Nicole Day #6

Chapter 7: Parents: The Gold Standard

I learned in this chapter how important parent-teacher communication is. I knew that it was important for the parents to be involved in their child’s learning experience, such as sending how behavior charts, getting signatures on bad grades, etc. These were all methods my teachers used on me as a child. Parents had very little interaction with the classroom or what we were learning. We had folders that needed a parent signature each week, and a report card that got sent home every six weeks that needed to be returned the next day with a signature. So while reading this chapter it was interesting to see how beneficial communication and interaction is to not only the parent, but the student and teacher as well.

In my classroom I plan to coordinate IEP’s with the students that need it, and encourage and insist that the student’s parents are involved and contributing. I saw how it made things easier for the teachers by knowing more information on the student they were teaching, and how it made the parents feel more involved and in the loop of how their child will be taught and their results of those methods. I think the IEP at a glance is a wonderful idea to implement for all parents who have a child with a disability. Whether they are “overbearing” and “too concerned,” or “distant” and “uninvolved,” I believe that all parents should have the opportunity to receive an IEP at a glance and be able to participate in meetings whenever they feel necessary.

After reading the story of Brenda and Brian, I thought back onto my strategies project about choices. I saw very clearly that strategy implemented and how it affected Brian. Some students with a disability will look at things from whole new perspective. In Brian’s case, he had a much more colorful and boundless imagination that allowed him to express his personality and strengths without even saying a word. I plan on using the “choices” strategy in my classroom on a daily basis for *all* students. It allows the student to express themselves and feel a sense of control.

The entire chapter was very inspirational and knowledgeable, and I felt touched especially by 3 different parts: the story of Tonya and David, *The Language of Us and Them* poem, and the reaction of Trevor’s mother as they both socially progressed. The story of Tonya and David touched me on a personal level. I too have a single mother who works multiple jobs to provide. I understand and have seen firsthand the stress and toll that pressure has on a single parent. The last thing a parent under that kind of stress wants is something else on their plate, however, when it comes to their child, they will do anything to ensure they succeed and are provided for. Tonya was willing to wake up early or go to school late at night after work because she knew the importance of this meeting and how it would benefit David. I am so glad that Schwarz did not take his co-workers word that she was uncooperative and wouldn’t answer the phone. This was a great example of when you put in the extra effort, they will too. It took Schwarz and Tonya compromising together to come up with a time and meeting place most convenient for them. I was inspired by this story to always reach out to those parents who “aren’t involved enough.” It may not always be the case that they are uninterested in their child’s education, but rather other issues are going on that we may not be aware of. Go the extra mile for your students, and reach out to all parents regardless of their reputation at the school.

*The Language of Us and Them* poem really expressed the common views people have towards children with disabilities. It really connected the dots for me. All children… all humans have the same emotions and same tendencies. So why is it viewed in such a more negative light for students with disabilities? I think if more teachers read that poem their entire outlook on the behavior of theirs students with disabilities would change… I know it changed mine. I was, and still am, a little nervous of what to expect whenever I am responsible for teaching a non-general education learner, however, by reading the poem and changing my perspective, I now see that if I am going to be worried that they will “act up” or “keep to themselves” or “be off task,” then I honestly need to worry those things for ALL students. This poem helped me equalize the behaviors of all students on the same level and eliminate that profiling and judgmental labeling that the school has placed on certain behaviors.

Lastly, I felt so much compassion and joy for Elizabeth and Trevor as they both became more socially involved. Elizabeth, as mother, just wants the best for her child, and wants him to fit in with the other kids. I was so pleased to see how inviting the other children were to Trevor and Elizabeth as they arrived at the birthday party. I think everyone knows how it feels to be left out of something, or feel unwanted or uninvolved. I am sure Trevor has had to miss out on many opportunities given his situation, so seeing him be able to have fun, especially at a gymnastics birthday party, was touching and I can see why Elizabeth needed to take a moment to let out some tears of joy. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to show the entire class that the students with disabilities are no different than you. They still feel the same emotions and still want to be a kid and have fun. A wheelchair, or a hearing aid, or a special math tutor does not define who that person is. I thought it was beautiful seeing the acceptance and excitement the students had towards Trevor when he arrived at the birthday party.

My question for this chapter is: what are ways that the teacher can involve all of the students AND parents to join together as a community? Should there be more class parties where all parents are encouraged to come and socialize? Should there be more out of class activities that the teacher can encourage the students to all get together to do? Study groups? I think it is very important that not just the students feel a sense of community, but that the parents do too. This gives the students and parents a chance to not only bond together, but share that sense of community with their peers.