

5 MM Episode Script

Episode: People Are Not Supports

Welcome to Five Moore Minutes! Useful videos in about five minutes, that support the teaching and learning of all students! I am your host, Dr. Shelley Moore, and today's episode is called "People are NOT Supports!"

We all know that there are certain terms in education that get thrown around, and over time become contaminated because they lose their meaning. One of those words are SUPPORT! And I hear it all the time – I need more support! I need an EA!

Friends, EAs are not supports because people are not supports!

People can be supporTIVE...and some may think it's just semantics but it's actually really important to know the difference! Ok, lets clarify...

To understand what a support is (and why an EA is not one) we need to understand four words: needs, supports, strategies, and resources. Ok, lets walk though this together.

So, if you know me at all, you know that I can kind of be a hot mess. My executive functioning skills are not a strength for me AT ALL. I lose my keys every day. I'm always late. I forget everything...including forgetting to pick up my dog on multiple occasions.

Executive functioning is a needs based area –and it isn't something that I can just eliminate from my life, it is just something I have to navigate. And, it becomes more possible or less possible to navigate when I have (or don't have) supports in place!

One support that I use is a visual checklist – keys, wallet, phone! It is right by my door to remind me before I leave the house that I have everything I need. I also have an apple tag in my wallet so that if I forget it somewhere i can find it again! (Before the air tag. I would lose a bank card every month – I'm not even kidding my issue number is 74!)

Visual checklists and air tags are supports or TOOLS that help increase my independence while navigating my executive functioning needs. I also live on an island and rely on a ferry...which I miss it a lot because I have a hard time getting out the door of my house (I mean who doesn't?). My wife actually taught me a good strategy for this one. Our ferry runs about every hour, so she told me to leave the house at the ferry time of the ferry BEFORE the one I get on and then I have lots of buffer time to get to the ferry and even get a coffee!

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January, 2025**

This strategy is an ACTION that I take so that I can increase my independence while navigating my executive functioning needs. Did you catch that? Supports are tools and Strategies are actions. BUT! In order to not lose my wallet, I need an air tag. In order to not miss the ferry I needed my wife to teach me a strategy. In order to have a visual checklist i need a COLOUR PRINTER!

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I need RESOURCES to be able to access the supports and strategies! Resources are the people, the time, and the funding needed to access the tools and actions we need to navigate a need. Resources cannot eliminate a need – because needs are just a part of who we are. In education, however, resources are used instead to try and eliminate the need that students have.

Do you know how many resources are used, for example to try and stop students from feeling anxious...or mad ...or frustrated or being an introvert!

Another important point here is that although my wife taught me a ferry catching strategy...she does not do it for me. But do you see the difference?

Often when we jump straight to a person as a support and skip what the person can do to facilitate and teach the use of a supports– we decrease independence instead of increasing it! (xxx). Resources are only as good as the plan we have that respond to our needs. Without the plan or without knowing what our needs are, resources may not be used optimally or lead to decreased independence in our students (and ourselves).

Now don't get me wrong...we still need more people, just like we still need more time and more funding in the education system... absolutely. It is also important though to look at how resources are being used. Are they being used to try and fix or change Disability, or are they being used to teach students how to navigate and respond to their specific needs? Are they being used to make decisions and take actions for students or are they being used to facilitate self-determination, agency and independence with and by students?

Knowing our needs, making a plan for the supports and strategies that we can use, and having access to the resources to ensure that supports and strategies are available is so important if we want to move inclusion forward. Asking for only more resources is not enough... and... sometimes ends up getting in the way for the goals we're trying to achieve.

So here is your challenge for today: How can we advocate for resources AND ensure that they are being used to support needs based planning that articulates the tools and actions needed for students to gain independence, and self-determination as a part of an inclusive and diverse community?

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See you next time!