users of specialized assistive equipment supports Wright's (1983) concept of the "spread" phenomena; the idea that people relate a person having a disability in one area to affecting other unrelated areas. According to Wright, there is a fundamental negative bias, in which people tend to remember the negative conjugation from a disability rather than the positive information about an individual with a disability. (Wright, 1988) This professional development model will address the effects of spread theory and give teachers resources to address this within their classrooms

Attitude Differences between Genders

The kind of disability is not the only important factor of different attitudes and social acceptance. Gender also plays an important role. Girls tend to be able to identify, form friendships and be concerned by a peer with special needs. Younger girls tend to ask questions about why and how the disability occurred and older girls tend to ask about how they can help a child with special needs (Ronald, 1977). Boys tend to have more negative attitudes toward peers with the physical impairments. (Archie and Sherrill 1989; Gash and Coffee 1995; Laws & Kelly, 2005) When students are given specific information about the disabilities, boys tend to have unchanged opinions of the other child, while girls' opinions were changed negatively in the aspect of physical disabilities. But the girls' opinions are not changed by information considering cognitive disabilities. (Laws & Kelly, 2005) This information will be given to teachers to help teachers adjust the information for use in their own classrooms.

Importance of Awareness Activities for Acceptance

Children's awareness of disabilities is important for acceptance (Haring, 1991; Sapon-Shevin, 1992) Awareness activities which give students a realistic and honest look at disabilities will give the students information required to be more accepting. It is always important to emphasize of the whole person and it is not a matter of any group being superior but each deserves to be seen for the unique. Both the similarities and differences among the children should be celebrated. This focus will help create a sense of community which will benefit all students. (Korinek, Walther-Thomas, McLaughlin & Williams, 1999) Ronald (1977) found curiosity is usually the response of children to the subject of disabilities and often have many different questions. She suggests that teacher and parents use questions asked about persons with special needs as teachable moments to dispel misunderstanding and confusion and to give the children factual information. A classroom where both similarities and differences are celebrated to create a better learning community is the main focus of the professional development model.

Effects of Social Rejection on Children with Special Needs

Not being accepted by peers can have negative effects on children with disabilities. Stanovich, P. J., Jordan, A., & Perot, J. (1998) found that students with learning disabilities scored the lowest in social acceptance with peers in comparison to students at risk and typically achieving students. According to Thomas (1999), 'disablism' is defined as exclusionary and oppressive practices at the interpersonal, organizational, cultural and socio-cultural levels in particular societal contexts' (p. 40). An example of disablism is not allowing a child in a wheelchair to join chorus

due to the stage lacking a handicap accessible entrance. Psycho-emotional disablism is any behavior of other people which can be perceived as insensitive and antagonistic. Behaviors such as teasing and being made to feel inferior have harmful effects on a person's sense of self worth and self-conception (Thomas, 1999).

Children with special needs maybe often isolated if they also have difficulties with social skills such as forging friendships. Mathur and Rutherford (1996) stated that social skills could be viewed as "socially acceptable patterns of behaviors that enable students to gain social reinforcement and acceptance and avoid aversive social situations" (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008) Stoneman (1993) suggested that negative attitudes toward a person with special needs could be just as detrimental as physical barriers. The diminishing of self-worth can cause acting out behaviors and emotional effects which can last a lifetime. (Deater-Deckard, 2001; Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004) Hence why the acceptance of peers is so important and need to be fostered by teachers and other adults. Lewis (1995) point to children's understandings of disabilities to being vital for acceptance and suggests finding out the students' already forged perspectives on peers with disabilities prior to introducing them into the classroom environment. By collecting this information, the teacher has a better perspective of how the new students will fit into the classroom environment and to know how much they will need to intervene to help this new student be accepted.

Teachers' Roles in Tolerance, Acceptance and Social Competency

In the *1995 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization wrote that "Education is the most

effective means of preventing intolerance. The first step in tolerance education is to teach people about their shared rights and freedoms are, so that they may be respected, and to promote the will to protect those of others." Typically tolerance is defined as "a sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own" or "the act of allowing something" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tolerance>). This definition of tolerance as the sense of suffering while enduring others. But not all definitions of tolerance have a negative connotation. The *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* defines tolerance as "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. (Article 1.1) This positive definition which promotes "respect, acceptance and appreciation of diversity". In this professional development model, this definition will be used in the workshops for teachers to then bring into their classroom communities.

Teaching students about tolerance should focus on different cultures, but it also needs to be extended to different levels of ability. Most of the research done on tolerance has previously focuses on ethnic and racial issues, but the same ideas can be applied to disabilities. There is a need for teachers to step in to help the students to learn the social skills. The standards for teacher candidates reflect this need to help students with their social competency (Meadan and Monda-Amaya ,2008. For example, in the *Council for Exceptional Children Definition Of a Well-Prepared Special Education*, the fifth standard is "Learning Environments and Social Interactions".

The fifth standard states “Special educators actively create learning environments for individuals with exceptional learning needs that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and active engagement of individuals with exceptional learning needs.” (Council for Exceptional Children Board of Directors,2004) These standards ensure that teachers are to aid students who are lacking in the abilities they need socially. This professional development model is designed to help create that positive environment which will support students’ both academically and socially

Six Guidelines for Fostering Positive Attitude Development toward Individuals with Disabilities

Teachers do not only need to help students who need guidance in socially appropriate behavior, but at teachers need to provide the support and information for children who are developing typically by creating an environment which fosters acceptance and tolerance of all students. According to Han, Ostrosky and Diamond (2006) there are six guidelines for adults to “foster positive attitude development toward individuals with disabilities” through analyzing their own perceptions of people with disabilities and creating an environment to support positive relationships. These six guidelines are based upon research studies conducted about attitude and acceptance of children with special needs. The six guidelines are 1) Consider one’s own attitudes as adult’s attitudes are transmitted to children, 2) Foster friendships, not feelings of pity, toward children with disabilities, 3) Guide children to see the similarities between themselves and their peers with disabilities, 4) Do not judge children based on their physical characteristics or let children judge

one another in this manner, 5) Educate parents; some disabilities might make parents of other children uncomfortable, 6) Provide facts, at the appropriate developmental level, to children regarding disabilities so that they understand what their peers with disabilities can and cannot do. (Han, Ostrosky, & Diamond, 2006)

These guidelines provide the factors which become the focus in the series of workshops. Further details of the outline of the workshops will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Guideline 1-“Consider one’s own attitudes as adult’s attitudes are transmitted to children”

According to Triandis (1971), attitudes are learned thus analyzing one’s own opinions prior to trying to help shape others’ attitudes are helpful and crucial while trying to learn about the perceptions of others. Both parents and teachers shape children’s views of the world as a guiding force to the development of one’s own (Innes & Diamond, 1999; Triandis, 1971). Stoneman (1993) stated that children acquire their attitudes from their parents as a primary source of pro-social behaviors. While within the classroom the teacher is the most significant factor to the level of acceptance and tolerance. (Hollingsworth, Didlot and Smith, 2005)

Since children learn their behaviors from the adults around them, it is essential for both the opinions and bias of parents, teachers and any other adults, who the child considers to be a role model, to be considered by the teacher

Ways Adults Shape Children’s Opinions

Adult attitudes can be communicated in direct and indirect ways. For example, parents talking within earshot of their child, who is a typical learner, about

how they heard about another child who has Down's Syndrome in their class displays aggressive behaviors. The parents wondered aloud if they should have their child moved out of the class for their own protection. This conversation may have a direct effect on the typical child's behavior toward that child with Down's syndrome the next day in school. An indirect example would be if the teacher does not call on the one student with Down's syndrome in the class as often as his peers. By not calling on the one student, though the attitude is not verbalized, it can be detected by students. . During the workshops, teachers will be asked to analyze their own thoughts and beliefs about children with special needs. This self reflection will teachers a chance to think about what kind of influence they are giving to their students. Also these workshops will give teachers ideas and methods to working with parents to think about their own attitudes about people with special needs.

