

News Notes

A Newsletter for Teachers of Students with Significant
Cognitive Disabilities
Educational Equity for All



January 2020



The Walking Classroom is a national award-winning education program that provides students and teachers with an innovative way to get exercise without sacrificing instructional time. The nonprofit program's "Walk, Listen, and Learn" methodology capitalizes on the favorable link between exercise and cognitive function.

Perfect for students in grades 3 through 8! The Walking Classroom program is simple: Students take brisk 20-minute walks as a class while listening to the same custom-written, kid-friendly podcast that comes preloaded on their WalkKit (audio device). Each podcast begins with a brief health literacy message and includes a character value woven throughout the narrative. The lesson plans and quizzes in the available Teacher's Guide help educators effectively discuss and review the podcast material.

<https://www.thewalkingclassroom.org/our-program/>

Working with short attention spans

- Set clear expectations for all students.
- Break assignments into smaller pieces to work on in short time periods.
- Space breaks between assignments so students can refocus on their tasks.
- Share ideas with parents so they can help with homework.
- Carry out everyday routines consistently.
- Develop a reward system for good behavior, completing work on time and participating in class.
- Use visual and auditory reminders to change from one activity to the next. This may need to be done several times before the change is made. An egg timer is a good auditory tool that indicates a signal to begin or end an activity. t.ly/GjGWb

TEACHING Children PHILOSOPHY

It may surprise you to know that children's books often raise deep philosophical issues and that children love to think about them. This website contains all the materials that you need to lead philosophy discussions with your students.

We've chosen a set of books that we think are remarkable for their philosophical content, and we have assembled questions to use to initiate a philosophical discussion. All you need to do is to read one of the children's books suggested by our site aloud to a group of elementary school children and you are ready to go. The question sets will guide you in getting the children to discuss the philosophical issues raised by the book.

Leon Lionni's book, *Let's Make Rabbits*, for example, raises questions about how we know that something is real. What's the difference between a real rabbit and a picture-book one? Is having a shadow an adequate mark of something's reality? These are the sorts of questions that the book raises and that our guidelines and question sets help you discuss with your students. These are issues that puzzle and excite children, and their ideas will surprise and excite you!

Doing philosophy with children is a great way to improve their verbal skills. They learn to listen carefully to other students, to formulate their own opinions in a clear manner, and even to defend their opinions against objections from their peers. Doing philosophy builds a real sense of community in the classroom and, at the same time, it aids in the individual intellectual development of your students.

Take a look at our book modules for a wide range of children's books you might be interested in teaching. On the course part of the site, you will also find our Elementary School Introduction to Philosophy curriculum.

Interested in discussing philosophy with older students? Take a look at *Philosophy@The Virtual Art Museum* which uses works of art to stimulate philosophy discussions. t.ly/GjG39

EDUCATIONAL
EQUITY FOR ALL
..... Giving kids what they need to succeed.

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FEATURED IDEA OF THE MONTH



The River

Build your own path and balance along the flow of balancing stones as you travel down the motor-skill developing River Balancing Toy from eSpecial Needs. t.ly/0B8Ng

ALTERNATIVE AND AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION



QuickTalker Freestyle[®]
by AbleNet
AbleNet

Insurance can cover the iPad-based QuickTalker Freestyle communication device! t.ly/PjREw

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

<https://www.gatepath.org/toyguide>
t.ly/YRBn0
t.ly/IOrXV

6 Strategies for Teaching Special Education Classes

The purpose of the special ed classroom setting is to provide more intensive, individualized attention to the students who most need it.

However, even in special education classroom settings there can be a wide range of skill levels and abilities. How can teachers provide quality instruction to all students? Here are some strategies that special education teachers can use to benefit all of their students:

1. Form small groups
2. Create classroom centers
3. Blend 'the Basics' with more specialized instruction
4. Rotate lessons
5. Try thematic instruction
6. Provide different levels of books and materials

t.ly/ed3wn

Classroom ideas for accommodating students with significant special needs:

Use visual cues to orient student in the classroom (Volmer, 1995). Children with developmental disabilities can be much more independent when they have strong visual cues to guide them through the physical space of the classroom. You can, for example:

- Use boundary markers such as barriers (e.g., bookcases or other furniture), rugs, and colored tape on the floor to represent boundaries between spaces that are used for different functions. Marked boundaries make it easier for children to know when they are in a space that is dedicated to play, one that is set aside for study, etc.
- Store common classroom materials (e.g., school supplies, games) on accessible shelves or in see-through storage containers. When needed, provide labels for these materials (using pictures paired with words).

t.ly/mOY5q

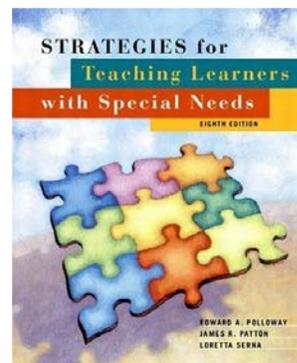


PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



FREE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING COURSE

Wondering about what are executive functioning skills? Today, I'm very excited to share a mini course that I've been working on behind the scenes. This Free Executive Functioning Skills Course is a FREE, 5-day email course that will help you understand executive functioning and all that is included in the set of mental skills. t.ly/e7Emr



Strategies for Teaching Learners with Special Needs by James R. Patton, Edward A. Polloway and Loretta Serna (2004, Paperback, Revised)

The authors give substantial coverage to generic methods and to all curricular content areas. In the new edition increased emphasis is given to

effective, research based teaching strategies that will enable students with special needs to be successful in any classroom environment, inclusive classrooms, resource, and self-contained classrooms.