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EDUC 301

29 October 2010

#### Professional Development Workshop: Autism

During the professional developmental workshop centered on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), I was able to expand my knowledge on the wealth of information ~~was~~ presented by the guest speakers. The different sections of the workshop provided me with ways I can support students with autism in my classroom along with ways I can help parents and guardians of these students feel welcome. My workshop experience would not have been the same without getting the opportunity to hear parents of children with autism speak and share their personal accounts and how they connect to this spectrum disorder. I related extremely well with guest speaker Kylee Bassett when she was talking about her brother who is autistic because I actually grew up with a cousin who is also autistic and remains a good friend of mine still to this day. Molly Lang's presentation also helped me relate to students within my student teaching placement this year who are autistic. Her presentation centered on the visual and sensory items that students with autism need to support them, and some of my students use these aids to get them through their school day.

The workshop's information will allow me to appropriately support successful student-teacher relationships in my classroom with students who are autistic. One way that I will improve interactions between myself and my autistic students is by utilizing social stories to help them understand and learn rules and procedures that are a part of my classroom management plan. I will create social stories in my classroom based off of rules and procedures I have in place for all my students to follow. My students with autism will be provided and assisted with reading

and several opportunities to practice the appropriate to interact with classmates and other individuals. What I like best about teaching students how to use social stories is that they can be used with students ranging from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This will help me out tremendously if I get a job teaching high school special education, which is the preferred age group I would like to teach upon graduation. Another way that I will improve interactions with my students with and without autism is to provide visual schedules to my students. The purpose of visual schedules is to show students with pictures what their daily schedule looks like. To improve relationships with my parents of autistic children, I will communicate effectively and efficiently so that that they always feel welcome in my classroom and know how their child is progressing academically and socially.

During Molly Lang's "Answers on the Spectrum" presentation, she emphasized communication as a key part of dealing with students with autism in your classroom. She also explained how students with autism learn better in a classroom that is structured and well organized with a teacher that provides many visuals for all students to understand and process tasks. Finally, she focused on different sensory integrations that could be used to help students with autism function. Some examples of sensory integration are using visual aids, such as sectioning off the classroom with bookshelves and removable walls and providing floor lamps as opposed to fluorescent lighting. While Kylee Bassett discussed with us, she mentioned the importance of teaching social skills because most activities require some form of social interaction. She provided several different ways teachers can implement social skills in their classrooms, such as role plays, video modeling, and social stories. The part I liked the most about her presentation was when she engaged us in the process of getting to write our own social story in groups.

After the workshop, I set the professional goal for myself to always communicate with parents on a regular basis when I begin teaching. This goes for both students with and without disabilities. This is an important goal because all of the workshop's guest speakers emphasized that communication with parents is a key component to having a successfully run classroom. Finally, another goal I have set for myself is to research and become more knowledgeable on how to effectively use visual aids and communication devices appropriately in my classroom. The more I am aware of these elements, the less likely my students will become stressed in my classroom environment. Overall, I enjoyed the professional workshop on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It provided me with useful information on how to accommodate and make students with the disorder feel welcome in my classroom.

**Comment [v1]:** This is so true and observant of you to pick up on this tip

**Comment [v2]:** insightful