Guideline 2- Foster friendships, not feelings of pity, toward children with disabilities

According to Odom & Diamond (1998), children should be encouraged to make friends regardless of any differences between the two people. It was found in a study by Hestenes and Carroll (2000) that children who develop typically prefer to interact with other typically developing students, rather than their peers with special needs. Therefore to create an equal and accepting learning community teachers must take measure to ensure there is not division between the students who are typically developing and students with special needs. Friendships can be encouraged by the structuring the classroom to encourage peer interactions such as limiting materials and grouping students into small groups. (Odom and Colleagues ,

1999) Observations of the children are important to can give adults a better picture of the interactions between children.(Hestenes & Carroll, 2000).Teachers need to monitor interaction with the students by paying attention to how often the students who are developing typically are not asked to give the their peers with disability help-giving behavior. A help-giving behavior is considered to be an action which a children with disability receives help from their typical peer without aiding their peer in return. If help-giving behavior is given too often by the typically developing students, they will begin to feel pity for their peers with special needs and will not view them as equals (Ebert, 1977). This professional development model will give teacher the resources to help make the learning community focused on friendship and acceptance.

Guideline 3- Guide children to see the similarities between themselves and their peers with disabilities

Adults can guide all children to recognize similarities with their peers regardless of ability level based upon similar interests and experiences.(Han, Ostrosky and Diamond, 2006) If two students of differing ability levels have similar interests, adults can point out the commonality and encourage the students to form a friendship based upon their common interest (Hestenes &Carroll, 2000) This professional development model will give teacher ideas and stragtiges to help students to find similarities amongst the entire class.

Guideline 4- Do not judge children based upon their physical characteristics or let children judge each other in this manner

Children with special needs may have physical attributes which set them apart from their typically developing peers such as distinctive facial features, thick glasses or other specialized assistive equipment.(Han, Ostrosky and Diamond,2006) Based upon Wyer and Lamber (1994) found person's perspective is how one may judge another based upon their physical characteristics. Similarly Dion (1972) found that the adults tended to perceive children's behavior as a reflection of their physical attractiveness. Adults need to reflect upon their own biases and make sure that they are not judging children's behavior based upon those biases. Additionally adults need be vigilant that children do not judge each other in this manner either. Frequently, quick judgments are made due to having a lack of experience or information about a certain topic. As a remedy, holistic approaches such a read aloud followed by a guided discussion or structured play groups, give experiences (Favazza, LaRoe, & Odom, 1999). During the workshops, teachers will be asked to analyze their own thoughts and beliefs about children with special needs. This self reflection will help teachers discover their own personal biases . The awareness of their own biases will help teachers to monitor their own actions. Also the workshops will give the teachers strategies and ideas to implement in their classroom to keep students from judging classmates with special needs prematurely based on their physical appearance.

Guideline 5- Educate parents; some disabilities might make parents of other children nervous

Due to the fact that parents have the most profound influence on their child's attitudes toward their peers with special needs, they are important partners in

fostering and establishing positive attitudes toward persons in children developing typically. Hence why the attitudes and biases of parents need to be considered, but it is more essential for parents to be informed about disabilities. Just as children have a range of feelings about their peers with special needs, parents have different ranges of concern based upon the disability. Green & Stoneman (1989) found that parents are most concerned about children with cognitive, emotional and behavioral disabilities rather than sensory disability which caused very little concern among parents. Hence if parents are given information about the disability they are less likely to attribute the behavior to “bad parenting” or something similar, which may have no stance in truth (Han, Ostrosky and Diamond,2006). These workshops will give teachers ideas and strategies to working with parents to think about their own attitudes about people with special needs.

Guideline 6- Provide facts, at the appropriate developmental level, to children regarding disabilities so that they understand what their peers with disabilities can and cannot do.

Not only parents need to be educated about disabilities. Children also need background information about disabilities to feel at ease and have understanding of people with special needs. By giving children factual information on the child’s development level about a peer’s disability or adaptive equipment, myths shall be vanquished while awareness is being raised, giving the children clearer understanding of their peers(Han, Ostrosky and Diamond,2006). An understanding unobstructed by myths and untruths can also give way to children learning what the strengths and weakness of their peers with special needs. These workshops will

give teachers suggestions and strategies for giving students a chance to access information about disabilities at their own developmentally appropriate.

Conclusion

As the literature suggests, there is a need for disabilities to be addressed in schools through both interactions as well as education to dispel any myths or falsehoods that the children may have learned from uninformed sources or assumptions. The literature also touches on teachers' role of providing support of students in social competence and to facilitate an environment of acceptance and tolerance. Also the six guidelines to foster positive attitude development toward individuals with disabilities. These guidelines have a focus on the importance of education for both children and their parents about persons with special needs. Parents have the single greatest influence on the way children perceive the world. So for children to have an informed perspective, parents need to be well versed in the realities and facts about persons with disabilities because adults' perspectives are transferred to children , even if not spoken of directly.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

A review of the literature indicates children's perceptions of persons with special needs are drawn from their own experiences and the attitudes of others around them, when information about disabilities is not provided. Without information, typically developing children may not be as accepting of their peers with special needs who may not have as adequate social skills. Teachers are instrumental in the level of acceptance special needs children receive from their peers. Teachers need to set up an environment which is accepting of all people. In a learning community which is focused on acceptance and tolerance of all people, students will be more accepting of their peers with special needs. Often tolerance education and acceptance is mainly focused on just cultural differences but not the differences in ability levels. Many teachers do not even address the ability level difference, possibly due to uncertainty of how to do it without making the children with special needs feel uncomfortable or as if they are being targeted. Teachers need to be taught ways to integrate difference of ability into the classroom in a positive light.

Chapter three presents a model of a professional development workshop series designed to teach teachers ways to create an inclusive learning community environment which will not only support special needs students academically but

also socially. The overall aim of the workshop is to help teachers create learning environments in their classroom where students feel safe and socially accepted regardless of differences between the students.

