

## \* FIVE \*

## CASE STUDIES OF STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

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The case studies in this chapter address the needs of students with the exceptionalities most often observed in classrooms. To prepare for the analysis of the studies, review your philosophy of education that you developed in the last chapter to connect your strategies for helping students to your belief system about teaching. Remember, the purpose of a philosophy of education is to actualize your beliefs as a teacher. If you fail to consider your philosophy before you begin, your problem solving may produce only superficial solutions to the problem. Teacher problem solving is superficial when it addresses only the obvious symptoms of the problem—noisy students, difficult students, low achieving students. To be reflective is to consider the larger instructional concerns—learning and motivation theory, developmental issues, and individual student history and needs—all necessary contributions to fully interpret the situation when attempting to solve the problem. Each case study poses questions but provides no definitive answers, because reflective problem solving and the teacher's own philosophy will determine how the problem is solved.

To help you identify the quality of your reflective problem solving, a rubric is included after each case study. The rubric does not provide best answers or solutions but comments on the quality of the problem-solving process itself. The levels of the rubric distinguish three levels of quality describing the problem-solving process. The first level describes a fully developed problem-solving process, where all available knowledge is used to solve

the problem. This includes appropriate theory, research, instructional methods, student data, as well as the values, opinions, and beliefs of those involved in the problem-solving process. The second level describes the use of partial evidence during the problem-solving process. For example, the reader's own beliefs and values can be included in the problem-solving process but not to the point of excluding more objective evidence. Objective evidence such as student scores, research, and theory provide a better basis for decision making than what is derived from a single individual's perspective. The third level represents the use of existing knowledge, preconceived ideas, stereotypes, and conventional wisdom that are not examined in relation to the evidence presented in the case study. The third level is not reflective. It uses common or popular wisdom that is of limited value because it does not take into account all knowledge about the problem that is available to the reader. It may also include preconceived ideas that the reader refuses to relinquish even when faced with evidence to the contrary. It produces overly simplistic solutions.

In addition to the reflective use of evidence to determine quality of problem solving, educational values are also included in the rubric. Values are included because they are impossible to eliminate from educational determinations. The rubric represents a specific value system about education. The value system is student centered, meaning that the educational needs of the student are considered first, paramount to those of the teacher, administration, or school bureaucracy. Often teachers and schools make educational decisions based not on what is in the best interest of the student but on what is easy and convenient for teachers and administrators or what supports the existing bureaucracy or culture of the school. Notice in the top level of the rubric that, when a conflict exists between various interests, it is the student's interests that are honored. A teacher who places the interests of the student ahead of self-interests is acting in a morally reflective manner.

In addition, recall from Chapter 2 our first analysis of case studies, the discoveries we made, and the lessons that were learned about reflective problem solving. Here is a summary of these:

- **Lesson One:** Never make rash judgments about students without checking the facts with reliable sources. Never label, belittle, or otherwise speak unkindly about students and their parents.
- **Lesson Two:** Use data about student achievement and behavior to make the best determination of how to help students who have problems.

- **Lesson Three:** Use educational theory to understand and make decisions about how to assist students and solve classroom problems.
- **Lesson Four:** Learn how to be reflective when solving problems and to recognize the importance of reflection in solving classroom problems and for your continued development as a teacher.

One of the most poignant moments in a teacher's career is when he or she realizes there are no simple procedures, four-step processes, or magic plans to solve tough educational problems. At that point, the teacher has to concede that good teaching means having good problem-solving skills. The teacher then begins to systematically apply his or her philosophy of education to the experiences of the classroom. Some of the case studies address controversial issues that are exceedingly difficult to resolve, but the discussion and consideration of different viewpoints will lead to a better understanding of the complexity of that issue. The vicarious experience of the case studies may even cause you to rethink and rewrite your philosophy.

#### CASE STUDY FIVE—ATTENTION DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVE DISORDER: GABE SILVA (PART I)

Susan Sovinski's third year of teaching the second grade was, in her own view, going quite well. Her classroom was quiet, organized, and neat. Her classroom rules were posted for the students to see, and for the most part, they followed the rules. Everything was as smooth as could be expected, and Susan was proud of how far she had come since that first terrible year with undisciplined students and a confused, noisy classroom. During that first traumatic teaching year, many evenings found Susan numb with exhaustion, her ears ringing, and her head thumping. But in the years since, Susan had managed to improve her classroom management and organization skills and, most importantly, build rapport with her students so that learning was the primary classroom event occurring on most days. She was also relieved from the endless skirmishes of discipline and control that had dominated her first year of teaching. That is, until the middle of the year when a handsome bundle of energy named Gabriel Silva transferred into her classroom.

Susan objected to getting an additional student because she had as many students as the other second-grade teachers, and she viewed the social ecology of her classroom as in a delicate balance. Like the tropical rain forest where the elimination of one butterfly species could topple the entire forest ecology, she feared any additional alien element that might threaten her hard-won classroom serenity. And Gabe Silva was certainly a natural force to be reckoned with. He was attractive, almost beautiful, with thick dark hair and large brown eyes. He was outgoing, friendly, and talkative with all the students and seemed to thrive on creating an audience for his plans and monologues. When it was time for recess, Gabe would enter the playground like a cork popping from a champagne bottle. He would run across the playground at full throttle as if to throw off the sedentary dust of the classroom. He excelled at every game the second-grade boys played, including kickball, stickball, and soccer. He quickly took over the organization of the recess games, assigning teams and positions, arbitrating arguments over rules, and generally directing the other boys in their play. He was the first child on the playground each recess, and he was the last to leave the playground. He would remain on the field kicking the ball around until a teacher specifically called his name to come in. He would then dash across the playground and jump ahead of everyone else in line to be the first to enter the building. Susan watched him on the playground in amazement. She sighed. Where did all that energy come from? How could it be contained in her quiet, organized classroom?

Gabe was obviously of Latino descent, but his English was almost unaccented. His reading and math skills seemed nearly at grade level, but his grades were low because he failed to complete or turn in his work. He seemed interested in learning, but he was easily distracted. When Susan assigned work to be done at his seat, he started the page, but soon he was jumping up to sharpen his pencil, leaning over to talk with his neighbor, pulling toys from his desk to play with, or simply rummaging through his messy desk searching for things. When Susan stopped to check on him, he would look up from his desk, but often he had forgotten what he had been searching for. Susan thought his grades would improve if he were just more organized. He often seemed to complete his work, or at least part of

it, but either he couldn't find it when it was due or he would forget to turn it in. After the students left for the day, Susan would go through his things and find dozens of partially completed assignments stuffed, wrinkled and torn, in his desk. Susan had never seen such a messy child. Gabe was a little better with the work he took home because he hadn't had time to finish it at school. He completed most of it, but, again, Susan would find the assignments in his desk long after they were due.

She asked the principal about Gabe's permanent records, but they had not yet arrived from his old school. During one particularly trying day, when Gabe talked with anyone close to him, Susan resorted to isolating him at the back of the room. Even from the back, Gabe would motion to students to join him at the back of the room where he would begin earnest and lengthy conversations. It seemed to Susan that the entire classroom was slowly, insidiously being infected with a Gabe virus that made them as noisy, active, and messy as he was. Susan conferenced with Gabe after class one day, and when she asked him if he understood the classroom rules, he said he did. She asked him why he didn't follow the rules—why was he always talking, getting out of his seat, and not completing his work? He hung his head and shrugged his shoulders; he didn't know why. He wanted to follow the rules. He liked school, he liked the other kids, and he liked her. He promised he would do better tomorrow. Susan didn't believe that for a minute, and she went to see her friend, the school's special education teacher. She asked the teacher to informally observe Gabe in her classroom the next time she had a few hours. Having briefly seen Gabe in motion on the playground, the special education teacher readily agreed. In the meantime, the special education teacher suggested that Susan collect informal achievement data on Gabe's basic reading, writing, and math skills.

