

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

“Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn” Podcast Episode 15 – May 2018

Title: *Mindset Shifts within Special Education - Part 2*

SPEAKERS

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INTRODUCTION:

MP: I'm sure that both of us in our careers have heard, “But, that's not fair.”

RH: And I hate that statement.

MP: I know, I know. But, you know, I think that's where we want that mindset shift to occur is that we're thinking about these accommodations or modifications as leveling the playing field.

MP: There are so many people that are involved in that IP document and I think it's important that every teacher needs to know what their role is in that process.

RH: Everybody working with students with disabilities is responsible for making sure they are familiar with everything in that document and not only the goals and the objectives but also all of the supports that have got to be in place in the classroom and in other aspects of school life.

JO: Welcome to the "Ayers Lunch and Learn" podcast presented by the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation at Lipscomb University where we're all about education. These podcast episodes are sponsored by Edsouth which promotes interest and awareness of higher education opportunities to students, families, and schools. Each Ayers Lunch and Learn podcast episode provides bite-sized portions of professional learning.

Today's topic is "mindset shifts within special education" and this is part two of this conversation. We'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic as well using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #SpecialEducation. My name is Julia Osteen and I'm the Technology Integration Specialist for the Ayers Institute. Participating in the conversation today are Dr. Misty Parsley and Dr. Robbie Hampton of Lipscomb University’s College of Education.

JO: Welcome back ladies.

MP & RH: Thank you.

EPISODE BODY:

RH: Wow. Between the two of us we've got a lot of experience in Special Ed!

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MP: And, different types of experience.

RH: Should I tell them that you often say that we're two halves of the same brain? Between the two of us, our experiences cover teaching and speech language and administration. So, we're glad to be here.

MP: Yes. So, last time we talked, some of the points we made were: that special education is not a place; that we need to have high expectations for all students but including students with disabilities; and that collaboration is key for special education to really be effective. And I think today we're going to talk a little bit more about the IP and the importance of accommodations or modifications and also communication and social development.

And I'll just kick it off with the first thought on the IP. And I know when I say IP, some of you listening may be rolling your eyes you may be holding your breath maybe having some got a reaction because we've all had some probably uncomfortable situations with IEP. But the bottom line is...

RH: I certainly hope they certainly hope they understand what I mean if they're listening to this conversation.

MP: I think that's a great point. I probably should say the IP is the individualized education program or plane. And it is a legal document. And I always explain it to my students and Special Ed law that it's the contract that is written between the school and the family on what is going to be done to support that student with a disability.

RH: Is it only a contract between the special education teacher and the family?

MP: Oh, absolutely not. That goes back to that collaboration piece. There are so many people that are involved in that IEP document. And I think it's important that every teacher needs to know what their role is in that IEP process.

RH: Everybody working with students with disabilities is responsible for making sure they are familiar with everything in that document. And not only the goals and the objectives but also all of the supports that have got to be in place to meet the needs of those students in the classroom and in other aspects of school life.

MP: Yes, absolutely. And it is a fluid document and I think some people forget that it can be changed. It does require parent input. We want parent input on everything that is in that document. But if you are a Gen Ed teacher and you are you have an accommodation is being used in your classroom– or maybe you think there isn't a needed an accommodation– that definitely is a time to get back together and talk about (at any point during the year) what can be done to assist that student.

RH: Yeah. You were talking about accommodations and modifications and I think this might be a really good time to talk about what those are and why they're so important. I mean with accommodations all you're doing is sort of changing the supports that we have in place for students but they still have the same expectations as the other typically developing children in their classroom.

MP: So, is that like wearing glasses?

RH: Well it could be. I mean they're still doing the same thing as all the other students in the classroom.

MP: But you'd never ask a student to hand over their glasses and take their test.

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RH: Not at all. It's a necessary part of school life. Now with modifications we're making some more significant changes and might even be changing what we expect students to do. So, we want to put a little more thought into those before we implement those because they could have some long-term impact on where students go within their school career.