Context of Professional Development Workshop

The workshop is designed to teach fifteen to twenty inclusion teachers how to create a safe and accepting learning environment where students are accepted regardless of ability levels. The workshops will consist of five two hour sessions that will take place over the course of five days. At the beginning of the first session, each teacher is given a folder containing the materials needed for all sessions including two PowerPoint presentations for note taking, handouts, the outline of the learning community workshop sessions, and self-assessment of the teachers' attitudes. The folder will also contain a compact disc with digital copies of all of the powerpoints, assessments and activities shown and used throughout the workshop. This compact disc will serve as an additional way for the teachers to access and review the information. Also the compact disc will allow teachers to alter the materials to best fit their specific classroom. The work completed by the participants throughout the various sessions is added to the folders thus building a repertoire of materials that can be used to create tolerant learning community.

About the materials

All materials created for the workshop are presented in chapter four.

Outline of Learning Community Workshop Sessions

Session 1- “Reflections of Attitudes of Teachers”

A. Learning Community Session #1 Power Point Presentation

B. Handouts

1. Outline of Learning Communities Workshop Sessions
2. Survey- Self-assessment of Attitudes and Feeling on People with Special Needs
3. Printout of Learning Community Session #1 Power Point Presentation
4. Triandis’s Theory of Attitude Development handout
5. Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior handout

Session 2- Working with and including parents as part of the learning community

A. Handouts

1. Tips for Making Parents Members of the Learning Community
2. Example “Back to School” Night Survey

Session 3- Understanding Children’s Perceptions and Misperceptions About Persons with Disability

A. Learning Communities Session #3 Power Point Presentation

B. Handouts

1. Print-out of Learning Communities PowerPoint Presentation

Session 4- Creating a Classroom Community Focused on Tolerance and Listening

A. Learning Communities Session #4 PowerPoint

B. Handouts

1. Instructions for Preparing Activities
2. Children's Books about Tolerance of Disabilities (done)
3. Circle of Friends Worksheet

Session 5- Creating a Classroom Community Focused on Tolerance and Listening

- A. Teachers will present the different activities to the entire group.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Chapter three presented the context and outline of a model of a professional development workshop series designed to assist teachers to create a safe learning community environment for every student regardless of level of ability. In this chapter, the materials listed in the outline will be shown in the chronological order which they will be used in the professional development workshop series.

Session 1

During Session One, we are going to focus on teacher's own attitudes and possible biases they may have. These maybe biases or opinions they may not even realize they hold. We are going to start the session by have the teachers do a self-assessment of their attitudes and opinions. It will be made very clear that they will not need to share these opinions with the group and that no one else will be looking at these self-assessments. This is to encourage honesty on the survey. Then we are going to review a PowerPoint of the major theories on how attitudes form. By understanding how attitudes are formed, it is also easier to learn how to change them. Each teacher will have a printed hand out version of the PowerPoint with room for taking notes. Also there are two individual handouts which further breakdown the two major theories.

Figure 4.1. Outline of Learning Community Workshop Sessions. This figure is a representation of the outline given to participants in their workshop folders.

Overview of the Workshop

Session 1- "Reflections of Attitudes of Teachers"

- A. Formations of Attitudes Power Point Presentation
 1. Introduce the important theories of attitude formation
- B. Handouts
 1. Outline of Learning Communities Workshop Sessions
 2. Survey- Self-assessment of Attitudes and Feeling on People with Special Needs
 3. Printout of Learning Community Session #1 Power Point Presentation for note taking
 4. Triandis's Theory of Attitude Development handout
 5. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior handout

Session 2- "Working With and Including Parents as Part of the Learning Community"

Teachers will participate in a discussion focusing on ways to use parents and both positive and negative experiences from including parents as part of a learning community.

- A. Handouts
 1. Tips for Making Parents Members of the Learning Community
 2. Example "Back to School" Night Survey

Session 3- "Understanding Children's Perceptions and Misperceptions about Persons with Disability"

- A. Understanding the Ways Children Perceive Disabilities PowerPoint Presentation

This presentation will be broken up by two rounds of discussion. This discussion time will give teachers a chance to verbalize their thoughts about the information
- B. Handouts
 1. Print-out of Learning Communities PowerPoint Presentation for Note taking

Session 4- "Creating a Classroom Community Focused on Tolerance and Listening"

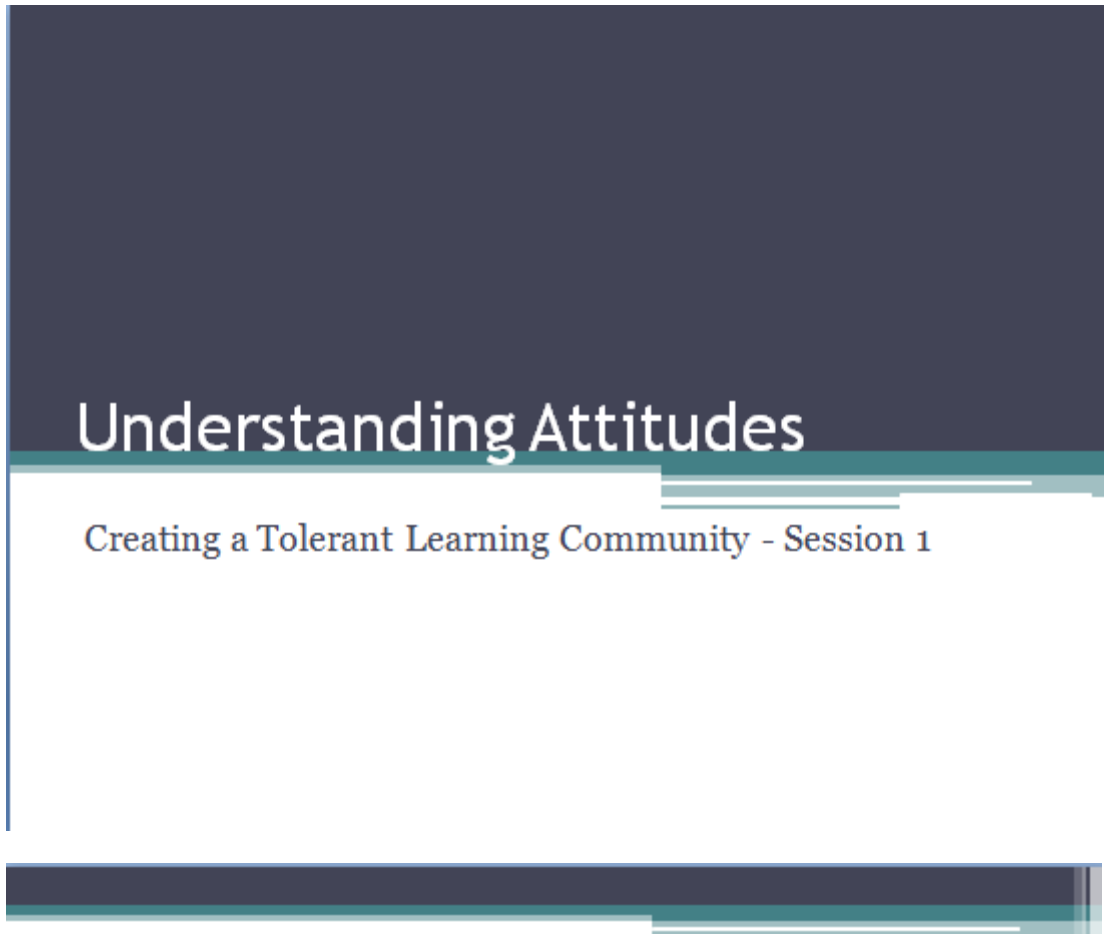
- A. Teaching from a Listening Perspective PowerPoint

This session focuses on creating a learning community by using a listening perspective. Then teachers will have a discussion about different resources to use in the classroom. The instructions will then be given for the culminating activity, which will be completed in the final session.
- B. Handouts
 1. Instructions for Preparing Activities
 2. Children's Books about Tolerance of Disabilities
 3. Circle of Friends Worksheet

Session 5- "Creating a Classroom Community Focused on Tolerance and Listening"

Teachers will use the first hour of the session to complete the culminating activity. Each pair of teachers will present a different activity to the whole group. There will be a follow-up discussion about the workshops.

