

00:00.00

theautismhelper

Hi Rebecca thank you so much for joining me I am so excited to chat with you today about a topic that I feel like I actually haven't covered a ton on the podcast which is inclusion and I know that's something you're super passionate about.

00:01.18

Rebekah _she_her_

Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

00:14.99

Rebekah _she_her_

Yes, absolutely that is you know I started my career working in a self-contained classroom as a paraprofessional and just really wanted more for the students that I was working with and then you know on down the road finishing My master's degree. Inclusion is just something that I've really advocated for for all of my students.

00:36.82

theautismhelper

And that's something that I think teachers get a little nervous to do right? especially in that self-contained room. It's like you don't know what you're allowed to ask for and what you're not so I love that it's something that you're talking about and and really sharing info and resources on because it can help. Motivate teachers to ask for more.

00:56.81

Rebekah _she_her_

Definitely I think you know for a lot of general education teachers when they're taking their courses to get teacher certification. They're offered like 1 class in special education and it's just like here's the tip of the iceberg now go into your classrooms by the way you have 5 to. 10 students with iep's that you have to provide services for and that can be very intimidating and very overwhelming.

01:17.66

theautismhelper

Um, yes, and that's very intimidating. Yes, yeah so I mean kind of getting because you know the idea of really successful inclusion and you know I'm sure you've seen it done right and wrong. You know, many times.

01:31.48

Rebekah _she_her_

Okay.

01:34.43

theautismhelper

That overwhelming intimidating nature I think pops and everyone's head right away. So let's kind of start off what are some of the the challenges to doing inclusion right.

01:41.88

Rebekah _she_her_

So I think for for some of the teachers. There can be a disconnect between the idea of inclusion and what it actually means so I've worked at schools before where they're like oh this is the inclusion classroom like well.

02:01.27

theautismhelper

Um.

02:01.69

Rebekah _she_her_

Inclusion isn't a physical location. It's a mindset.. It's a belief that you know all students can and should belong in the learning Environment. So There's just kind of a disconnect between what they what people think inclusion is and what it. Actually is and a lot of that comes from you know a lack of communication with like between general education and special education Teachers. There's limited class time for teachers to provide inclusive instruction to provide the accommodations that the students need. And just a lack of understanding about what it what it actually is.

02:44.57

theautismhelper

Um, yeah I think there's a great point on the mindset versus location because I too have been to many schools where it's like always in the inclusion class and it's like ah okay and that yeah, but.

02:50.43

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, number.

02:55.50

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, yeah, like is he though if you have to call it that is he? yeah.

03:01.61

theautismhelper

Ah, and that that time piece you know I know it's a struggle for everything right? Like how do I trade my parents. How do I take data how to do this I Just don't have enough time for anything and there's such pressure put on teachers now with caseloads and resources that that time for communication collaboration becomes.

03:10.60

Rebekah _she_her_
That claim.

03:20.97
theautismhelper
The biggest hurdle. No one can get over.

03:21.74
Rebekah _she_her_
And it can be so difficult because there's only so many hours in the day and you know you don't want to use your off contract time at school and you've got a family at home or you know it's your time that you want to be Spending. It's difficult to make the time and find the time in our busy ever-changing schedules to meet with all of the team members all of the student supporters to like say Okay, this is my role in this this is your role in this. This is how we.

03:58.94
theautismhelper
Yeah, so what has been successful for you in the different settings you've worked with for moving towards a more successful inclusive community and really embracing that mindset of really what inclusion is what.

03:59.28
Rebekah _she_her_
Come together.

04:15.86
theautismhelper
Strategies have worked for you.

04:19.52
Rebekah _she_her_
Honestly, at the beginning of the year just trying to sit down with my gen ed teachers and like because we have to give out the iep at the beginning of the year and I made like an iep at a glance form I know some iep programs will generate that automatically. None of mine ever did I didn't know that was a thing that other peoples would do and I was really jealous of that because I'm taking my time to make Ip a glance forms but it put everything that my jennad teachers needed to really know on 1 page and then I could provide examples of.

04:41.77
theautismhelper
Um.

