EDIE 4100 Learning Journey: **Practicum**

Supervising Resource Room Teacher: Jacqueline Ferguson

Thursday, November 5, 2020

“***Our day goes by the energy that we feel in the morning***” (Ferguson, 2020).

I spent the day with Jacqui in the Life Skills room at Lake City Senior Secondary in Williams Lake, British Columbia. She introduced me to her students, who were quite willing to tell me about themselves! I will begin by listing each student’s initials, explaining their designations and the characteristics that make them unique.

**Inclusive Education**

**“*Students are ‘present a, and they are there’ (in the classroom)*” (Ferguson, 2020).**

They are involved in other programs, but the resource room provides them with a place to avoid noise, stress, and told-regulate.

“*TEA*”

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| **Category F**: Deaf or Hard of Hearing  **Category C**: Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities  “*TEA*” has an extremely low IQ of 61, and in previous days would have been institutionalized.  She attended a private school until grade 8, and. Since schools receive no funding for Special Education, her teachers kept her busy with emptying dishwashers and taking notes back and forth to various teachers.  TEA is a beautiful grade eleven girl who feels safe in the Resource Room at LCSS. Her goal has always been to learn how to read! TEA is still working toward this goal with Jacqui and hopes that one day can read. I believe that she will succeed!  TEA was excited for her mother to pick her up for an appointment and was extremely disappointed when her mother cancelled. She shut down immediately, which is typical for TEA. The resource room provided her with a safe place to deal with her emotions. It took a while, but we finally saw her lovely smile! |

“*MW*”

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| **Category G**: Autism Spectrum Disorder  “*MW*” is in grade 10 and currently working at about a grade 4-5 level.  “I like to be in Life Skills because I won’t get upset about energy in other classes” (MW, 2020).  MW is fortunate to participate in a work-experience program at a local bakery, Taylor Made Cakes. MW loves baking and treated Jacqui and me to one of her “Confetti Squares.” She is an excellent baker! MW loves to chat and told me many things about herself. She loves Drama class, Improv, and photography but has never tried it. She will begin a photography class next term and loves taking pictures of and drawing scenery. I suggested that she take photographs of the many delicious treats she bakes and makes a photo-resume! MW also wants to learn how to draw people, wrote a story called “Animal Force,” and likes movies and gaming. MW is worried about making mistakes, which is something that MW and I have in common! |

“*SS*”

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| **Category K**: Mild Intellectual Disabilities, suspected FASE(effected) – based on background and observation  \*She is on a program for which there is no more extended funding  SS is in grade eleven and is a gifted graphic artist. She specializes in “Animae.” SS has her own YouTube account with many followers and is currently working with someone (online) from California to circulate her videos on the internet! Before she started in the Life Skills program, she was timid, but now SS loves to show people her graphic art and “animae.” She showed me examples of her work and a few of her videos; they were incredible! SS expresses her thoughts and emotions through her videos, which was evident as I watched some of them; each of them told a story about an aspect of her life and experiences. SS participates in graphic arts classes with her peers and spends time in the resource room when she needs a quiet space to work. |

“*DF*”

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| **Category D**: Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment (FASD)  **Category C**: Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (epilepsy profound)  \*DF didn’t arrive at school until November, so they will not receive any ministry funding until January (funding happens in October and January). Until the school receives funding in January, DF’s condition does not count for class composition, but Jacqui needs to keep him in the resource room. He cannot function in a regular classroom setting yet is welcome to be in the classroom with his peers if he chooses.  DF wore a helmet until grade 8 due to severe seizures and has suffered countless head injuries from falls during the episodes. He speaks very little but knows how to ask for something he needs. DF is a quiet, kind grade twelve student who is often hungry due to his home situation. He knows that the resource room provides a warm, safe place with something to eat. As a result of his seizures, DF has decreased from a grade two level down to Kindergarten in Math and pre-primary in Language Arts.  The school tried to get DF’s parents to bring him through the doors of the school by the end of October so the school could receive funding, yet they were unsuccessful. These deadlines are the same for all of the Ministry designation categories. |

“*PS*”

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| **Category D**: Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment (progressive eye disease)  (missed grade seven due to epileptic seizures but has not had any for some time)  PS is passionate about the outdoors. His Math teacher helped PS use a blueprint of his house for an adapted math activity, and PS helped his father build a replica of the blueprint to create a “man cave” building in their back yard.  Jacqui is helping PS finish his schooling by grade 12, so he can continue to receive full support. His vision condition will not work well with the local community services to support him once he graduates. PS says that talking in class is “out of his comfort zone” but his teacher was “really chill” and helped his confidence grow. He was able to express his learning by performing a rap in front of his peers. |

After speaking with Jacqui about “PS,” Jacqui taught me about the **Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales.**

Grade twelve students (in modified programs) are testing for community living (CLBC). Community Living British Columbia provides supports for special needs students who can move on to university or provide respite for parents in difficult situations. CLBC will pay 50% of a student’s rent, and the student must get a job to pay for the other half.