Figure 4.2. Learning Community Session #1 Power Point Presentation. This figure illustrates the power point shown during the first session of the workshop.



What is an attitude?

- Plotnik defines attitude as "any belief or opinion that includes a positive or negative evaluation of some target (an object, person, or event) and that predisposes us to act in a certain way toward the target" (p. 540)

Attitudes are formed by the experience and the thoughts a person has about an object, person or event and the way they behave is directly related to these thoughts and experiences.

Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development

Three components
of Triandis's Theory of Attitude Development

- cognitive
- affective
- behavioral

Figure 4.2 Continued

Cognitive Component of *Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development*

- How the human mind categorizes specific characteristics into a general category
- For example- the assumption that all people with red hair are of Irish

Emotional Component of *Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development*

- The emotional component connected to a thing, person, place or idea.
- The emotional connection to a person, place thing or idea is normally derived from past experience or .
- For example, if a child has a positive relationship family member with special needs, the child is more likely to look positively on another person with special needs.

Figure 4.2. Continued.

The Behavioral Component of Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development

- The behavioral component is the physical manifestations of these ideas.
- For example, if a child has a negative opinion about people with special needs, then they will not go as the student in a wheelchair to come join them during lunchtime. (Inglis, 2005)

The Importance of Triandis's theory of attitude development

Understanding the factors of attitude development can pinpoint the origin of a person's attitude toward a person, place or thing and how to new experiences or associations can be provided to change the perceptions.

Figure 4.2. Continued.

Specialized Equipments Effects on Children's Assumptions (through person perception)

- Specialized equipment, such as a wheelchair, is the easiest for preschool-aged children because it is a concrete visual of difference.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

- According to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, a person's intention tends to overestimate the readiness to perform the action(Ajzen,2010) (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992).
- The theory of planned behavior focuses on the idea that people assess too highly their readiness to perform an action.

Figure 4.2. Continued.

Wright's (1983) concept of the "spread" phenomena

- the idea that people relate a person having a disability in one area to affecting other unrelated areas.
- there is a fundamental negative bias, in which people tend to remember the negative conjugation from a disability rather than the positive information about an individual with a disability.

Figure 4.2. Continued

The figure displays a series of 10 PowerPoint slides arranged in a 5x2 grid. The slides cover the following topics:

- Slide 1 (Top Left):** Title slide: "Understanding Attitudes" with subtitle "Creating a Tolerant Learning Community - Session 1".
- Slide 2 (Top Right):** "What is an attitude?" with a definition by Plotnik: "any belief or opinion that includes a positive or negative evaluation of some target (an object, person, or event) and that predisposes us to act in a certain way toward the target" (p. 540).
- Slide 3 (Second Row, Left):** "Attitudes are formed by the experience and the thoughts a person has about an object, person or event and the way they behave is directly related to these thoughts and experiences."
- Slide 4 (Second Row, Right):** "Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development" with three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.
- Slide 5 (Third Row, Left):** "Cognitive Component of Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development" with two bullet points: "How the human mind categorizes specific characteristics into a general category" and "For example- the assumption that all people with red hair are of Irish".
- Slide 6 (Third Row, Right):** "Emotional Component of Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development" with three bullet points: "The emotional component connected to a thing, person, place or idea.", "The emotional connection to a person, place thing or idea is normally derived from past experience or.", and "For example, if a child has a positive relationship family member with special needs, the child is more likely to look positively on another person with special needs."
- Slide 7 (Bottom Row, Left):** "The Behavioral Component of Triandis' Theory of Attitude Development" with two bullet points: "The behavioral component is the physical manifestations of these ideas." and "For example, if a child has a negative opinion about people with special needs, then they will not go as the student in a wheelchair to come join them during lunchtime. (Inglis, 2005)".
- Slide 8 (Bottom Row, Right):** "The Importance of Triandis's theory of attitude development" with text: "Understanding the factors of attitude development can pinpoint the origin of a person's attitude toward a person, place or thing and how to new experiences or associations can be provided to change the perceptions."

Figure 4.3. Printout of Learning Community Session #1 Power Point Presentation. This figure shows the printed version which the teachers will receive to take their notes.

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

- According to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, a person's intention tends to overestimate the readiness to perform the action (Ajzen, 2010) (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992).
- The theory of planned behavior focuses on the idea that people assess too highly their readiness to perform an action.

Wright's (1983) concept of the "spread" phenomena

- the idea that people relate a person having a disability in one area to affecting other unrelated areas.
- there is a fundamental negative bias, in which people tend to remember the negative connotation from a disability rather than the positive information about an individual with a disability.

Figure 4.3. (Continued)

Triandis's Theory of Attitude Development

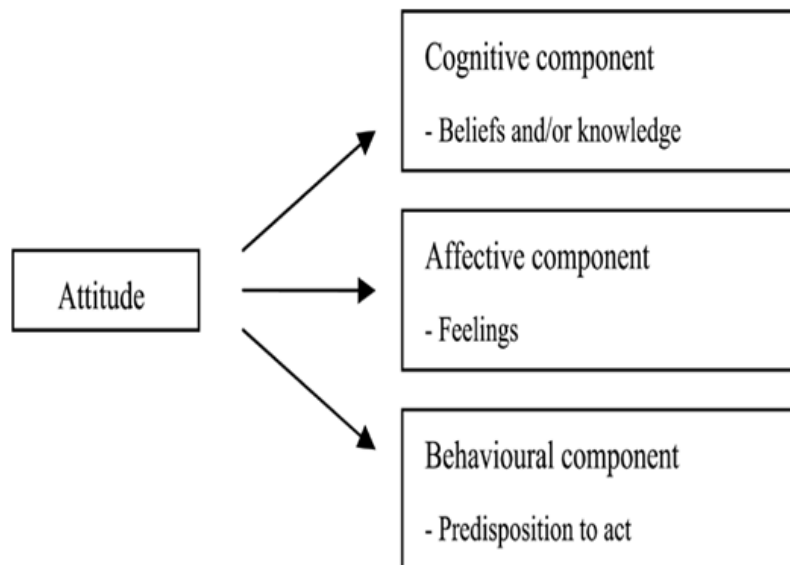


Figure 4.4. Triandis's Theory of Attitude Development handout. This figure represents a more in-depth presentation of Triandis's Theory of Attitude Development

