

Reconceptualizing Special Education School Policy: An Asset Oriented Approach

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Abstract

This presentation explores ways of reconceptualizing disability, inclusion, and responses to students with disabilities through the development and facilitation of methodical school wide professional development and policy. What is offered is a structured approach to reimagining disability policy at the school level. The three phases of professional development and policy generation that are described and made explicit throughout the presentation are intended to allow for critical construction, deconstruction, and reconceptualization of thought, language and practice in relation to students with disabilities to begin and become continuous within a school. What emerges throughout the three phases that are described is data that can be researched by a school community to enrich and further the on-going reconceptualization process. The outlined phases that are the focus of the research being presented can be applied at board of education or government levels and adapted to enable a critical examination of policies and official texts that organize disability and how people with disabilities are being responded to within the institutions these policies govern. The outlined phases and guiding questions that are central to the phases of this approach to policy development are not intended as prescriptive directions that guarantee how reconceptualization is to be accomplished, but rather to provide a structure that focusses on and facilitates critical discussions, reflexivity and planning to assist schools and educators in the on-going process of reconceptualizing their thoughts and language about, and practices that respond to students with disabilities and their parents.

Keywords

Disability, Special Education, Policy, Professional development.