

CASE 11 – SYNTHESIS

Sue – a student with special needs

In Sue's case, the classroom teacher is in a difficult situation. The parents of Sue, who is a special needs student, asked for the teacher's advice on whether to move Sue to a private institution or keep her in a regular education classroom. Though the teacher feels incompetent in her ability to provide an inclusive learning environment for Sue, she receives external pressure on keeping Sue in her class from the principal.

Although Sue is non-verbal and the class has been frequently interrupted by her periodic outburst, which disrupted the learning of the rest of the class, Sue could be successfully included in the class with the implementation of an effective individualized education plan (IEP). Short-term goals for Sue include teaching her to use TechTalk to communicate her needs and wants and developing classroom games which Sue can participate in a meaningful way. For example, the use of TechTalk and Big Mack will enable Sue to interact with her peers and to develop social skills in the long run. A teacher and the parents should agree on the same method of communication with Sue to build a bridge from home and school. Developing a routine to encourage interaction between Sue and the class will increase Sue's opportunity to engage in activities and connect with the class.

George – behaviour issues and low academic achievement

George receives pull-out support everyday, but his writing and reading skills remain below his grade level. Besides his poor performance on academic areas, he has aggressive and defiant behaviour issues; he frequently disrupts the class and act aggressively to his peers. His lack of social skills leads him to be segregated in the class as well.

In the case of George, an ethical dilemma is between the teacher's professional obligation to include George in the classroom and the rights of the rest of class to receive a quality education in a safe classroom. It is much easier to manage the class when George is not present. George interrupts not only his own learning but his peers'. However, it is not an optimal way to keep George isolated for the benefits of others only. Strategies to help George manage his aggression and create a cohesive class are to do a whole-class lesson on pro-social behaviour. For example, the students will be trained on how to express their opinions to and interact with their peers without hurting their feelings. Encouraging George to participate in group work through drawing, which he loves, is one way for him to interact with other students. In regards to his academic achievement, specific goals on improving his writing and reading skills and math skills will be included on his student learning plan (SLP). For example, George will be given opportunities to use an iPad or other forms of technology to support reading and writing. He will be encouraged to engage in both personal and formal writing assignment with intensive support from the classroom teacher and a resource teacher.

Inclusion of Students with Special Needs

As an educator, I am committed to follow the codes of ethics stated in a BC Special Education Policy Manual. I believe that students with special needs should receive an education program in an inclusive classroom. Integration and inclusion of children with special needs require an effective collaboration between a school and parents. The key is for everyone on a school-based team to get actively involved in the decision-making process in a collaborative partnership.

In my personal opinion, an effective inclusion should be based on equity, rather than equality. Each student has different needs and it is fair to tailor the instruction according to their

specific needs and provide resources adaptive to the students. Providing more support in terms of attention and time to students with special needs or higher learning needs may pose an ethical dilemma to a teacher in the case of inclusion. However, as it is clearly stated in a Special Education Policy Manual, I am committed to design and implement education programs that “enable students with special needs to have equitable access to learning and opportunities to pursue and achieve the goals of their educational programs” (Special Education, 2006).

Special Education, 2006, Retrieved from

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=0859706D590E4842A1FBE045D398231C>