

SEND AWARE

Volume 2 Issue 5

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Christmas Special 2013

An esteemed colleague commented that he thought the last edition was a little 'heavy'. As it was the normal number of pages I can only think that he meant the 'content' was heavy and I think he was right. I make no apologies for that, however, as I see the challenges teachers are facing every day in schools around our region and know that they are only increasing. Without sharing information and advice we cannot possibly deal with the complex needs that are now coming into our schools

and our classrooms. However I also appreciate the fact that people are reading the newsletters-and making comments on the content. It can only help to make them pertinent and relevant to our needs. In this issue I have included some Communication information and a round-up of other areas that I have been asked about. As it is Christmas there is also a poem, a nod to '*'Twas the Night Before Christmas'* to make us think-I make no apologies for the content!



A TIMELY REMINDER

All special-needs students are capable of success. Each will succeed according to his or her individual ability -- but all *can* succeed. Keep that constantly in mind when working with a special-needs child in your class. In addition,

- Work closely with the special education department and any other aides who might work with that child.
 - Read the Pupil Profile to learn what modifications need to be made.
 - Talk to the parents and learn what motivates their child.
 - Allow student choice in your activities and use brain-based learning strategies that stretch the mind.
 - And above all, be enthusiastic in your encouragement.
- Focus on your students strengths and be supportive of their weaknesses. Let each student know that you believe in him or her.

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- A timely reminder
- Effective communication
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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Some thoughts on how we communicate:

- ⇒ Speak in a clear, concise manner at a slightly slower pace using short and simple sentences
- ⇒ Let the child know that you are really listening
- ⇒ Allow the child time to talk-resist the temptation to fill a space or to give the answer or word
- ⇒ Use pictures, symbols or signs to allow those visual learners additional cues
- ⇒ Allow extra time when speaking and listening-if children feel rushed they may not contribute
- ⇒ Break questions down into smaller components and check comprehension-have they understood?



- ⇒ Resist using literal questions, such as "Can you open the window?" Do not be surprised if they answer "Yes"!
- ⇒ Give the child thinking time and even prime them with their question ahead of the group so that they have even more time
- ⇒ Always have a word bank or list of key words for particular topics. Can the child have their own laminated list on the desk at all times-even for oral work?
- ⇒ Give single instructions clearly and allow understanding time before you give a second
- ⇒ Communicate important information at the start and then regularly re-visit during the lesson
- ⇒ Use photos, audio, video and recording devices to support learning and recall



CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL

If you are feeling jaded by the sheer commercialism of Christmas take time out to use your Amazon or Waterstone vouchers to buy *'Chicken Soup for the Soul'*. This book explores the struggles of families with children with disabilities through some truly amazing stories (do not buy if you have stopped believing in Father Christmas!).

It contains heart-warming stories of families and caregivers who interact closely with children with special needs. The parents do not hide the pain or sadness, but discuss meaningfully, the importance of acceptance, embracing limitations and focusing on the abilities of the child before one's eyes. One uplifting story after another demonstrates the stoic determination and big-heartedness of parents, grandparents, siblings, caregivers, teachers and friends in the community, who selflessly care for and love the children unconditionally. One four-year old, diagnosed with ASD enjoys picking sea shells that are broken but beautiful in their own right, and reckons that unbroken ones, whilst perfect, do not have "the colour purple on it". He taught a valuable lesson: "none of us are perfect... we are all broken in some way."

*Merry
Christmas*

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Twas the night before Christmas, when
all through the room

Was no sign of a Christmas in the dank
and the gloom.

No stockings were hung by the chimney
with care,

The little boy knew St Nick wouldn't stop
there.

The boy lay a-shivering, cold in his bed,

With visions of sadness lodged deep in
his head.

His mother was out, would not come back
that night.

He should stay in his bed and stay tucked
out of sight.

When out in the street there arose such
a clatter.

He sprang from his bed to see what was
the matter.

The neighbours, returned from a rave in
the pub,

Shouting and swearing, eating take-away
grub.

But once in his bed, the boy dreamed of
the snow,

And he looked on the children, laughing
way down below.

He was warm, he was happy and his tum-
my well-fed,

He had toys and a life-he slept sound in

his bed.

He heard Santa on the roof, with his
little round belly,

Shaking as he laughed, like a bowl full
of jelly.

In the crisp night-time air he heard
Santa's clear whistle,

And away flew the sleigh, like the
down of a thistle.

He heard him exclaim, ere he drove
out of sight,

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a
good night!"

In the cold light of dawn, the boy
rose from his bed,

With the sweet dreams of Christmas
still real in his head.

His mum had not returned and the
house was so bare,

The cupboards was empty-no love and
no care.

Spare a moment to think of those
children for whom Christmas is not
the happy holiday that we try to make
it for those around us. Being away
from school is not a pleasurable expe-
rience and they do not feel valued and
loved away from the security of their
teachers and their friends.

Merry Christmas



ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

We need to take stock every now and then of where we are and Christmas and the end of one year and the beginning of the next is a good place to start.

AfL should be part of effective teaching and learning-are we planning effective differentiated opportunities? Think about using pictures and writing, verbal feedback, post-it notes, frames, alternative ways to record.

AfL should focus on how children learn-are we taking into account the oral difficulties and working memory challenges for some of our children? Use the 'Think out loud' strategy and encourage every child to talk about how they achieved something in the lesson.

AfL should take account of the importance of a child's motivation-can we engage the disaffected for whom all work is 'hard'? Can we help those with poor concentration and motivation to develop enthusiasm about their learning? Use the child's previous good work as exemplar and use explicit

PUPIL PARTICIPATION

In this school all children are encouraged to participate and be active in their educational experiences. That participation process will help them to make informed choices throughout their lives and will show them that they have choices, even at an early age and stage of development. We must ensure that our parents also see that their children have choices and allow them to do so. We have a role to play in this as the link between parents and children. The messages that we impart to parents at the school gate or the classroom door can help children to have a voice. They can be difficult conversations at times, but they are worth having. We are building for the future with our children.

comments that focus specifically on why the work was good.

AfL should allow for constructive guidance about how to improve-do we reduce the anxiety by helping children to understand what this means rather than heightening it by the stress of under-achievement? We can talk to children about what they are trying to achieve and involve them in their goal-setting so that they have ownership of things that are important to them. We can encourage peer and self-assessment if we teach them how to do this and this does not add further stress.

AfL should help children to become reflective, self-managing learners-do we help them to understand what this means and how to do it? Do we expect them to look too far ahead? We can encourage children to see just where and how they have improved. We can help them to learn the vocabulary of self-assessment and give them the skills to be able to be critical but positive about theirs and other children's work.

Need more advice? Want to know more? Come and see DB!



Have a happy festive break and a safe and restful start to 2014.