

Individualised education program analysis



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Inclusive Education Assignment

When you hear the word inclusive, it immediately brings thoughts of everyone belonging or being on an equal level, or something or someone not being excluded. So, when it is used in conjunction with education, does the same meaning not apply? Should that not mean that every child should be included in our education system? Sadly, it wasn't until the 1983 that the integration of children with special educational needs, partaking of special classes, was introduced into mainstream schools. By 1993 there were over 2,000 children being educated in special classes within the mainstream school, and teachers were finally being educated in special needs as part of their teacher training education (Flood, 2013). Prior to this, children with special needs were only educated in special school's which had only been set up in the 1960's, after the first inspector of special educational needs was appointed (The Development of Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (Ireland), SCoTENS, Standing Conference on Education North and South Webpage, n. d.). So, 39 years later, has there been any progress from those first steps? In a lot of respects yes, with the publishing of the Green Paper (1992) which promised radical reform in respect of the education of children with special needs, stating that where possible the child should be integrated into mainstream schooling and that adequate support services be provided. This was followed by the White Paper (DES 1999), several government reports on Special Education and legislation such as The Equal Status Act (2000), Education for Persons with Special Needs Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005). All these papers, reports and Acts are striving to ensure that all children regardless of background or disability

receive an education that does not exclude them where possible, like all able-bodied children do in Ireland today.

Today there is a process to help children with special needs, which is the creation of the Individualised Education Program (IEP) process. The IEP whilst being a legal requirement in a lot of countries such as America, Australia and the UK, however in Ireland it is not (NSCE 2014), because of this there is no uniformity to any of the national approaches of the IEP's in Ireland. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is working towards this and has released guidelines to assist in the creation and implementation of IEP's on a national level in advance of the Act being enforced. This will allow parents, teachers and schools to familiarise themselves with the new implementation of the IEP's. The aim of an IEP as set out in the NCSE (2014, p12) report is " A system of identifying where the student is, where he/she is going, how he/she will get there, and how to tell if the journey is successful" and it " specifies the learning goals that are to be achieved by the student over a set period of time and the teaching strategies, resources and supports necessary to achieve those goals." There are several stages to the IEP process. The first stage is the prereferral intervention stage, where we provide immediate instruction and/or behavioural help. The next stage is the evaluation and identification stage where any child that is suspected of having any kind of disability is to receive a non-discriminatory multifaceted evaluation. If a disability is diagnosed the next stage is the programming stage, where an individualised education program (IEP) is developed for the child. The next stage is the placement stage and the IEP team need to decide on the least restrictive environment that meets the child educational

needs. The final stage is the review and evaluation stage, this is where the IEP's are formally reviewed and assessed on an annual basis to ensure that they grow and adapt to the child as they progress through their schooling (NSCE 2014). The IEP team then comprises of the parents, the principal or teacher and one or more of the following – a psychologist, the child (if appropriate) or another suitably qualified person (McCausland 2005). All members of the team need to work together to ensure the best possible level of education is achieved for the child in question. Once the IEP has been produced, it is then up to the teacher to implement what has been set out with in the classroom and it is by using a variety of strategies that this is achieved.

Most of the widely used methods used in the classroom for inclusive teaching, which enables students to learn at a level suited to their ability are classified under the umbrella of differentiation. Differentiated teaching is basically tailoring the learning in the classroom to meet the needs of the individuals using any of the vast array of methods available. There are three main aspects to this style of teaching that need to be observed and constantly adapted: The content, i. e., what is learned? The process, how the content is taught? Then finally the product, how will the learning be assessed? (Bender 2012). It is through the teacher's successful analysis of the varying abilities of the students that differentiation can really occur. Physical aspects such as classroom structure and the constant modifying of the classroom and curriculum to suit the learning requirements of the students allows for the success of this style of teaching. The use of Blooms taxonomy to modify and use the curriculum in a more achievable way allows

not just students with any learning disabilities but all students to proactively learn within the differentiated classroom.

