“What Do I Think When I Hear Special Education?”

Kayleen Malizzi

Mrs. Sally Rosanne Carmichael MS

Introduction to Special Education 101

College of Saint Mary’s

As a college student, I am at a mature stage in my life where I can thoroughly explain what Special Education means to me. Hearing the words “Special Education” brings me to the attention that there are people all around us that have something special about them, including ourselves. I think of God’s children, and how we are all created to be unique from one another. Though, God made us different from each other, he really emphasized in his word that we were all to be treated equally. We are humans created to live, to love, to teach, and to learn. To me, Special Education is a process that helps children build more confidence and social skills in ways they will not learn out of being in a general education setting. Special educators of these particular students typically have a massive amount of patience, they have the skills and knowledge to teach, they know the right ways to adapt to every students learning style. Most importantly, they have the desire to teach handicapped children. All leading to the main goal of helping students progress in learning to succeed in school.

Patience is a major asset of a teacher. Teachers must remain patient with all their students whether the students are obedient, acting up, or if they are disabled. Throughout my elementary, middle school, and high school career I had the chance to watch a special education program in action. I have watched many teachers that really show passion of teaching the students they are assigned to. Handicapped students need a numerous amount of attention to keep them functioning, and it is the special education teacher’s job to make sure all the student’s requirements are met. It really breaks my heart to see these children getting to work with such kindhearted adults who really take the time to help the students strive to do their best. Most of the students in the school I attended did not have the ability to speak. Though, they were still eligible to learn the specified curriculum because of the attention the special educators were providing them through computers, music, and creative activities.

 To be a teacher of any kind, whether it is a general educator or a special education teacher, the teacher has to have the right skills and knowledge. If I had a teacher that had no experience with working with children, they in return would receive a class that did not want to learn. Teachers’ who come prepared for class; for the most part, have a successful day with the students. This shows the students that the teacher cares about them and shows them that the teacher is wanting them to succeed in class. So, a teacher that comes prepared to a class with creative skills and knowledge, will have students craving to learn, and students wanting to participate more in class.

 Another skill teachers should learn is ways to adapt in tough situations. They should be able to change the way they teach information to their students, so everyone in the class understands the lesson. If I were a teacher for example, I would choose to create a visual aid for my students, or I would get the students physically involved in the lesson. Bringing all of these traits into a classroom allows each child; no matter what their struggle may be, they will all have the chance to consume the information in ways they learn best.

 Overall the others assets of being a special educator, I believe that special education means I have to have the desire to work with handicapped and learning disabled students. This means that I have to be dedicated to wanting to help these students succeed no matter what. No child likes feeling abandoned and hopeless. It is very depressing and stressful to the students, and they start to think that school is just a joke, and they should just quit. Signing to be a special education teacher sets a clear line that I should have kid’s backs in school, and I should be willing to take anything and everything of my patients, skills and knowledge, and the ability to adapt to different learning styles to work through the child’s difficult situations in a classroom. I should always be open to trying new activities that help your student learn the subjects simpler. I should not only be their teacher, but to be a friend; someone to look up to for advice. It takes courage for someone to become a special educator, but it really breaks my heart in the work field because I remember seeing teachers who learned to truly enjoy working with such positive and bright students.

 So, what do I truly think when I hear “Special Education?” I go above and beyond the education part of the handicapped student, and zoom in on the teacher’s roles as they dive into curriculums self-adjusted for their handicapped students. I look at the way they handle challenging situations for caring for the students. I see a teachers patiently waiting for their students to understand their own version of the problems originally given out by the general education teachers. I see the special educator attempting to explain; in the simplest words, guiding the student in the right direction on homework problems. Lastly, I draw into what the teacher is doing that makes them such a successful teacher, and that is their true desire to work with such gifted students. Special Education is not a job for everyone, but if I ever came upon the opportunity to try it out I would accept. These students deserve to have an education, and I have a passionate heart to help them learn and succeed. The students of special education really break hearts of their teachers because they want to succeed, and they know their teachers are going to help them reach their highest potential. That is the goal of a special educator!