The next day, Susan asked Gabe to find a book he liked and read it to her. He brought her one of the *Magic School Bus* books but didn't read a word of the text on the page. He made up his own narrative based on the illustrations, ignoring the text on the page. Susan gave him a second-grade primer with few words per page and simple illustrations. Gabe could read the primer and read particularly well when Susan covered the words and asked Gabe about the pictures

and then covered the picture as he read the text. He was quite good at using context clues from the illustrations and was very imaginative in adding his own details and extensions to the story lines. Susan was convinced that, with the right books and support, Gabe could almost read at grade level. She then tried math, and Gabe balked at completing a full page of subtraction problems. When Susan used flash cards with a single problem and lots of praise for correct answers, she found that Gabe had memorized all the lower combinations and at least some of the higher ones. Writing was another matter. When she asked Gabe to write a short note home to tell his mother about a book fair to be held in the school, he started six notes on six pieces of paper and didn't complete any of them, leaving the pile of dirty, scribbled, torn papers under his desk. When Susan asked about his note for his mother, he said he had a good memory and he would tell her; he didn't need a note.

Based on the case study description so far, what do you think about Gabe and his behavior? Do you think Susan is overreacting, or is she prudent to take steps to seek help at this time? What evidence can you list that would indicate a need for intervention or a conference with parents? What do you think the special education teacher will report after her observation? What other action should Susan take?

When reviewing the evidence about Gabe, the information you learned from your special education or exceptional student courses would be helpful in contributing to the problem-solving process. Is Gabe behavior disordered (BD), learning disordered (LD), attention deficit/hyperactive (AD/HD), or just an energetic and spoiled child who needs clear boundaries and more discipline?

Your responses:

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## CASE STUDY FIVE—ATTENTION DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVE DISORDER: GABE SILVA (PART II)

The special education teacher sat in the back of Susan's classroom and observed Gabe for two hours in the morning the first day and an hour in the afternoon the following day. She completed running records of all of his activities. She tallied the number of times he left his seat. She tallied the number of times he engaged other students in conversation. She used a stopwatch to time how long he focused on his assignments before he became distracted. She didn't stare at Gabe but looked at the entire class so that Gabe would not feel spied upon. During the observation, Gabe attempted to draw her into a conversation on his way to the pencil sharpener. He asked her who she was, what she was doing, and if she had an extra pencil. Based on what she had seen, the special education teacher suggested that they invite Gabe's parents to school for a conference, and she asked Susan to be prepared with his grades, samples of his assignments, and a short list of concerns to discuss with the Silvas.

The Silvas readily agreed to meet with Susan, the principal, and the special education teacher. Mr. Silva came in his work clothes and spoke good but accented English; Mrs. Silva was shy, spoke little, and didn't seem comfortable with her English. Mr. Silva said that Gabe was the oldest child in the family and that he had three brothers and sisters. He said that he and his wife were very interested in Gabe doing well in school and that the teacher should just tell him what Gabe needed to do. He would make sure Gabe did it, or he would be punished! Susan immediately felt uncomfortable. She didn't want Gabe to be spanked or punished. Gabe meant well; he wasn't mean—he was just driving her crazy. But she felt silly explaining that to these hardworking, earnest parents. To Susan's relief, the special education teacher jumped in to say that they were concerned about Gabe's grades; they thought he could do better if he were more organized, and she wondered if, with some practical steps, his grades wouldn't improve. She asked if Gabe brought home his assignments and did he have a regular place to complete them? Mr. Silva turned to his wife, and she spoke haltingly, saying that she asked about homework each day, and sometimes Gabe had it while other times he didn't. If he had homework, he completed it while sitting at the table as she was preparing dinner. Susan suggested an assignment notebook where she would make sure Gabe had his assignments each night and asked if Mrs. Silva would sign it and make sure he brought them back the next morning. Mrs. Silva happily agreed. Then Susan suggested that the kitchen was too noisy and distracting for Gabe's

homework; maybe Gabe needed a quiet place in another part of the house to do his work. Mrs. Silva said that she had tried allowing him to work in his bedroom, but when she checked on him, he would have completed one homework problem and six other projects of his own device. To help him manage his work, Mrs. Silva had Gabe complete his homework in small parts. He would do a quarter of it, and then she would let him help her with dinner. She let Gabe tear up the lettuce or set the table. She felt he was more relaxed when he did a number of short activities instead of one long one.

The principal noted to Mr. Silva that Gabe was very good at sports, and Mr. Silva said that no matter how late he got home from work he always tried to play with Gabe in the yard. He kicked the soccer ball to him, pitched for batting practice, or he batted so that Gabe could shag flies. He said that Gabe always needed to keep busy and described how he was a great help with yard work or fixing the car or helping with the younger children. Mrs. Silva shyly related that her mother-in-law said Gabe was just like his dad and that as long as he was busy he stayed out of trouble. Mr. Silva told a story about Gabe when he was five and had been left alone in the garage. When they found him, he had dismantled the entire motor of the lawn mower. After that incident, Mr. Silva had bought Gabe his own broken lawn mower at a garage sale, and they often worked on them side by side.

Susan then suggested that, because Gabe was more inattentive and active than his peers, his parents should take him to a doctor to have him tested for AD/HD. Mr. Silva became visibly upset, and Mrs. Silva's eyes began to tear up. Mr. Silva said that he didn't want his boy on those drugs. The special education teacher said that identifying the condition didn't mean that Gabe would necessarily have to take drugs but that he would qualify for special services that could help him. She said that research had shown that most children did better with a combination of adaptive classroom strategies along with drugs to help distractibility and hyperactivity. Mr. Silva said that he didn't want his son in a special school or classroom. He would make him do better on his work. The special education teacher replied that if Gabe were identified as AD/HD he could still stay in Susan's classroom, and methods to help him learn would be designed just for him. She assured the Silvas that nothing would be done immediately; this diagnosis could not be made by the school but by a medical doctor. Also, nothing would be done without their signed agreement, and they would be invited to attend and participate in all planning meetings. The school would need their signed agreement to create and implement a classroom plan



for Gabe before anything could be changed. Susan told the Silvas that although Gabe was nearly able to keep up with the other students now, in the future that could increasingly be a problem. The same could be true about his bossy behavior, which, by the fifth or sixth grade, could turn into aggression and fighting with other boys. The Silvas left the meeting looking worried but prepared to discuss and think about the next steps for Gabe.

Susan also left the meeting worried; she was concerned about Gabe and about herself. She wondered if she would be compelled to make numerous changes in her orderly classroom in order to accommodate Gabe. She didn't know how willing she was to change the methods that, before Gabe had arrived, had worked so well for her.

What do you think Susan will choose to do? Will she make her orderly classroom more accommodating for Gabe and the other students or will she insist that it remain the same? Should Susan willingly change or be compelled to make these changes? What are her rights as a teacher? What do you predict will happen to Gabe? Based on your philosophy of education and your values as a person and a teacher what would be your answer to the problem of Gabe?

