



Carol Frankl tackles two more queries around the issue of meeting students' special educational needs...

Q

Is there a magic art to effective planning for meeting the needs of SEN children? I seem to find myself tied up in knots whenever I attempt to prepare a fully inclusive lesson, and I'd love to know where I'm going wrong!

A I have often listened to teachers who find it difficult to incorporate individual

education plans (IEP) targets into their daily or weekly planning and feel that they might be letting students down by not doing this. Teachers often plan lessons taking into account three levels of ability, and SEN students may require an additional level of planning. School assessment practices sometimes make it tricky to include progress against IEP targets and this can be frustrating because it involves extra work to review SEN targets.

Using planning as part of formative assessment allows teachers to plan and review all students' progress incorporating IEP targets into their normal planning. I have seen this done very effectively in secondary schools and teachers feed back how well the approach works both in terms of integrating planning for SEN students and cutting down on paperwork. A win situation for everyone!

It's an approach that works best when the learning intentions are very clear and based on students' prior knowledge. I have seen many 'learning intentions' that are really activity descriptions, which makes assessing the actual learning difficult. The best examples of learning intentions are explicit about what you want students to know, understand and do as a result of your teaching. Using the same learning intention for the whole class is possible because each student will be expected to make a different journey and perhaps achieve a different outcome. Recording progress is done on the planning sheet. When the learning intention is well formed, most children will achieve it and the teacher need record nothing. The only comments that need to be made are about students who exceed or do not achieve the learning intention.

Using this approach to planning means there is little need for separate assessment systems, and when asked for a student's progress it is easy to go back over the planning mentioning what you know the pupil has learned and noting where there are particular successes or difficulties.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CAROL FRANKL HAS OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF SEN. IN ADDITION TO BEING A PASSIONATE EDUCATOR, SHE IS A REGULAR SPEAKER, A PROVIDER OF SEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY, AND FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTHOVER PARTNERSHIP, ONE OF THE UK'S LEADING INDEPENDENT AND MANAGED SEN ORGANISATIONS, WHICH PROVIDES A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO SEN, INCLUDING A SPECIAL SCHOOL (THE SOUTHOVER PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL), AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPRISING A SUPPORT-IN-SCHOOL SERVICE, A SPECIALIST SUPPORT TEAM OF EXPERTS AND STAFF TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY. FIND OUT MORE AT SOUTHOVERPARTNERSHIP.COM.

Q The TA assigned to one of my students has been in the school for nine years and I find her a bit intimidating. How can I set boundaries, yet still keep her on side?

A

This situation is more common than one might think. Research shows that 39% of TAs have been in post for over nine years and this length of service is often equated with increased expertise. Remember though, that as the teacher you have responsibility for all of the teaching

and learning in your classes and the TA is one valuable resource amongst many others.

Some of the most effective collaborative working partnerships that I see are where the teacher and teaching assistant have clear boundaries and their roles and responsibilities are well defined. In setting this up you might want to consider the following: do you want the TA to take on any kind of teaching role? If so, think about how planning, assessment and behaviour management are going to be managed. It is a good idea to try to communicate with the TA before the lesson so that you can make your expectations clear. Establishing your role as the leader of teaching and learning through good quality dialogue and clear planning will go a long way towards building and maintaining high quality professional relationships in the classroom.

In my experience, unless a child has personal care needs, it is best to encourage independence in learning, which means the TA is, where possible, deployed to work with other groups once the target child has been set to work. Explaining the importance of independent learning will often be enough to enable the TA to see the value of moving away from the target child for some parts of lessons.

When a child is misbehaving an experienced TA may take control and very often this control is not effective. One solution in this situation is for the teacher to instigate a behaviour plan with scripted responses to poor behaviour and a very clear articulation of rewards and sanctions. Setting up this approach as an expectation in your classroom shifts the balance of power back to you.