

Elizabeth Kelly

Professor Geidel

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### Final Essays

1. Teachers should place the deliberate inclusion of students with special needs, resulting from diverse cultural, language, or disabilities, high within the priorities. I have discovered that within a class of students a menagerie of gifts, struggles, quirks, and needs exist. Teachers must know their students and consider this diversity if they desire to accommodate for them in an effective manner. Considering IEP goals and the students themselves, I will adapt lesson plans and create a classroom environment beneficial for instructing students with special needs, in order to ensure the inclusion and overall learning of such students.

First and foremost, teachers need to have a loving mentality for these students just as they have for those students without disabilities, caring for them and desiring their growth. General education teachers must “have high expectations for student achievement” although these students might have specific needs or IEP goals (Jorgensen, Notes). Lesson plans would be adapted to give more differentiated instruction in order to benefit a variety of student needs. However, in regards to students with specific IEP goals or adaptation needs, I will alter my lesson plans further to include options to provide growth for such specific cases. I desire to match the needs of each student, whether that be academic or other. Some IEP goals require teachers to address life skills, rather than academic learning, so that students can reach an independence in society. I know that to ensure that I stay committed to these students, I must

participate in the writing of such goals, converse frequently with families, and also tailor my lessons to fit a diverse classroom.

The classroom environment most suitable for successful inclusion follows the pattern of Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” This would be a respectful, Least Restrictive Environment for the student, giving the student their right to a general education classroom whenever possible. Special education should “foster equity and access to all aspects of society” (Notes). My classroom must be set up in such a way that does not hinder students from participating, specifically if they have physical disabilities. This should be considered in order “to be devoted” to these students, as it says in Romans 12.

Only with effective pedagogical methods can a teacher help their students really grow academically. However, a lot of nonacademic areas must be considered for the teacher to really connect with her students. I saw the reality of these situations and grew from them in my field experiences with students from other cultures or students with disabilities. Just as with all their students, teachers should approach these students with love and respect, in order to establish a relationship that will foster growth and effective implementation of pedagogical methods in light of IEPs. With the students’ interest at heart, teachers will learn to approach these situations through experience and God-given strength.

2b. Dear Parents,

Hola! My name is Elizabeth Kelly and will be your child's Spanish teacher for this year. I'm really excited about getting to each of my students and hopefully their families, as well. Please feel free to come and sit in or volunteer in any of my classes! And, more importantly, please contact me with any concerns, questions, needs, etc.

By writing this letter, I wanted to begin the communication process with you about my instruction techniques and classroom. I use a lot differentiated instructional methods that may be new to you and your child.

Some examples of this includes more student choice within the classroom; multiple approaches to content, process, and product; a more qualitative assessment of learning goals; and more evaluation, both done by the students themselves and done by me, the teacher.

First and foremost, I desire that your child grow significantly this year, reaching their full potential as a student and a learner of Spanish. My primary reason for differentiating is to connect with my student's needs, interests, levels, and preferred learning method. Differentiated instruction is qualitative, rooted in assessment, student centered, and emphasizes critical thinking. All of these characteristics will contribute to helping your child learn and apply the Spanish language over the course of this year!

I hope that my students will have an open mind when coming into my differentiated classroom, so that they can embrace a new teaching style as well as a new language! They must be ready to work hard, this will not be an easy class. However, I will do all I can to help them achieve their best. I also hope that this letter excites you about what is in store for your child this school year!

Gracias!  
Elizabeth Kelly

3. I loved watching The Ron Clark Movie, in light of the possibility of my future career as a teacher. I do not really have a lot of experience with the issues and diversity that characterize urban areas, such as the inner Harlem of New York City. However, the movie's portrayal of New York City really illustrated the specifics necessary for viewer to understand the lives of

Ron Clark and his students. I think that each multiple characters, their individual stories, and the overall account of Ron Clark's teaching career all contributed to the impact that this brilliant movie had on me. However, I need to remember that this movie actually told the story of a *real* man, a real teacher, Ron Clark. His story educated me about the importance of the student-teacher relationship in overcoming and growing from the challenges that usually accompany an urban setting.

Ron Clark's tenacity, confidence, and commitment inspired me as I am contemplating my future career. His determination in connecting with students and gaining their respect seemed very important in his overall efficacy as their teacher. He made known to his students that he cared about them as people, which really separated him from their past teachers. The movie's portrayal of Ron Clark's influence on some of his students' lives, specifically Shamioka, really touched on my understanding of the student-teacher relationship. Shamioka rebelled and led the class into chaos, but Ron Clark did not give up on her. He continued to show her, and each of his students, respect and also motivated each to use their gifts to achieve. These children faced a multitude of struggles daily, from living in poverty to peer pressure to violent atmospheres. However, the ability Ron Clark had to guide these students toward achieving their utmost, inside and outside the classroom, really was astounding to me.

I think that I will remember Ron Clark's perseverance and attitude toward his students, when approaching my own classroom. I also think that this movie showed good ideas for differentiated methods of instruction and overall adaptations of lessons to fit students' needs. Ron Clark had such great success, despite his harsh teaching environment. I hope that in my future I can also harness these methods and attitudes and fully commit myself to my students,

hopefully building relationships and watching them grow to achieve their potential in my subject and in life.