Nicole Day #6

Ch. 3: No Double Standards

After writing a few of these papers already, when I am reading I now know what to look for. As I read this chapter I thought I had an idea of what it was going to be about. “Yeah yeah, treat everybody fairly; these are things that should be obvious to any teacher.” However, like usual, this book proved me wrong. During Zach’s story, I learned that “no double standards” means the same consequences for everyone. I have a hard time being tough and setting my foot down with people. I like to make sure that everyone is pleased and nobody’s feelings are getting hurt. Since this is a part of my personality, I always assumed that whenever I got a student with a disability, I would be a bit of a pushover with them such as compromising with what they wanted, and excusing a lot of their behavior because I didn’t want to be mean to them. But after reading how Kathryn and Sheila handled Zach’s bathroom situation, I can see how having a punishment for the student can actually be beneficial for them as well as you and the other students. If those two ladies had never let Zach know the severity of his mistake, he would have continued making the same mistake throughout his entire life, leading to even more serious consequences. Reading the story of Zach will help me as a teacher remember that if a student with a disability makes a mistake, it is my responsibility to tell them what is right from wrong. I would be hurting them by allowing them to continue to make the same mistakes without correcting them.

Although I do not have children of my own, I see now that when my parents punished me, or set rules I didn’t think was fair, they were doing those things to help me and keep me safe. As future teachers, it is safe to say we all have loving hearts, however, we need to use this characteristic in a way that doesn’t allow the student to do whatever they want because we don’t want to hurt their feelings, but instead use it in a way that allows us to be stern if needed for the sake of our love for the student.

While reading Marco’s story, I was surprised at how the student’s mom reacted to the principal saying that Marco needed to be removed from the class. I think that the principal handled the situation in a very professional and thoughtful manner by explaining to the concerned parent that Marco was indeed punished for his actions, as any general education student would be, and that removal of the classroom was not an option. As a teacher, if I get a parent complaint similar to this situation, I will handle it in the same manner the principal did. I would try to explain to the parent that just because the student has a disability, does not mean he or she is a threat to the other children, and will not be treated as if he or she is not as important as the other students. If a *general* education student would have pulled his pants down in front of the parent’s daughter, would she have responded the same way? Or does the fact Marco has a disability affect her outlook on the situation?

What I took from this chapter and can implement in my own classroom are two things: that everyone should be punished equally, and to try and look for the root of the problem. Marco’s parents and principal didn’t just punish him and stop there. By looking further into the situation and talking to Marco, they were able to see where he learned this behavior and how to help prevent it. Zach’s teachers discovered that at his previous school, his teacher had no consequence for him. This is something that I will be able to do if I am having a behavior problem with one of my students, general or disability! Children repeat what they see and hear, so speak wisely in front of them and chose your actions responsibly. Secondly, I know that no matter how a student learns, or what type of a learner the school classifies them as, they are all equal students deserving of the same attention and education! If a child with a disability does something wrong, telling them so and punishing them, if needed, is what is fair to not only them, but all of the other students as well. As a teacher, I am not only teaching them academic curriculum, but also how to be a more mature person; a more mature thinker.

While reading the “Dining in Siberia” section, it not only reminded me of how my high school cafeteria was, but this chapter also got me asking myself if that was really the best thing to do. In my high school, we had a designated table that the students with disabilities would sit and eat their lunch at while their teachers would sit with them. Although I personally did not think twice about how them sitting together made their diversity stand out in the lunch room, I understand Schwarz theory of how separating them to a separate table can highlight that there is a difference. However, the school’s reasoning behind this was not to separate them from their peers; their table was not secluded and shut off to the school. It was actually for their own safety and comfort. Sitting with their friends and teachers they were familiar with was comforting to them and made it safer for them in case they choked, had an episode, or any other emergency, there would be a trained adult present. When the school bell rang, the cafeteria was a mad house as everyone scrambled out of the two double doors onto their next class. If the students with disabilities were scattered amongst those students, this could scare them, injure them, or cause them to get lost. If a student wanted to sit with the students with disabilities at lunch, they were always more than welcome, but for the concern of the students with disabilities, it was required they all stayed together.

A question I had while reading this chapter was that if Schwarz is so determined on no double standards, why was it fair that Eric got to be pulled from school and taken to the firehouse? Although Schwarz tries to explain how this is not a double standard, it seems to me like he picks and chooses which cases get special treatment and which ones do not. Yes, I agree that Eric’s future and enrollment into the school depended on this, but Schwarz is contradicting himself by saying that all students should be given an equal learning opportunity. If he is going to do what is best for Eric and take him to the station, he needs to further clarify in this chapter that depending on each child and their situation, there can be special circumstances. I too agree that the decision to take Eric to the fire station was a wonderful learning experience for him, and potentially saved his educational career as well. But as we have discussed in class multiple times, maybe all of the students should have gotten to take a “field trip” to the station. When Gavin needed a rocking chair, multiple chairs were bought so he was not singled out, and other students had the opportunity to sit in the rocking chairs. This part of chapter three confused me, because it seemed like this scenario went against what Schwarz has been telling us all along.