Curriculum Adaptation and Volunteer Training for the Special Kids Sunday School Class at First Baptist Church of Hendersonville

Bethany Crain OTD/S
Faculty Mentor: Tamara L. Garvey EdD, MSOT, OTR/L
Expert Mentor: Dena Cull

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to provide the Special Kids Sunday School program of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville with a teaching format designed to meet the unique learning needs of the children who participate in the program. In order for the classes to run effectively, it was also important to provide training for the volunteers who work with these children. A meeting was held with the volunteers and parents to better understand the strengths and challenges of the children who attend the religious classes. This data was incorporated into the design of new modules and modification of the existing classes. A workshop was held where volunteers were given a training manual that contained these updated lesson plans as well as tips and strategies on how to best address special learning needs and challenging behaviors that may be demonstrated by children diagnosed with various developmental disabilities. The Universal Design for Learning (Burgstahler, 2012) was discussed as a method to provide the children with a variety of ways to participate in classes that include coloring, music, story time, and activity centers. The occupational therapy concept of providing the “just right challenge” (Case-Smith & O’Brien, 2010) was incorporated throughout the project in order to create a supportive teaching environment that addresses the unique abilities of each child.

Relationship to Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy focuses on “areas of occupation” (AOTA, 2008) when working with individuals in order to encourage participation in meaningful activities. These areas of occupation include activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, rest and sleep, education, work, play, and social participation (AOTA, 2008). The three areas of occupation related to the project included:

- **Education**
  - The education related to this project was religious education. Each week, the children were told a story from the Bible and completed crafts that related to the lesson. There were various ways in which the students received education apart from just being told the lesson. Examples included videos related to the lesson, songs related to the lesson, and sensory boards in which the children could interact with materials related to the lesson.

- **Social Participation**
  - Through completing the various crafts and lessons each week, the students were able to interact with each other and the volunteers. The students would often times help each other when needed. Some activities required answering questions in a group, helping each other play matching games, and taking turns when utilizing craft materials.

- **Leisure activities**
  - It was important for leisure to be incorporated into the class each week in order to provide a break from the requirements of seated tasks such as craft and story time. After completing the crafts and stories, the students were able to have a “choice time” in which they were able to play with items of their choice. These items included time on the computer, assembling puzzles, and coloring pictures related to the lesson.

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership is described as “…the primary force in enabling effective change necessary for organizational and systematic development. The individual leader empowers colleagues to collaborate through a shared vision within the organization” (Belmont University Occupational Therapy Program Student Handbook, 2013). This residency project provided the opportunity to develop leadership skills through collaboration with church leaders, professionals from within the community, parents and volunteers from the First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, who joined together in a shared vision in which children with disabilities were given a learning environment that supports their desire to learn about Jesus.

Curriculum Theme

Curriculum Theme

The mission statement of the First Baptist Church of Hendersonville is as follows: "The purpose of this project was to provide the Special Kids Sunday School program of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville with a teaching format designed to meet the unique learning needs of the children who participate in the program. In order for the classes to run effectively, it was also important to provide training for the volunteers who work with these children." The goal of the project was to demonstrate leadership skills in the ability to plan, develop, and organize the Special Kids Sunday School class (ACOTE, B.7.5.).

Examples of Adapted Crafts

Each week, craft projects were selected that were simple to complete, related to the story, and consisted of fine motor or sensory components. After securing the supplies and materials needed for the crafts, adaptations were designed to address the unique needs of each individual child. The top pictures illustrate adapted instructions for each task. The bottom pictures illustrate crafts completed by the children using these adaptations. For the first picture, step-by-step instruction were written for the child to follow. This provided direction for ease of completion of the craft. For the rainbow picture, a dot was placed in each circle so that the children could match the corresponding dot paint color to the marker dot. Finally, step-by-step instructions were provided as a visual aid for completion of the task.

Volunteer Training

- Provided the volunteers with tips and strategies to interact with children with a wide range of diagnoses:
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Down Syndrome, Trisomy 21

- Educated the volunteers on strategies to use in the classroom and in preparation of lessons, such as (Key Ministry, 2016):
  - Physical Environment
  - Visual schedule
  - Social Environment
  - Social Stories
  - Modifying lessons
  - Adapted expectations
  - Adapted materials
  - Communication Strategies
    - Simple instructions
    - Demonstrate patience

References

- Barnes, M. A. (2012). Open hearts, open minds, open programs of First Baptist Church of Hendersonville with a teaching format that addresses the unique abilities of each child.
- Summit Camp High School. Principal: Art Cook
- Vice Principal: Melissa Norman
- Special Education Teacher: Jill Gregory
- Special Education Teacher: Teresa McCormick
- Speech Therapist: Kristin Laurenzy

Acknowledgements

- First Baptist Church of Hendersonville Children’s Ministry
  - Children’s Pastor: Mark Hayman
  - Special Kids Sunday School Coordinator: Rena Johnson
- Station Camp High School
  - Principal: Art Cook
  - Vice Principal: Melissa Norman
  - Special Education Teacher: Jill Gregory
  - Special Education Teacher: Teresa McCormick
  - Speech Therapist: Kristin Laurenzy

More from this source

www.PosterPresentations.com