Megan Gregory

27 May 2017

SPED 854

M5 A Broken Arm

Case Study Reflection

1. List what you learned about each of the characters in the case. What do you think is motivating the thoughts and actions of each of the characters?

1a.) Mary King is a fifteen-year veteran at Crossroads High School and has taught 5 years in the co-teaching program. I learned that Mary enjoys working with others to meet the needs of her students; however, she is hesitant to change and does not speak up when conflict arises. I believe that since Mary had a long and strong teaching relationship with the former English teacher, she became comfortable with the collaboration flow.

Helen Williams is a twenty-year veteran from another school district who is taking the place of the general education teacher at Crossroads. She does not have experience in co-teaching but is confident that her methods are the best because of her past students’ performance. Additionally, she does not seem to bend easily in her teaching style since her system has been successful thus far.

Helen and Mary from the beginning are at odds with one another as they view co-teaching differently. Specifically, Mary sees co-teaching to be a collaborative effort in which co-teachers together plan, instruct, and assess every student (with or without disabilities) in the general education classroom. In contrast, Helen views co-teaching simply as two teachers being in the same classroom, but that overall instruction still is the responsibility of the general educator, and the special education teacher is simply responsible for helping struggling students and students with disabilities learn.

1. What are the issues and problems in the case? Discuss the common problems and issues faced in co-teaching. What steps are required to establish successful co-teaching relationships?

2a.) In this case, the issues revolve around the responsibilities decided at the beginning of the year. Helen said she would teach the content, and Mary agreed to help those who needed extra support. However, the two did not establish a plan for when those roles blend or switch. Another issue was with establishing the grading guidelines. Mary believed that Jim should have different guidelines since he is not successful with the way Helen was instructing. Further, it did not seem that the two teachers met or planned often enough throughout the school year. This could be why there was a communication barrier as Mary and Helen did not get a chance to know each other. Overall, the main issues are Helen and Mary’s lack of compatibility and differing teaching philosophies, and Helen and Mary being unable to agree on whether or not instructional modifications for Jim’s spelling tests are warranted.

2b.) These issues are common as are many others. Some common concerns expressed by teachers regarding co-teaching include concerns about differing teaching philosophies, instructional aides versus equal partnership, adequate planning, support from administration, behavior management, resources, professional development, compatibility, and willingness of teachers to be involved in co-teaching. High school general education teachers expressed particular concern about grading (Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004).

2c.) To establish successful co-teaching, there are steps that need to be completed. They are:

* Deciding who is responsible for students in the classroom and when those responsibilities change
* Establishing grading guidelines
* Setting classroom management expectations
* Creating specific physical space (i.e. desk and chair) for each teacher
* Informing students that they have two teachers and that they have the same authority
* Involving parents when planning and establishing a collaborative teaching arrangement
* Setting aside time to co-plan (at least 45 minutes per week) (Vaughn, Schumm, & Argyles, 1997)

1. When is it appropriate to make instructional accommodations? Modifications? Discuss techniques for modifying instructional methods and materials. What instructional accommodations and modifications in spelling did Mary make for Jim? Were they effective? Why or why not?

3a.) It is appropriate to make instructional accommodations or modifications when a student is not able to participate and/or be successful in the general education curriculum. In this particular case, Jim is not able to be successful in the spelling curriculum. 3b.) Possible instructional accommodations or modifications include allowing students to use the computer for written assignments, shortening the length of assignments, or as in this case study modifying a spelling test so that the student does not have to physically spell the word correctly, but rather pick the correctly spelled form of the word from a list of options.

3c.) In this case study, Mary attempted a number of accommodations to support Jim and to improve his spelling scores. She reduced the number of words he learned each day of the school week, helped Jim make flashcards, had Jim copy each word several times, and even instructed him in orthography skills. 3d.) Though Mary had Jim’s success in mind, these modifications were not effective because they did not address Jim’s language and processing disabilities.

1. Discuss the importance and benefits of communication and collaboration that promote interaction with students, parents, and school and community personnel.

4a.) Communication and collaboration between students, parents, and school and community personnel is key to the success of our students. Open gates lead to positive impacts on our instruction and learning that we provide for our students. It is important we keep in mind that developing successful relationships between co-teachers requires time, planning, and effort from all parties, and co-teaching is a give and take (balancing act) scenario at all times. When we work together and get along, our goals of inclusion and student success increase as well as our ability to support our students through accommodations, strategies, modifications, and instruction.

References

The IRIS Center [n.d.]. Instructional accommodations & co-teaching: A broken arm. Retrieved May 27, 2017, from <file:///C:/Users/Megan%20Scantlen/Downloads/sped854-m5-full%20broken%20arm%20case%20study.pdf>