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English 102

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I-Search

What I know!

The education of disabled children is not something I am well educated on, but I do know some valuable points on this topic. This topic is not really discussed that often and therefore, the problem is not well known unless it directly affects the person involved. There are numerous disabilities that I am not aware of, but I hope that this research will educate me more on this imperative topic. In many schools there are a multitude of problems and complications that a disabled individual may be subjected to that others do not know about. I believe the most obvious problems that most people think about when they think of individuals with disabilities are the physical disadvantages. Schools have come a long way to help accommodate some physical disabilities but not all schools have transformed. Some schools lack ramps for disabled people in wheel chairs, or someone who is on crutches. Numerous schools lack accommodations for those who are deaf. From personal experience, when a video is played in a classroom or at an assembly they do not have closed captions for anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing. Most schools have brail on the walls outside of the classroom where the classroom number is located, but other than that brail is rare in the school system. A school may have brail books in the library to read, but I have never seen brail textbooks in a place of education. This is very appalling to know that a commonly known disability such as blindness or partial blindness is not well accommodated for, and I cannot imagine how difficult it is for children with other less known

disabilities. I want to know how schools plan on improving inclusion by hiring new teachers and staff. I also would like to know how schools will detect the more concealed disabilities that children have and how will they accommodate to those children.

What I have learned!

While most people tend to focus on the physical disadvantages in the school system there are also a great deal of mental disadvantages as well. There are several children who have ADHD that have been labeled as a bad child because they have not been properly accommodated in a “normal” classroom setting. Children with a more apparent mental disability such as Down Syndrome are commonly excluded from a “normal” classroom and put into a “special” classroom. Most people believe that this should help the mentally disabled but, it has seemed to hurt more than it has helped. Excluding children from their peers does not improve their learning, but it continues to exclude them from everyone else. Inclusive education is the idea that every child is valued equally and deserves the same opportunities and experiences that non-disabled children have. Studies have found that children with disabilities are less likely to start school and they are more likely to drop out of school earlier before completing their high school education than non-disabled children. This clearly shows that the learning process of schools are not inclusive. Mark Drolsbaugh a deaf author, questions the "Least Restrictive Environment" which calls for Deaf and hard of hearing students to be placed in a mainstream classroom, in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Drolsbaugh exclaims, "Real life experience beats professional opinion and educational policy every time. Research can be twisted to show what people want it to show, but it can never change the real-life experiences of an individual who has already been a number. School districts can thump their chests and insist they know a Least Restrictive Environment when they see one, but more often than not,

money and politics overrule common sense." Researching some aspects of this topic was a challenge, because a lot of sites show the good parts of disability and not specifically how things will change to improve learning environments in the future. This topic interest me because this issue affects my classmates and could eventually affect me and how we all learn. I am also interested in this topic because it can change millions of children's lives, if schools can accommodate to everyone's needs. Accommodation is a must in our school system and all children should have equal opportunities to get the same well-deserving education that they need. When schools accommodate to the needs of children with disabilities it not only makes it easier and more accessible for disabled students, but it also makes it more accessible for students without a disability.

Before and After

After long and hard research, I have found that most of my initial thoughts about the education of disabled children were correct. I wanted to know how schools qualified children and how they would accommodate those children in need. I found that according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, there are "thirteen categories of disabilities that qualify children for its educational protections. The Act was devised to provide children with qualifying disabilities a free 'appropriate' public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living." The only problem with this is that the IDEA did not specify what the term "appropriate" means. By not specifying this term it left leeway for schools and educational institutions to do as little as possible when dealing with disabled children and inclusion. The IDEA also stated "Therefore, the United States Supreme Court in Board of Education v. Rowley defined 'appropriate' by stating schools have met this substantive standard

if an IEP confers ‘some educational benefit.’” This definition, “conferring some educational benefit, has purposely been left very broad as the courts have avoided establishing more stringent guidelines regarding the substantive aspect of an IEP.” Though the IDEA has tried to make a change with educational inclusion most of their efforts do not seem to change anything. I also wanted to know how schools planned on gaining new teachers to help with the inclusion of disabled children. I found that disability researchers such as Berninger, Nielsen, Abbott, Wijsman, & Raskind have reported that these misconceptions, “if held by teachers, may be detrimental to ensuring that children and adolescents with persistent reading problems receive timely and appropriate intervention.” I agree with the statements that these researchers have made, teachers do not have the skill set to accommodate disabled children in the school system and this hinders children from learning properly. I researched that organizations such as the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) as well as the state legislative “have pushed for teacher preparation programs and professional development endeavors to include accurate, recent, and research-based information on the characteristics of reading disability and dyslexia.” Creating programs for teachers to learn more about disabilities would be a tremendous step in the right direction into making schools more inclusive for disabled children. When teachers begin to learn how to help disabled students and abled bodied students alike, there will be an incredible transformation in the school system for the better. There have been various changes in curriculums and how teachers are qualified, which is very vital for our educational system. Though there have been countless changes, there is a long way to go before our educational system will be completely inclusive for every child to learn and have a proper education.

My Sources!

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