

Intro

Hi, and welcome to the adaptation station podcast. This is your host, Nicole. I'm a former special education teacher and currently an ABA therapist at a private center. This podcast is filled with tips and tricks for not only being the best special education teacher. You can be in the classroom, but living the best life you can live outside of the classroom as well after all, I'm all about balance. Hope you guys are excited. Let's jump on it.

Nicole

I would like you all to welcome Allie from Miss Behavior on the podcast.

Allie

Hi

Nicole

and so I'm super excited to have Allie on the podcast today. One thing that you guys have heard me talk about throughout this whole series is how much I believe that students have access to their education and they should have access to all parts of their education. And I totally get it. I was a self-contained teacher for six years. when you're looking at everything throughout the day, sometimes science and social studies are the first things to go because we need to get those fundamental reading and math skills in and all the other parts of the day but science and social studies have a place on our classrooms because they mean so much when we're talking about having our students connect to the world outside of them, eventually they'll leave that little self-contained bubble and go into the real world. And so giving them access to the same education as their peers is crucial, but we might not be able to do it the same way. And that's why Allie is coming on. She's going to help us figure out how we can do this. So Allie, one of the biggest things I think people struggle with is the fact that these social studies concepts are huge. They're huge concepts. The idea of teaching government to a child with a significant disability might seem so difficult that we don't do it at all. So what's your advice for approaching the concept of something like a government concept?

Allie

Sure. So when we're talking about something like, let's just say government, like the U S government, that's very overwhelming. I even think as a general education teacher, how would I make this something that can make perfect sense to our students and even more so when we're talking about a child maybe with significant autism or with an intellectual disability like that is overwhelming. So I think we often make it more complicated than it needs to be. Our students don't need to necessarily know all the nitty gritty details and all the little tiny facts that might be on a pop quiz in their fourth grade class, but they do need to know those big overarching themes. And so it's our job to figure out what they are. So with these topics, looking at the general education curriculum, which I know is also really scary and some times looking at other state standards, I know some States actually have social studies standards that they've adopted. They can be helpful to look at. And sometimes if your state doesn't, it's good to look at a state who does, because then sometimes you can sort of just get some, you know, bigger ideas, um, and stuff that's sort of written out more plainly for us to look at. Sometimes that's helpful to pull things out of and looking at, let's say that unit, that, that fourth grade class is doing and saying, okay, at the end of the day, what are the main ideas that we want every kid to know? And those are the things that

we want to work on teaching our students within that. There's going to be so many little details and facts, kind of push that aside for now and just say, okay, I want them to maybe know the three branches of government and maybe a few other overarching things and that's it. And that's okay. It's going to take you awhile to so make that relevant to your students.

Nicole

Absolutely.

Allie

And one thing that I think that is important to do, but I think people get stuck on is kind of follow the lead of your general education teacher. Especially if you're a student going into that environment, you don't necessarily need to reinvent the wheel.

Nicole

But Allie, what happens when our students go to a general education classroom for a lecture, and then they bring work back to our classroom, but it's not attainable for them. It's not accessible. How do we take those concepts and make them accessible for students with disabilities?

Allie

Sure. So that used to happen to me a lot. I also taught in a self contained setting for about seven years. I had students with pretty significant disabilities and this would happen to me. And I will say this also took me a while to figure out. So if you're not in a position where this is something you're doing regularly, that's okay. You can always start tomorrow. You know, and what I would do is I would look at the work that came with them. And oftentimes it was a worksheet and my students, many of them at that time, just didn't have the writing skills or the cognitive skills to be able to actually complete a worksheet to this degree. So I would think what about this worksheet is the hangup, what can they not do? Okay. There's too many words on the page. They can't do all the short form writing. It's just not a skill that they have right now. Okay. So how do I make this accessible with most of these skills here, still things that we're working on, but make it in a way that they can do it. So some ways I would do that would be with sorting. I would take pictures. And the thing is, it doesn't need to be something like, like giant and beautiful, nothing like that. Just print out a few pictures off of Google images, no big deal, even bonus points, if they're real photos, cause that helps our kids connect even better. And maybe you'll have a few pictures of like a dog and ice cream cone and a picture of a grandma. And then you'll have pictures I have to do with governments and the kiddos have to sort them out, which kind of makes sense and fits in here and which doesn't and those kinds of things kind of help our students just make sense of what we're talking about. Okay. I understand I'm making, you know, new pathways in my brain to understand like this category is a new category that now is part of some knowledge base that I know. And other things that we would do would be circling things on a page. So maybe it would still be a worksheet that they could turn into their teacher at the end, but it would be a worksheet that I have adapted where they're just circling things. Maybe I had some students that would be able to respond to a read aloud if I read the text aloud to them and then they could maybe use highlighters and highlight certain pieces to answer the questions I would just make that work a little bit more accessible to my students. Never anything too wild and crazy because we have so much on our plate as special ed teachers, but with a little bit of tweaking, it's totally possible.

Nicole

I love those suggestions. I almost go back and teach a social studies lesson again, it made it a lot easier. And then Allie and I had talked before this podcast and she gave me a great example. We know that we are using visuals all across our classroom. How can we get those visuals embedded into our social studies lessons as well?

Allie

Yeah, so I think the main thing about social studies is how they're it, the concepts can be so lofty for our students. They're often things that they've never experienced like a historical event. Well, none of us have experienced them, but if our students have a hard time with perspective taking in real time, it's going to be really hard for them. If they're a super concrete thinker to be able to say, Oh, 200 years ago, this happened. It's like a pretty complex topic. So showing them real photographs I found is the best way to help them make a connection. If we're talking about maybe a president and we use the name George, or use the last name, Washington, their mind might go to their friend's named George or Mrs. Washington, who was their kindergarten teacher. Well, that's not who we're talking about, but you can't blame the student for trying to make, you know, personal connections. So when we show them a photograph of George Washington, at least now they can say, okay, I don't know who that is. This is not a person. I know this is a new figure that I'm like, you know, adding to my brain as a new person that I'm learning about. Maybe if we are talking about the white house, we should show them a photograph of the white house and talk about where it is in the United States through a map and through real photos. So they're not thinking, Oh, the white house, that's next door to where my mom lives. Yes, that is a white house, but it's not the white house that we're talking about. So giving them real concrete examples with real photographs can be so helpful for our students just making actual connections.

Nicole

Absolutely. And then one follow-up I wanted to give us. I know a lot of people get confused. Like you said, if you're not distributing these materials anywhere, you can just use Google. You don't have to go buy really nice stock photos. And it's something that you're printing for personal use. Just get on Google, grab the pictures that you need. And you'll be fine.

Allie

Absolutely. Yeah. That's the way to do it. It makes it so much easier. And that's why Google images is there anyway, just for us to use, to make connections. And sometimes you don't even have to print it out. You can just show it on your projector on a laptop or an iPad that you have in your classroom.

Nicole

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for coming on and sharing this awesome tips for social studies.

Allie

Sure. Thanks for having me.

Nicole

Bye.

Thank you for listening to this week's episode of the podcast. If you like what you heard, I would greatly appreciate it if you left me some feedback. And if you want to hear more, go ahead and give me a follow while you're at it. Come say hi on social media, you can find me at adaptation station on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and adaptation station.net. It's taco night in my house. So I'm going to go have a delicious dinner and a margarita. And I will talk to you guys again next Friday