Your responses:

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**Evidencing the use of the reflective problem-solving approach**—by integrating your own philosophy and values and use of student evidence collected from classroom and school documents; observations; interviews by specialist teachers, parents, and medical professionals to produce the best educational decision for Gabe

**Evidencing the emerging use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—by using limited evidence to make the best possible educational decision for Gabe

**Evidencing the need for a reflective problem-solving approach**—by failing to make use of a systematic approach to problem solving and making educational decisions for Gabe based on what created the least amount of difficulty for Susan

## CASE STUDY SIX—UNDERACHIEVEMENT: LASHANDRA JONES (PART I)

Lashandra was one of the most popular girls in the junior class. She was active in cheerleading, student government, the drama club, and a host of other social activities. Her SAT scores were in the top 5%, which did not surprise her teachers because she was a straight A student. In many respects, her teachers viewed her as the perfect student—she was well behaved, dependable, and highly motivated in her assignments, and she added a certain social sparkle to every class. At the same time, when Mr. Murphy, the high school counselor, examined Lashandra's perfect record, he discovered that Lashandra had academically "slacked" through her junior year. Her transcript revealed a series of courses that offered little academic challenge. Lashandra had been enrolled in the high-achievement track for English, but the English teacher was well known for giving every student in the class an A as long as the work was done neatly and reliably. Lashandra's record showed that she took only the required science courses. It also revealed that although she had enrolled in a calculus course the previous semester, she soon dropped it. When Mr. Murphy asked Lashandra about the course, she explained that after getting a B-minus on the first quiz she knew the teacher didn't like her, so she decided that she had better drop it because she didn't want to lower her GPA.

Mr. Murphy had seen students like Lashandra before; he knew the type. Students like Lashandra religiously follow the teacher's directions for every assignment. Such students are tuned in to their teachers and have an astonishing ability to predict what material will be stressed on tests. Lashandra overstudied for every test and repeatedly reviewed the text and memorized every possible fact that she might be asked to recall. She rarely read anything that was not required for a course. Working methodically within the guidelines and structure provided by her teachers, she had demonstrated no effort to be creative or to extend her talents in ways that were self-satisfying. Why would she? Her grades were excellent, her teachers loved her, and other students envied her. Most of her free time was spent pursuing an active and varied social life with many friends and boyfriends.

When Mr. Murphy discovered that Lashandra had ignored the schedule of courses he had suggested for acceptance at a selective university, he called her to his office. Lashandra informed him that she would be attending the local community college. Consequently, Mr. Murphy called Lashandra's parents to arrange a meeting to discuss Lashandra's final year in high school as well as her college and career plans. Her parents readily accepted the invitation. On the day of the meeting, Lashandra's parents arrived on time. Mr. Jones was well dressed in a blue business suit and a conservative tie. Mrs. Jones was beautifully groomed with an expensive-looking suit and fashionably trendy shoes. To the counselor's momentary surprise, he discovered that Mr. Jones was black and Mrs. Jackson was white. Both parents were obviously proud of their daughter and her accomplishments and were happy to discuss her. Mr. Murphy began by asking if they were aware of Lashandra's plans to attend a community college rather than a more selective 4-year university. Mrs. Jones said she was aware of her daughter's decision, and she knew that it was based on Lashandra's wish to attend college with her boyfriend, who was not as academically gifted as Lashandra. Mrs. Jones expressed surprise at the counselor's concern, given Lashandra's 4.0 GPA and her level of involvement in extra-curricular activities. Mrs. Jones stated that, although she was very busy running her own business, she was always happy to meet with her daughter's teachers and then went on to recount several of Lashandra's recent accomplishments, including the lead in the high school play and winning a local beauty contest.

Mr. Murphy responded that he was well aware of Lashandra's many talents and insisted that he didn't want her to waste them by attending an educational institution that couldn't possibly challenge her. Mrs. Jones countered by saying that while academics were important there were other qualities that were necessary for success in life. Becoming angry, Mr. Murphy said that he was surprised Lashandra's parents would allow such a talented girl to waste her time on beauty contests and community college boyfriends. Both Mr. and Mrs. Jones jumped to their feet. Mr. Jones shouted that Mr. Murphy had no right to speak to his wife that way and angrily demanded to see the principal.

Later, the principal reprimanded Mr. Murphy for his angry display with the Joneses, but they both shook their heads over the choices that Lashandra was making and what that said about their school and society in general.

What do you think about Mr. Murphy and his behavior with Lashandra's parents? Do you think he was justified in speaking his mind to her parents about Lashandra's activities? Was the principal justified in reprimanding him?

Your responses:

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#### CASE STUDY SIX—UNDERACHIEVEMENT: LASHANDRA JONES (PART II)

You might be asking yourself if there is actually a problem to solve in this case study and how someone as successful as Lashandra could be considered a student with special needs. Lashandra is an academically gifted student who is working below her capabilities, and she is therefore an underachiever. If the goal of an excellent education system is to develop each student to the extent of his or her capabilities, then this one has failed Lashandra. Of course, Lashandra's parents and some of her teachers may dispute that conclusion.

The conflict between the counselor and the parents represent different value systems about what is important in education. When we talk about what motivates individuals to learn, there are two major perspectives—extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Proponents of extrinsic motivation operate from a behavioristic perspective and believe that the environment will provide all motivation for students to learn. They view the role of the teacher as providing a variety of extrinsic incentives such as praise, grades, prizes, and privileges to induce students to learn. Proponents of intrinsic motivation operate

from a constructivist perspective and believe that motivation to learn is derived from within the learner and is based on internal interests and needs of the student. This second view assumes that in a supportive learning environment all students will want to learn, and they do not need external rewards to do so. In fact, they cite research evidence that demonstrates that the use of excessive rewards destroys a student's intrinsic motivation to learn. They have found that this is particularly true for topics that are of high interest to the learner and for tasks that require creativity and problem solving (Kohn, 1993).

Some teachers agree with this intrinsic motivation research and feel that rewards can diminish the student's natural love of learning and create students who won't attempt any learning task without the promise of a high grade, a privilege that means time off from school, a toy, food, or entertainment. Other teachers feel that much of school learning is boring to students and that many students wouldn't attempt to learn anything without the promise of a reward. They view rewards as an essential and useful classroom tool.

In Lashandra's case, Mr. Murphy represents the perspective of intrinsic motivation. Opposing his views, the Joneses represent the extrinsic perspective. You might wonder who taught the Joneses about behaviorism, but the truth is that both of these value systems are imbedded in our culture, and parents and teachers can ascribe to either. The debate over Lashandra's future is a clash over these views. Lashandra is an extreme case, as she seems exclusively motivated in her learning by extrinsic factors. Lashandra will only take courses when she is sure to get a high grade. She doesn't want to read or learn anything outside of school where no extrinsic rewards are offered. All of her attempts at "learning" revolve around what will please her teachers and earn her high marks, not what will excite her desire to learn or achieve for its own sake. You can imagine, and perhaps have even experienced, how seductive social approval and popularity are for a young woman in our society.

Mr. Murphy reacts to the clash of views with anger and by grieving over the loss of someone who is so capable of learning at high levels, but who will never attempt to learn anything based on her own preference. Lashandra's parents value her extrinsic accomplishments, so they cannot understand Mr. Murphy's perspective. They resent Mr. Murphy's concern as being disrespectful of what is important to them.

How can Lashandra's situation be resolved, or does it need to be? Do you believe that Mr. Murphy or anyone at the school can change what Lashandra values? Can they influence the choices she will make in her final year of high

school and in her selection of a college? What would you say to Lashandra if she were your sister or friend?

