

## **Meet the Case Study Students!**

### **Elementary--Sophie**

Since you live and teach in the town, you know many of the families whose children attend the local schools. One such family is a neighbor, and their daughter Sophie has been your “mother’s helper” when you needed someone to watch your younger children. Her teacher knows of your relationship with Sophie, and has spoken with you about her. Here’s what she has shared with you.

Sophie is painfully shy. She’s smart and eager to learn but quite hesitant to speak in class. She’s a terrific artist but you are concerned that previous teachers have assign her to do the “pretty work” on projects which does bring her pride and respect from classmates but limits the time she has available to improve her academics. She has not yet become a fluent reader and the demands upon her ability to gain information through reading are increasing.

The last year’s teacher says Sophie withdraws because her primary language is Spanish that is spoken at home, but you have a sense that Sophie also has language processing and word retrieval problems. You are relieved to hear that the teacher is determined to gain a deeper understanding of Sophie’s language skills and barriers. Because Sophie is in the inclusion class comprised of eight students with identified special needs and eight who are typical learners, the teacher has a capable assistant to work with. How fortunate for Sophie that the assistant, Hector, is bilingual in both Spanish and English, and is working on his Masters Degree in Education at UMassBoston. Sophie’s teacher has asked you to help her design a lesson plan that will help Sophie learn to read, and help other students begin to include Sophie in their games and interactions.

## **Upper Elementary School--Max**

You have been hired for your "dream job" teaching 5<sup>th</sup> graders in a small, urban elementary school. The new principal seems dynamic and open to supporting the faculty. She is young, and the aunt of a nephew with ADHD. She appreciates that, with your background and hands-on work with students, you would have much to offer students with challenges to learning. Your roster of 24 students contains 8 students with disabilities ranging from emotional disorders (3), behavior problems (4) and one student, Max, with ADD. He is quite and extremely distractible. Surprisingly, you are finding that, while able to set up behavior contracts and safe spaces for the first 7 students, you feel less satisfied with how you are approaching Max. While his standardized test scores vary, most of them hover near the "gifted" range. Based upon your interactions with him, you feel strongly that he is, indeed, gifted with strength in visual/spatial areas such as geometry, geography, physics and photography. He seems interested in these areas more than others, but has difficulty remaining focused on his reading. He then becomes frustrated and becomes full of "put-downs.". And, you think because of his difficulty focusing, he has a limited reading vocabulary that gets in the way of his reading comprehension. Predictably, he is now "hating" to read, even about those topic that excite him. Unlike the other 7 students with disabilities, he is relatively quiet, more likely to express himself in internalizing behaviors (self-doubt, withdrawal, depression). He then becomes easy to overlook while meeting the ever-present externalizing behaviors (calling out, poking others, walking around the room) of some of his classmates. How will you go about making sure that Max receives the reading instruction he needs, assistance with keeping on track, and reassurance when he accomplishes sections of overall tasks that he needs to learn. What can you do that will help him with learning and with acquiring the work behaviors he needs to **maximize** his smarts and his interests? And, how will you create a classroom learning environment where all students accept the learning differences of their classmates?

## **Middle School—Chris**

You are a general education inclusion teacher in an urban middle school where you “loop” with 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. One of “your students” (ie, one identified with special needs) will become an 8<sup>th</sup> grader in fall.

The social studies teacher for 8<sup>th</sup> graders came to you to ask about “your student”-- if he would hold the other students back, and how much extra work the student would cause for him. This 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher genuinely loves teaching social studies, and seems quite willing to include your student, but doesn’t seem knowledgeable about how to teach students who do not read at grade level. He is especially interested in making sure “your student” can actively participate in class discussions and progress in the general education curriculum.

He also wants to make sure “his students” are able to accept a student who doesn’t read as well as they do.

What lesson would you suggest that the teacher conduct that addresses both reading and social inclusion?

Here’s a bit about your student that you share with the teacher:

Chris loves history and watches the History Channel on cable during much of his free time. He also spends hours surfing the web, but you doubt that he is ready to conduct web-based research because he seems to be “all over the place.” Chris has above average intelligence, and shares his knowledge during discussions where he shines. However, his written assignments are hampered because of his organizational challenges, difficulty with spelling and grammar, and penmanship. His reading level is about 2 years below grade level. His attention difficulties certainly appear to present a challenge for him.

In the cafeteria he’s got lots of friends—he’s friendly, and tells good jokes. He’s better at sports such as track and swimming because he hasn’t been too successful with the sustained mutual interactions of team sports.

The principal is a strong advocate for including all learners, and has offered you a significant budget to use for technology to prepare the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and classroom for the coming year so that your student will “shine.”

## High School –Bill

Bill is a shy young man who plays in the high school marching band. He and his family recently moved into town from a warm climate because of his mother's job promotion. The family also felt some relief leaving California for Massachusetts because of the reminders of Bill's bicycle accident 4 years ago that had caused him to become legally blind. Bill also welcomes the move because he loves to ski but has only done so occasionally with his family while in California before his accident, and he has "high hopes" for long snowy winters to learn snowboarding.

The school welcomed Bill and immediately began to add the accommodations to the large, traditional three-story high school building that is home to 2,000 students, grades 9-12. For example, the school principal arranged to have Braille labels **painted (?)** on all the doors to indicate the room number and the type of room, such as Biology Lab and Gym and Cafeteria.

Bill is academically capable and particularly interested in Biology and Math. His organizational skills are not intuitive, so he spends much of his time at home figuring out what he was to do for homework, and also pulling all-nighters to write papers he forgot were due the next day.

Design a lesson for your high school literature class that includes Bill as an active member of the class, and helps him with his organization skills. Also, how might you help all classmates understand how to interact with Bill, and to ease their discomfort with not understanding "about Bill"?