The Conversation on Disability is Changing

Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in K-12 Education

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Overview

1. Ableism
2. Models of Understanding Disability
3. Disability Studies
4. Changing Contexts
5. Growing Awareness
6. Developing Disability Identity
7. Disability Studies is not Special Education
8. Replication Models

Ableism

- The unearned privilege afforded able-bodied individuals.

- Ableism operates in society in many of the same ways that we recognize racism, classism, sexism and ageism operate (Institutional Ableism).

- Micro aggressions in the example of ableism abound.

- Despite laws and social policy to support disabled people, ableism is authorized throughout society **as legitimized prejudice against disabled people**.

Medical Model of Disability

- Conceptualizes disability as a tragedy or problem localized in an individual body or mind.

- Relies upon medicine or medical professionals to remedy disability.

- As the default paradigm for understanding disability it is rooted in pathology and the problem of disability.

- Prompts the question, *"What happened to you?"*

Social Model Analyses examine

- How medical discourses objectify and pathologize the disabled

- How language about disability is freighted with negative connotations

- How the built environment impedes access

- How complicit many of us are in the preservation of systems that exclude

- Locates the PROBLEM of Disability in the physical, built environment

Disability Studies = Interdisciplinary

- Involves multiple perspectives on disability linked to culture, access, history, the arts, law—and not exclusive to exclusively medical, psychiatric, and rehabilitative frameworks.

- DS is informed by changing social perspectives that trace to 1970s & knowledge perspectives and new bodies of knowledge informed by civil rights and social justice struggles by disabled people **and their allies.**

- **Challenges MEDICAL MODEL of DISABILITY**

Global Context

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) underscore that people with disabilities experience greater:

1. Unemployment

2. Poverty

3. Educational insufficiency (higher drop out & lower retention rates; less likely to go to college)

4. Exposure to neglect and violence

5. Social devaluation

National Context

- Endrew vs. Douglas County-2017 Supreme Court decision: "When all is said and done, a student offered an educational program providing 'merely more than de minimis' progress from year to year can hardly be said to have been offered an education at all. For children with disabilities, receiving instruction that aims so low would be tantamount to 'sitting idly . . . awaiting the time when they were old enough to 'drop out.'" (Page 14)

The Endrew F. decision is located on Wrightslaw at:
http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/caselaw/2017/ussupct.endrew.douglas.15-827.pdf

State & Local Contexts—CSI

- Goal 1: Ensure that all students graduate from high school, college, and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.

- Provide a learning environment that develops life-long learners.

- Build a collaborative professional community that values and strives for continuous organizational improvement.

- Provide resources that support work typical of the 21st Century workplace, etc.

Growing AWARENESS that Disability

- *Not* as personal misfortune or individual defect.
- *Not* as a devalued life experience or, a less than human existence.
- *Not* as an inspiration fueled by an over-coming narrative.
- *Not* as an exclusively medicalized experience.
- Not as an experience to be shamed or silenced

But Rather …..

- as the product of a disabling social and built environment impervious to laws & policies that mandate access and inclusion

- as newly claiming their right to "Be" in the world;

- as "more than the sum of their parts. . ."

- as an IDENTITY informed by truly unique life experiences

Disability Studies—is not SPED

- The human variations that we call disabilities have always been the target of research and analysis in medicine, psychiatry, sociology—framed as "defect"

- Interdisciplinary DS offers a lens to explore the lives of disabled people through their VOICES—past and present.

- DS offers new critical cultural understanding informed by history, culture, human experience and systems that recognize uninformed institutional practices as problematic.

DS Objectives

- Shift student/teacher conceptions about disability from those of remediation to recognition of the productive value of disabled children, youth and adults.

- Recognize people with disabilities as a discrete, sociological population from which to view history, literature, and the arts.

- Integrate disability experience into the curriculum in ALL CURRICULUM CONTENT!
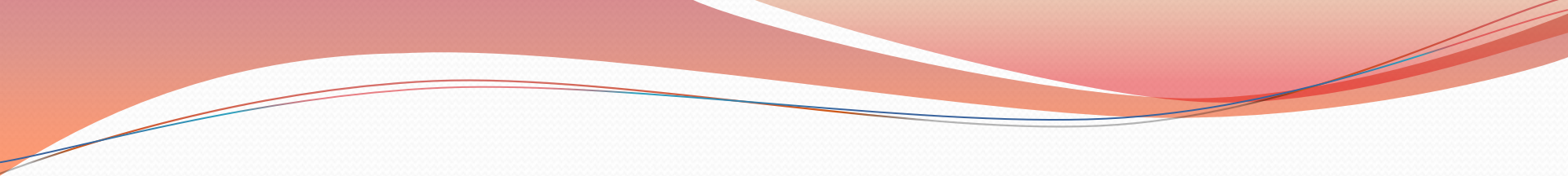
Changing the Conversation on Disability in K-12 settings

- When/where might administrators, teachers and support staff able to consider the changing conversation on disability?

- How can we move systems in the absence of moving individuals first?

- How can we move past the existing system that is overly focused on IEP and not on an inclusive curriculum.

Key Areas of Intervention

1. Administration: Often begins with one teacher that leads to district-wide collaboration

2. Pedagogy: Expose teachers to lectures on disability by Disability Studies experts and principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)—and general recovery of their own content, mined for disability.

BOO Radley—need not scare teachers away from discussion!

"We cannot truly know a society until we know how its disabled people understand it, analyze it, and critique it."
– Kenzaburo Oe

Opening quotation from the Chicago Disability History Exhibit
April, 2006, National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum

Replication Models in our Communities

I. Develop Disability Literacy among students, faculty & the community

II. Use web-based resources (on UDL and DS) as tools for interested teachers

III. Develop web-based modules ("class in a box") and incorporate them directly into the curriculum

IV. Other ideas about how replication might work?