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# The Teaching Techniques and the Concept of Fairness Concerning Students with Disabilities

## What I've Learned about Fairness and from this Course about Teaching Students with Disabilities

Fairness is more than just giving everybody the same treatment. Fairness is about giving everybody an equal chance at life to fulfill goals and discover personal potentials. One of the important things I remembered from our course is to always use people first language. I didn't realize before and couldn't articulate why words like the "R" word or talking about someone such as "autistic" rather than someone with autism would be devaluing them and sort of stripping them of personhood. Fairness is treating people like real persons who may come from unique and different circumstances and not assuming everyone is the same. From this course about teaching students with disabilities, the lectures, the content, the videos, and the very informative families' panel, I've learned to see people with disabilities more as people rather than the disability. I think that is something most people struggle with because they have not been in contact with, related to, or emphasized with people with disabilities. I fall in that population too. I don't have friends or family members with disabilities that I'm close to, and it's harder as adults to be open-minded. The course and the videos like the families panel were truly eye-opening for me. I didn't know, before taking the course, of the struggles that students with disabilities, parents and families had to go through, such as dealing with incompetence in the public school system and not having the supports and help and knowledge to accommodate and help their children grow in positive ways. It is part of the teacher's job to figure out ways to accommodate all students to the best of their ability and with the help of specialists and with resources like parents and families of students.

These are people, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, family and friends who have hopes and dreams and feelings and unique personalities. Fairness and equality isn't just giving everything the same resources and saying that's good enough. It doesn't work like that. Just like how not everyone learns the same way, people with disabilities need different accommodations to succeed. We're not all the same. We need to acknowledge differences because we all don't start from the same place, especially people who have disabilities. It's like if someone is in a wheel chair, you would create ramps and accessibility points for them to get to work or school because that's what they need to accomplish their goals. I don't see why we can't create supports like that for everyone who's different. For example some disabilities are well researched and so people can prepare and expect how a child with something like autism might behave in class, and so any disruptive behavior can be handled efficiently and the child

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can still be taught. I believe fairness to be giving everybody access and to the same opportunities as everyone else regardless of differences. Just giving people the same things isn't fair. But accommodating and being mindful that differences can hinder a person's success, and preparing and creating supports for those differences so that they can achieve their full potential in life is fairness.

## **Plan to make Fairness Happen**

As a potential future general education teacher, in order to promote fairness and equity, and in order to help students of all kinds succeed and discover their potentials and accommodate them for academic and social success, I would try to utilize what I've learned and know, but realize I still have a lot more to learn due to lack of experience, and try to figure out creative ways to bring students with disabilities into the classroom socially and academically with the help of research, planning, parents, families of students, specialists, my general education students, technology, and any other resources out there for students with disabilities. Throughout the semester, I've learned so many ways and saw many ideas brought up on how to prepare for students with various disabilities and how to help and support them in the class, and I hope that what I've learned and know now will be useful in promoting fairness in the future.

For example in one of the videos we watched, I saw a teacher nervous at the thought of having a student with Down syndrome in her classroom. The student was rather violent and uncooperative at times. At first she didn't really know the best to handle the situation, but over time it became a valuable learning experience, not just for her, but also for the other students in the class. The students helped the teacher by positively reinforcing proper behavior in the class. They realized the student with Down syndrome was only acting out to get attention, and that it was best to ignore him when he does something bad, but positively reinforce good behavior by paying attention to him when he does something good. Eventually, the students got along with each other and importantly even made friends with the student with a disability. What I've learned from videos like this is that even the general population without disabilities benefits greatly from students with disabilities in the classroom because they bring with them their personalities and friendships and gets all of us to empathize and relate to people with disabilities. If the student with Down syndrome had never come into the classroom, the rest of the students would have never made a friend or would probably never be acclimated to the needs and issues of people with disabilities.

As a potential future teacher, I would try to accommodate all students positively and be a role model for the rest of the general education students on how to treat and support students with disabilities. I would try to foster inclusion and get help from the students so that they learn about people with disabilities and as a side bonus, make my job easier. This is promoting fairness for students with disabilities because it allows students with disabilities to adjust to a classroom

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culture so they can be independent and be ready for higher education, and it allows opportunities for making friends. Not only that, the other general students grow up and learn how to positively treat a person with disabilities, and I as a teacher grow more wiser because I learned how to also work and teach a student with disabilities. Fairness is about helping students with disabilities have as much a normal interesting life as possible and having them be able to go on to the next steps of academic life.

Another recurring theme I saw from this course and videos like the families panel and other videos about students with disabilities is that sometimes the schools aren't supportive of inclusion, sometimes not even trying to see how students perform in the general classroom, and students with disabilities may become homeschooled, or educated elsewhere, or isolated, and thus become lonely. I think in class the professor said that as teachers, we'll have to change the culture and ideology of the schools we work at in regards to how they view students with disabilities. Rather than sweeping students with disabilities out of sight into separate facilities, future teachers should advocate for at least trying out how a student with disabilities performs in the general education classroom. I would try to include them with other students with the necessary supports and individualized education program and see how they do. And if I see something wrong like teachers not willing to take a student with special needs, then I'll maybe try to explain to them that it's not so bad and offer my ideas and thoughts about fairness and giving people a chance at least. If situations are unfamiliar and difficult for me, then I'll consult with the experts at the school, work with the parents, and do the best I can with what the resources I have access to.

Again, it's about fairness, and thus it's about accommodating for differences because students with disabilities need all the supports they can get to fit into the world of the general population. I will also not be negative or judgmental because I know it's not a fault for being different. In order to promote fairness for students with disabilities, I won't readily just throw my hands up in the air and give up. I'll struggle to find ways to accommodate them and include them. For example, if they can't move their limbs, like in a video we saw, I can still get them to paint and draw by using a drawing apparatus placed on their head. There might be technology that can assist various disabilities like using communication devices and iPads. Basically, I'll keep my mind open and try to be aware of all the possibilities and ways to accommodate each student in order to live up to my philosophy of fairness.

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