This case study presents information about theories of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Which of these do you value and want to promote in your future classroom? According to your philosophy of education, which theory better represents what is important to you?

Your responses:

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**Evidencing the use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you used specific motivation theory to analyze the situation and to base your arguments about Lashandra’s situation and future

**Evidencing the emerging use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you didn’t use specific theory, but you discussed Lashandra’s situation and used more general ideas and common knowledge about jobs she could obtain without a degree and the future quality of her life based mainly on your own experiences

**Evidencing the need for a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you determined that there wasn’t a problem, and Mr. Murphy and others in the school should mind their own business. This view ignores multiple perspectives in education and the need to negotiate the case study controversy.

## CASE STUDY SEVEN—BEHAVIOR DISORDER: WILLIAM “BILLY” STARK (PART I)

Everyone—all of the teachers and even the students at Southview Middle School—knew about Billy Stark. His reputation preceded him. He was the type of kid that everyone pointed out in whispers, and it was hard to miss him, even in a crowd. No matter what the weather, he always wore an oversized fatigue jacket, jeans, T-shirts, and heavy boots. His hair, if he didn’t shave it, was dyed jet black

and combed into spikes or jelled straight back. He was of average height, but he was so thin and scrawny that he appeared slight. Like a starved, stray dog, he loped and sidled around school—a clear misfit and outsider to observers. Standing near him, he didn't smell, but he appeared grungy and dirty. He smoked heavily and took drugs, often coming to school high or possibly pretending to be high. He was the kind of boy parents told their daughters to stay away from and teachers dreaded when they learned he was placed in their classrooms.

Sometimes such appearances in adolescents are misleading—the most ferocious-looking students will prove to be respectful and considerate. But not Billy Stark; in his case, his appearance was fair warning of what to expect from him. His reputation had preceded him from his last school, where he had been expelled. The teachers heard rumors, but they didn't know for certain if he had been expelled because he had brought drugs to school or because he had stolen fund-raising money from the band booster's strongbox. None of the teachers wanted him in their class, and no one had any idea of how to handle him when he broke the school rules they expected him to break.

Mr. Salstic, the principal of Southview Middle School, was loved by the teaching staff. He was one of the few principals they had worked with who, rather than dealing with bus and cafeteria schedules during faculty meetings, actually dealt with student and instructional issues. The entire faculty met every other week, and the academic teams met for an hour once a week after school and daily for 20 minutes during their collaborative planning time. Mr. Salstic was committed to the idea that the only way to solve school problems was through teamwork and teacher input, and he worked hard to provide planning time for teachers so they could collaborate.

The principle of teamwork was evident when Mr. Salstic discussed where the new student Billy Stark would be placed and what kind of support services the teacher would need to help this challenging student. The seventh-grade teachers decided that Mr. Banta would be the best teacher for Billy, because of his low-keyed, non-confrontational manner and his good rapport with students. The group also recognized that unless they were going to simply wait for

Billy to break the school's rules and then expel him as the last school had done, they would need support from many different sources. This would include the school counselor, who would meet with Billy regularly to track his adjustment to school; the special education teacher, because Billy was identified as BD, which made him eligible for special education services; and possibly tutors, because his records indicated that he was well below grade level in all academic areas. Mr. Salstic also wanted to keep in close contact with Billy's family and had already scheduled a meeting with Billy's father. The teachers left the meeting feeling better about the prospect of the new student, but they patted Mr. Banta on the back in sympathy for what they anticipated as a difficult assignment.

True to form, Billy was in trouble on the first day in his new school when he smacked another student on the arm with a book after he asked where he got his hair done. Mr. Banta didn't send Billy to the office because he wanted to deal with behavior problems within his own classroom, but he regretted not talking about Billy with the other students. Mr. Banta wasn't sure how to do this without invading Billy's privacy and labeling him as a troublemaker and a misfit. He needed the cooperation and understanding of all his students to see if Billy could make friends and fit in. Mr. Banta talked to Billy about the incident before he went to lunch. Billy denied hitting the student and then claimed that other people always picked on him, so he had to defend himself. Mr. Banta said they would talk to the school counselor after school. That same afternoon Billy was caught smoking in the bathroom by the janitor, which he also denied. Based on this, Mr. Salstic was glad the meeting with Billy's father was scheduled for the next morning.

Mr. Stark arrived on time the next morning. He had taken time off from his job as a pharmaceutical representative to meet with Mr. Salstic. He was honest with the principal about Billy's troubled school career. He described how at one point they had home schooled Billy because he was often in trouble for his behavior and had been making little progress in the regular school setting. Billy had also been in several special education programs and had been prescribed drugs to help him deal with his hyperactivity and aggression. Currently, Billy was particularly angry because his mother had



suddenly abandoned the family. Mr. Stark admitted that in the past he had left all the parenting responsibility for Billy to his wife. He had worked long hours, and he had had a drinking problem that kept him away from home. But he was now sober, and he was prepared to help Billy and the school in any way he could. Mr. Salstic described the problems of Billy's first day and how the school planned to help and support Billy. He suggested that a united front would better convince Billy to change his problem behavior. Mr. Stark agreed.

Mr. Banta was an excellent teacher, but Billy tried his patience a dozen times a day. It was decided that, because he was so far behind, Billy would receive much of his instruction in the special education classroom. But he would remain for part of the day in the regular classroom with Mr. Banta. Here Billy could make friends and work to adjust to the routine of a regular classroom. During Mr. Banta's class, Billy was sullen, withdrawn, and sarcastic, and that was on a good day. On a bad day, he was angry, argumentative, and on rare occasions violent. During these violent incidents, Billy would suddenly erupt, throwing things across the room, shouting and cursing. At these times, Mr. Banta would take the entire class to another classroom, leaving Billy alone in his rage. Mr. Banta would return when Billy had calmed down and talk with him, but Billy blamed others for his outbursts—the other students got on his nerves, his dad made him mad, his mother was a witch, Mr. Banta was unreasonable in his demands, and no one understood him. There were rare times when Mr. Banta could see glimpses of the kid Billy could be without the anger and the angst. He was intelligent, although not in conventional academics, but he had quirky interests and keen insight into the lives and motivations of others. He was good at historical and literary analysis, as long as he didn't have to read or write anything. He was uncanny in picking out the dysfunction of others, and he even had insight into roots of his own anger and antisocial behavior (his mother's disappointment with him), but that self-knowledge failed to translate into improved behavior. Mr. Banta recognized that working with Billy was taking a toll on him. He was emotionally exhausted and, as a result, didn't have the same energy and enthusiasm he usually had for teaching. The other students

sensed this and were jealous. They told their parents, who called and complained about Billy's behavior and how the extra attention he received was at the expense of their children. Mr. Banta wondered what was fair and ethical in this situation.

