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Research in Special Education: Implications for Practice

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Research in Special Education: Implications for Practice

Proposal Submission for Dominican Scholarly & Creative Works Conference

Identifying How to Better Support Parents of Children with Autism

By Sarah Rushworth

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a collection of neurological disorders affecting communication, social, and behavioral development (Nealy, 2012). More and more children are being diagnosed as having ASD each year in America. Today, 1 in every 110 children in the United States has autism (Nealy, 2012). The families of these children with autism must learn how to cope with the challenges that come along with the disorder. These challenges include lacking social and communication skills, which can lead to difficult behaviors. Raising a child with autism is associated with increased family stress and depression. This impacts family functioning and can lead to families being isolated from friends and family, as well as leave families with a feeling of stress and helplessness; parents need more support with how to cope with having a family member with autism in order to help improve these families overall quality of life (Russa, 2015).

The purpose of this research was to examine how parents of children with autism could be better supported, using interview data. Families of children with autism need to have a variety of supports in place and overall feel as though they are not receiving enough (Nealy, 2012). The intention of this study is to obtain more knowledge of what parents of children with autism need in order to feel better supported, more confident, and less stressed.

Shannon Ward

The Use of Project Based Learning to Empower Latino Students

Today, the high school graduation rate for Latino males is 50% (Huerta, 2015). Additionally, Latino males often compose a disproportionate amount of suspensions, and the Latino population makes up a disproportionate amount of the students in special education. There has been much research done on the history of the Latino experience in the American school system, and how it has affected their current performance (Conchas, 2015), cultural factors that have impeded Latino student performance, as well as ways in which school counselors, and more developed college access programs can help mitigate this issue (Huerta, 2015). However, there has been little or no research done as to what teachers, in the classroom, can do to support Latino students to help them feel more part of the school community and graduate from high school. Therefore, the goal for this research is to identify learning strategies that can be successful in empowering Latino students in their education.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aim to provide young men and women with the skills necessary to be successful in their future college and career endeavors. The incorporation of Project Based Learning (PBL) is one method educators use to achieve this purpose. PBL may be very beneficial to the Latino community as its focus on group work will ensure that they interact with their peers, and become more involved in their own learning. Currently, there is significant research on PBL project ideas, group dynamics, and cooperative learning strategies. However, there is very limited empirical research on the effect PBL has on the education of struggling learners. Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine how to use PBL to empower students of the Latino community.

Behavior Interventions for the Classroom

By Anna Veelman

Behavior challenges and Urban Education are two terms that unfortunately go hand and hand. Students from urban communities are more likely to experience trauma due to violence, death, neglect, and abuse. Children may respond to these traumatic experiences in the form of behaviors in the classroom. Students with trauma or behavior disorders are likely exhibit severe behaviors such as violence, disruption, self-harm, and defiance with in the classroom (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Students who exhibit these types of behaviors may be put on a behavior plan or be referred for an Individualized Education Program for Emotional Disturbance or miss academics due to being sent out of the classroom. With a high amount of these students being boys of color, this increases the over-representation of this demographic within special education but also aids in the continuation of systems like the school to prison pipeline and achievement gap (Wilson, 2014). This project will be looking deeper into trauma-based behaviors and strategies for teachers to use within the classroom to best support students who exhibit these severe behaviors.

The Role of Trauma in Special Education and Early Interventions for Educators

By Kristen Wimpee

Children's brains develop within the context of their earliest environments and experiences. Their neural and social development can be affected as consequences of complex trauma, disorganized attachment, maltreatment, and abuse. During early childhood, children's nervous systems are in their most vulnerable period of maturation and organizational development. Early life traumas and stresses can lead to structural and physiological differences, which can have long-term consequences on emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and social development. These students often have trouble interacting with others, communicating, playing, and learning. Research shows that students with trauma have difficulty with self-regulation and self-soothing; they tend to struggle with aggressive tendencies, attention, disassociation, and physical and motor delays (Bath,

2008). Children with adverse childhood experiences, including complex trauma, are more likely to be suspended, expelled, and have lower academic achievement. They are at a higher risk of failing, dropping out, and are usually assigned to special education. This puts students with early trauma histories at greater risk of behavioral challenges, suspension, expulsion, low academic achievement, drop out, and difficulty in peer relationships. Many of these children are assigned to special education. Early interventions and creating trauma-sensitive classrooms through multi-modal methods can significantly impact brain development for students who have experienced complex trauma by helping students to self-soothe and self-regulate. Therefore, this presentation will report on the complex link between trauma, diagnosed behavioral disabilities, and behavioral difficulties in the classroom that affect student learning. Trauma-informed teaching methods can help build strong relationships with trauma-affected children, who often have disrupted attachments. These methods can help students develop a resiliency mindset and develop the skills and motivation to successfully engage with the world around them.