1. List what you learned about each of the characters in the case. What do you think is motivating the thoughts and actions of each of the characters?

Jim O'Hara is a 17-year-old student at Crossroads High School. Jim struggles with language learning delays and auditory processing deficits. He has received special education services since second grade and is motivated to go to college on an athletic scholarship. Despite his successes in other subjects, he struggles with spelling, which is impacting his performance and causing frustration and embarrassment. Jim is motivated by his desire to excel academically and eventually secure an athletic college scholarship.

Mary King: Mary is a veteran teacher who has taught in the co-teaching program for five years and values relationships with students. Mary creates a safe and welcoming environment for her students, especially students with disabilities. Mary is motivated by her dedication to her students’ successes and her belief in creating an inclusive learning environment.

Helen Williams: Helen is also a veteran teacher with twenty years of experience and a new addition to the co-teaching program. She is very efficient and holds high standards for her students. She also believes strongly in teaching spelling as an essential skill and is resistant to accommodating students with disabilities as she views it as lowering standards. Helen's motivation lies in maintaining high academic standards and preparing students for high-stakes testing and future success.

1. a.) What are the issues and problems in the case?

The case presents several issues starting with Jim's spelling despite his success in other subjects. This difficulty is impacting his academic performance, self-esteem, and potentially his future opportunities, including his athletic scholarship aspirations. Furthermore, there are new rising issues within the co-teaching Dynamics. The introduction of a new teacher, Helen, disrupts the established co-teaching relationship and creates challenges in communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making between Mary and Helen. This disruption is caused by the difference in teaching philosophies. Mary and Helen hold contrasting beliefs about teaching and learning, particularly regarding the importance of spelling and the approach to accommodating students with disabilities. This leads to conflict over instructional strategies and accommodations for Jim.

Another issue that is a direct result of the co-teaching failure is Jim's frustration and embarrassment over his spelling difficulties which are affecting his motivation, engagement, and attendance in class. This resulted in Jim’s parents being concerned about his struggles.

b) Discuss the common problems and issues faced in co-teaching.

Co-teaching is first and foremost, a collaborative approach where two educators share the responsibility of planning, instructing, and assessing students. In this case, the clash of differing teaching philosophies and styles led to the rising issues with Jim. Furthermore, communication problems are also common, as effective co-teaching necessitates clear and effective communication. Additionally, co-teaching requires flexibility and clear definitions of responsibilities to effectively run a classroom.

In this specific case, the problems with co-teaching stem from differing teaching philosophies, communication issues, role uncertainty, imbalanced workload, resistance to accommodations, strained professional relationships, and a lack of administrative support. These issues collectively hindered the effectiveness of the co-teaching arrangement and the academic success and well-being of students like Jim.

c) What steps are required to establish successful co-teaching relationships?

To establish successful co-teaching relationships, it is important to engage both teachers in collaboration and decision-making. Additionally, the teachers involved in co-teaching must communicate their roles and responsibilities and unify their teaching strategies to better help and support their students. Furthermore, to be an effective co-teacher, both parties must be able to resolve any conflict professionally while promoting a positive learning experience for the students.

3. a) When is it appropriate to make instructional accommodations?

Instructional accommodations are appropriate when a student’s disability or specific learning needs hinder their ability to access the curriculum or demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These accommodations are designed to provide equitable opportunities for learning and assessment, ensuring that students can participate fully in educational activities despite their struggles.

b) When is it appropriate to make instructional modifications?

Instructional modifications are appropriate when a student’s disability or specific learning needs do not allow them to access the general education curriculum or demonstrate their knowledge and skills, even with accommodations. These modifications involve altering the expectations or content of the curriculum to support the student’s learning capabilities. Additionally, sometimes, modifications are necessary for students with more severe learning disabilities and challenges. Instructional modifications should be used to ensure that the students are engaged more effectively, allowing the students to work at their speed and capabilities.

c)What instructional accommodations and modifications in spelling did Mary make for Jim? Were they effective? Why or why not?

Mary made several instructional accommodations and modifications to help Jim with his spelling difficulties. These included breaking down the list of spelling words into smaller segments, providing daily practice words, using flashcards, and teaching mnemonic rules for spelling. However, these instructional accommodations were not effective perhaps due to Jim’s underlying language learning delays and auditory processing deficits, which required a different approach and different EBPs such as multisensory approaches.

4. Discuss the importance and benefits of communication and collaboration that promote interaction with students, parents, and school and community personnel.

Effective communication and collaboration in education are vital for enhancing student success and creating a positive school environment. It also allows a better understanding of student’s unique needs and helps teachers tailor their teaching strategies accordingly, which then helps keep students engaged and improves their academic performance. Collaboration among teachers ensures that learning challenges are identified and addressed early, preventing any potential issues and conflicts, and promoting a culture of cooperation and understanding. Additionally, involving parents and community members allows educators to support not only students' academic needs but also their social, emotional, and behavioral development, offering a well-rounded educational experience.

References

IRIS Center. (n.d.). Instructional accommodations and co-teaching: A broken arm. Vanderbilt University. Retrieved from <https://kuconnect.ku.edu/courses/3475/assignments/77069>