In the special education resource room, where most of his instruction took place, the teacher found that Billy had so little confidence in his abilities that most of the time he refused to try the simplest tasks. It seemed that, while Billy had only the most basic of math skills, he could read on a third- or fourth-grade level. To gain insight into his learning, the special education teacher first conducted a functional behavior analysis and found that he needed to develop impulse control. She first attempted to use rewards such as privileges or tokens to modify his behavior, but Billy was so cynical and sarcastic or took advantage of such attempts, that she quickly abandoned the plan. For example, each time he was released from the classroom as a reward, he would be found in the bathroom smoking. He threw the tokens he was awarded across the room, and he complained about the lameness of the school's computer when he earned free computer time. The special education teacher tried to interest him in reading anything—including storybooks, comic books, and computer ads, but he usually refused. And if the teacher read to him, he seemed interested for just a short amount of time. He would then begin to make fun of the story, the characters, or even the teacher and how she pronounced certain words. Billy's comments could be biting, honing in on the insecurities, flaws, and weaknesses of others. The special education teacher remarked to Mr. Banta that for nearly being illiterate himself, Billy was certainly hypercritical about the efforts of others. The teacher thought that she could build from Billy's current interests, but the only interests that Billy would admit to having were video games, the more violent the better, and heavy metal rock, the louder the better. Keying from that, the teacher found biographies of tragic rockers Kurt Cobain and Jim Morrison. She brooded about this activity, wondering if she were just providing a deviant's roadmap for Billy. Billy was interested for a short time in reading the biographies of the rockers and listening to their music, but, like everything else, he soon became impatient

with the activity. It was as if something—emotional, social, or biochemical—always got in the way of his attempts to learn or change. The special education teacher wondered if an undiagnosed learning disability or neurological problem was being masked by Billy’s home problems, school adjustment, and learning difficulties. At this point, it seemed too complex for even a team of health care experts to sort out, and she had Billy to deal with every day, whatever the root causes.

Soon after that, Mr. Salstic received a call from Billy’s father. He thanked Mr. Salstic for everything that he had done for Billy, but he told the principal that he and Billy were moving to be near his family in Indiana who were willing to help him with the children. Learning this, the teachers were both relieved and disappointed. Months after he left, the teachers talked about Billy and the effort they had made on his behalf. They speculated that maybe they shouldn’t have kept Billy; he was too extreme and perhaps he would have made more progress in a sheltered facility. Maybe more intensive therapy would have benefited him, but the school counselor said he refused to talk with her, saying he had been to plenty of counselors and all of them had been lame. Later, they heard that Billy had been placed in a juvenile detention center in Indiana, then they lost track of him.

What do you think of the effort Mr. Banta and the school made on Billy’s behalf? Were these efforts too lenient, too tough, too uncoordinated? Would Billy have benefited from a “tough love” treatment? What assessment can you make about Billy’s treatment and the ultimate outcome of his educational experience?

Your responses:

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## CASE STUDY SEVEN—BEHAVIOR DISORDER: WILLIAM “BILLY” STARK (PART II)

The case study of Billy provides a description of a student who had been diagnosed with a behavior disorder. Many of the characteristics described for Billy are typical, but Southview’s response was not. Many schools and many teachers do not have the energy, resources, or compassion to truly attempt to help such difficult students. The conclusion of this case study was not satisfying, but it is accurate, because many such students are often passed from school to school until they drop out, or they are detained by another social service agency. Behavior disordered students can be difficult, time consuming, and baffling for parents, teachers, and other students. The confusion and helplessness that a new teacher might feel when working with a student with a disorder could be somewhat mitigated by an understanding of what creates the condition and how teachers attempt to deal with it. Courses about students with exceptionalities are very helpful in providing information and interventions in such as case; in addition, it is useful to review the theories discussed in previous chapters to see how they might apply in Billy Stark’s case.

Maslow’s hierarchy provides one explanation for Billy’s disorder. If problems at home created an unstable and unhappy environment where he felt insecure and unloved, Billy might have arrived at school with little confidence in his ability to learn and to get along with others. If Billy’s lack of confidence and difficulty with fitting into the school environment impeded his ability to learn skills and knowledge, his low achievement would have marked him as a school failure, further eroding his confidence and sapping his motivation to learn. Maslow’s hierarchy describes a downward spiral of lack of success, leading to increased failure and decreased motivation. But while Maslow’s hierarchy can explain in general terms what can go wrong in human development, it does not explain specifically what to do in such cases. The competing learning theories of behaviorism and constructivism attempt to do so.

The special education teacher first attempted to use behavioristic techniques with rewards and privileges to shape Billy’s behavior to more positive outcomes. Behavior management technique has been the mainstay of special education and can demonstrate fast results. This was unsuccessful in Billy’s case, and the special education teacher abandoned the plan. When behavior management is unsuccessful in demonstrating results, the behaviorist is quick to suggest that the reward the teacher offered must have been inappropriate for

the learner. That which is rewarding is, after all, in the eye of the beholder. Determining acceptable rewards for rebellious adolescents can be particularly challenging for teachers. In Billy's case, his complete disdain for all rewards, except for those that contributed to his delinquency (like being allowed to leave the room and using that time to smoke), left the special education teacher with a dilemma best left to behavior theorists to solve.

The special education teacher then switched to constructivist methods. The reader should recall self-determination theory from Chapter 4. Self-determination theory advocates the promotion of competence, relatedness, and autonomy as necessary for creating a successful learning environment. Billy's teachers attempted to engender his competence with instruction at a level where he could be successful, but Billy's skills were so low that, rather than facing the humiliation he felt with respect to his peers, he abandoned learning altogether. His teachers attempted to develop relatedness in the environment by placing Billy in a regular classroom for a portion of the day and by selecting a teacher, Mr. Banta, who related particularly well with students. Mr. Banta may or may not have been making progress with Billy—it was too soon to tell—but if he had reached Billy, then he could have provided a bridge to make connections with the other students in the class. For some students, all it takes is one strong connection to another human being who will provide positive support and mentoring, leading to new behavior. The proliferation of mentoring programs is based on this observation, but the connection has to be made by those two human beings, and it cannot be orchestrated by social welfare institutions such as schools and agencies.

The special education teacher attempted to provide autonomy, or choice, for Billy by selecting materials that were interesting to him, like the rock star autobiographies, but even this failed. Constructivist theories, such as self-determination theory, make assumptions about the relative health of the individual to pursue activities that lead to self-fulfillment and satisfaction in learning. With someone as cynical and self-destructive as Billy, all efforts on his behalf were twisted into a negative interpretation, which supported the negative reality Billy created for himself as he resisted a positive education outcome. Constructivist learning theory was actually correct in predicting Billy's responses, because the constructivist view holds that all experiences are filtered through the lens of the learner to be interpreted according to the learner's preconceived ideas or existing schema of understanding. To the despair of his teachers, constructivist theory predicted Billy's bleak outcome given his negative preconceived ideas and resistance to the interventions of the school. In

this case, constructivist theory could explain, but couldn't overcome, the obstacles Billy faced in attempting to change.

The last consideration to make in an extreme case like Billy's is the use of community services to assist the school. Billy presented a number of self-destructive behaviors that made it difficult for the school to make a successful intervention, no matter how dedicated they were to helping him. For example, if Billy was using drugs regularly, this would typically act to mask the nature of the problem from the user's perspective, deluding him about the true nature of the problem. In other words, the use of drugs keeps the user in denial about the responsibility the user has to solve his or her own problem. With the approval of his father, substance abuse experts could have been called in to help Billy become sober. In a similar fashion, the severity of Billy's depression and anxiety might have required psychotropic drugs to level his feelings to the point where he could begin to form better relations with others and to support his attempts to learn the skills he would need to feel competent. Also, anger management might have been attempted in Billy's case. Billy's anger pushed people away from him and made it difficult for him to receive the help and support he needed as he attempted to build his skills. Last, his father might have benefited from social welfare services offered by the community, including family counseling, single parent counseling, and peer support. Overall, with extreme cases, the school and teacher need to be able to rely on and act in concert with all the services a community offers to support a family that needs assistance. A student's issues with learning are only one small part of the family equation, and it does no good for the school to work with the student if other negative forces are systematically impeding or destroying what the school is attempting to build.

