



Disability Awareness: Creating Supportive Environments

Est. Time: 30-40 Minutes

Objective

To develop an understanding of the people-first philosophy as an initial step toward creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.

Overview

Educational leaders often reflect on the challenge of keeping up with correct special education terminology. Since the 1990 Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), PL 101-476, was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a number of key semantic shifts have occurred. The result has been increased emphasis on people-first language.

Activity

1. Read the article Russell, C. L. (2008). How are your person first skills? A self-assessment. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(5), 40–43.
2. Do the self-assessment exercise in the article.

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. What insights did you gain from the article and the self-assessment?
2. Reflect on your day-to-day use of special education terminology. Does your current behavior reflect your belief in people-first philosophy? If not, what needs to change?
3. What is the relevance of this article to the preparation of educational leaders?



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