

Hallee Hinds

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#### Requirement 4-2: Option 4-2 Interview a Special Education Teacher

Ms. Beth Twedell works for the Fort Zumwalt School District at Fort Zumwalt South High School. She teaches ninth through twelfth grade, and she is the Special Education Department Chair for the building. She teaches a variety of subjects, including communication arts, social studies, applied biology and chemistry, personal finance, and health. She has two plan periods throughout the day, one of which is designated to Department Chair work. The classes she teaches also vary as to whether they are self-contained classes, co-teaching classes, or resource classes. She discusses what she does daily and how her day is organized for her students, as well as how she communicates with families and prepare for students' IEP meetings. She also shares her techniques for gathering information from families and encouraging them to be active members in their students' IEP meetings. Finally, she discusses how vital regular education teachers are when preparing for and participating in IEP meetings.

Although the district recently changed the education requirements and eliminated certain life skills classes, the teachers in Ms. Twedell's department still try to give students that are hopeful for competitive job placement the necessary education in skills they will need in the adult world beyond high school. She discusses how these life skills classes are more beneficial to these students much more than any social studies or science class ever will be, and she even explains that the parents of her students agree with that idea. Their students are divided into two subgroups of MAP-A groups, which are determined based on where the students will be going

after their high school graduation. All of Twedell's resource and co-taught students, which includes the support students, follow the same curriculum as students in regular education classes, including taking the same exams. Her students are expected to take exams, tests, etc. within five school days of regular education classes. To complete co-taught class exams, Ms. Twedell modifies each one based on the student's needs while discussing with the regular education teacher as well. In her resource class of applied biology and chemistry (a lab class), she demos everything and reads every word of instruction, even having students highlight parts they will see again. Ms. Twedell shares that she frequently communicates with this group of students' parents and case managers. She also received a lot of support from their athletic coaches because some of the resource students who are athletes lacked academic motivation.

She benefits greatly from working with her students for all of their high school years. For the past few years, she has had 12 students on her caseload. She gives her cell phone number to parents so they know they can always contact her. She says she has never had a parent abuse it or bother her. She sends pictures to her self-contained students' parents because they don't always communicate what happened during the week very well when they get home. She discusses that many teachers disagree with her philosophy, but she feels that it helps foster the positive relationship she wants to have with parents. She feels that she and a student's parents are a team to help that student be the best they can be. Because she is in constant communication with parents, everyone is usually on the same page by the time IEP meetings come around. Every once in a while she runs into a parent who disagrees with her opinion, but it can usually be worked out during IEP meetings because the parents know that Ms. Twedell is just looking out for their child. She says that the parents of her students actually come to meetings, which is a big help in setting goals for each student.

Ms. Twedell believes that regular education teachers' input is vital to a student's IEP. She says she cannot follow her students around all day to see what they do, so regular education teachers give input as to how a student acts or completes work in their classroom. Twedell sends out reminders to regular education teachers letting them know that if an IEP meeting is going on during their plan period, they have to make an appearance. She does her best to get as much of a progress update from those teacher as possible, though, before the IEP meeting. This way, she can be prepared and have all of her information together before meeting with parents. She says that overall, teachers at Fort Zumwalt South have gotten a lot better about helping complete progress sheets and participating in IEP meetings.

I believe that the special education teacher and regular education teacher must work together to create the best environment for a student to learn and grow. To work together, they must trust each other's opinions and listen to their point of view. If these two cannot work together, it will only hurt the student and their chance at doing their best. By working together, teachers can create appropriate and attainable academic and behavioral goals for students to reach throughout the school year.