Dana Moody

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SPE 710

Synthesis Paper

This course has really opened my mind to all of the different types of assistive technology that individuals can use to help them with school, everyday tasks, communication, writing, and so much more. Thinking about how far technology has come since I was in elementary school to now and how much I depend on my devices is amazing. As everyone was saying on the first day of class, the piece of technology that I rely on the most is my cell phone. I use it for emails, keeping in touch with family and friends through text, phone calls, face time, and skype. My future profession is to become a teacher where I can help make a difference in the lives of the children and families I serve. One way I would like to fulfill this goal is to use different types of assistive technology for my students who have different disabilities, students without disabilities, and just different ways of learning and succeeding in the classroom.

One piece that really stuck out to me in this course was the case study we did on Matt. To be told that he wasn’t supposed to live past his first year of life, to now going into second grade and with the same students and teachers from his year in first grade is really amazing. We also learned that unfortunately his motor abilities in his hands are becoming less and less, so eventually he will have to rely on the use of his voice to maneuver his wheelchair, and to do most of the activities he normally would while in school. Another piece that I found really interesting when learning about Matt was his team of adults that he has working with him twenty-four seven. Being an advocate for children with disabilities is one of the most important roles a teacher can have. Other than a child’s family a teacher is one of the individuals that know that child the best. They spend five days a week with these children and know their learning styles, what works and what doesn’t work. As a teacher it is important to let other teachers, the principal, guidance counselor, and other professionals working with the student know what is needed to help the child, how the child learns best, and what pieces of assistive technology will be used to help the child succeed. All of these steps are important when advocating for a child with a disability. Fortunately for Matt he has a wonderful team of supports constantly advocating to help make him comfortable and to help meet his needs. Learning about Matt really made me stop and think how fortunate I am, but to also really think about how I can help make a difference in the lives of children I will be teaching one day.

Throughout this past school year, I had the privilege of helping out in a forth grade classroom. Within this class there were students with varying learning disabilities, English Language learners, and students who required a constant “focus on your work.” On certain days of the week the class would use the school wide IPad’s to further their learning in math, science, or if they were working on a writing assignment. But, for each student, what I did notice was how many of them used various forms of assistive technology to help them get through the school day. Some used seat cushions, some used medicine ball chairs, some used noise cancelling head phones, and others would have foot swings to keep themselves moving so that they could concentrate. I found it interesting to see how each student had their own special way of learning and using different forms of assistive technology, and one day I hope to be able to provide my students with what I have witnessed and learned about through out this course.