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

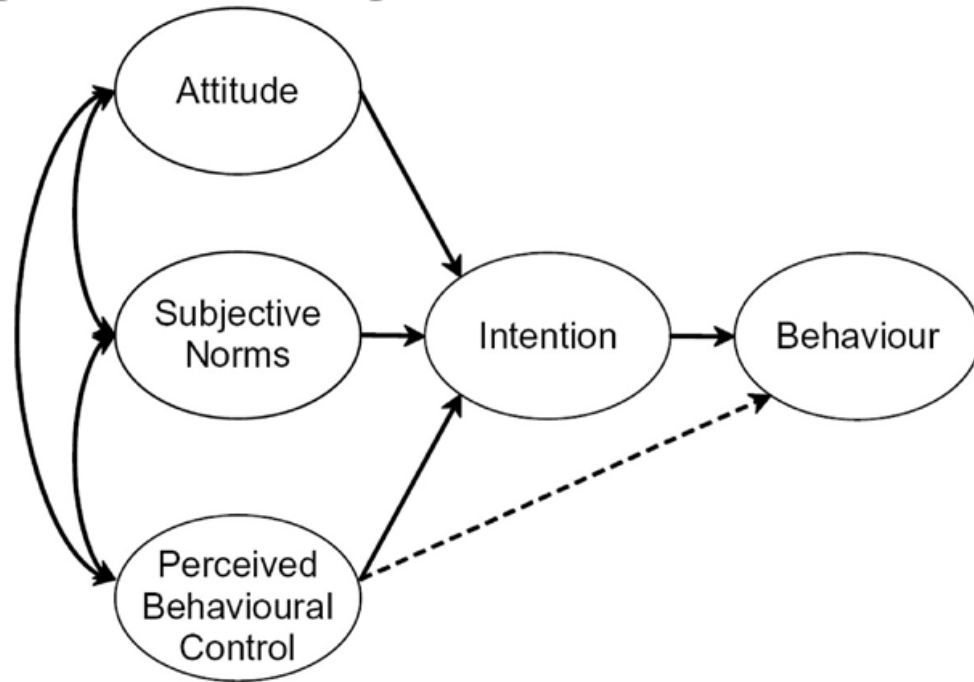


Figure 4.5. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior Handout

Session 2

During session two, we are going to have a discussion about the experiences the teachers have had with having parents in the classroom and the different ways they already bring the parents into their learning community. The discussion will also include a chance for teachers to mention any problems they may have had bringing parents into the classroom. This will give a chance for sharing and give the teachers a chance to use each others as resources. Also the open discussion will allow for teachers to get to better learn from each other's experiences. Then we will review the different ways of bring parents into the classroom found on the "Tips for

Making Parents Members of the Learning Community”, which can be found in the folder each teacher received.

TIPS FOR MAKING PARENTS MEMBERS OF THE CLASSROOM LEARNING COMMUNITY

- . Have communication with parents as often as possible
- . Let parents know the best ways to contact you and make sure you are consistent and quick with your responses.
- . Let the parents know about the focus on celebrating strengths and supporting weaknesses in the classroom.
- . Ask the parents what they think their child’s strengths and weaknesses are.
- . Invite parents into the classroom to share their interests, own strengths or cultural background.
 - Use a survey at a Back to School night (see handout)
- . Invite parents to come in as classroom volunteers.

Figure 4.6.. Tips for Making Parents Members of the Classroom Learning Community

Can You Help Us?

Parents or guardians: Please complete the following survey and return it to school at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

1. Do you have any special skills you can share as part of our classroom program? These may include model building, electrical knowledge, weaving, fishing or hunting, cooking, writing, and the like. *I'd be willing to share the following:*

2. Do you collect any special objects you can share with students? These may include shells, coins, stamps, bottles, photographs, or postcards. *I'd be happy to demonstrate my collection of:*

3. Does any part of your work or job involve something related to our class or subject? This may include electricians, lawyers, doctors, store owners, beauticians, plumbers, carpenters, machinists, architects, etc. *I can share the following parts about my job:*

4. Do you have an association with any special places we may visit as part of our classroom program? These may include construction sites, museums, galleries, hospitals, industrial sites, and so on. *Yes, I can arrange a visit to:*

5. Do you know of other individuals in the community (friends, relatives, co-workers) who have a special hobby or talent they could share with our class?

Their name: _____

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

6. Do you have any special materials at home we could borrow as part of our instructional program? These may include antiques, memorabilia, special tools, gadgets, etc. *Yes, I could loan you:*

7. Is there any other information, materials, places, or data you can share with us that will help our classroom program?

Sincerely,

Figure 4.7. Example "Back to School" Night Survey

Session 3

In the third session, we are first going to review a PowerPoint about the different ways children perceive children with special needs. Due to the length and quantity of information in this PowerPoint there will be two times where the PowerPoint will be stopped and the participants will be asked to form two circles and discuss the different information being given. This activity is called Paseo. It will also be done at the end of the PowerPoint presentation with questions about what teachers can do with this information. Then the teachers will complete a quick write reflection for five minutes. Then we will have a discussion about how the participants feel about this information. This conversation will be used as a lead in to the next day's lesson on learning communities.

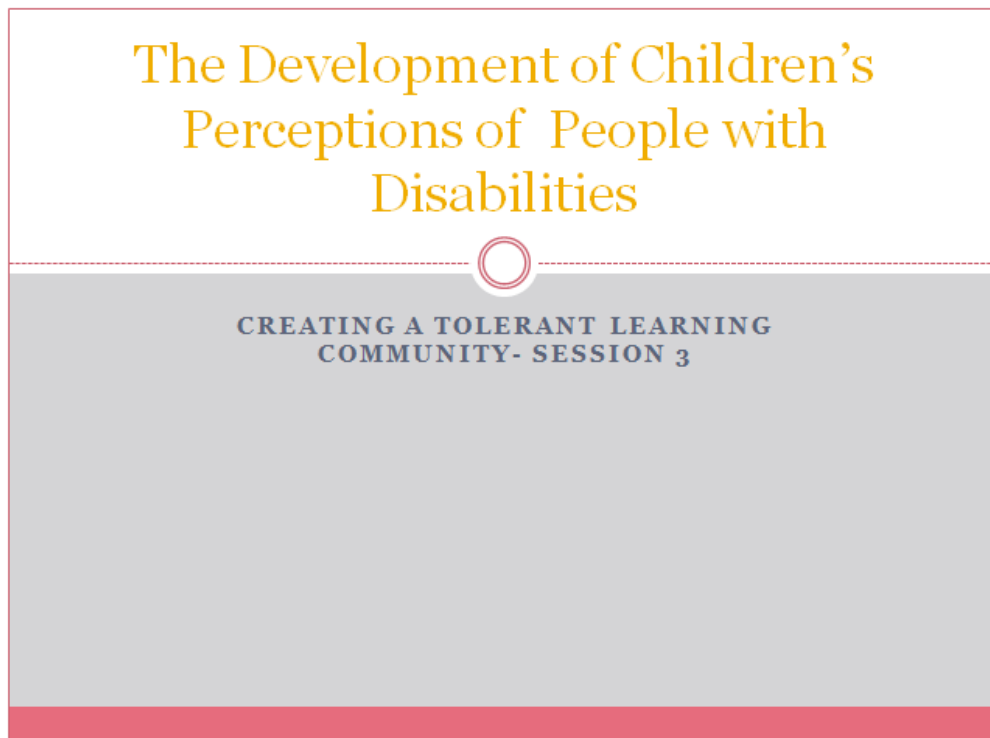


Figure 4.8. Learning Community Session #3 Power Point Presentation. This figure illustrates the power point shown during the third session of the workshop.