For this paper, I will refer to the student by the pseudonym Emma. Emma is 14 years of age and is in second year. She is a very social person, she has good communication skills and interacts well with her peers. She has excellent conduct in the classroom and is a very creative young person. She has been diagnosed with Mild General Learning Disability (MGLD), her WRAT 4 scores show low abilities in spelling, word reading, and maths calculations and she has a SEN assigned to help her in the classroom. From conversations with the support staff, her teachers have all pointed out similar trends in respect of her memory recall and literacy and numeracy skills and she can tend to be quite passive in the classroom and shows a lack of interest in the lesson. Emma has difficulty with comprehension and language and needs times to break down the information, her working low memory also results in an inability to retain the information. Her thinking, reasoning and doing ability are all exceedingly low, which will result in a limited capacity to abstract and generalise what she has learnt. Emma can be quite disorganised and often comes to class without the necessary books and tends to lose concentration if given instructions are too long and complicated, which results in frustration for Emma. Her writing overall is quite good, it is legible, she can punctuate and write out full sentences, but her reading is weaker, she needs a lot of time to process the information in a book. She does not read for enjoyment as she tends to forget or is unable to understand what is happening in the story. Emma's least favourite subject is mathematics and is reluctant to do any mathematics in the support

classroom, she requires a lot of help with this subject and to date she has failed all her tests in Mathematics. Her inability to recall what was learnt in the previous lesson due to her memory recall is most apparent within the mathematics classroom. She struggles with simple computations and requires a calculator to carry these out, she also has difficulty understanding the mathematical keywords and word problems due to her difficulty with functional skills. She also struggled in her first year of secondary school as she was bullied, and this resulted in quite a lot of missed days at school, which has further impacted her learning. There has been an improvement so far this year and Emma seems to have settled much better into 2nd year in comparison to her 1st year, but what are the implications for Emma as she continues her secondary education.

In terms of her social abilities, Emma has had some difficulties due the bullying aspect of her first year but this aside, she has a small circle of close friends with whom she interacts well with and the same applies to her classmates/peers. She has effective interpersonal skills and can hold a conversation and listen to others and as mentioned earlier, she is not disruptive in class and is rarely in trouble. Difficulties with social interaction can be an issue for children with MGLD (Heward 2006), however Emma does not seem to be social awkward and maintains relationships with her peers. She does suffer from low self-esteem and is very self-conscious about her weight and her body-image. Her self-confidence was impacted from first year and her lack of self-confidence may be more related to the bullying rather than an issue resulting from her MGLD. She scored quite high in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which would indicate that she

finds it hard to cope with new situations and needs time to adapt to any new situations, which may also explain her difficulties in first year and hence the improvement seen in her second year.

In respect to the implications for her learning environment, Emma is impacted due to her diagnosis on a much greater level than her social aspect. From a motor development point of view, Emma can write legibly, however she does not like writing and struggles to keep focus if required to write large pieces of writing. This dislike of writing large pieces of text may be partially due to her low working memory ability, Goodglass and Kaplan (1983) highlighted the role of memory as a necessary factor of expressive writing. She needs constant encouragement and motivation to get her to write and her spelling, grammar and punctuation are at a very low level, these are all once again related to her low working memory. The complexity of some spelling or punctuation and the need to remember the vast array of words or rules is an information overload for Emma and results in several errors and a lot of frustration. Her low working memory hinders her reading ability and her memory recall is poor, hence this affects her ability to recall information from within a text. It also impacts her inferences and deduction skills, making it harder for her to understand and then draw conclusions from a piece of text. She tends to rush through words that she does not understand or even skip them altogether and she can make a lot of semantic errors, which can result in a complete misinterpretation of the text she is reading from.

Emma's mathematical and numeracy is also very poor, it is her least favourite subject and probably the one she has the most difficulty with.

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English and reading tend to be new pieces in each class but mathematics is a build up of information from the previous class and her memory recall is not able to carry over the information required to progress in Mathematics. She can carry out simple single digit arithmetic but once the numbers are double digits she needs a calculator to carry these out. Her functional skills are low, so she finds it difficult to understand mathematics problems such as measurements or calculating time questions. She grasps the basic terminology such as bigger/smaller; more/less but cannot grasp the more conceptual mathematical topics such as algebra or probability and struggles with the mathematics for living such as calculating the time, percentages, area & volume and converting currencies to name a few.