04:56.27
Rebekah _she_her_
What these accommodations are you know these are going to be the

service times. This is when I'm going to be pushing into the classroom. This is when if I'm going to be pulling out this is when we'll be pulling out but trying to trying to find ways. To be proactive to potential problems rather than waiting for those problems to occur. So if I know all right when I was teaching third grade resource I know our third grade uses the same curriculum year after year. So we actually sat down. Once at the beginning of the year to prep materials and we went ahead and made accommodated versions of the tests like we chunked the tests into smaller sections. We took away a couple answer choices because I knew we had some students who were coming in that had that as an accommodation so we did that at the beginning of the year and then the next year it was already done so we didn't have to try to spend all of that time to do and it did take a little bit of time at the beginning but it saved us so much time during the rest of the year that we could actually use for instruction and providing services.

05:49.00

theautismhelper

Nice.

06:06.98

theautismhelper

That's ah and thinking long term too of like yes this is going to be a big time chunk now. But this is going to then be able to be reused year after year and those for those genedd teachers too like again that saving time thing that we're you know, not going to have extra time in the next few years but it's going to make. Everything more efficient later.

06:24.11

Rebekah _she_her_

Right? Yeah, and that's always the goals like if I do a little bit of extra work now. It's going to save me some time later and then everything was ready. We saved all of it in a Google drive folder and you know. They're able to use it year after year as long as we're using that curriculum then they're able to still have access to those accommod like pre-accommodated tests.

06:46.64

theautismhelper

Yeah, so with teachers that you've worked with you know I think inclusion goes in my experience has gone really easy when you have 2 teachers that both want the vision right? They're there for it. We're gonna make it work I think it gets hard obviously when we have teachers that are more reluctant to that and not that any teacher like.

06:57.29

Rebekah _she_her_

Yeah.

07:05.96

theautismhelper

Doesn't want this beautiful version of inclusion but people are set in their ways. People are intimidated overwhelmed you know, etc and are reluctant maybe to put it nicely um to embrace those inclusive practices in those situations. What advice do you have.

07:20.92

Rebekah _she_her_

I Think really trying to help them understand what inclusion actually is because a lot of times we hear these words we hear inclusion accommodations modifications things like that and it just seems like another thing to put on the to-do list.

07:37.91

theautismhelper

Are.

07:39.45

Rebekah _she_her_

Like oh my gosh now I have to worry about you know making all of these accommodations and providing this instructional time and okay, which student is supposed to you know, have preferential seating away from distractions versus who's supposed to have preferential seating closer to the board so they can see better like there's just a lot that. Seems very overwhelming but what I've had the most success with with those teachers who think I can't do 1 more thing and I think you know all teachers we've all thought that before like I cannot take on 1 more thing but often. The best practices that are that you need to use for your special education students are also going to be best practices for your general education students and often when I would go into a classroom to observe after that observation I'm able to tell the teacher. Did you know you're already doing x y z and she's like oh I've been doing that for years I'm like well that's an accommodation that's inclusion. That's best practice. That's you know your researchbased strategy and it's always a little mind blowing for them to like oh well I just.

08:46.32

theautismhelper

Um, the.

08:55.53

Rebekah _she_her_

I just you know the kids need it so I was doing that like that's that's it I think you're doing and I think you know when we stop looking at it as 1 more thing to do for like.

09:00.19

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, yeah.

09:11.00

Rebekah _she_her_

A very small group of kids and look at it as this is what's best for all of the students then it it makes it make a lot more sense and it makes it a lot more feasible for teachers who are already feeling. Very overwhelmed by what they're already doing.

09:27.80

theautismhelper

Yeah, and I think that's a great strategy because right off the bat. You're you're telling someone what they're doing right? which is just going to build rapport and trust and a better you know, professional relationship I I So too often, especially with consultants in that role see people come in and be like here's all.

09:41.27

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, me one.

09:45.26

theautismhelper

Things you're doing wrong and then that teacher is immediately like Nope I'm done at the like so starting off on that on that positive just from like a professional collaborative standpoint is is so important we kind of forget that and that you know that idea of it. It works for everyone I talk about that all the time too that.

09:55.62

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, absolutely.

10:04.62

theautismhelper

You know the strategies we're sharing aren't like special Ed Voodoo strategies like they're just best practices that will help any struggling learner and the more we can explain that well more that we'll get to that like inclusive mindset you were talking about.