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions

- age
- gender
- frequency of exposure to a certain difference
- attitudes of surrounding people, such as family members, teachers and friends.

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- Children's attitudes about differences between people are formed during preschool.
- Children tend to classify peers into two the categories of "like me" and "unlike me".
- i.e.-a wheelchair as reason to put another child in the "unlike me" category, even if they are alike other ways such as interests.
- i.e.- child with autism can be put in the "like me" category if they both enjoy build towers out of blocks, even though that maybe the only thing they have in common.

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- Three to five year-olds have an awareness of physical and sensory disabilities, but showed no awareness of mental retardation.
- Awareness of mental retardation and psychological disturbance is developed in late primary school years.
- Diamond and Hestenes (1996) found through interviews , children ages three and six often explained other children's disabilities as immaturity, injury, and an accident.

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- The characteristics of the condition were explained as the disability and the causes are related in association rather than a sequence of or singular event.
- For example "She can't walk because she has a wheelchair." instead of ""She can't walk because she didn't get enough oxygen when she was being born and the part of her brain that controls her muscles was damaged, so she has to use a wheelchair."

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- Also, children as old as twelve perceive people who use specialized assistive equipment as having a cognitive disability as well as a physical disability

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Gender

- Girls tend to be able to identify, form friendships and be concerned by a peer with special needs.
- Younger girls tend to ask questions about why and how the disability occurred

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- frequency of exposure

- Interaction between typically developing children and their special needs peers tended to have the most positive attitude for the typical developing children
- Children who have experiences in inclusive preschool programs are more accepting of people with differences.

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- attitudes of surrounding people

- Adult attitudes can be communicated in direct and indirect ways.
- Stoneman (1993) stated that children acquire their attitudes from their parents as a primary source of pro-social behaviors.
- While within the classroom, the teacher is the most significant factor to the level of acceptance and tolerance. (Hollingsworth, Didlot and Smith, 2005)

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

The Importance of Social Acceptance

- Social acceptance by peers does depend upon disability
- Disruptive behaviors tend to be considered less socially acceptable than physical or cognitive impairment.
- Stanovich, P. J., Jordan, A., & Perot, J. (1998) found that students with learning disabilities scored the lowest in social acceptance with peers in comparison to students at risk and typically achieving students.

Disablism

- ‘Disablism’ is defined as exclusionary and oppressive practices at the interpersonal, organizational, cultural and socio-cultural levels in particular societal contexts’
- Psycho-emotional disablism is any behavior of other people which can be perceived as insensitive and antagonistic.
- Behaviors such as teasing and being made to feel inferior have harmful effects on a person’s sense of self worth and self-conception

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

Effects of Social Rejection on Children with Special Needs

- Children with special needs may have difficulties with social skills such as forging friendships.
- Social difficulties can lead to diminished self worth and self- esteem
- The diminishing of self-worth can cause acting out behaviors and emotional effects which can last a lifetime.

Figure 4.8. (Continued)

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Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- The characteristics of the condition were explained as the disability and the causes are related in association rather than a sequence of or singular event.
- For example "She can't walk because she has a wheelchair." instead of "She can't walk because she didn't get enough oxygen when she was being born and the part of her brain that controls her muscles was damaged, so she has to use a wheelchair."

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Age

- Also, children as old as twelve perceive people who use specialized assistive equipment as having a cognitive disability as well as a physical disability

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Gender

- Girls tend to be able to identify, form friendships and be concerned by a peer with special needs.
- Younger girls tend to ask questions about why and how the disability occurred

Contributing Factors to Children's Perceptions- Gender

- Older girls tend to ask about how they can help a child with special needs
- Boys tend to have more negative attitudes toward peers with the physical impairments.

