

More inservice on severe discipline issues – can we have this?

Elementary Supervisor Adams responds:

It is certainly possible to have more training on strategies for dealing with students with severe discipline issues. I need to know if they want this during the summer, at faculty meetings, or on the professional learning days. I will talk to principals regarding this request.

PASS / DiscoveryEd – what is the true purpose? 2nd test why so much of information that hadn't been taught yet? Why last test in February? What's the rationale behind what's on the test? Students can't read the word or story problems – why?

Elementary Supervisor Adams responds:

Discovery Ed Assessments are aligned with the Tennessee Curriculum Standards. They are formative assessments which assess students' mastery of skills taught and also are great assessments as pre-tests when information not taught is presented on the test. The purpose is to assess students, find out who has mastered subject matter and who needs additional time and support on certain skills. The last test must be given by Feb. 20. This schedule is set by Discovery Ed, not us. As far as students not being able to read the story problems, possibly modifications need to be made for those students whose reading ability is below grade level, but we are testing math competency, not reading.

The one thing I have said over and over is that these tests are not used to evaluate teachers. They are used to assess students and to allow teachers to have another tool in their teacher toolbox to know who needs remediation with more time and support and who needs to be challenged.

Why is the SPED inclusion teacher gone a lot? This causes a hardship on their regular ed partner.

Special Education Supervisor McCarver responds:

This should not be happening. I agree that it causes a tremendous hardship on the general education teacher, and the students are being denied the services that they are entitled to per their IEP. I have stressed to the special education teachers that they are to be in class unless they are absent from work or in approved professional development. Missing class for meetings and paperwork is not acceptable; those things should be taken care of during planning times. The principal should be made aware of this problem and address it with the teacher in the same manner as he/she would address the issue of a teacher leaving the students unattended, which in effect, is happening.

General Ed teacher needs some professional development on how to deal with SPED - can this be scheduled?

Special Education Supervisor McCarver responds:

An effort has been made at the district level to provide coordinated professional development in areas of need that are identified by the schools. Two areas that have been a focus for a couple of years are differentiated instruction and inclusion/co-teaching. Many opportunities for training have been provided and will be provided for those areas. Teachers should watch for appropriate professional development opportunities on My Learning Plan. We also have a new web-based professional development program called PD 360 that has many good offerings on differentiated instruction and working with special education or at-risk students.

Is there a set percent of SPED students who are mixed in with regular ed students in an inclusion classroom?

Special Education Supervisor McCarver responds:

The recommendation from Marilyn Friend, who is considered the "co-teaching guru," is a 2:1 ratio. That means that no more than 1/3 of the students in the class should be students who require co-teaching services. However, that is an ideal, not always attainable, situation.

Why does 4th grade inclusion differ from the inclusion practices at the middle school?

Special Education Supervisor McCarver responds:

If you define the word "inclusion" broadly, it just means that students who require special education services are considered part of the general education classroom and are only "pulled out" for the least amount of time required to meet the students' unique educational needs. Using this definition, all of the schools in Cheatham County practice inclusion. Although often used synonymously, "inclusion" and "co-teaching" are not the same thing. We are in our third year of implementation of co-teaching at the middle schools in the county, but this is our first year to begin implementing co-teaching at the elementary schools. Since this was a new initiative, I asked them to begin co-teaching in the 4th grade (to get the students ready for what was to come in middle school) in, at least, reading. However, several schools elected to do co-teaching in both reading and math.