

Case Two Synthesis

Dear Journal,

I can now take a deep breath and take it all in. Today was the last of the parent-teacher conferences. Trust me, it's been a long week. Right now, I am a little uncertain about how it all went. To start, seven families did not show up! I had received confirmation from four of those families last week that they were attending, so where were they? And the other three, I have no idea what happened to them. *was my letter home not clear enough?* Maybe *my language* was a little *hard to understand?* I know that Rory's mother has been juggling her time with being a part-time student and looking after three children. I think for the mid-term conference I will offer *more time slots* for the caregivers to come in, rather than just the same time period each day. There are a few ELL families in my class as well and all except one of them did not attend. I'm starting to think now that they did not understand my letter. I will need to consult with the staff to *find a translator* for any of my future correspondences out to these families.

I met with Stephen's father who I felt had no interest in what I was talking about. I told him that Stephen was doing well but likes to keep to himself most of the class. I didn't get more than a few nods and a couple of grunts. Perhaps I should have had *Stephen point out his beautiful Haida inspired drawing in the hallway*. Maybe his father would have appreciated that; that *Stephen was proud of his First Nations background*. And it just occurred to me that Stephen's uncle is a Haida artist! I think I will *reach out* to Stephen's father and uncle in a *possible guest opportunity* for our class on First Nations art.

Not only do I feel uncertain if the conferences went well, but I feel an unexpected amount of shock learning about some of the students in their home life! First of all, I didn't know that Ally goes to violin lessons every day. Connor is preparing for a major upcoming soccer tournament. Logan goes to gymnastics because he is actually quite flexible. I learned so much about these students just from interacting with their families. This inspires me to do more *cooperative learning* with the students. I believe they all can complement each other in their learning. What really shocked me was to find that Drew is actually a chatterbox at home! He is so quiet in class. I brought this up with his mother and father and they seemed to be shocked at me too. Now I am beginning to wonder if Drew feels uncomfortable with his peers, or maybe I am just *not giving him the opportunities to speak?* And apparently Kayla is a saint at home. She

helps out with her younger brother all the time, according to her mother. I am going to have to monitor Kayla's teasing of Nikesh's lunches if she continues it. The next time it happens, I will have to **speak to her privately** and have her tell me in her words the situation. I worry that the teasing will lead to a bigger bullying issue, so it is my job as an educator to step in. My goal is to have Kayla **aware of her actions**, the **positive and negative consequences of her actions**. I also need to speak to Nikesh about the situation and how he feels about Kayla. A **potluck lunch** might be a good idea to create **cultural awareness** among my students. It will also be a great opportunity to get the **families involved!**

There were also some parents that brought up concerns of academic skills. Brajit's father was concerned that she couldn't understand making change from money at home. I have a feeling that the **decimal is really confusing her**. I may need to take a break from the **transmission approach** and give the students **more opportunities** to work with money in a **real world context**. Ultimately, I want Brajit to have a **problem-solving strategy that makes sense to her** when it comes to currency.

I also need to take into consideration what Troy's mother said about his reading comprehension. I will admit, I am keen on phonics in the classroom. While Mrs. Bennett agrees with me, she thinks it is also important for him to actually know what he is reading. I need to shift to a more **balanced reading approach**; give the students strategies from **both phonics and comprehension** to enhance their reading skills. Because Troy can decode words well, I could experiment with the **cloze procedure** strategy to see if he can use **context cues to generate words**. Maybe to start, I will give him the first few letters of a word so he can depend on his phonics skills to decipher the word.

A lot of insight has been gained from these conferences. I learned that there are some **strategies** that I need to bring in the classroom, based on the **input of the caregivers** I spoke to. For the midterm conference, my preparation should be more thorough; recognizing the **different cultures** and their **value of education** and creating **accessible correspondences**. It is possible that having the **students lead** their conferences could make it **uncomfortable for the families**. I could try a **split conference** (teacher and student) next time and adapt from there. My goal is to have all families attend the next conference, the students enthusiastic about their work, and to have more engagement during the conferences. Always learning! Now, onto the thank you notes for the families that attended...until next time...

Miss M.