EDUC 285: Dis/ability and Access in Elementary Schools

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Course Goals

- Apply a critical lens to the special education system and take an asset-based approach to learning variation.
- Summarize essential components of special education law and describe the general education teacher's role under the law.
- Demonstrate knowledge of inclusion, inclusive practices, and begin to envision an inclusive classroom.
- Recognize principles of universal design and differentiated instruction; and, describe the role they play in designing an inclusive classroom.
- Identify learning processes that may impact a child's experience in an inclusive classroom.
- Design individualized approaches and practices to support individual students with special learning needs.

HONOR CODE:

Students are expected to adhere to Stanford's honor code. According to the Office of Judicial Affairs (OJA) website, “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” For further information, please consult the OJA website: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm
STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk; phone: 723-1066; website http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae.

A note on the use of digital technology:

Cell phones and laptops are excellent research and note-taking tools, but they are sometimes distracting and can detract from our ability to be present with each other. If you are using your laptop to take notes in class, please turn off your wireless Internet. The use of cell phones for anything other than assistive learning support is discouraged, unless we are explicitly using them for a class activity. If you have an emergency situation, please do let us know.
Every school has a process for qualifying students for special education services. Very often, the process goes something like this:

1. **Teacher/Parent has concern about Child A**
2. **Child A receives intervention**
3. **Child A shows adequate progress** → **Process stops**
   - **Child A does not show adequate progress**
     - **School has SST meeting for Child A**
     - **More interventions tried for Child A**
       - **Child A shows improvement** → **Process stops**
       - **Child A does not show improvement**
         - **Special Education evaluation for Child A**
           - **Qualifies for Special Education Services**
           - **Initial IEP meeting for Child A**
           - **Does not qualify for Special Education Services**
Schools differ on how they qualify students for special education services, but in general, they tend to follow a similar path. Above is a skeletal outline of the path in its most basic form. For this assignment, you’re going to better understand this process in the context of your school.

**Your Task:**

Learn how your placement site identifies students for special education services. To do so, rely on (1) conversations with at least 2 school staff, (2) observations of at least 2 meetings (these can be either IEP meetings or SST meetings), and (3) analysis of websites/documents. You might find that some parts of this aren't clear to you from that information – that is, unfortunately, quite common. Just make note of it in your assignment.

You may choose to represent what you learn about this process however you like (slide show, comic, annotated artwork, audio recording of dictation, a traditional paper, etc.), but you must thoughtfully and thoroughly address the following:

1. How are students referred for special education services at your school?
2. How do staff seem to view the process of qualification for special education? Do they think it works well? Why or why not?
3. What happens at IEP and SST meetings at your school? What are your general impressions of these meetings?

**1. Interviews**

Possible individuals to interview might be: an RSP (resource/special education) teacher, school social worker, principal/assistant principal, intervention specialist (e.g. literacy specialist, literacy/math coach), counselor, and/or school psychologist.

Here are a few suggested questions for school staff:

- What is the process of qualifying a student for special education services at this school from the moment a teacher or parent has a concern about the child through when they qualify for services?
- What interventions do you offer students for whom there are academic, behavioral, or socio-emotional concerns?
- Tell me about your SST process.
- How does the decision to evaluate a child for special education get made?
- What does the evaluation process look like?
- How are parents involved in this process?
- How are classroom teachers involved in this process?
- What are your thoughts on how well this process works at your school?
- What does the evaluation process look like?
- How does the decision get made whether to evaluate a child or not?
There is no specific page requirement for this assignment, but to provide a general sense: if you were to do a traditional paper, we would expect that it might be around 3-4 pages single spaced.

2. Meeting Observations
The goal is for you to see what the meetings are like for children considered for special education pre-referral (SST) and/or post-referral (IEP). We encourage you to enter the meetings with a desire to learn, as well as a critical lens. Below are some guiding questions for your observations and reflections. Feel free to use these or other questions you've considered.

- Who was present at the meeting?
- What were the dynamics between the participants? Was there an interaction that struck you? If so, describe it and explain why.
- What was the role of the general education teacher in this meeting? What are your thoughts about this?
- What was the role of the parents in this meeting? What are your thoughts about this?
- What kind of language was used to describe the child, the child's family, the child's classroom/school experience, etc.?
  
  NOTE: Be specific – avoid simply describing the language as “tense language” or “judgmental language.” Say what you heard, if you're able to remember.
- What if any outcomes emerged from this meeting?
- What connections can you make to our course readings?
## Sessions & Readings

*All readings will be posted on Canvas.*

*You may also find it useful to purchase some of the books to read them in full, but that is not a requirement of the course.*

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| **Session Three (1/22)**  
Interacting with Ableism  
● What is ableism, and what are some different ways that it manifests in the schools where we work?  
● How does ableism intertwine with other forms of oppression?  
● What is disability justice?  
● What kinds of specific barriers exist for people with dis/abilities and how might we work to eliminate them in schools?  | VIDEO: Patty Berne & Stacey Milbern, “Ableism is the Bane ...” Watch at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IelmZUxBlq0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IelmZUxBlq0)  
DUE: February 14th  
Plan to observe meetings, schedule interviews, and begin to research special education systems in your new placement |
| **Session Four (1/29)**  
Special Education Law  
● What are the contemporary models for special education?  
● What are the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act?  
Recommended  
Professor Bill Koski  
Eric and Nancy Wright Professor of Clinical Education  
Director, Youth and Education Law Project |
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