The case study of Billy Stark provides an analysis of how educational theory can be used to attempt to solve a specific student problem. It also demonstrates that theories have limitations and that a theory cannot be applied and used to unfailingly solve a student problem. According to your philosophy of education, which view of motivation appeals to you when solving difficult student behavior problems?

Your responses:

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**Evidencing the use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you were able to describe the benefits and liabilities of different theories from the narrative and how each could be applied to Billy’s case to address his educational needs

**Evidencing an emerging use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you didn’t use specific theory, but you discussed Billy’s situation based on your values and experiences and how these applied to help a difficult student like Billy

**Evidencing the need for a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you determined that Billy should simply be incarcerated by educational or social services and be punished for his poor behavior. While this solution punishes Billy, it does nothing to address the educational problems of a troubled student

## CASE STUDY EIGHT—ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: THE KITIPITIYANGKUL TWINS (PART I)

When Chris Kargas picked up her roster, she was surprised to find that she had twins in her first-grade class. Not only that, but the twin girls were from Thailand. Although it was common for big city districts to enroll large numbers of students speaking a variety of languages, it was a novelty for Chris’s little community and small private school. The principal told Chris that he had met with Mr. Kitipityangkul, who had come to the United States to work in his brother’s restaurant. The principal said that the father was excited about being in the United States and was happy to have his daughters enrolled in a private school. The principal said that the family spoke limited English but were learning fast. Chris asked the principal about support services for her new students, but he replied that she shouldn’t worry because the twins were so young they would be fluent in English in no time. Chris wasn’t so sure and wondered if she could find a Thai translator in their small town.

When Chris met with her class on the first day she could see that the twins were fraternal, not identical. Mary was tall and thin with serious looks and glasses. Susie was smaller with more babylike

features. Chris wondered why the Kitipityangkuls had named their daughters such common American first names. Later she learned from the school counselor that the principal thought their first names of Pranee and Preeya were too hard to pronounce and remember, so he renamed them Mary and Susie. Chris was a little shocked—who did such things in this day and age? What was her school, Ellis Island? In any case, Mary and Susie it was, and Chris wondered what to expect. The girls were polite, quiet, and hardworking. They were self-sufficient and mainly kept to themselves. This worried Chris because she thought their language skills would benefit from more interaction with their peers. As the year progressed, the skills of the girls developed as divergently as their looks. Mary was the smart, serious one, while Susie lacked confidence and was slow to warm up to new ideas and activities. Mary could haltingly read the first-grade primer in accented English and was a whiz at addition and subtraction. Susie worked hard but struggled with every subject, and Chris couldn't determine if the problem was lack of confidence in English or another issue. Chris mulled it over and wondered that, if Susie's problem was limited English proficiency, why didn't Mary have the same problem? They were from the same home and the same age: Why didn't Susie learn at the same rate as Mary?

A few months into the fall semester, Chris was invited to dinner at the Kitipityangkul home. Suddenly Chris had firsthand experience of how teachers in other countries were honored and respected. Mrs. Kitipityangkul treated her like an honored guest as she and the girls served her an elaborate multicourse dinner. Mrs. Kitipityangkul explained that her husband was at work. He worked long hours, but he had prepared much of the food especially for Chris. Both girls were giddy with happiness to have their teacher in their home as they served her food. Here neither sister seemed shy or uncomfortable as they often appeared at school. Mrs. Kitipityangkul explained a little about Thai culture to Chris, who knew little. She was surprised to learn that the Kitipityangkuls were Buddhist; she had assumed they were Christian. Mrs. Kitipityangkul even presented Chris with gifts—a beautifully embroidered handkerchief and a little brightly colored paper fan. The gifts were exquisite,



but they made Chris feel a little guilty. She didn't deserve the gifts, and she didn't deserve this honor. She really hadn't done very much to help the girls. They were just struggling along with the rest of her class doing the best they could.

Chris remembered the day she attempted to teach ordinal numbers in math by lining the children up and asking them to name their place in line such as "first," "second," and "third." Mary was fine, but Susie was increasingly bewildered and confused by the activity as Chris pushed her into different positions in the line and asked her to name her spot. Susie didn't know first from fifth. And Chris had no idea why. She thought about asking the special education teacher to evaluate Susie—perhaps Susie had a learning disability. But the school had so few resources that the special education teacher was already overloaded with students, and was it fair to label Susie as disabled when Chris really had no idea the nature of her learning problem? Maybe Susie just needed a few more months to learn English and then she would catch up to Mary and the rest of the class. Chris's guilt also led her to consider going to the fifth-grade teacher for information. His teaching always included multicultural topics, he had traveled a lot, and knew a great deal about other cultures—maybe he had some information about Thai culture and language that Chris could use in her instruction.

What do you see as the nature of the problem that Chris faces? Is she right to feel guilty? Is it fair that she receives little help from her school and yet is expected to teach students from a culture she doesn't know or understand? What steps do you think Chris should take?

Your responses:

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## CASE STUDY EIGHT—ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: THE KITIPITIYANGKUL TWINS (PART II)

How to educate children who speak a language other than English is one of the most controversial issues American schools face because it encompasses political and economic as well as educational issues. People hold sharply differing views about how recent immigrants should be taught English. It is a problem of increasing proportion, as it is estimated that there are as many as 8 million school-age children whose primary language is not English (Grossman, 1995). The American school system is struggling with how to adapt to the needs of so many children with so many different languages and cultures. So far it is uncertain which programs are best for children, and clearly Chris is caught in the middle of this American controversy; but schools struggle everywhere. Twenty states have enacted legislation or passed amendments establishing English as the “official” language of their state (Crawford, 1995, in Gargiulo, 2003), and five states prohibit bilingual education in their schools (Baca, 1998). California is one of the most diverse language states and, until recently, included school laws requiring bilingual education where children learned basic skills in their primary language. A referendum passed in 1998 called Proposition 227 mandated a maximum of 1 year of bilingual education for students with limited English proficiency before they were mainstreamed into English-only classrooms. The voter approval for this law surprised bilingual educators, with 61% in favor of the law, including 37% of Latino voters (Schnailberg, 1998). This legislation is particularly controversial when research suggests that fluency typically develops in children after approximately 2 years of instruction, the deeper, more complex language structures necessary for academic success require an additional 5 to 7 years of instruction (Cummins, 1984, in Gargiulo, 2003). Some teachers fear that programs that transition students to English-only classrooms may be putting increasing numbers of children at risk for later school failure.

Ideally, every language-diverse student would be taught by a classroom teacher who is both bilingual and knowledgeable about the student’s culture, but this is unrealistic. How many English-speaking people do you know who also speak Thai? Following are a number of approaches used to address the needs of bilingual students. You will see that some programs are more supportive of preserving and promoting children’s bilingual language skills, whereas others are more interested in developing immigrants’ English-language proficiency (Gargiulo, 2003).

### **Transitional Programs**

Students are instructed in academic content areas via their primary language only until they are sufficiently competent in English, then they transition to all-English classes. The primary goal of this program type is to move students as quickly as possible to English-only classrooms. Most students exit after 2 to 3 years of instruction.

### **Maintenance (Developmental) Programs**

These programs have a strong native language emphasis, where students maintain proficiency in their first language while receiving instruction in English. These programs promote a long-term approach with less emphasis on transitioning from the program and more emphasis on a solid academic foundation learned in the native language.

