

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

“Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn” Podcast

Episode 14 – April 2018

Title: *Mindset Shifts within Special Education - Part 1*

SPEAKERS

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INTRODUCTION:

MP: I think sometimes too when we are thinking about special education in terms of a place, we start to forget who the students belong to and there tends to be maybe an argument about who's students are these? I think every student in the building belongs to every educator in the building and we all have a role in educating all of those students.

RH: We've got to make sure to focus on the grade level standards that are appropriate for students. Even those students with the most significant disabilities need an opportunity to have access to grade level standards.

MP: This is a team project! All teachers in all areas of the school, parents, students all have to work together to reach these high expectations and to see the success of our students that we want to see.

JO: Welcome to the "Ayers Lunch and Learn" podcast presented by the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation at Lipscomb University where we're all about education. These podcast episodes are sponsored by Edsouth which promotes interest and awareness of higher education opportunities to students, families, and schools. Each Ayers Lunch and Learn podcast episode provides bite-sized portions of professional learning.

Today's topic is "mindset shifts within special education." We'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic as well using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #SpecialEducation. My name is Julia Osteen and I'm the Technology Integration Specialist for the Ayers Institute. Participating in the conversation today are Dr. Misty Parsley and Dr. Robbie Hampton of Lipscomb University’s College of Education.

Welcome!

MP & RH: Thank you. We're glad to be here.

JO: Dr. Hampton I wonder if you would take a minute just to introduce yourself to the listeners.

RH: I'd be happy to do that. I am currently a member of the College of Ed faculty working specifically with students who are wanting to become special education teachers. I joined Lipscomb's faculty almost two years ago after retiring from Metro Nashville Public Schools. I spent my time there as a classroom teacher and then an assistant principal and principal working specifically in schools for children who have special needs and I have a passion for children with disabilities.

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JO: Thank you. And Dr. Parsley, if you would introduce yourself.

MP: Sure. My title here at Lipscomb is the director of special education programs which includes overseeing our graduate and undergraduate degrees in special education as well as the IDEAL program which is our college program for students with intellectual disabilities. I have been at Lipscomb for seven years and prior to that was in K-12 education for about 15 years in a variety of roles. I've enjoyed my time shifting to teaching students who want to be special education teachers.

JO: Well thank you both for bringing this important topic to us today.

MP: Thank you.

EPISODE BODY:

MP: When I think about mindset shifts in special education. One article always comes to mind and that is by Paula Kluth who is an author an expert on inclusion and her article is called "Special Education is not a Place" and I love that quote because I believe that we in our previous mindset was really thinking about what room were the students with disabilities going to be in rather than what services were those students going to get. And so, we need to be thinking about those services and not necessarily the location.

RH: As a principal, particularly one who was serving students in a special day school, we often heard from people who felt like they had to remove students from the general education classroom in order for them to receive services. And also in order to protect the students who are typically developing from those students with disabilities and they don't think about bringing services to the students in that Gen Ed classroom.

MP: Right. Right. And I think that you know IEP teams are in the role of determining what are those services that the students need and that's all driven by the goals that we write for the students. So sometimes the students best meet their goals in a general education classroom and sometimes they definitely could benefit from some pull-out, a quieter setting, a smaller group – things like that. So, that's one of the reasons why we write those goals first and then we determine where they need to be worked on.

RH: And there is a continuum of services there for students so that we make sure that they are receiving exactly the services they need in the exact location they need to receive those right.

MP: I think sometimes too when we are thinking about special education in terms of a place that we start to forget who the students belong to and there tends to be somewhat of a maybe an argument about who's students are these? And, I think every student in the building belongs to every educator in the building and we all have a role in educating all of those students and so we want to make sure that that students with disabilities feel very much a part of whatever community or environment they're in.

RH: And I think once we recognize that those students do belong to all of us I think one thing that that's going to do is make sure that we are aware of the importance of setting high expectations for all students regardless of whether those students have a disability or not.