Figure 4.9. Learning Community Session #3 Power Point Presentation Handout

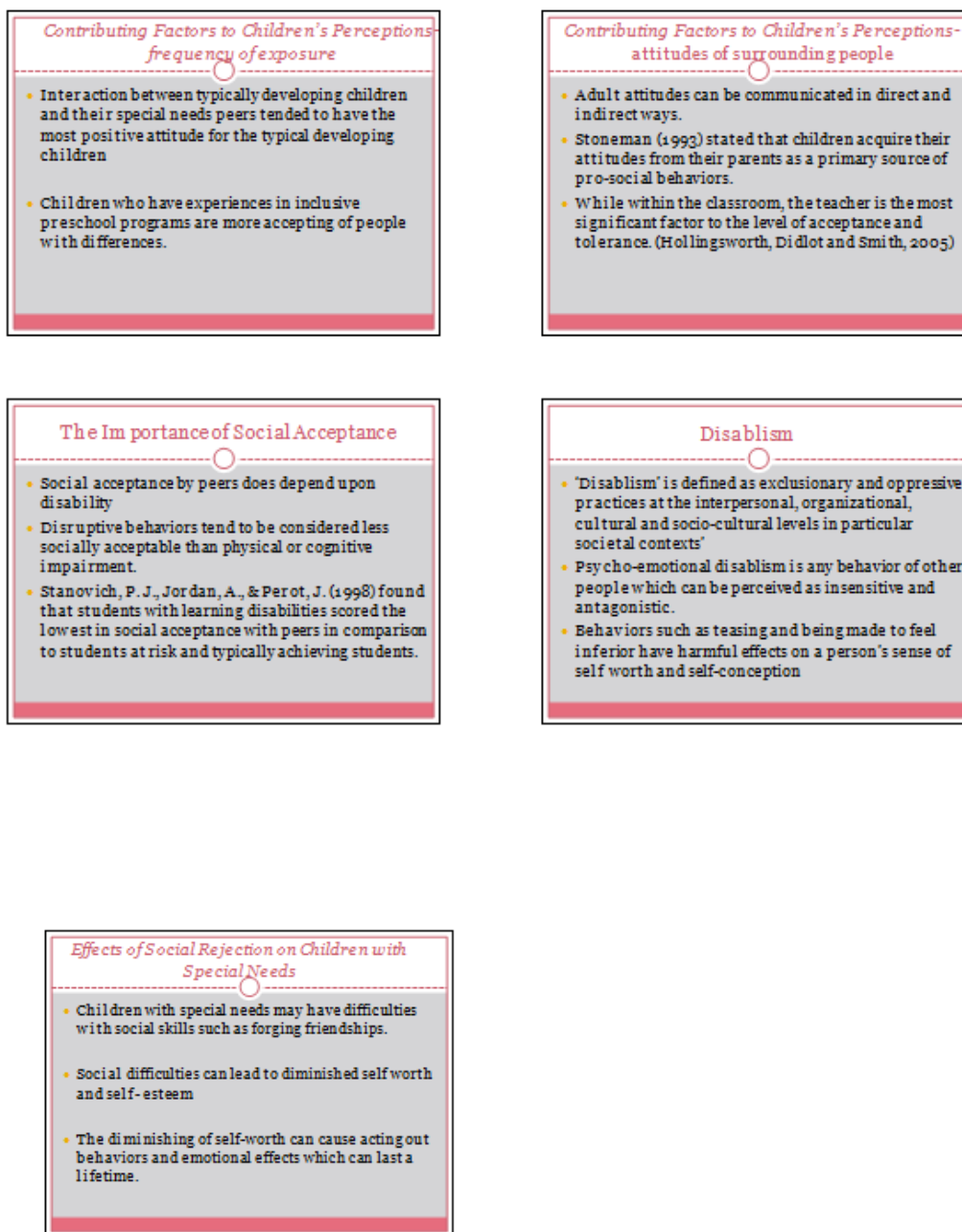


Figure 4.9 (Continued)

Session 4

During Session Four, we discuss how to create a learning community by using a listening perspective. First we view a PowerPoint to introduce the concept of listening. Then we have a discussion focused on how to use the listening framework as tool in helping to form a tolerant learning community. We will discuss the role of books in giving students information about disabilities. Then the presenter explains as a culminating activity each pair of teachers is going to receive an activity, which can be used in the classroom to build a tolerant learning community. Then as a whole group , we will review the instructions for looking at an activity and shaping it to be used in a classroom to create a tolerant learning community. Teachers then be told that first thing at the fifth and final they will complete and present the project.

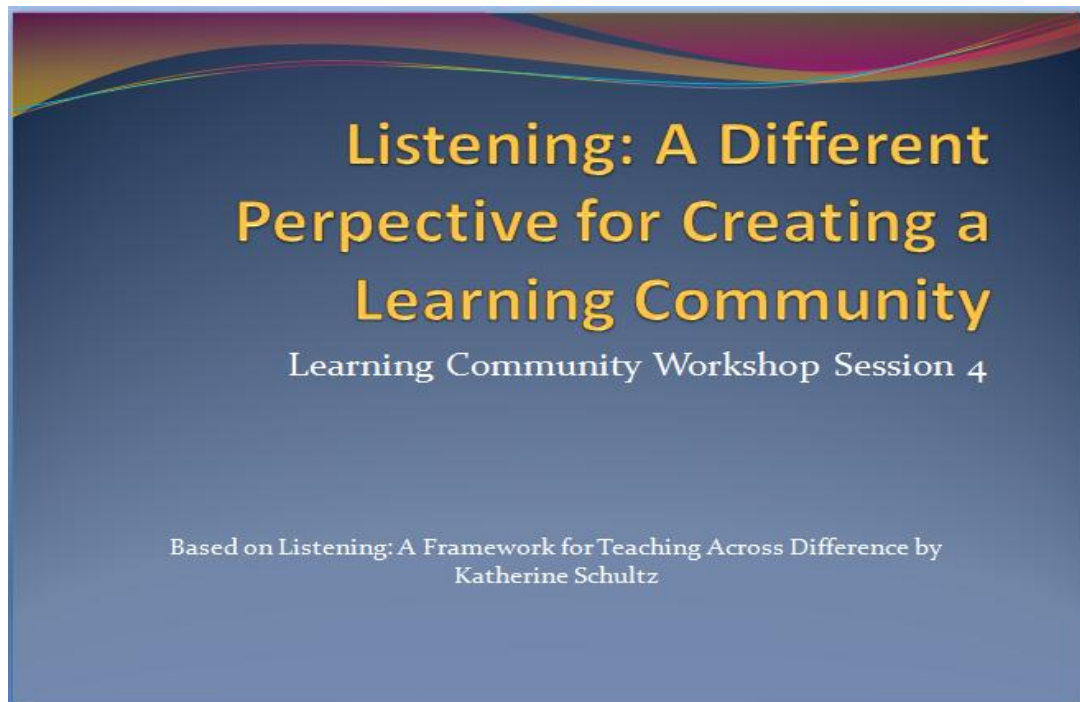


Figure 4.10. Learning Community Session #4 Power Point Presentation. This figure illustrates the power point shown during the first session of the workshop.

Listening is a stance

- Locating listening at the center of teaching works against the notion that teachers talk and students listen, suggesting instead that teachers listen to teach and students talk to learn (pg 7)
- Taking a listening stance implies entering a classroom with questions as well as answers, knowledge as well as clear sense of the limitations of that knowledge.(pg8)

Listening is MORE than just HEARING!

- Based on interactions rather than receptions
- Focus on observation and close interactions with students
- Teaching is improvisational and responsive
- The phrase listening to teach implies that the knowledge of who the learner is and the understanding that both the teacher and the learner bring to a situation constitute the starting place for teaching pg8

Figure 4.10 (Continued)


Listening to know individual students

- Use to learn about each student
- To learn the individual strengths, weaknesses and information about each individual child.
- Learn how the child approaches schooling, what captures their attention , what their preferences and how he makes meaning out of things.

Four Types of Listening


- Listening to know individual students
- Listening to the rhythm and balance of the classroom
- Listening to the social, cultural and community context of children's lives
- Listening for the acts of silence or silencing.

Figure 4.10 .(Continued)



Listening to the rhythm and balance of the classroom


- “Teaching is most often described as a dialogue or a series of interactions between student and teacher.” (pg 39)
- “Students learn by listening to each other as well as by listening to their teacher” (pg 40)
- Listening to how the class is as a group and how individuals work with and within that group.



Listening to the rhythm and balance of the classroom (cont'd)

- Listening for the balance of voices within the classroom
- Gives a sense of how the whole group is doing
- Listening for the way students build off of each other

Figure 4.10 .(Continued)



Listening to the social, cultural and community context of children's lives

- Inviting students to bring the larger context of their lives into classroom life
- Close contact with parents and families are key
- Can be done through writing as well as conversation



Listening for the acts of silence or silencing

- Looking for overlooked or divergent perspectives or missing conversations
- “Silencing is about who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled” (pg 109)

Figure 4.10 .(Continued)

Listening Across Difference

- Reshape differences as strengths
- Look for every child's strengths as well as their weaknesses
- “Listening enables teachers to adapt their teaching and classroom practices to each student, rather than assuming that the student must fit the classroom”
(pg 16)

What does a listening classroom look and sound like?