10:18.23

Rebekah _she_her_

Exactly that reminded me of there was an old commercial. It's been several several years ago, but it was talking about um people with quote unquote special needs and everyone in the commercial um had down syndrome. And they're talking about like my needs aren't special. They're just human. They're human needs and that commercial has obviously stuck with me for a very long time. 1 of the one of the

girls who was in it um was one of the actresses on glee that old Fox show.

10:53.13

theautismhelper

Um, oh yeah.

10:53.59

Rebekah _she_her_

And 1 of her 1 of her lines was like if I needed to eat dinosaur eggs for breakfast that would be a special need but you know needing support to communicate with my friends is not a special need. That's a human need and I just loved the shift away from. These needs are special. These needs are different. These needs are extra to know this is this is what we all need and I love that.

11:21.80

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, yeah, and then it it doesn't feel like you said before it doesn't feel like another thing on your plate. It just feels like what you're already doing as an educator.

11:31.84

Rebekah _she_her_

Exactly so I've got um I have a book coming out next summer. It's called blueprint for inclusion. Um I'm really excited about it but 1 section of the book I'm kind of diving into the differences between universal design for learning udl. And then differentiation and then accommodations and how it's it all kind of tears you know top-down like universal design for learning kind of is an overarch overarching. You know this is ways we can alter the curriculum to work for the students and then.

11:52.18

theautismhelper

Are.

12:08.30

Rebekah _she_her_

Dives into differentiation which is more you know instruction classroom environment and then accommodations are specific to individual students. So if you are already looking at guidelines of Udl. You're covering those needs. If you're already differentiating your instruction and your process you're meeting those needs. So. It's just the specific ones for individual students. The accommodations that you really need to be focusing on if you're already doing best practices on those other tiers. The accommodations is. Is a logical next step.

12:44.97

theautismhelper

Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. It's a nice way to think I like visually too to like see that you know what I mean I mean in in an ideal world I was picturing it Rebecca I like.

12:48.96

Rebekah _she_her_

Yeah, and you can't see me because it's a podcast and I was talking with my hands and I had my my hands wide open for Udl and then a little closer together for differentiation than very narrow for accommodations that I'm I'm hand talker.

13:02.90

theautismhelper

Um, I totally saw it but I totally got it. You know, Ideally, you know we're going to sell teachers with all of this these ideas which I think is really great, but what about those teachers that.

13:09.75

Rebekah _she_her_

Um.

13:18.97

theautismhelper

You know you've done the training you've done the rapport building the collaboration. You know all this and accommodations are just not being followed like time and time again. What is your advice then.

13:31.32

Rebekah _she_her_

So that can be a very tricky situation I feel like especially if you're a newer special education teacher and a teacher that is not following the Iep as well as they should be is a little bit more of a veteran than you are and.

13:38.81

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

13:45.91

theautismhelper

Are.

13:49.34

Rebekah _she_her_

I have I have personally experienced that. Um, we've we've Struggled. We butted some heads but I started by just going in and watching the class. Okay,, where's the disconnect happening so I was able to pinpoint. Okay. This student needs this accommodation in this situation and it was a little more work for me I was like how can I

make sure that it's easier for the general education teacher to meet those accommodations.

14:21.46

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

14:23.52

Rebekah _she_her_

So once I could see where the disconnect was I was able to sit down with that teacher and say okay, you are showing a lot of text on at that time we had um, view sonic boards you're showing a lot of text on the view sonic boards. My students are not. Necessarily able to read that they need audio. So we found a Google Chrome extension that we could put on the students chromebooks that enabled them to have the text on their chromebooks. Read to them they wore their headphones and they were able to listen to it that way and that was just something that you know was a very simple solution but the teacher who had been around for quite some years you know this was just after covid happened. We're all swapping to technology based. Instruction she was out of her element and didn't didn't really know how she was going to be able to use the technology in a better way. She was using it like a textbook.

15:21.73

theautismhelper

Um.

15:33.33

Rebekah _she_her_

Like this is this is your book. But it's on a screen instead of on paper so just educating her a little bit on well this is what you can do with the technology that we have to use those accommodations for the student because she was like well how are they supposed to be able to.

