

Ten things every special educator wishes you knew

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1. **No, we don't have extra patience.** We are specifically trained to work with children with learning and behavior challenges. Teaching students with disabilities is an art and science with a significant amount of research-based practices.
2. **Just because there are less than 10 students in my classroom, it doesn't mean I'm not extremely busy.** Many of those students are all on different levels and struggling with different learning challenges. When I'm not teaching or grading, I'm probably writing IEPs or doing other paperwork.
3. **We have to prepare more lesson plans than almost any other teacher.** Not only do we teach numerous subjects, but each student is at a different level, see number 2. We often have one lesson plan for each student for each subject.
4. **We need the regular education teacher at the IEP meeting.** We need them to tell us and the parents how typical students perform in the classroom so we know what tasks to modify. It also helps the parents have a basis for comparison. The regular education teacher also needs to give input on reasonable accommodations.
5. **Our kids don't typically make quick, steady progress.** They learn, they regress, they learn again, then forget. Sometimes they don't make any progress at all for a while, then surge forward.
6. **We celebrate every single victory!** Don't assume that we do nothing but play in our classrooms because we could be celebrating a small or big victory OR just need a break to be able to get more learning done!!
7. **We do everything within our power for your child.** We treat them like our own children within the context of all we know of special education law and regulations.
8. **We get kicked, hit, and bit.** We work with kids other teachers are often afraid of. Most importantly, we love these kids and they deserve every chance we can give them. Everyday is a fresh start.
9. **We are constantly amazed by kids with behavior problems.** Some of the most interesting kids we know are those with behavior problems. They are unique and have a huge capacity to love. Their problem behaviors aren't there every moment and they can be tremendous fun.
10. **We work hard at building trust.** Students with emotional and behavioral problems have to trust the adults at school. Once they trust, they will open up and work hard.