Supervising and Coaching Special Education Teachers

Cheryl Chamberlain

Grand Canyon University: EAD-530

December 1, 2021

Lessons and Student Needs

During the pre-conference of an evaluation there are several questions that would need to be addressed to get the full picture of what is about to be observed. When asked, the teacher must be able to clearly state what the objective of the lesson is, what standards are being taught, and what teaching strategies she will use to obtain understanding. With students having different IEP goals and accommodations, what types of modeling, presentation, scaffolding, technology, and level of student engagement they wish to achieve (Lawson & Knollman, 2017).

Other factors will play into how well the lesson is planned out. What materials will they be using? Will there be communication boards, AAC devices, or any other special tools to help those with specific needs? What types of students does she have? How does the teacher plan on grouping students? Knowing the students and their individual needs, goals, and cognitive levels should be in the forefront when the lesson plan was being developed. If there is an instructional assistant, how will they be utilized during this lesson, and has the teacher met and gone over the lesson with them prior to instruction.

The teacher will be asked and should be able to relay what type of assessment(s) will be given to see the students' progress. Will they be checking for understanding throughout the lesson, at the end of the lesson, or will it be in the form of an exit ticket or quiz? These are things that should be planned out with the lesson, and questions, along with discussion should be planned as well.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiating instruction in special education is important, because it allows for whole and small group instruction, as well as individual comprehension and questioning with the

students. I would look through the lesson plan to see if differentiation is clearly marked, or if there is a routine that the class is used to when learning new content. While key concepts can be taught with whole group, the small groups will have their focus based on their cognitive and output skill levels. Some students may be able to read and write, or at least copy content, while others may only be able to discuss or repeat what they have learned. Groups can be divided by interest, learner profile, skill level, and more. This minimizes having to repeat content while maximizing how much content can be taught (Dixon & Zannu, n.a.)

Struggling Students

When students struggle with content, not all are able to verbalize what exactly they do not understand. Observation and assessment on a daily basis is so important in special education. When the teacher sees a student struggling, what is their plan of action? Are they allowing for extra instructional time for those students? Teacher should know that giving that extra instructional time is so important in supporting struggling students. This could mean setting aside time with a resource teacher, instructional assistant, or even a tutor. Resources and intervention from other staff members that are knowledgeable in the content to provide explicit instruction should be utilized until the student has a good and confident foundation (Levenson, 2021).

Prior Knowledge

How does the teacher check for prior knowledge? The teacher may utilize a KWL chart which lets the teacher know what the student already knows about the content, what they want to know, and then follow up with assessing what they learned new about what was presented. This

may allow the teacher to be able to even skip over parts of the lesson if the students are already familiar with content, such as the topic, vocabulary words, and even information.

Classroom Management

Ideally, the pre-conference should be in the teacher's classroom, so certain classroom management strategies can be observed. This would include the schedule, routine, posted instructions, labels, organizers, word walls, etc. I would ask specifically about any students with behavior plans and ask how the data regarding the interventions are being tracked. Are there whole class interventions in place if a problem arises? Are the students aware of these procedures, and do they practice them? Some other questions I might have are if students supervised at all times, or are some allowed to be independent during transitions, such as lunch, electives, and what plans are in place in the teacher's absence. Because most special education teachers can have their students for several years in a row, the relationships and trust goes a long way when it comes to classroom management, so making sure students are given a heads up on any changes to their routine can greatly reduce conflict and issues in te classroom (Banks, 2020).

References

Banks, A. (2020). *Special education classroom behavior management strategies for K12.* https://insightstobehavior.com/blog/special-education-classroom-behavior-management-strategies-k12/

Dixon, E.C., & Zannu, D. (n.a.) *Supporting multiple disabilities through differentiation.* (https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/IDEAS%202014%20Handouts/Supporting%20Multiple%20Disabilities%20through%20Differentiation%20ppt.pdf

Lawson, J. E., & Knollman, G. A. (2017). Evaluating Special Education Teachers: School Administrators' Perceptions of the Process. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 30(1), 6–18.

Levenson, N. (2021). *10 best practices for improving sp. ecial education.* https://www.dmgroupk12.com/blog/10-best-practices-for-improving-special-education