15:33.75

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

15:53.80

Rebekah _she_her_

I Can't read it to them like well if it it was in their Iep then yes, you would but I digress we were able to use you know accessibility features on the chromebook to provide their accommodations if I adjust that well you have to if you.

15:58.19

theautismhelper

Um.

16:06.20

theautismhelper

Um, that's a good example because.

16:09.49

Rebekah _she_her_

If I had gone into that classroom and told the teacher you have to find a way to make this work. You have to provide this accommodation. It's your job. It's you know iep's or a legal document again that would have just put her completely on the defensive. But instead I went in saw exactly what was happening.

16:23.61

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

16:28.77

Rebekah _she_her_

And was able to find a solution a very easy solution like we it took all of 5 minutes to download the extension and the extension and then the students were able to access the material just like their non-disabled peers.

16:42.33

theautismhelper

Um I Love that example because sometimes the tech issues are in the way and if and if a teacher doesn't feel confident in utilizing technology I get that like I'm not I'm not confident in all aspects of technology if someone asked me to set up like you know an audio visual system I'd be like I don't know so. Being able to see that like okay like maybe this person isn't as fluent as the in this but like I am or I could help and we could do it together and yeah, it probably took you more time than saying it's the Iep follow it. But you both walked away with a successful situation. So.

17:02.94

Rebekah _she_her_

And you.

17:13.29

Rebekah _she_her_

Right? And also you know I I know that as special education teachers. Our time is precious and our time is very limited but we have to also be willing to.

17:15.38

theautismhelper

Being that like detective and that I think is important.

17:32.74

Rebekah _she_her_

Work with the general education teachers we have to be willing to work with the Paris we can't just as a special education teacher. Our job isn't just to teach the students. Our job is to make sure that. They're getting the best educational services across the board. You know we write those ieps in a way that is going to ensure that they are being provided with the supports that they need and often supports for a student involve. Communicating with the general education teacher to make sure they understand the iep to make sure they understand how to implement the accommodations. We're not just there for the students we're we're leading a team to support the student in their academic progress.

18:14.39

theautismhelper

Yeah, so true and then it's really just part of our. It's like another institution on our caseload basically that your caseload was big enough. But.

18:22.53

Rebekah _she_her_

Yeah, it can be. It can be.

18:27.37

theautismhelper

So thinking about I know you started your career in the self-contained classroom and and thinking about those teachers now where inclusion feels I don't I don't know what the right phrase is more even more challenging or even of a bigger mountain to climb on how to do a well and how to do it right for. Teachers and really for parents who that have kids in self-contained classrooms. How can we get more inclusive opportunities that aren't just specials because we see that so often right? Well the student goes to gym with their peers and you're like that's all you got like yeah greggie.

18:54.18

Rebekah _she_her_

Yeah, and like yay.

19:03.35

theautismhelper

Love that What else you know so because we see that time and time and sometimes that's and sometimes that's not even happening. You know we're not even going to specials with our peers. So how can we go beyond that when you know the difference in skill set between the students in the self-contained classroom and their neurotypical peers.

19:04.11

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, what else can we do exactly.

19:09.51

Rebekah _she_her_

Right.

19:22.21

theautismhelper

Feels really big communication. Styles are very different. How can we think outside the box on other ways to to make inclusion happen there.

19:29.58

Rebekah _she_her_

So I think you know as as teachers as special education teachers especially data drives everything like we have to be able to show the data like that this student is able to go into this classroom for maybe not the entire class. But. For part of the day you know show the academic data show the behavioral data you know is the student going to be able to sit in this classroom with their non-disabled peers and participate. Actively. A lot of it also has to do with the general education teacher being open and willing to that I was so lucky when when I was teaching. There was my very first elementary school that I that I taught at um I had a student I'd had him first grade self-contained second grade self-contained.

20:24.37

Rebekah _she_her_

And he was making so much progress that we really wanted him to be able to participate in the Gen Ed classrooms. He was not a significant behavior issue. He academically we knew he'd be able to do it. Um.

20:43.99

Rebekah _she_her_

And I had a third grade general education teacher who's like put him on my roster give him to me I will you know she was amazing at providing accommodations she well if everyone could go to that. Her name is Amy Culvert if anyone could go and observe miss culvert in her third grade classroom. It. It was just miraculous. This woman is a phenomenal educator but she was like give him to me put him on my put him on my roster she provided him support.