- Dominated by student talk, rather than teacher talk
- Giving students the chance to talk out the ideas and conceptions in discussion

Figure 4.10 .(Continued)

**Listening: A Different
Perspective for Creating a
Learning Community**
Learning Community Workshop Session 4

Based on Listening: A Framework for Teaching Across Difference by
Katherine Schultz

Listening is a stance

- Locating listening at the center of teaching works against the notion that teachers talk and students listen, suggesting instead that teachers listen to teach and students talk to learn (pg 7)
- Taking a listening stance implies entering a classroom with questions as well as answers, knowledge as well as clear sense of the limitations of that knowledge.(pg8)

**Listening is MORE than just
HEARING!**

- Based on interactions rather than receptions
- Focus on observation and close interactions with students
- Teaching is improvisational and responsive
- The phrase listening to teach implies that the knowledge of who the learner is and the understanding that both the teacher and the learn bring to a situation constitute the starting place for teaching pg8

Four Types of Listening

- Listening to know individual students
- Listening to the rhythm and balance of the classroom
- Listening to the social, cultural and community context of children's lives
- Listening for the acts of silence or silencing.

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**Listening to know individual
students**

- Use to learn about each student
- To learn the individual strengths, weaknesses and information about each individual child.
- Learn how the child approaches schooling, what captures their attention, what their preferences and how he makes meaning out of things.

**Listening to the rhythm and
balance of the classroom**

- "Teaching is most often described as a dialogue or a series of interactions between student and teacher" (pg 39)
- "Students learn by listening to each other as well as by listening to their teacher" (pg 40)
- Listening to how the class is as a group and how individuals work with and within that group.


**Listening to the rhythm and
balance of the classroom (cont'd)**

- Listening for the balance of voices within the classroom
- Gives a sense of how the whole group is doing
- Listening for the way students build off of each other

**Listening to the social, cultural and
community context of children's lives**


- Inviting students to bring the larger context of their lives into classroom life
- Close contact with parents and families are key
- Can be done through writing as well as conversation

Figure 4.11. Learning Community Session #4 Power Point Presentation Handout.




Listening for the acts of silence or silencing

- Looking for overlooked or divergent perspectives or missing conversations
- "Silencing is about who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled" (pg 109)



Listening Across Difference

- Reshape differences as strengths
- Look for every child's strengths as well as their weaknesses
- "Listening enables teachers to adapt their teaching and classroom practices to each student, rather than assuming that the student must fit the classroom" (pg 16)



What does a listening classroom look and sound like?

- Dominated by student talk, rather than teacher talk
- Giving students the chance to talk out the ideas and conceptions in discussion

Figure 4.11. (Continued)

Children's Books about Tolerance of Disabilities

Hooray for You! A Celebration of You-ness by Marianne Richmond
A Friend Like Simon - Autism / ASD by Kate Gaynor
My Friend Has Autism by Amanda Doering Tourville
Ian's Walk: A Story about Autism by Laurie Lears
In Jesse's Shoes by Beverly Lewis
My Brother Charlie by Holly Robinson Peete
Different Like me: My Book of Autism Heroes by Jennifer Elder
A Birthday for Ben - Children with hearing difficulty by Kate Gaynor
Cosmo Gets an Ear by Gary Clemente
Susan Laughs by Jeanne Willis
Special People, Special Ways by Arlene Maguire
Nathan's Wish: A Story about Cerebral Palsy by Laurie Lears
Sunny and her Cochlear Implants by Susanna Dussling
I Am Utterly Unique: Celebrating the Strengths of Children with Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism by Elaine Marie Larson
Don't Call Me Special: A First Look at Disability by Pat Thomas
Daniel's World: A Book about Children with Disabilities by Kathleen DeLoach
Hi, I'm Adam: A Child's Book About Tourette Syndrome by Adam Buehrens
Taking Tourette Syndrome to School by Tira Krueger
It's Ok to Be Different by Todd Parr

Figure 4.12. Children's Books about Tolerance of Disabilities Handout.

Instructions for Preparing Activities

Each pair must present their assigned activity to the entire group tomorrow at our last and final session. The activities will be assigned randomly by pulling numbers out of a basket.

Needed information in presentation

- How this activity could be used in a classroom?
- What kind of information could you listen for in this activity?
- Would you use this activity in your classroom? Why or why not?

Figure 4.13. Instructions for Preparing Activities Handout

Session 5

During the fifth and final session, the groups prepare their presentations on the activities which they picked during the fourth session for the first hour. Each group then presents the activity which they chose the previous day. After each group's presentation, a whole group discussion takes place to discuss the activity. The session concludes with a final reflection and discussion about what they learned from these workshops and what information they are taking with them to implement in their classroom.

Chapter 5

Introduction

This is not the thesis I dreamed I would do. I always thought my thesis would take place in a classroom, which will yield copious amounts of student work giving wonderful results and insight to my teacher research question. But there is more than one way to form and write a thesis and I ended down a different path than I originally planned. But the path which is unplanned is often where you learn the most.

A Change of Plans

I never really planned my original study. The topic, methods of data collection and method of execution all came from a single sitting of brainstorming. So when the circumstances arose that required me to change my thesis from a study into a more conceptual model, I was dumbstruck. How can I possibly enjoy writing a conceptual thesis? More importantly, how will I turn my beloved study into just a concept? A concept seemed so large and abstract and a far cry from the concrete work of a study. But it was brought back down to size when it was suggested that I take all the research I have already done for the other thesis and make it into something else. Somehow that something else turned into a professional development model. I remember thinking there is something very powerful about giving the information to teachers which they can take and implement in their own classrooms.

The Giant Scavenger Hunt

Once the form which my thesis was going to take was determined? I needed to decide what the content of my workshops were going to be. For inspiration, Dr. Madden suggested I use the research in Chapter 2 as a guide. Chapter 2 ended up being almost like a roadmap for my workshops. All of the information was there; I just needed to access and use it in a way which could be used to teach teachers. From that point on I thought of my thesis almost as a giant scavenger hunt because all the information was there and I just needed to find additional resources and activities which could be used to give support to all of the information. So for the next three months I tried to gather as many ideas as I could and wrote them all down in hope that I was collecting something worthwhile.

Assembling the Workshops

After months of doing my thesis scavenger hunt, I had a lot of information and ideas and the time had come to sort through it all. I went back to my roadmap in chapter 2 and found the most important information which I was able to make into categories. From making these categories I was able to take all of the ideas and activities I had found and sort them to where they would be the most useful. Each of these categories became a workshop with it's own materials and information.

I once heard it said that teachers are the worst audiences because they are always thinking about the other things that could be doing instead of what the presenter is presenting. This is something I kept in mind while creating my professional development model. I want to make sure that I did not make it boring

or tedious. I tried to deliver the information in multiple ways, using handouts, video and PowerPoint.

Closing Thoughts

Firstly, I know that I will forever have a new respect of any presenter at a professional development day for any workshops I will attend for the rest of my career. Doing my own professional development model, I now know firsthand the hours of work, research and preparation time it requires to put together a professional development workshop.

This journey down the path of a conceptual thesis has been an interesting path from which I have learned a tremendous amount which I may have not had the chance to experience if I had done my original thesis. From this thesis, I have a large store of ideas and activities to create the kind of learning community I have always dreamed my future classroom will be. I know that it will not be done in the first try but will be an ongoing learning experience which will span my entire career as a teacher. I am ready to begin!

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