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And to remember that it's we've got to make sure to focus on the grade level standards that are appropriate for students. Even those students with the most significant disabilities need an opportunity to have access to grade level standards.

MP: Sure, absolutely. And you know I think that it's amazing what students can do when we set the bar high and we challenge them. I think sometimes we assume that they can't do things but when we're building on their strengths and we're focusing on what they can do and we're using those strengths to help them learn in those areas that they struggle: really the sky's the limit. There's so much they can achieve.

RH: Again, I've worked with students with significant disabilities over the years. And there was always this assumption that they were not going to be able to do something. And we think back to legislation and the "No Child Left Behind." And you know that definitely brings up some negative connotations for some people. But I think one thing that that definitely did end the shift in the Special Ed community is make sure that we are keeping the needs of all students in mind and raising that bar is as high as we possibly can.

MP: Sure. I remember you telling me one time about some of your reading materials at Harris Salmond in ninth grade books that you were using with your students that were ninth grade age.

RH: We, when I first moved into that building, our library because the buildings serve students kindergarten through 12th grade and actually students who are up to 21 years old. All of the books in the building were picture books, and we just it – was impossible to think about the fact that they didn't have access to regular books. So, we spent several years spending money on making sure that they had access to the young-adult books that all 13 15 year olds were reading. And making sure that we were using those same literature books with our ninth through 11th grade students that all students are exposed to in high school literature courses. And it required a shift for some of my teachers because they felt like the content might not be appropriate. But if we don't expose them to it we'll never know.

MP: I love that. I think that one of the mindset shifts that need to occur as well is sometimes I hear teachers say they're not trained to work with students with disabilities. And I think one of the biggest things to remember with students with disabilities is this is a this is a team project. We will never succeed if we don't have a strong team. And so, teachers – all teachers in all areas of the school, parents, students all have to work together to reach these high expectations and to see the success of our students that we want to see.

RH: You are exactly right. Collaboration is vital in our schools. And not just our teachers and parents: all school staff can be included as well in some of the schools that I worked in custodial staff had some of the biggest impacts on our students and the relationships that they developed with students went a long way to helping them gain skills in lots of areas including socialization and communication.

MP: Absolutely. And I know that co-teaching is a big thing in schools today and it's important to remember that coach is not about two teachers being in the same room. It's about planning purposeful planning: how are we going to include all students in this lesson and make sure all students are learning? So, that collaboration and that planning with your teachers is crucial for this to really succeed.

RH: I was teaching a class to some Gen Ed [college] students before we came over here today, and one of the things that I was talking about was the importance of not just walking into a classroom and assuming everybody knew what was going to go on that day. But you've got to take the time for everybody who's in that room to know what's going to be taught and what the goals of that lesson are. We need to make sure

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that not only the teachers are involved in that conversation, but paraprofessionals or teacher assistants who are participating in that classroom: they need to be included in those conversations as well.

CONCLUSION:

JO: In our conversation today, Dr. Parsley and Dr. Hampton highlighted some elements of a proper mindset and the importance of collaboration when working with special education students. They have certainly provided us with a lot to think about. A probing question for you and your colleagues to explore is: “What steps can you take to improve the experience for students receiving special education services in your school?”

As we close today's episode, we would like to encourage you to continue the conversation on the importance of special education. There is a graphic organizer file available for download as you continue thinking about this topic. The graphic organizer, along with links to articles cited, are found on eduTOOLBOX – at eduTOOLBOX.org.

Don't forget: we'd love to hear your thoughts on the importance of special education using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #SpecialEducation. Also, follow and like the Ayers Institute and Lipscomb's College of Education on Twitter and Facebook at @AyersInstitute and @LipscombCofEd.

We hope your appetite for bite sized portions of professional learning was satisfied with this podcast presentation sponsored by Edsouth. Look for other episodes of the Ayers Institute Lunch and Learn Podcast at <http://podcast.ayersinstitute.org/>.