### **Immersion Programs**

Immersion programs use English as the exclusive medium for instruction. Neither the student's primary language nor culture is incorporated into instruction. This provides a "sink or swim" approach to language development.

### **English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs**

ESL is not a true form of bilingual education. Students typically receive instruction in English outside their regular classroom. There is an exclusive emphasis on English for teaching and learning; native language is not used in instruction. The program goal is to quickly develop English proficiency in bilingual students

### **Sheltered English**

Students receive instruction in academic subjects exclusively in English; no effort is made to maintain or develop proficiency in native language. English instruction is continually monitored and modified to ensure students' comprehension. The program goal is simultaneous exposure to the English language and subject matter.

The twins' case study is about applying educational programs to solve student problems. The type of program you would select and the educational and social goals you would want to achieve would speak to your values and what is important to you as a citizen and a teacher. Which of these language programs sound the most similar to the program Chris was utilizing? What do you think would be fair education for the twins in terms of preparing them for life in the United States? What type of program do you think is in the best interest of our society? Which program would you select for Chris and the twins?

Your responses:

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**Evidencing the use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you were able to describe the benefits and liabilities of the different language proficiency programs and how each might benefit the Kitipitayangkul twins

**Evidencing an emerging use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you didn't use the information about different language proficiency programs but were able to discuss how Chris could arrange her classroom to help the Kitipitayangkul twins become more proficient in English

**Evidencing the need for a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you determined that the Kitipitayangkul twins should not receive special treatment to address their language difficulties. Instead, as recent immigrants, their parents should bear the responsibility for the twins' English-language acquisition. This represents a perspective where the student is viewed as the problem because they have needs that the educational system is unwilling or unable to address.

## CASE STUDY NINE—RELUCTANT READER: AMY BRIGGS (PART I)

Each day during independent reading time Lee Shelby observed as Amy Briggs did everything but read. Each day during this 15-minute

period students were allowed to select and read anything they selected. Lee's classroom embodied the ideal of a print-rich environment with hundreds of books of all types and topics on shelves at the students' eye level. With everything from newspapers to recipe books to comics to joke books, students had a wide selection of reading material to choose from. With cozy spots like beanbags chairs, old easy chairs, and hammocks, students had many places to curl up in. With posters describing author studies and celebrities urging students to read, students had plenty of encouragement to sustain their effort (Troyer & Paris, 1995; Turner, 1992). She even had a small geodesic tent donated from a sporting goods store, complete with flashlights, campstools, and fake campfire.

Lee consistently modeled a love of reading by talking about her favorite books and reading aloud each day to the class. The students always got to select the read-aloud book by classroom vote, and this time it was a Harry Potter book. To enhance the story-telling mood, students put on their Harry Potter glasses or black hats or capes or slung their legs over broomsticks. Lee's classroom instruction embodied a holistic approach to reading and writing. She encouraged students to write their own books, which were placed on special shelves in her library. Each day students journaled about their reading, and the class produced their own newsletter, which was sold to others in the school for a nickel to cover the cost of the printing. School news articles, photographs, drawings, cartoons, and a school advice column were written, edited, and laid out by the students. Computers were used to access the Internet for research, to e-mail pen pals, and to design and illustrate the newsletter and other classroom publications. Students even ordered new books from Amazon.com with the classroom book budget.

Lee often conducted workshops with other teachers describing her methods, and her principal was called on a regular basis to bring tours of teachers interested in seeing her classroom and to watch her model her classroom methods and activities. Each of Lee's classes usually included a few reluctant readers who with time and patience she was able to make modest headway in eliciting an appreciation for books. Books were, of course, the love of Lee's life. When other people were watching sitcoms or cop shows on television, Lee was

curled up with a book in one of several favorite spots where she spent most evenings. She read everything—biographies, mysteries, science fiction, historical romance, and self-help books along with her professional journals and scholarly books. She had the complete collection of the Oprah Book Club selections. She subscribed to the *New York Times* Sunday edition so that she could read the book review section each week. She was dedicated to literacy and to bringing literacy to every child who was lucky enough to be placed in her classroom, and she was completely baffled by Amy Briggs.

Amy was alliterate; it wasn't that she couldn't read, it was that she didn't read. While other students were reading independently, Amy walked around the room pretending to select a book. Or she worked at the science or social studies center. Or she tried to sneak on to the computer, which she wasn't allowed to use during this time. Amy did anything but read. When Lee checked, Amy's skills in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and phonetic skills were completely on level for a 9-year-old. Amy balked when compelled by the teacher to read for an assignment, but after whining and complaining she would eventually complete her work. Amy was smart; she maintained above-average grades with little effort. She also demonstrated an amazing creativity to avoid all Lee's attempts to develop in her a devotion to literacy. Lee tried everything. She paired Amy with an excellent reader, hoping that peer mentoring would entice Amy to independent literacy. Amy allowed the other student to do all the reading while she daydreamed or attempted to distract the reader with other activities. Lee paired Amy with a struggling reader, hoping Amy would compassionately attempt to aid the reader in improving his skills. Instead, Amy enticed the naive student to engage in activities unrelated to reading such as talking, paper chewing, and spitting on the floor. Lee even resorted to bribing Amy by using the computerized reading series, *Ezcomp Reader*, a program that awarded points and prizes for each book read and test taken on the computer. Usually Lee only allowed the most underdeveloped readers to use the system. Lee felt that students should acquire a love for reading and an appreciation for seeking knowledge from books without extraneous rewards. Reading was reward enough in itself. But for Amy she allowed the reward of a pizza from the local delivery joint

if she read a specified number of books. Amy scammed the system. She was an adept reader, so she quickly scanned the books she was reading (which were below her reading level), and then easily answered the simplistic recall questions on the computer test. She was ingenious at locating the thinnest, simplest, easiest books and reading until she had reached her quota and had her pizza, and then she stopped reading. Lee hesitated attempting using the computer program again—what would be her net gain, a fat Amy who still hated reading?

Not defeated yet in her struggle, Lee gathered material about Amy and her abilities—work sample, book reading lists, her achievement test scores, and her reading habits and prepared to put her case before Amy's parents at conference time. Amy's mother appeared for her appointment with Amy in tow. Lee brought forth the evidence and argued passionately about Amy's lack of interest in reading, but she couldn't convince Mrs. Briggs that a problem even existed. Mrs. Briggs just kept pointing to Amy's grades and completed assignments. She offered her own philosophy of child rearing that included the notion that too much was expected of kids these days. School was too stressful, and children should just relax and have fun when they got home. School learning was important, but so were other things—look at her, with just a high school education she had a great job at the local Zella window factory that paid great and had wonderful benefits. Amy was something of a tomboy like herself, and she liked playing sports and getting into things like the boys in the neighborhood. Amy liked to work on cars and do yard work and work with her hands. She liked to stay active. Mrs. Briggs shared that she wasn't worried about Amy. Amy's grades were great, but her youngest, Kevin, was another story. The kindergarten teacher was already threatening to hold him back next year. But Amy, Amy was fine; Amy was her good girl and helper. Twenty minutes into the conference, Lee realized she wasn't going to get any help on the home front with Amy. Mrs. Briggs didn't particularly value reading herself, so how could she provide a role model of literacy for Amy? Wickedly, Lee thought there probably wasn't a single book, newspaper, magazine, or printed word in the Briggs household.

