The child I chose to focus on was one that I had met in my first placement In my first year of being in the Elementary Education Program. Let’s call her Stacy.

I was placed in a grade 3 classroom, and received a warm welcome from the class. I understood that I would not be trusted by all students as I was a new person, as they were to me. Further, I knew that students may not respect my authority as I held very little for a very small amount of time. While each student presented their own set of challenges and strengths, one student stuck out to me within that time – Stacy. She was academically striving in all subject areas and would finish her work accurately. Her engagement in class was great a lot of the time. However, there were many times we had to remind her to stay on task as she would be chatting amongst her peers and often distracting those who were focused on the assignment. The cooperating teacher had a class with diverse academic ability, ranging from readers at a kindergarten level to those that were reading above their grade 3 level. With this in mind, she utilized small groups, ranging levels of learning tasks and carefully considered groups. Stacy had always been a part of the group who received the more difficult version of the task, but these tasks seemed quick for her to grasp and then move on from. She would often use her seat improperly (sitting backwards, etc.) or take another chair that was in the classroom. While my partner and I would remind her to stay on task, she often seemed to dismiss what we had asked from her – she would listen to her teacher promptly. I figured that this behaviour was correlated with the teacher being present – and ultimately they had an established relationship based on trust and consistency. However, while in situations where the main teacher was not present Stacy seemed to replace that role for the class. For example, when we walked through the halls in a line without the teacher Stacy would walk a few steps ahead of my partner or I against us asking her to stay in line with her peers. After getting to know Stacy (as much as she would let us) and talking with our cooperating teacher, we began to understand Stacy a bit better.

I learnt that Stacy was the oldest of her siblings, with a hardworking mom. That being said, she had extra responsibilities at home because she was the oldest. When Stacy would walk ahead of us in the hall or replace the teacher in situations, it may have reflected her role within her home (leader when mother was working) and her independent personality. She may have struggled with the type of power that she had while she was at home versus what she held at school. We learnt that her family had moved around a few times over the past year, which led to Stacy taking some time to warm up to new people – like she did with us. Unfortunately, Stacy moved before out placement was over so we could not continue building a relationship of trust, but I think of her often. One the days leading to her move, she seemed to be feeling a negative emotion. She also seemed to cover that emotion, becoming distant with those that were not in her trusted circle (e.g., my partner and I). With the knowledge I have gained, I have thought of a few ways that I may have helped Stacy if I were her teacher.

My first step would to work on building trust and a relationship with the student, then inviting her to come up with a plan that fulfilled her need for independence, responsibility and leadership within the classroom in a respectful way. She seemed to want to be a part of her learning. She also seemed to be academically above the lessons that were being taught in her class, so providing more difficult tasks with open-ended formats/strategies could allow her to take control of her own learning. For example, getting her to teach a lesson about something she loves or leading a small group. I thought for a long time about how to support her as she moved from place to place, but realized I could only help while she was in my learning community. I would try to find her someone in the school outside of her teacher to be a support, that way if she stayed in the same school over the years she would have a constant (as teachers change from year to year, and sometimes for subjects). I would reach out to the school that she was moving to if her family would be switching learning communities to ensure she would have support at that school as well.