Someone from Vineland will observe, monitor, and test the students. (via psych-ed, and by Vineland with a procedure of testing for behaviour and coping skills). Testers consider cultural awareness. For example, there are no “tenses” in the Chilcotin language. A person will say, “I go to the store.” Instead of saying, “I am going to the store.” Case leaders consider this when testing an Aboriginal student in the Williams Lake area; otherwise, the student will present as having a lower language score when, in fact, it is cultural diversity.

If a parent wants their child tested, they must sign a form. The Life Skills program assumes the workload for any subsequent paperwork. An assigned worker from STADD (Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities) will examine the forms and visit the student. The STADD representative will interview the student to ask them about future goals and help them achieve these goals. “The ‘STADD’ is now part of the Ministry because there are so many kids in the program” (Ferguson, 2020). Jacqui stresses to the parents to test children before they complete grade twelve because after students graduate, the testing is private and can cost between $5000 and $6000.

***Additional notes from my chats with Jacqui:***

Currently, there is no “Life Skills” program until grade 10. Students should be immersed (as best as possible) through the end of grade 9. Therefore, there should be no modifications until grade 10, only adaptations. If modifications are premature, students may not graduate with a Dogwood (modified programs will only grant an Evergreen certificate of school completion, not formal graduation). According to Jacqui’s observations, she has seen kids “modified” unnecessarily, preventing them from meeting graduation requirements.

“Students can’t be modified without a Psych Ed and IEP” (Ferguson, 2020).

Example: Even if they are doing grade 5 level Math in a grade 8 classroom, this is an adaptation because they are still doing the same Math. For example, the entire class may be working on a measurement lesson, but some students might only have to complete every second question or work on more straightforward exercises (Ferguson, 2020).

Interview with Marina Campsall, Special Education Teacher, Lake City Senior Secondary

During my practicum, I also spoke with one of the teachers who designs the Inclusive (Individual) Education Plans for the students of LCSS.

When developing an IEP, Marina tries to speak with the student privately first. She will ask questions about their interest, what they need to improve, as well as social, personal, and intellectual-based inquiries (Campsall, 2020). Marina then arranges a meeting with the parent to gather more information; it is sometimes challenging for them to talk about themselves. She remarks that Education Assistants are excellent data sources because they often work one-on-one with them and learn pertinent details about them; they know the students’ habits and struggles. As Marina collects details about the students, she categorizes them into “strengths and stretches” Stretches are goals that the students must “stretch to achieve” (Campsall, 2020). Marina showed me examples of IEPs, one of which I have included on this website page.

References

Campsall, Marina. (2020, November 5). Special Education Teacher, Lake City Senior Secondary. Williams Lake, British Columbia.

Ferguson, Jacqueline. (2020, November 5). Life Skills Program, Lake City Senior Secondary. Williams Lake, British Columbia.

Reflection:

Nothing compares to a face-to-face practicum! I am honoured that I spent a day with Jacqui’s life skills students and was especially thrilled that they were willing to share their stories with me. After completing my UDL and Designation assignments for EDIE, this experience was the perfect way to observe students in an adapted setting. Based on my observation, Jacqui’s resource room’s most important feature is that the students are free to come and go as they please (within reason). Some are still involved in regular school classes and programs, but they have a safe place to settle when they get overwhelmed. I loved to see how this small group of students acted the same as any classroom community, but with an added element of an extremely close-knit family.

During my previous classroom assignments and TTOC work, I have gained experience with students with special needs. Still, I feel that spending the day as a volunteer allowed me to understand resource room programs more completely. I was able to observe and ask questions as the events of the day unfolded. I also appreciated learning how the school created its Inclusive (Individual) Education plans. When I taught my grade seven class, two students were on IEPs. I was involved in the parent meetings but not in the program’s making; someone had made it the previous year. It was a tremendous asset to discover the types of questions asked when creating an IEP. I appreciated how the items included many aspects of the student as a unique individual, such as social and intellectual profiles. In retrospect, these are valuable questions for teachers to ask all of their students. It reminds me of the “All About Me” unit that I cover at the beginning of a school year. It is a good idea for students to be self-aware of their strengths and areas for improvement, as it covers the BC Curriculum Core Competencies. Elementary students can be reflective practitioners too!

Finally, the most memorable aspect of my practicum experience was noticing how comfortable the students were in their environment. For many of them, it is home. My heart hurt when I heard some of the stories about their home life, and it made me thankful that our schools provide programs for these students. For some, the need for emotional support outweighs academic guidance. As I reflect on my teaching experience, my fondest memories are when I earned a troubled student’s trust. My day spent with this life skills class reaffirms my passion for teaching and my goal to make every student feel worthy and loved.