There are several strategies available to help Emma improve her learning at school, but the first thing that needs to be addressed is building up her self-confidence. Emma is a capable young girl, but she does not have much faith in herself and is extremely worried about what other people think about her, so a main priority needs to be building up her self-esteem through positive praise, feedback and reinforcement of her strengths and achievements.

People who have a high self-esteem can accept both their strengths and weakness and once they have accepted their weaknesses, they are able to receive criticism and then learn from it and grow (Frey & Carlock, 1989).

Emma needs to learn to accept her strengths and weaknesses and her teachers need to bolster Emma's self-esteem and this in turn will influence her behaviour and achievements (Lawrence, 2006).

The simple strategy of breaking down the learning into smaller more achievable goals. This will result in a two-tiered effect, Emma will be able to

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complete the given task without losing concentration and her confidence will be bolstered because she completed the task. The use of differentiated worksheets will also have several effects on Emma's learning, the worksheet will be shorter to complete therefore Emma will be able to complete the task, the information will be based on previous work carried out, so the repetition will help reinforce the topic. Another beneficial strategy is to ensure Emma is seated next to a capable student and using peer assisted learning strategies (PALS), using this strategy improvements should be achieved in her reading. Fuchs, Fuchs & Kazdan, (1999) and Topping & Ehly (1998) both found that there was a significant improvement in students with reading difficulties using the PALS strategy, plus the students were found to have worked harder at trying to improve their reading. Paired reading is another effective strategy that can be implemented both at home with Emma's parents and within the support class to help further improve Emma's reading ability (PDST, nd). Tiered worksheets will also work very well in Emma's circumstance, you can lessen the amount of writing necessary whilst still allowing for the completion of the task and of the lesson. The use of assistive technology, especially in English will greatly help Emma with the longer based writing assignments. Emma prefers to use the computer when possible and it also prevents frustration on her behalf in terms of her writing difficulties, support should be given to help improve her keyboard skills here and promote a skill that enables Emma to deliver assignments in a less frustrating and more achievable manner. The addition of assistive technology has come on hugely in recent times and by making use of these new technologies such as taped books, software to support writing, screen

reading programs or software with speech capability can further support students with reading or writing difficulties (Lawrence-Brown, 2004).

When it comes to Emma's difficulties with mathematics, a simple strategy to help her remember mathematical keywords could be a little notebook where she can write down the keywords and symbols, which she can refer to as needed and this will also serve to reinforce the knowledge by the daily referring to the notebook. Improving her calculator skills is another simple method that can be used to assist Emma in her Mathematics class, this allows her to avoid struggling on the basic computations and can allow more time for the more complex problems, though ensuring that she carries out the simplex computations mentally will also help improve her computational skills. Differentiation of work and fostering a positive attitude towards mathematics will play the greatest role in helping Emma with this subject. The use of bronze, silver and gold worksheets will benefit both Emma and the rest of the class as it allows the students to make their own choice in the complexity of the problem they choose, whilst allowing for progression goals within the class. This method allows the students to determine their own readiness within the given topic and it also provides an opportunity for peer assisted learning as the different choices can split up into smaller groups as they work on their chosen problem (Adams & Pierce, 2004).

When you consider all that factors within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory that affects a normal teenager from family, to friends, to school friends to teachers right out to the chronological effects and on top of all that we include a learning disability for some children, the struggle to get through each school day can be quite daunting for them. Once the child enters the <https://assignbuster.com/individualised-education-program-analysis/>

schooling stage of their life, they enter certain dyadic relationships such as peer to student or teacher to student, these relationships can have a huge influence on the child (Sontag, 1996), thus the teacher has a huge responsibility to ensure that they receive as comprehensive and inclusive an education as possible. For students like Emma who have a learning disability, that means necessary steps and provision needs to be put into place that will allow her to flourish within the school setting. Emma needs the constant positive reinforcement of her abilities and praise for all achievements and successes in school will bolster her self-confidence and allow her to grow and learn. With the slight changes in her classroom instructions, such as lessening the amount of writing to be taken down from the whiteboard or supplying handouts with keywords to be entered being adhered to, will result in definite improvement in the classroom for Emma. The setting of smaller more achievable tasks which can be completed in the same time as her cohorts will give Emma a great sense of achievement and again bolster her confidence and ergo encourage her to strive harder within the classroom setting.

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