Going home and feeling defeated after the long grueling night of parent conferences, Lee considered her options and obligations to her students, particularly those like Amy. Who was Lee to say what was important in Amy's life? If Amy was destined to work at the Zella factory, then why did she need to read *Tuck Everlasting* or *Bridge to Terabithia*? Who was she to impose her own values on a family who, by their own estimation, seemed to be living the American dream? Lee was so exhausted that night that she went to bed without reading.

What do you think Lee should do about Amy? Should she stop attempting to entice her to read? Should she continue to work with the family and Mrs. Briggs? What do you think Lee will do?

Your responses:

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#### CASE STUDY NINE—RELUCTANT READER: AMY BRIGGS (PART II)

The next day Lee awoke to a whole new attitude and began to consider new strategies to motivate Amy to read. Lee had 12 years of experience as a third-grade teacher, and she wasn't prepared to throw in the towel on Miss Amy Briggs just yet! Lee thought about Amy's little brother and wondered if she sent home some simple story books and instructions and activities if Amy could be enticed to help him to learn to read. Her mother was right; Amy was a good kid. She would want to help her little brother to learn to read, and in the process Amy might develop a sense of efficacy and appreciation for the power of reading.

Lee also considered this new information about Amy as a tomboy; it fit. If Amy were interested in building things and hands-on projects, the "How



Things Work” series of books might be a way to intrigue Amy, particularly if Lee could organize a building project to parallel the book. If Amy were the tomboy that her mother claimed, then maybe she would be more comfortable working with a small group of boys on the project. Several of Lee’s boys were marginal readers (who read far more than Amy), and they might also be interested in the building project. Lee thought she remembered that one of the books guided the reader through how to build a wooden slot car. Lee imagined that the Boy Scout leader would help the group and then they could hold a race and a classroom celebration. Math and measurement would be a great tie-in with reading, and Amy loved math.

A few weeks after the parent-teacher conference, Lee had begun organizing the slot car project and was excited about what might happen next. That day, during independent reading, Lee glanced up from her reading to mentally record what her students were doing and she couldn’t find Amy. Lee silently got up and walked around the room glancing in corners, under tables, and into the tent. She found Amy in the corner curled in one of the beanbags reading *Julie of the Wolves*.

Lee Shelby’s efforts might seem heroic on Amy’s behalf, but the research evidence shows that teachers play a significant role in the achievement of their students. A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy, that is, the teacher’s beliefs in his or her skill and ability to teach, heavily influences not only how they view their students’ ability to learn but also how they select classroom instruction (Bandura, 1997). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy operate with the belief that even difficult students are teachable through extra effort and appropriate techniques. They, like Lee Shelby, are experienced and committed to their students’ literacy. Even when Lee felt defeated, she was able to rebound and plan her next attempt to help Amy. Self-efficacious teachers operate on the belief that, with extra effort and appropriate techniques, they can overcome negative family and community influences through effective teaching. In contrast, teachers who have a low sense of instructional efficacy believe there is little they can do if students are unmotivated and that the influence that teachers exert on students’ intellectual development is severely limited by unsupportive or oppositional influences from the home and neighborhood environment (Bandura, 1997). Lee’s success with her students resulted in a persistence, which was communicated to her students. Even if students had given up on themselves as learners, she had not. This teacher’s confidence in the ability of students to learn, no matter the circumstances, communicated

confidence to the students. Research shows that this influence is particularly powerful for young children, low-achieving students (Bandura, 1997), and minority students (Casteel, 1997). Low achieving students and students lacking confidence in their academic abilities are more vulnerable to the doubts of teachers with low self-efficacy and more influenced by teacher of high self-efficacy. High-achieving students overall are less influenced by their teacher's perceptions (Bandura, 1997). Knowing the extent to which a teacher's perceptions can influence student learning and motivation should caution new teachers to gain the skills they need to project confidence and competence to their students. Although this can be difficult for new teachers who are just developing a sense of themselves as teachers, the powerful influence they will have on their students should be an encouragement to attempt to be the best teachers possible.

This case study demonstrates that understanding theory can lead teachers to a better understanding of how their behavior can influence students in positive and negative ways. How does recognizing that your self-efficacy as a teacher can have an important positive or negative influence on student learning determine how you will prepare yourself for the classroom?

Your responses:

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**Evidencing the use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you were able to discuss how theory describes and predicts the specific literacy methods that Lee selected to motivate her students to read and how Lee's high level of self-efficacy predicted the extent of her effort to help Amy become a self-motivated reader

**Evidencing an emerging use of a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you were able to discuss Lee's instructional methods and their potential effectiveness with Amy but not how these are connected to literacy methods, learning theory, or teacher efficacy

**Evidencing the need for a reflective problem-solving approach**—if you determined that Lee should not be overly concerned about Amy’s reading habits, because if Amy’s parents do not evidence concern about her education, why should the teacher? Some children are simply not intended to be readers. When this happens, it’s not the teacher’s fault. This represents the perspective that only those who share the values and culture of the school should be its beneficiaries. Those who do not share school values deserve their alienation from the benefits of education, and nothing should be done to alter this. Others would say the school should change in order to reach the student and family.

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

### **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)**

[www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/add\\_adhd/add-adhd.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/add_adhd/add-adhd.html)

The Web site LD Online provides information and answers questions about attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

[www.help4adhd.org/en/about](http://www.help4adhd.org/en/about)

The Web site of the national organization Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHAD).

[www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm)

A National Institute of Mental Health (HIMH) site that describes and defines AD/HD.

### **Bandura, Albert**

[www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/self-efficacy.html](http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/self-efficacy.html)

A Web site devoted to Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

### **Behavior Disorders (BD)**

[www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html](http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html)

The Kentucky Department of Education and the University of Kentucky host this Web site of information about childhood behavior disorders.

[www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/behavior.html](http://www.as.wvu.edu/~scidis/behavior.html)

Web site includes an extensive list of strategies to help students with behavior disorders in a variety of classroom situations, including testing.

### **Bilingual Education**

[www.ncela.gwu.edu/links/bies/](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/links/bies/)

A Department of Education organization, the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) Web site provides extensive links to information and resources for bilingual education.

[www.multicultural-childrens-books-cds-friezes.com/bilingual-education.html](http://www.multicultural-childrens-books-cds-friezes.com/bilingual-education.html)

A publisher's clearinghouse of materials devoted to bilingual education.

[www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed403101.html](http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed403101.html)

An ERIC Digest document that explains the research and the controversy over bilingual education.

[www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/15\\_02/Edit152.shtml](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/15_02/Edit152.shtml)

This online newsletter reports information about bilingual education including issues and controversy.

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/biling.htm>

This Web site provides insight into the controversy of bilingual education with discussion of various perspectives and issues.

### **Gifted and Talented Education**

[www.hoagiesgifted.org/](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/)

[www.worldgifted.org/](http://www.worldgifted.org/)

[www.gtworld.org/](http://www.gtworld.org/)

[www.nfgcc.org/](http://www.nfgcc.org/)

[www.nagc.org/](http://www.nagc.org/)

These five national Web sites are devoted to the interests of gifted children and other individuals by providing information and support to teachers and families.

### **Parent Conferences**

<http://teachermentors.com/MCenter%20Site/ParentConfr.html>

This Web site provides a list of tips to help teachers with what to do and say during parent conferences.

### **Special Education**

[www.cec.sped.org/](http://www.cec.sped.org/)

The Web site for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). This national organization is important for special education teachers and others who deal with children with special needs.

