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Transcription Jodi Copeland-Ayles

Introduction: A video in which Jodi Copeland-Ayles of NBCC talks about her experiences in accommodating students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

How did you accommodate a student with a disability in your class?

Having a student with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder can sometimes be very challenging. One of the things that I remind myself is they bring a lot of fun to the classroom because they have a lot of energy. So if I can harness their energy to go in a more productive way, then things can go really, really well. You have to develop a relationship with the student and help them talk to you about what their needs are—you know, where would they like to sit in the classroom, what kind of accommodations would they like for testing, and that type of thing. Sometimes that's set up before they come to the college but sometimes they don't think they'll need it—you know, how to access all of those things, letting them leave to write a test in the testing centre, or allowing them to have some extra time, giving them the opportunity to write it away from other people, even within the classroom—going to the back of the room and turning the desk the opposite way if that's their choice, just trying to use techniques that don't make them stand out. I find that a lot of students with ADHD come to college with a whole bag of self-esteem issues and so I want to help them feel success right away. Once you can get them to start feeling like they're going to be successful, then a momentum builds and builds and builds. With all of the students in the class—I have students that might have come back to college after 25 years being out of school, and that type of thing. A lot of people are nervous, so we do a lot of talking about test taking and that type of thing, setting them all up for success, not just a student with a disability *per se*.

How was the experience from your perspective?

Kind of roller coaster some days. Depending on what's going on with them, if they have outside issues that are interfering with their ability to concentrate and things like that. We have certain rules set up in the classroom and they need to follow them. So it can be really good some days and not so great other days, but it's wonderful to see them succeed, it's wonderful to see them develop a sense of self-esteem, that they know that they can accomplish it. Just with the right tricks and tools in place, they can go far.

What would you say to a colleague who will have a student with a disability in his or her class?

Education's the key. Learn about the issue, learn about young adults with ADHD. They're not like young children with ADHD, they don't look the same. In fact, you might not even know by looking at someone, because they can control their hyperactivity to a large extent. They might not be able to control their impulsivity when they're going to start asking questions in class, and blurting out things, so educate yourself. Really take some time and look at some of the strategies that are out there in the research, especially from occupational therapy. Occupational therapy can be of great assistance, you know, letting someone chew gum in class, you know, I don't have any issue with that but that can help someone with

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ADHD pay attention. You know, maybe structure your classes a little bit different, don't lecture for a full hour, lecture for 15 minutes, do an activity, have an discussion, lecture for 15 minutes. You can get as much done, but that changing of the pace will help everybody concentrate, not just somebody with ADHD. Oftentimes, there's tutoring available within the university or college environment for all students, and I've used tutors not in the traditional way. I've used tutors to help someone with ADHD organize their materials to help them do their research and organize their thoughts, so that they have a better outcome at the end. Oftentimes you'll look at a student who has ADHD and you'll look at their notebooks and everything's all just kind of glommed and dumped in together and they really need someone to help them sort out "that's this course, and that's this course, and that's this course," so that they can stay on track because organization can be very hard for them.