

INCLUSION MODULE - ASSESSMENT

Case Scenario

Seth is a third grade student who likes science and math. He has a special interest in the atmosphere and is very knowledgeable about the causes of weather patterns from watching the weather channel. His grades in school are inconsistent. His primary challenges revolve around social communication skills. Seth has difficulty interacting with peers and his teacher has noted that he is sometimes picked on by a group of boys in the class. He engages in some odd behaviors that further complicate his social relationships with peers. For example, he will often correct students when they do not follow classroom rules. When students do approach Seth, he is unable to relate to their topics of interest and will commonly talk excessively about the weather patterns (his special interest).

Seth has a diagnosis of high functioning autism. He is in a full-time general education class placement. He receives two half hour speech/therapy pull-out sessions each week. The general education classroom includes 2 other children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and Kara, a paraprofessional, who is assigned to the general education classroom to provide extra supports for these students. Kara divides her time among the 3 children with IEPs, assisting them to complete assignments. The general education teacher, Liz, delegates most of the responsibility for the students with IEPs to Kara. Once per month Kara meets with the special education teacher, Ted, to review each child's progress toward IEPs goals. Kara, the paraprofessional, is the primary point of contact for the students' parents.

Seth has been displaying behavior problems in the general education classroom. He has been verbally and physically aggressive toward his peers. When he is assigned to group work, Seth is often excluded or he becomes so "rule-bound" that he takes charge of the group and does not allow any other student input. When students try to address Seth taking over the work, he will often become aggressive with them. By contrast, when Seth is asked to complete his independent work with Kara's assistance, he accomplishes it quite easily.

Seth's school has a special classroom which includes children from kindergarten through age 10. Both the general and special education teacher have recommended full-time placement in this classroom in an effort to provide Seth with more individualized academic and behavioral attention, and a less stressful social environment. However, Seth's parents are firm in their belief that he should remain in the general education classroom setting with additional supports provided by Liz. They have provided some specific suggestions on accommodations they believed would help their son succeed. Liz expressed concern that her class as a whole show improvement on annual test results, leaving little time to devote to the "extras" including "dealing with" the special concerns of children with special needs. Liz also adds that Seth's behavior has begun to affect the other students learning opportunities.

Seth's most recent IEP meeting was attended by his mother Sally, the special education teacher, his speech/language therapist, and a school psychologist. During the discussion about inclusion, the school psychologist presented Liz's concerns about Seth's current placement. Sally expressed

anxiety about the possibility of a special class placement and since the team did not arrive at a consensus, they decided to schedule a future meeting to arrive at a placement decision.

Questions

1. From your reading of Anna's thoughts, what are some red flags that appear in this case scenario? Refer to "Witnessing", "About Anna and Sabrina", "What Anna Says" sections on the module pages, and "How Can I Be a Parent-friendly Educator?")
2. After observing the five video excerpts of the team meeting, what are some elements of the meeting that could be of value to Seth's team? Consider Anna's role in the conference and the rest of the team's response to her. Also consider how Dr. Jackson's comments relate to this team's interaction.
3. How do Dr. Jackson's comments (see 'Involving Parents' tab) apply to what you 'read between the lines' in this scenario? How would you describe the school's effectiveness in involving parents in the decision about Seth's classroom placement?
4. *Why are benefits and legal findings about inclusion that should be considered?* Consider (a) elements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) that Seth's team will need to consider in their placement decision, (b) moral or value-based considerations, (c) benefits that Seth and others may experience from an inclusive environment to be considered alongside Liz's concerns, and (d) court decisions about inclusion.
5. Please apply the material from the chapters on Student Empowerment, Communication, Involving Parents, and Accommodations to this case scenario. Using what you learned from these chapters, what changes could Seth's team make to promote a successful experience for him in his inclusive placement?