**PS340: Exceptional Needs Children**

**Unit 3 Discussion Board Lecture**

Welcome students! In Unit 3, you will examine the federal laws that have impacted public school education programs for exceptional needs children. In your readings for this unit, you will explore the court cases that led to the development of these laws and how these laws have influenced local approaches to the development and implementation of behavior strategies in the classroom, as well as the disciplinary approaches that can be used with regard to exceptional needs children.

In keeping with the goal of creating safe and positive environments in which learning can take place, it is important to incorporate proactive, active, and reactive strategies in the classroom.

Behavior and classroom management is the means by which teachers and administrators create this positive learning environment.

Proactive strategies, or antecedent modifications, can prevent behavior difficulties from occurring in the classroom. Teachers should develop and implement proactive strategies before students enter the classroom – before the school year begins.

Active strategies maintain student behaviors and preserve a positive learning environment. These strategies may include the traditional hierarchy of rules, consequences, and rewards; response-to-intervention (RTI); Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA); and behavior intervention plans (BIPs).

Reactive strategies include enforcing consequences and providing reinforcement for behaviors based on the traditional hierarchical behavior management plan and referring a student for special education services when interventions in the general education setting have been ineffective.

Beyond the ethical considerations of providing a safe environment for children in classrooms, teachers and administrators have legal rights and responsibilities for managing student behaviors. A crucial part of creating a safe learning environment is the development and implementation of effective discipline policies.

A school-wide management plan provides rules and consequences that are consistent across classrooms; however, these plans should be developed with the intent to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with disabilities, students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with different ability levels.

The three most important pieces of legislation affecting behavior and classroom management are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was specifically created to guarantee the provision of educational services for children with disabilities in public schools. *Inclusion* is not mentioned in IDEA, but the law’s definition of *least restrictive environment* provides the impetus for the inclusion movement.

One of the key considerations in the behavior and classroom management of students with disabilities is whether the consequence of a behavior results in the student’s change of placement. A school must convene a manifestation determination review to decide whether the student’s unwanted behavior was related to the student’s disability or if the behavior was a direct result of the school’s failure to implement the student’s Individual Education Program (IEP) appropriately. Students with disabilities who bring drugs or weapons to school, or who inflict serious bodily injury on others, can be removed from the school setting without a manifestation determination.

FBAs are conducted when a student’s behavior interferes with his/her learning or that of others. The purpose of the FBA is to identify the probable function of the unwanted behavior through the identification of the antecedents (triggers) and consequences (maintainers) of the behavior. Once complete, a behavior intervention plan (BIP) can be designed to address the interfering behavior.

Under certain circumstances, students who are not yet eligible for special education services may be protected from disciplinary action for some kinds of behaviors if the school has knowledge of the child’s disability.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act basically prevents discrimination toward individuals with disabilities by any program receiving federal financial assistance. The Americans with Disabilities Act protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in the workplace or at any public program or activity and guarantees accessibility at public places for those with disabilities. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act amendments, a person only has to show that he or she is perceived as having a disability regardless of whether there is a formal diagnosis. A person who has an impairment that is episodic or in remission may be considered as having a disability if the impairment would substantially limit a major life activity when active.

Federal and state legislatures and courts allow physical restraint of students for therapeutic and risk prevention, or as a response to imminent danger. A student should be restrained only as a last resort when the physical safety of the student or others is in immediate danger. Mechanical or chemical restraints should not be used.

As you can see, there are many laws that govern how teachers design and implement classroom management plans. Many classroom management approaches are based upon the science of applied behavior analysis (ABA), which you will be learning about in the coming weeks.

Thank you for viewing your Unit 3 lecture!