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Scaffolding, Reciprocal Teaching, and PBS

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Children with mental retardation and other learners with special needs, require special teaching strategies to meet their learning problems.

Two recommended strategies designed to meet their difficulties in learning are scaffolding and reciprocal teaching (Kirk, et.al., 2006).

Scaffolding

A strategy that educators call "scaffolding" conjures up the image (Cooper, 2006) of a building under construction. A new building is barely visible at the beginning of the construction cycle. Hidden behind supporting beams and platforms, is a temporary support called the scaffold. But the scaffold is critical, because it gives workers the ability to slowly construct the new building from the bottom up, assisting but not obstructing others. The scaffolding surrounds the new structure, adding to it slowly to ensure that it is solid. As the edifice takes shape, the scaffolding is reduced, and as the building nears completion, the scaffolding is finally removed.

Educators have borrowed this scaffolding imagery to describe the teacher's role in building a pupil's competencies. As stressed by Cooper, (2006) the educational scaffolding is substantial at the beginning of the construction; as the teacher carefully diagnoses a child's or a pupil's competencies and determines where new knowledge will need to be built. Once the scaffold is planned, the teacher begins to build the pupil's knowledge through carefully crafted questions, well-phrased explanations, and thoughtfully designed student activities. As the child internalizes information, the teacher's scaffolding can be reduced. Once the learner becomes fully competent, the scaffolding is removed.

In scaffolding, the teacher models the expected behavior and then guides the student through the

early stages of understanding. As the student's understanding increases, the teacher gradually withdraws, hence the name scaffolding. The goal is to have the student internalize the knowledge and operate independently.

Reciprocal Teaching

In reciprocal teaching, small groups of students and teachers take turns leading a discussion on a particular topic. This exercise features four activities: questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. In this strategy (as in scaffolding), the teacher models how to carry out the activities successfully. The students then initiate the teaching style while the teacher plays the role of the student. In this way, the students become active players in a role they find enjoyable.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

One technique that is useful for educators is positive behavior supports (PBS). PBS's are used to reduce or eliminate obnoxious non-adaptive behaviors (Koegel, Koegel & Dunlap, 1996). Combining functional analysis (to determine the possible triggers to the undesirable behavior) with modification of the environment around the child has been found to be effective.

With the PBS technique, environmental conditions are remediated and positive behavior repertoires are built. Applied behavior analysis techniques (ABA), as the desirable behavior and the mastery of social skills. Building positive behavior repertoires can include self-management skills, social skills, and other constructive behaviors.

A synthesis of 10 years of research projects using PBS revealed that PBS was widely applicable to persons with behavior problems in one-half to two-thirds of the cases. This relatively new PBS approach deserves the attention of the teacher trainers especially the teachers of children with special needs.

Reference:

Bonilla, Lucilla S. **The Professional Teacher**. Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing, Inc.

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

for Children with Special Needs

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Introduction

The fundamental principle of the Inclusive School is that all children should learn together, whenever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must respond to the diverse needs of their students – accomodating both different styles and rates of learning geared for the students and ensuring quality education for all through approximate curricular and organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school.

Within inclusive schools, children with special educational needs should receive whatever extra support they require to ensure their effective education. Inclusive schooling is the most effective means for building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers. Assignment of children to special schools – or special classes or sections within a school on a permanent basis – should be the exception, to be recommended only in those in-

frequent cases where it is clearly demonstrated that education in regular classrooms is incapable of meeting a child's educational or social needs or when it is required for the welfare of the child or that of the children.

As a global trend in educating special needs children, inclusion must be seen in the context of reducing the gap between the special and regular school program, thus merging the best practices for each component. The need is to redesign the goals of special needs education. This requires a fundamental change both in educational practices and in the design of the curriculum.

Special Needs Education

Special Needs Education refers to the education of persons who are gifted or talented as well those who have physical, mental, social, or sensory impairment and cultural differences. Such a group may require modifications of the school curriculum, programs, and special services and physical facilities to help them develop to their maximum capacity. These persons include the gifted/talented, the fast learners, the mentally retarded, the usually impaired, those with behavior problems, orthopedically handicapped, those with special health problems, the learning disabled, the speech impaired, or

multi-handicapped. (Section 1, Art. II Policies and Guidelines for Special Education, 1997 Revised Edition).

Inclusion

Inclusion means teaching all children together, regardless of ability level. Inclusive programs celebrate children's similarities as well as their different abilities and cultures. In inclusive classrooms, children with special needs take part in the general education curricular based on their ages and grades. They are not put into a separate classroom, but rather the curricular and the room are adapted to meet the children's needs.

The provision of inclusive education is anchored on the philosophy that all children and youth with special needs must receive an appropriate education and everything within the system. It is a basic freedom for all kinds of children and a guarantee for one to get education along with other children regardless of human differences.

The following are the special legal mandates at inclusive education in the Philippines:

- A. The World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) held in Joltier, Thailand (1990) has given primacy for an expanded vision and renewed commit-