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Interview

I interviewed the special educator who is in my cooperating teacher's World History I ninth grade class. Ms. K. had previously worked as a special educator in another state, and prior to that she was a social studies teacher. Because of her background in social studies and her knowledge of the students in my cooperating teacher's classroom, she can be a particularly good resource for me during my student teaching.

Ms. K prefers to work with the general educators during their planning phase, so that she can have input into how to differentiate lessons right from the start. She is planning to sit down with my cooperating teacher in order to make adjustments soon. At this point, she would like to develop better study guides for the students with IEPs because they need directions to be clear and written out to take home. She suggests that the students be given graphic organizers to take home and fill out while doing the reading in order to help them build up their note taking skills. She would recommend this to all the ninth grade students because they could all benefit from some scaffolding when it comes to reading the textbook on their own. The unofficial policy at Grafton is that students read the textbook on their own at home, and they are responsible for knowing this material for tests even if it is not specifically reviewed in class. The purpose of this is to give the students an experience like they will see in college. However, this is a big jump for ninth graders in general, and they could all benefit from an intermediate period where they go over the textbook reading in class a bit more.

Ms. K works with students in my cooperating teacher's classroom to help them stay focused and organized. All of the students with IEP plans in this classroom are on track to receive standard diplomas. She will take the students out during quizzes so that they have as much time as they need to complete them. She walks around and helps students when they are

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doing individual or pair work. Some of the students with IEPS also have a life skills class which is separate from the other general education classes. Ms. K gave me advice on the specific students that I will be teaching in the spring. Certain students work well together while others do not. One boy does not like to be touched. A few students need to be reminded to stay on task. One student's main issue is attendance. All of the students need to be reminded to stay focused and organized.

We also discussed sitting down together to plan in the spring. This will be particularly helpful for me because differentiating instruction in an inclusive classroom is one of the challenges that I am struggling with at this point. I hope to work with Ms. K during the planning phase of my lessons as she suggested. It will be much easier to keep in mind the needs of all the students from the beginning instead of making changes afterwards. Ms. K seemed very willing to offer me any help that I might need when it comes to her students in the class I will be teaching.

I was especially glad to have this assignment because I did not go to a high school which had special educators in the room. I did not really understand how this would work until beginning my practicum and witnessing the special educator in the classroom. It was helpful to sit down with Ms. K and hear her perspective on the class and what I can do to help all the students in my class succeed.