**INFORMAL LEARNING PROFILE ASSIGNMENT: WHO IS IN YOUR POCKET?**

Observations and anecdotal notes about students’ choices, preferences, and excitement and frustration. *(Gregory & Chapman, 2013, p. 29)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| student #1: (pseudonym nAME) Stacy Grade 3 | | | | | | |
| **GIFTS & Strengths** | **interests** | | **challenges** | **LEARNING PREFERENCES** | HOPES & GOALS | |
| * Understands lesson content and engages in the learning activities – especially the group activities * She is social and able to communicate effectively with all of her peers * She is able to take a leadership role within group work. * She answers questions in class and comes to creative solutions through all work (art, English, etc.). * She was caring and kind to her peers. | * She seemed to really enjoy the tasks that she needed to build or put together, rather than worksheets. * During library visits, Stacy would often get the Captain Underpants comic books. She seemed to have an interest in illustrated literature. * I did not know Stacy for a long period and was teaching a unit on bats within my time with her. She seemed to have an interest in bats at first, but seemed disengaged by the end. That being said, I was not exposed to many of her interests within our short time together. | | * She would talk to and distract her peers who would otherwise be focused. * She would often disregard instruction coming from anyone other than her teachers (our cooperating teacher, the physical education teacher and Indigenous Studies teacher). * She lost interest in tasks frequently. * She got distracted by her environment around her – using different chairs, etc. | \*Our cooperating teacher often focused on workbooks/sheets for students, with some group/class activities and construction tasks (e.g., build a bat cave out of given materials).\*   * Stacy would take a leadership position and completely involved herself within group and class activities. This seemed to be a time that she was completely indulged in the learning. * Stacy would involve herself with the construction activities. She would demonstrate creative processes and have a plan about her creation. She was resilient and persevered through the challenges she may come across during these learning experiences. * She seemed to really enjoy and watch videos without becoming distracted or distracting her peers. This is was even more evident in the videos that encouraged class participation. | While I tried to create a relationships with this student during my time with her, I was not as successful as I wished I was. However, there is very little time to work on this relationship when you only see the learners half a day every week. That being said, I did not learn her hopes and goals for herself.   * She seemed to enjoy the arts, and creative construction. I assume that she would hope for more assignments that targeted that aspect of learning. * She was social and kind to her peers. Near the end of her time at the school, she expressed that she had wished that she could stay with her friends within the school. A hope of hers was to maintain relationships and see her friends that she had made in the school she was in. | |
| **Observations:** Stacy was a social student that often distracted herself or her peers when she had finished her work. She was kind and able to communicate effectively, which led her to being great in a leader position. She did not open up quickly to new people surrounding her, but was not shy. She would often take a leadership role of the class when her main teachers were not present (with no regard to my partner and I being present). She would strive in group work and construction activities, and thoroughly enjoyed her time in Physical Education. She was unlikely to stay in her same seat throughout class times, but would engage with the teachers and peers when instructed to. | | | | | | |
| **DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING: ADAPTIVE DIMENSION IN PRACTICE** (Adapting the Variables) | | | | | | |
| **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (the where)**  I believe that all students benefit  from a positive learning environment that reflects all learners, and Stacy is no different. I will hang student art in the classroom and have materials that reflect all learners in the school and community. Further, I think that Stacy would benefit from some sort of reflection of her family in the classroom as a way to always keep her constants in life nearby. For example, asking families to send a picture of their family or anyone that is important to their child. The teacher would hang those pictures up on a tree sticker on the wall – a classroom family tree.  Further the function of the  classroom would be predictable and familiar to all the students. For example, in the classroom environment where I had met Stacy the class often participated in small group learning activities. When small groups where announced and she indicated what group was beginning where, the students knew exactly what they needed and where they needed to go. They may have not known what they were going to be learning or what kind of activity was planned, but the routine was predictable and the students were familiar with it. I saw that Stacy benefitted from this consistency in her learning environment. | | **INSTRUCTION (the how)**  As her teacher, I would develop a sense of  her interests, as well as the classes, to lead the topics discussed in class. Stacy seemed to disengage herself from the learning task when she was no longer interested (near the end of the bat unit, she seemed to have less interest in the activities). I would continue small group activities like my cooperative teacher had done as the class had diverse levels. This can ensure that all students are getting reached and challenged by the content that is being delivered. I would adjust the group activity based on the learning styles those particular students benefit from. For example, having hands on tasks, or giving the student a teaching role may have benefited Stacy within her own classroom.  While I see the benefits of small groups, I  believe that is essential to incorporate individual and whole class learning experiences. Our cooperative teacher rotated in stations within her small groups – one of those groups was independent reading (literature was a main challenge and focus within this specific class). She also would bring the class together to continue that sense of classroom community. Stacy engaged herself and became a leader for her peers through whole class activities (e.g., class scavenger hunt). These types of activities can be beneficial for all learners as students can be involved in scaffolding and cooperative work. | | **RESOURCES (the what)**  Within the classroom, as stated in  the learning environment section, I would ensure that the materials and decoration within my classroom would be diverse and representative of my class and the community. This would include a carefully selected library of literature in the classroom. I would select my books based off of the anti-bias guidelines, which can be found on the following website: <https://www.teachingforchange.org/selecting-anti-bias-books>  Other than books representing the  all aspects of identity, I would also have other formats of resources in the classroom for student enjoyment, learning, instruction and so on. I would incorporate videos into the learning experiences, utilize IPads for reading and math games (the students seem to enjoy the time spent learning through those games – even playing them at home as well), and so on. I think it is essential to utilize technology (e.g., IPads, laptops, computers, etc.) in the classroom as not everyone has access to these things in their home and school may be the only place they are able to explore these materials. That being said, when introducing new technology to the class it is essential to have explicit instruction periods about the technology | | **ASSESSMENT (the show what you know)**  While Stacy excelled in all areas of  assessment she was presented in the class, I believe there are more formats that she would be able to better demonstrate the extent of her knowledge. For example, having her lead a small group, or teach myself and her peers about a topic she has researched. These types of assessment allow her to take control of her learning as her independent personality demands. I believe presenting open-ended forms of assessment (like open-ended research projects, etc.) would have been beneficial for Stacy and her learning style. I would strive to build a relationship with her to establish the forms of assessment that would best benefit her and her peers, to ensure that my learning environment and content are directed at student success. |