

Behaviour Whose Choice? A.A.S.E. Conference

Tasmania 2004

Choice – Token or reality for students with disabilities?

Jayne Campbell & Maria Pedavoli

Presentation Abstract:

This presentation outlines the beliefs, processes and structures which underpin the implementation of effective secondary school integration initiatives for students with disabilities, including those who have high support needs and exhibit challenging behaviours.

The profile and role of the learning support team is described to illustrate how a large comprehensive metropolitan high school has evolved into a supportive and inclusive community where students with disabilities can develop their academic, social, vocational and living skills while forging transitional links to the wider community.

Within this mainstream context, particular emphasis is given to the importance of establishing relationships of trust between the student, her associates and the school with a dual purpose:

- To create greater choices and opportunities for the student, both in and out of school, by creating an environment in which she is willing to “push the boundaries”.
- Through both skill development and support, to make those choices real rather than tokenistic, by nurturing the self-efficacy of all stake holders in the I.E.P./I.T.P.

The School Context:

The Profile Of Mary MacKillop College:

- Located in Wakeley in South West Sydney
- 7-12 comprehensive Catholic girls' school
- Approximately 1000 students
- 87% of student population has a LBOTE
- 15% of the student population have a documented special educational need:
 - a specific learning disability
 - an intellectual disability (mild to moderate)
 - a severe language delay
 - a physical disability
 - a sensory impairment
 - Asperger's syndrome
 - Downes' syndrome

Profile of learning support team:

- Special education coordinator – full-time allocation includes:
 - Resource, Literacy, Numeracy, Learning Strategies & Stage Transition Coordinator
- Transition Coordinator – part of full-time allocation:
 - combined position incorporates Careers, Vocational Education & TVET Coordinator
- 1.7 FTE teachers
- 1 Teachers' Aide full-time
- 4 Teachers' Aides part-time:
(3 attached exclusively to high support needs students – 2 in school and 1 in work place environment)

Additional support accessed on a needs basis through:

- 2 itinerant teachers of the sensory impaired
- 1 itinerant Teachers' Aide

Teacher Support Provided Through:

- Professional development opportunities
- Student Profiles
- Program support materials
- Tutorial classes
- I.T.P./I.E.P. inclusion
- Timetabled L.S. Faculty Meetings (Stage 6) twice per term to facilitate documentation process and collaborative evaluation/planning. Proposal to be extended to Stages 4 & 5 in 2005
- Collaborative authoring of Stage 4,5 & 6 S.P.S.

Student support provided through:

- Transition support to bridge Stages 3 & 4
- Individualised educational assessment at enrolment
- Establishment & maintenance of IEP at enrolment
- In-class support and out of class support
- Subject selection counselling Stage 4 into 5/Stage 5 into 6
- Advice on accessing SPS
- Vocational assessment initiated at beginning of Stage 5
- Establishment & maintenance of ITP in Stage 5
- IEP/ITP merger in Stage 6
- Mediation/advocacy with teachers, parents, outside agencies
- Post-school tracking support service

Parent support provided through:

- Transition support to bridge Stages 3 & 4
- Establishment & maintenance of/inclusion in IEP
- Subject selection counselling
- Advice on accessing SPS
- Vocational assessment initiated at beginning of Stage 5
- Establishment & maintenance of/inclusion in ITP
- IEP/ITP merger in Stage 6
- Mediation/advocacy with teachers, students, outside agencies
- Post-school tracking support service
- Consultation in planning of work experiences, work placements and TAFE enrolment
- Out of hours access
- Regular feedback on progress in variety of learning environments

❖ **Real choice = relationship**

❖ **Relationship = trust built up through:**

- Knowledge
- Empathy
- Consultation
- Negotiation
- Shared vision

Making real choices requires stake holders to be willing to push their personal boundaries. That only happens when people trust each other and believe that they have been skilled to succeed.

The education of a student with special needs is like the education of any student:

- A whole school responsibility
- Most effective when teachers collaborate with other stakeholders to formulate and achieve agreed goals
- Best planned and evaluated over time
- Designed to develop skills to maximise participation in school, in the workforce and in the community
- Facilitated through the utilisation of links forged between the school and external resources/expertise
- Based on the inclusion of the individual within the school community
- Achieved through a notion of fairness in which every student gets what he/she needs, which is not necessarily the same