

SPED 620

Cultural Minority Activity

Short description of the activity

On Wednesday April 29, 2015, I went to Hazard Special Education Unit in Clarendon. The class consisted of a variety of students with special needs. There were students who had Down syndrome, autism, intellectual deficiency and ADHD. There were also other students whom the teacher was not sure what challenges they had as they were not tested. However, she says she treats them based on observations.

The teacher expected me so when I got there at 1:00p.m, she welcomed me and then introduced me to the class. The students had just finished lunch so after the introductions she went straight into her Mathematics lesson. Ms. Walker did a little warm up activity where she allowed the students to count from 1-10. She then explained the objectives of the lesson which were one; to be able to identify the numeral nine and two, to be able to spell the number name nine. After explaining the objectives, she pretended that she didn't know the numeral nine by writing several numbers on the board and ask if that was nine. The children all said no. She then asked them to show numeral nine on the chart then on old telephones and key boards. The children worked in groups at this activity.

Whenever a child found the number, she would do something comical or just thumbs up. There was this autistic child who refused to join a group so Ms. Walker had to take the keyboard over to him where he touched the numeral nine.

Ms. Walker was very dramatic as she says that she had to be that way to keep the interest of the students since it was after lunch and their general attention span was really short. She also explained that the class was labeled low functioning and at the kindergarten stage so she had to do a lot of repetition. When Ms. Walker was satisfied that all the students could identify the numeral nine, she played a ball game with them to spell the word nine. She first used the ball to get their attention then she told them to get in groups of four. This was a bit difficult as all students wanted to be in the same group. After much encouragement, she got them all to be in different groups of fours. Each group was to take turn to throw the ball to each group member, while spelling the word nine. Everybody got a chance to participate in the activity including me. The teacher had a visitor and had to step out of the class for a while. Instead of waiting until she got back, she invited me to continue the activity where I had joined a group and was helping the students to spell nine by throwing the ball. They all clapped

when my group finished spelling the word. At first, the Down syndrome girls were doing their own thing, colouring a book and not participating. Ms. Walker took the crayons from them and told them it would be nice if they paid attention. They too got their chance in the game. This activity lasted for 1½ hours.

My emotional reaction to the event

I felt very comfortable and included in this class and the activity. The students all wanted to know my name and where I was from. When Ms. Walker their teacher, told me to take over while she was gone, no one got back to his/her seat to say they didn't want me to throw the ball, they all participated. As a matter of fact, they were even explaining to me what to do as if I didn't know. I smiled when I saw how friendly they were. One of the students asked if I was staying and another asked if I was coming back. When I answered no to each question, they had sad faces. I really did not know that I would have felt so relaxed in that environment because of my preconceived idea about students in special education units.

Participating in this event has caused me to see that no matter what challenges children have, they can learn. It also helps me to understand that some parents may not be able to put their child in a special education unit and may need to put them in regular school. It is therefore my responsibility

as the teacher to do all things possible to let those children feel comfortable and to create an atmosphere that will help them to learn something.

There are several things that I have learnt that I can use in my teaching. I will try to use more repetition, try to be more consistent and definitely use more songs and games in my lessons especially for those students who are having problems to catch up with the others. I will also try to exercise patience with the students who show difficulty in learning. I will use differentiation in my approach to teaching my class as not all students learn at the same time or in the same way.

The lessons I have learnt that may affect how I include diverse learners in my classroom is that no child should be left behind so I must be creative, patient, consistent and loving. I have also learnt that children should not be taught as a package but that they have individual needs that should be addressed.