

On-line Resources for Exceptional Students

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“I’m the K-3 teacher in a two-classroom school. Marci, one of my grade two students just can’t seem to understand place value no matter what I’ve tried or what manipulatives I’ve used. Where do I find resources?”

“One of my grade nine students struggles to put down his thoughts on paper. The rest of the class is able to write interesting, cohesive paragraphs and short essays but Mike can’t seem to write in any organized fashion. He contributes so much to class discussion...I know he’s an intelligent student, but I’m at my wit’s end! Any ideas?”

Although Adventist teachers in Canada are often separated from their colleagues by long distances, we have on-line resources as close as the click of a mouse to help us with the exceptional students in our classrooms. Here are a number of valuable resources that I turn to when I have questions about the needs of my students.

1. <http://teachers.net/mentors/>. This page is part of a much larger and very helpful site (<http://teachers.net/>), but I often find myself at one of many grade-levelled or subject-oriented chatboards at the mentor site to have specific questions answered. When I’ve posted a question, I’ve had feedback from master teachers around the world within a day or two. Since this is an on-line forum, many teachers point to other helpful internet sites to answer my questions.
2. BC Government Special Education website articles (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/sped_res_docs.htm) are world-recognized resources for how to reach and teach students with exceptionalities. Look for articles that begin with “Teaching Students With...”. Another good provincial site is the Manitoba Special Education website (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/documents.html>).
3. Is there a student in your classroom with a special education designation? The site <http://www.do2learn.com/> provides definitions, characteristics, classroom strategies, on-line resources, and books to help you teach almost any student with specific learning challenges.
4. <http://www.mspowell.com/>. This easily-navigated jewel of a site is a must-see, especially for elementary and middle school teachers! Angela Powell’s teaching tips, lesson plans, management and organizational techniques are practical and doable!
5. <http://www.behavioradvisor.com/>. This site is loaded with strategies to help students who struggle daily with behavioural issues related to ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and learning differences. Not only are there strategies for building classroom management plans that support these students but there are also tools for classroom teachers to deal with specific exceptional behaviours in our classrooms.
6. Trying to find ideas for multisensory learning? Look at <http://www.resourceroom.net/>. This site provides practical ideas that help you teach students using multisensory methods. It also provides thought-provoking articles about learning differences.

7. Assistive technology can level the playing field, especially for older learners with reading disabilities. The site <http://www.phs.d211.org/academics/assistivetech/links.htm> is a portal to assistive technologies that work. (Adventist schools in BC can order a number of these technologies at a fraction of the cost through SET-BC.)
8. Free assistive technology that provides software to read web pages and Microsoft Windows-based text is available at <http://www.readplease.com/>.
9. Games will motivate all students, especially those who struggle with attention difficulties. The site <http://www.quia.com/web> offers games that help your students review and study what you've taught.
10. Math sites <http://www.webmath.com/> and <http://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/schools/souvenir/math.htm> provide tutorial and game support for students who struggle with math concepts or who need to practice their new knowledge.
11. Commercially-produced levelled reading resources include Scholastic (<http://src.scholastic.com/ecatalog/default.asp?UID=5BC9D8A2E6E54DAA9EE60823D0A1569D&subt=0&Test=NA>) and <http://www.scobre.com/index.php>. The latter site provides middle school character education reading materials—identical titles differentiated by reading ability levels that give both low and high ability readers access to the same literature. The websites <http://registration.beavton.k12.or.us/lbdb/default.htm> and <http://home.comcast.net/~ngiansante/> allow you to search many commercial book titles and discover reading levels for a large selection of books.
12. Spelling and phonics instruction can be tailored for individual students by using the resources at <http://call.canil.ca/english/index.html>. Teachers can choose spelling patterns and specific vowel and consonant combinations to generate single- and multi-syllabic reading and spelling lists specifically designed for a student's needs. (As well, the site developer is interested in working with teachers who are proficient in French to develop a companion site devoted to French spelling and phonics. He would welcome collaboration!)
13. <http://www.setbc.org/pictureset/>. ESL and FSL teachers often need pictures of objects and activities to help their students learn a foreign language. This site is a wonderful repository of pictures that can be used for flashcards.

So...what on-line resources would I use to help the students mentioned at the beginning of this article? I'd use ideas found at <http://www.garlikov.com/PlaceValue.html> to help Marci understand place value concepts; I'd use Inspiration® (<http://www.inspiration.com/>, <http://www.strategictransitions.com/>) to help Mike develop his ability to write clear, organized essays that demonstrate his insight of the curriculum. The internet places these resources in our hands to help our most at-risk students. Let's take advantage of it!