21:01.34

theautismhelper

Um.

21:18.68

Rebekah _she_her_

In the general education classroom. He came to me for some academic services to kind of try to finish bridging the gap between where he was functionally academic wise to being on grade level and. The the

coolest thing about this story for this kid is that he was not zoned for my school but his zone school did not have a self-contained classroom. They were very very small so he was being bused to my school for. The self-contained classroom and he was able to go to third grade in general education. It was a success. And he was able to go back to his zoned school with all of his neighborhood friends and he's he's still there. He still is being provided special education services but he is completely fully included in all of the general education classes and he his. Ah, kid that I will never forget ever.

22:25.70

theautismhelper

Oh I love that and it's those stories that like help you see how you know it it can work if you have the team members in place.

22:35.36

Rebekah _she_her_

Yes, yeah I Wish everybody had a miss culvert to work with she she made it so wonderful because if it had just been me saying I think he can do this here's the data. Let's try it out but the general education teacher wasn't on board with it.

22:41.65

theautismhelper

Um.

22:54.75

Rebekah _she_her_

And looked for reasons of why this wasn't going to work like everyone has to be willing to problem solve like okay these are going to be some potential situations that could come up what will we do in this situation. There needs to be a plan in place like if if the student is. Unable to participate fully. What can? What's the plan that we can fall back on so I would you know trying to get your student into more general education Classes. You get them be more included outside of a self-contained classroom a lot of times you just have to find somebody willing.

23:20.35

theautismhelper

Um, yeah.

23:32.81

Rebekah _she_her_

To work with you and to work with that student and it can be so successful and I saw that with with this kid.

23:41.71

theautismhelper

Um, yeah I Love that thinking about students that maybe are not ready

academically for I would say like language Arts math. You know that kind of like core academic subjects for inclusion within maybe their Gen Ed classroom. But.

23:52.46

Rebekah _she_her_
Come in.

23:59.48

theautismhelper

Could for you know Sociale Emotionalal or independent functioning goals and like speaking personally here when I was in the classroom I struggled often to balance. You know the academic instruction we're getting in the self-contained classroom with pushing for inclusive opportunities to work on social-emotional goals like finding that sweet spot of like. I want them in the classroom with me because we're learning so much but I also want them outside of the classroom because they're learning so much there too and like do you kind of get see I I struggled with that a lot on where to how much to push on that if that makes sense.

24:20.13

Rebekah _she_her_
Okay.

24:26.90

Rebekah _she_her_

Yeah I totally get that one one thing that we would do if we had students who we were trying to get into more of the gen ed classes. But we're not academically ready for for that. We would do all of the math and ela instruction in the self-contained classroom and then the student could push into the science portion of the day or the social studies portion of the day so they're still getting that core standards based instruction that they need. In the self-contained classroom because a lot of times. The curriculums are different if they're in a self-contained classroom as opposed to a general education classroom. The state assessments are often different and at least I know they are in Alabama um, but the the science classes the social studies classes. Um. Yeah, anything kind of not that those are extra but they're not the iep goal. This is what we're working on those classes I was able to send my students to they could you know have peer role models in that class somebody that they could.

25:19.99

theautismhelper
Um, yeah.

25:36.36

Rebekah _she_her_

Learned from they had you know they were able to improve their

communication because they're talking to students who don't necessarily have a speech language impairment or a learning disability. It worked on their social skills and it it also helps increase the staff collaboration. Because it forces special education and general education teachers to talk back and forth which is what's best for the student in general that you know we are a team we have to be working together I know in in my state and I Think. Nationwide Sorry edit that out because I know it's nationwide that was a stupid thing to say.

26:18.56

theautismhelper

Um, yeah, no, that's fine. Let it out. But.

