

May 15, 2014

Transcription Aynsle Croney

Introduction: A video in which Aynsle Croney of NBCC talks about her experiences in accommodating students with autism spectrum disorders.

How did you accommodate a student with a disability in your class?

Well, I was lucky enough to find out quite a bit ahead of time that I was going to have a student with autism in my class, so I was able to do some research and find out what the student was going to need for accommodations. By being able to do that research, I found out that I needed to plan ahead. So a lot of times for a student with autism, what lowers anxiety level is knowing what's going to happen next. So I needed to be really well planned. I needed to have my fall schedule planned right out and I needed to be able to tell the student, "This is what we're doing today, this is what we're doing tomorrow, and this is what we're doing the next day." If something was going to change, I really needed to—I don't want to say go out of my way, because you see students in the hallway, you see them in the class, but I needed to go and say, "OK, plans have changed, everything will still be OK, this is now what we're going to do." Because we made the mistake once and actually changed the classroom all around and didn't tell the student, and didn't think about it, just thought, "Oh, we need to do this change," and it actually was a bit of an upheaval for about 3 or 4 days and then when everything got to be more status quo again, it calmed down, but planning: plan, plan, plan and let the student know what you're going to be doing.

How was the experience from your perspective?

It was the most challenging and the rewarding experience I've had to date, teaching or just dealing with people. Challenging in that I had never dealt with a student with autism and I didn't know what to expect. So my anxiety was up. And just so rewarding because I guess I was thinking worst case scenario and I got a wonderful student that, yeah, communicates a bit differently, and social skills might not be exactly what we would expect as "normal," but really, what's "normal?" But he is one of the top students in my class, he adds to the value of the class, and what he's done for myself and the other students is they've had an opportunity to work with someone that has a disability. I can't imagine a better place to do that than college or university, before you go out into the workplace. So they have that testing ground, so it's really been a phenomenal experience for both students and myself.

What would you say to a colleague who will have a student with a disability in his or her class?

If you have the opportunity to find out ahead of time, then do some research. I went onto YouTube and found some videos that I watched, both listening to people that had had students with autism and also students that had gone to school that have autism. I went to my Disabilities Coordinator and I asked for some resources from them, and they were phenomenal. They sat down and gave me the information that I needed and also some more resources to look at. I didn't have an opportunity to meet the student ahead of time, but if you could meet the student ahead of time, and sit down and ask them what they

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need, because not every student with autism is going to need the same thing. Certainly be prepared to be overplanned for the semester. If you are an instructor who is planning day-by-day, it might be a bit more of a struggle, but even if you can plan week-by-week and let that student know what's happening each week, it'll be a better experience for everybody—for yourself, for the student with autism, for the other students in the class.