MP: Sure. I'm sure that both of us in our careers— because we've kind of been doing this a while— have heard, “But that's not fair.”

RH: And I hate that statement.

MP: I know I know.

But you know I think that's where we want that mindset shift to occur. Is that worth thinking about these accommodations or modifications as leveling the playing field; as helping the students meet their goals. You know these are students that have disabilities. So, if a student has a significant reading disability and having someone read the test questions to them helps them understand that content better than that just levels the playing field for them compared to a student who has a real high level of reading and doesn't need that support.

So, I think that's the mind shift that needs to occur of just realizing that it's similar to glasses; similar to other things that all of us might use to help us. You know they take my glasses away from me they don't want me driving. So, you know I think that's something to keep in mind that this is not about giving students with disabilities an upper hand on anything. They already have been dealt a tough hand. This is just leveling the playing field for them.

RH: Along those lines one of the things that we want to make sure that we are taking into consideration is the ways in which our students communicate. And that includes not only the way in which they communicate with us or share information with us but also the ways in which they take in or receive information. And students do that in a wide variety of different ways. And all teachers need to be familiar with the best form of communication for our students.

MP: There's a great book that a parent actually wrote. A true story about his nonverbal daughter called Skyler's Monster. And in that book, the father tells a story about when his daughter first got her device. She had it in the classroom and she brought it home and the volume was down to zero. And he went back to the teacher and said, “Why is the volume on zero?” And the teacher said, “Well, she was talking too much so I turn the volume down.” And his response was, “Do you get to turn the volume down on all of your students?”

So, we have to treat that device as their voice! And so, accepting that is the way that they're communicating is so important to realize that their ability to punch the pictures on their screen and have that device speak for them is as important as the student sitting next to them that is verbalizing what it is that they want to say. So, those are so important and definitely the social aspect is also so important. You know I personally believe that our social skills are what are going to help us get and keep jobs in the future not necessarily our academic skills. Definitely not always a popular opinion, but I think that we have to make sure that all students are developing socially and that includes our students with disabilities. And they need to be able to participate in all aspects of school life.

RH: Well you think back to the IEP document itself. One of the things that we have to address when we do that every year is talk about how we're making sure that they are participating not only in the academic

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programming but also the extracurricular activities and all social things that go on with school as well. And the expectation is there that they will be participating. And if they're not we've got to justify why they are not, because all students have that right.

MP: And I think we have to remember that not only does research show students benefit from being around their typically developing peers, but we see it on a daily basis. And we not only see that that benefits the students with disabilities but it also benefits the typically developing peers for them to be collaborating and cooperating in the same environment.

RH: Well if we think back to that notion of setting high expectations that we talked about in our first one: If we give them that exposure to other students and they see the communication that takes place between their peers and they see their peers doing academic work they're going to have the opportunity to rise to that same level as their peers.

MP: Absolutely.

CONCLUSION:

JO: In our conversation today, Dr. Parsley and Dr. Hampton highlighted the importance of: understanding the responsibilities inherent in an IEP; knowing how to use accommodations and modifications; and the role communication and social development play in providing a quality education experience. They have certainly provided us with a lot to think about. A probing question for you and your colleagues to explore is: “What specific strategies will you use to ensure high quality education for all students?”

As we close today's episode, we would like to encourage you to continue the conversation on the mindset shifts that are importance to provide a high-quality education for all students. There is a graphic organizer file available for download as you continue thinking about this topic. The graphic organizer, along with links to articles cited, are found on eduTOOLBOX – at eduTOOLBOX.org.

Don't forget: we'd love to hear your thoughts on the importance of special education using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #SpecialEducation. Also, follow and like the Ayers Institute and Lipscomb's College of Education on Twitter and Facebook at @AyersInstitute and @LipscombCofEd.

We hope your appetite for bite sized portions of professional learning was satisfied with this podcast presentation sponsored by Edsouth. Look for other episodes of the Ayers Institute Lunch and Learn Podcast at <http://podcast.ayersinstitute.org/>.