26:25.46

Rebekah _she_her_

In Iep Meetings. You're required to have a general education teacher as part of the Iep team. So if your students are not getting to spend time in the general education classroom that teacher is going to come into that meeting. And not really have any input. Not really have anything to say It's just gonna be a signature on a piece of paper which is not the point of having a general education teacher on the Iep team. So when your students are pushing into these classes and they're working on these other skills. That's gonna give. Special education teacher valuable information about possibly not academics but about functional skills social skills Behavioral skills. How are they communicating all of these different aspects of an iep that go way. Beyond Okay, what does the student need academically. And it transforms it into what does the student need to be successful in school in general to be successful with their peers rather than okay, how can we get this test Score Up. It's how can we support this child as a whole person.

27:32.43

theautismhelper

And so often those things go together in such a huge way that people don't see like those are typically executive functions which we need to increase our academics. So it's going to make everything better and more progress in the long run. Anyways.

27:43.47

Rebekah _she_her_

Um, exactly and it's also it's beneficial for the general education students as well to you know it increases their understanding of students who might be different from them and increases. And increases their acceptance of Diversity. It gives them the opportunity to be around people who might be different from them and see that you know it's different not less and I've I've heard that phrase so many so many times. Um. But for our general education students. They need to know that not everyone is like them. But that doesn't mean that

they're less than them that it doesn't mean that they don't need the opportunity to be a friend to someone like it. It just it supports the whole idea of inclusion. It's not just to be physically present in the same room. It's to be an included accepted member of of this classroom of this community. Of their peers.

28:56.84

theautismhelper

Yes, I mean that was gonna be what what I was going to ask you to wrap up on and you read my brain. Yeah, like it's important for everyone not just not just our our students that have an iep but for that entire classroom and it's not just about those kids. It's about. Every single child in that room and I think it's like selling selling everyone on that beautiful vision of why why we need it. Um, can you tell me a little more about your book before we wrap up I would love to hear more about it.

29:14.56

Rebekah _she_her_

Absolutely.

29:20.34

Rebekah _she_her_

Happy to. Yeah, so I recently started working on on my book back at the beginning of the fall and I really wanted something that was able to support a general education teacher. Who is teaching students with ieps in an inclusive setting. So The book Covers. You know how you can make your classroom more inclusive. What does that actually look like what are the action steps that you can take for that. But it also covers a lot of the information. That leads up to that like what goes into special Education Eligibility. What are the different categories of disability covered under idea. So. There's a little bit of technical work in the beginning before we get into all right? So now. We We know this student has Qualified. We know how the student is qualified Now. How can we teach them the best Way. So It's going to Cover Behavior practices. It's going to cover providing accommodations the difference between accommodations and modifications because while the terms are similar. They are not the same thing and.

30:41.91

Rebekah _she_her_

A lot of people use them interchangeably because they don't they don't know because they didn't go to school for special education. They took 1 class in college because that's what was offered and as far as I know there's not a lot of special education courses special education books that are.

30:44.42

theautismhelper

Um.

31:01.75

Rebekah _she_her_

Geared toward general education teachers. Typically if you get a book on special education. It's on students in a more of a self-contained setting. So I really wanted something that a general education teacher could pick up and read and be able to take back into their classroom. And start implementing some of these strategies the next day

31:22.94

theautismhelper

Yes, so needed because you're right, There was really not that much out there for that group. So what a valuable resource that will be and.

31:32.14

Rebekah _she_her_

Thank you I'm very excited about it. It's it's definitely turned into a labor of love I feel like I'm getting ready for another baby which I am not by any means. But that's yeah, it's kind of how it feels like okay we've got a few more months to go I need to do x y z and then it's going to be here.

31:44.16

theautismhelper

Um.

31:50.24

theautismhelper

Um, the due date. Ah all Congrats and and where can people go to learn more from you in the meantime until your book comes out.

31:50.86

Rebekah _she_her_

The yeah the summary. Yeah yeah, exactly.

31:59.33

Rebekah _she_her_

So the most place like the place I am most active is probably Instagram. Um I have a blog bless its heart. It's very neglected I post on it. Maybe once a month I'm trying to get better, but this book is taking up all of my time. But if you are looking for a way to get in touch with me if you're looking for quick tips resources. You can find me on Instagram at Rebecca Poe Teaching

32:30.76

theautismhelper

Um, awesome. Well thank you so much for joining me Rebecca. It's so much fun talking with you about inclusion.

32:34.19

Rebekah _she_her_

Yes I loved it. Thank you so much.