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**SPECIAL NEEDS & SPECIAL CHALLENGES
STUDENT DIVERSITY (NON-ETHNIC) IN THE CLASSROOM**

FORMAT: Lecture and Discussion- Participants are encouraged to make the workshop more relevant to their concerns by asking questions.

DESCRIPTION: Meeting the needs of at-risk, special needs (w/ physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and other challenges), foster, and adoptive children as well as the effects of family constellation, divorce, blended families, and same sex parents is another challenge of diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom. The training uses two theoretical orientations to help staff address the myriad issues that arise among children with diverse (and multiple challenges) that do not fit easily into mainstream classroom perspectives and expectations. Over and above a “how-to” training, this training seeks to help build a sound diagnostic understanding of the challenges faced by children with varying issues. With a sound theoretical orientation, staff can more successfully make appropriate interventions with children.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT:

1. Distinctions between Diversity and Multi-culturalism
2. Survival as the basis of Culture
3. The Culture of Survival of Special Needs Children, of Children from Dysfunctional Families, of Abused Children, and so forth.
4. Diagnostic Order for Evaluating Problematic Behavior and Issues with Specific Applications to the Different or Diversely Challenged Children (for example, particular Developmental issues affecting Abused Children, particular Situational issues affecting Children w/ Learning Disabilities, particular Systemic/Environmental issues affecting Children in Blended Families, and so forth)
Developmental - Situational - Physical - Emotional Disruption
Temperamental - Systemic/Environmental - Pathological - Moral
5. Family Systems Theories Applicable to Understanding Children’s Behavior in the Classroom

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGES

Children feel compelled to fit in with their classmates. To do so, they often develop a characteristic culture. The following strategies reflect common cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors of children with challenges:

1. Try to be the same as others
2. Hide, avoid, deny, or minimize differences or difficulties (including emotional distress)
3. Work hard or harder than others
4. Quit trying
5. Compensate for differences, difficulties, or challenges

Unsuccessful attempts at the first four strategies can complicate children’s lives by causing them to appear even more different than others and may also preclude adult support. Teacher awareness of these strategies is key to guiding children, whether the strategies are relatively effective or highly unsuccessful. Relative effectiveness could mean that children have hidden their needs, are highly stressed from working so hard, and/or given up trying. Unsuccessful attempts refer to failure to succeed academically and/or not fitting in socially. When teachers recognize these strategies, they can then guide children to the final strategy of academically and/or socially acceptable compensations which often build upon their strengths.