

An Educational Dispute

Lynn is a 27 year old special education teacher in a primary school. Eve has been a regular classroom teacher for over 20 years and is seen by many as overly concerned with discipline and not particularly interested in motivating children or accommodating the special needs some students may have. Lynn was warned about her before she came to the school—and the warnings seem to be well founded.

Ever since she arrived two years ago, Lynn has felt undercut by Eve. This year, Lynn is supposed to be working with three 10 year olds in Eve's class on reading, language and more generally attention issues. Their IEPs (individualized education plans) calls for Lynn to work with each of them for an hour a day, but because of Eve's lack of cooperation it has proved almost impossible to schedule this time. As a result, there has been growing tension between Lynn and Eve. The children never seem available when it is time for them to go to Lynn's resource room. Eve has indicated to several parents that she thinks the resource room is a waste of time and that what the children really need is "to have their nose held to the grindstone." Several times in the last two months Eve scheduled special activities—outings, a movie, and a drama class for example-- to conflict with Lynn's schedule, and has not even has the courtesy to tell Lynn about this.

Lynn has tried to approach Eve about it, but all that this has accomplished is to subject Lynn to condescending lectures about class routine. Lynn has also talked with her principal who has urged her to "hang in there" but has not been willing to interfere. Lynn feels that her ability to work with these children is being undercut, and that she is being increasingly seen as ineffectual by their parents. She does not know what to do.