

Student Name was changed to “Nico” (for protection of student)

INTRODUCTION

It was a warm summer day, one by one students leave their parents car to enter the school building. They shuffled throughout the building as the first bell rang. It's the first day of school.

I sat at my desk looking through the roster again and again. My eyes darted as the first student walked into the room. I said, “There is no sitting chart today, please come and take a seat. You may sit wherever you like.” My heart was beating fast as I waited for the second bell to ring, signaling that class has started. Students sat quietly at their tables awaiting my instructions. When the bell rang, I took a few breaths and introduced myself.

The students sat quietly without peeping a word. I decided to get students to introduce themselves, along with something they did over the summer. One by one students got up and introduced themselves. My eyes wondered to each student as they spoke. Finally, my eyes settled on the last student to speak. He was a tall kid with blondish hair with a light complexion. He stood up and said, “Hello. My name is Nico. I played football over the summer and uh...oh yeah, I'm the only white kid at school.”

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Few weeks went by and I noticed that Nico was a student that was very eager to learn. He would constantly volunteer, as he is always the first to raise his hand. I didn't really take notice of his racial difference, what intrigued me was more of his unique personality.

As I was teaching another class, I noticed that as I walked around observing student work, Nico's name was mentioned a couple times. It had seemed that he was fairly well known in the small school that we have. I thought this was interesting and it added to more of my questions that I had about Nico. What about him attracted these students? Is it the clubs/activities that he attended? I wanted to learn more.

One day during an “Office Hour” visit, I sat down with Nico and discussed a video project that he wanted to do. During this time, I was really able to find out quite a lot about him. He mentioned to me that he has “blue-green colorblindness”. Immediately this stood out to me. It was very crucial information that I needed to know. Although students have yet to work on color, this will

definitely affect the way I plan my future lessons.

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One day I came to school early to start to prepare my lesson plan for the upcoming week. I came across an email that said, "NICO- CONFIDENTIAL." The email said, "Nico has been suspended from school pending further discussion with his family. An incident occurred that warranted immediate suspension and subsequent intervention. We will be working with Nico's family to get the necessary support that he needs. Once a plan is in place, Nico will return to school with conditions. During this suspension period, Nico should be provided with the necessary classwork and homework so he can stay current." When I read this email, I didn't understand what really happened. I was very shocked that something like this had even occurred. It just doesn't seem like him. From the interactions that I have had with him, he not only seems academically inclined, but also very well behaved.

This makes me wonder mainly how much of his family background and environment affects that way his acts and behaves? What his motivation is towards school? What are the parent's goal for him as well as his own career goal? How does he manage his time between all the activities and academics? What support does he receive from his family?

METHODOLOGY

In the beginning of the school year, as a way for me to understand all my students I asked both students and parents to fill out couple of inquiry questions to help me better understand. In order to do more data collecting on Nico particularly and to find out more about him, I first decided to ask permission from the family. I sent home a letter home that explains my intentions and the purpose of doing this research so I can become a better educator.

When I initially explained to Nico, he had a sure look that it would be fine. However, I stressed to Nico that although, he is okay with this idea I need to make sure that his parents consent to it first. There were many doubts and I was afraid of the parents would reject my research project, mainly because they are afraid of people singling out their child due to his racial difference. However, I was thrilled when Nico came back with the letter sign and a note that said, "As long as this doesn't interfere with Nico's schooling."

A few days after I received consent, I went ahead and sat down with Nico to ask him more about him and his feelings about school, neighborhood, and career. After conducting this “semi-interview”, I did a drive through to his neighborhood.

Since I was able to get a good look around his neighborhood surroundings, I decided to do a home visit to the family. It had been a few weeks since the family agreed to this project, so I decided to follow up with an email about their agreement and the purpose of the project. If they were still interested, I would like to go over to visit their neighborhood and to possibly come meet the family. I wanted to know them, as they are part of the community that I teach in.

The mom was more than happy to comply and agree to meet me. We conversed through email and settled on a date in which I would go visit their home. Before I visited their home, I have compiled a list of questions that I would ask and baked cupcakes as a thank you. As I collect the data, I refrained from doing any audio recording to avoid any uncomfortably, but I made sure to take notes during and after the conversation.

CASE ANALYSIS

Environment plays a big role in how a student can react and feel. 34 th Ave, International Blvd, 73 rd Ave., these were the directions I took. As I turned onto 73 rd Ave., I notice the change from busy streets to more open residential areas. Considering this road was between two major roads, International Blvd and Bancroft Ave, it was less crowded and busy than I thought it would be. The area had an eerie presence as the headlights of my car beamed. There were many ranch houses with a fenced front yard. As I continued down the road, I noticed a church on my left hand side. I didn't realize I drove by the turn that I needed to take. I took a quick stop at the end of the block and I noticed a large Church's Chicken sign and a couple of small grocery stores. It seems that this area is a semi-major foot traffic area, due to a shopping complex nearby the grocery store.

I turned back around to find Nico's house. As I pulled up to the house, I noticed that unlike the other fenced ranch homes, this house was a nice two-floor home with a open front lawn. They even have a basketball hoop above the garage. I realized as I have pulled up to the house, I made sure to park close to the house. I didn't feel safe walking around their neighborhood. As I got out of my car, I was reminded of the conversation I had with Nico about his neighborhood. He told me that he didn't feel safe in his neighborhood. Nico is always escorted back home.

He also mentioned the theft that occurred at home, and hearing gunshots at night. This can really affect the way one behaves and feels.

I walked quickly to the door and rang the doorbell. My heart was beating really fast. Holding a tray of cupcakes, I can felt my palms getting sweaty. Nico's mom, a women in her 50's or 60's about my height, skinny with grey hair and wore glasses, welcomed me with a warm smile. We exchanged thank you and she welcomed me into their living room.

I walked on the warmed carpeted floor to the single armrest and sat myself down. I noticed the many family pictures along the walls. It had seemed that the Nico's dad was out with Nico and his sister, it was just Nico's mom and I. Silence filled the room as my heart continued to beat louder. I was unsure where to begin.

I took a deep breath and I started to tell her about me, this lead to a conversation about the neighborhood. Once the conversation started, the feeling of a huge rock holding me down settled. Nico's mom told me stories about how she has lived in the area for a while. She was born and raised in the house. I asked her how she felt about the neighborhood, she said that its, "uncomfortable but it is home."

Although the environment where the student lives is a major factor in terms of healthy living, Education plays a big role in a child's future. Considering all the photos I see along the walls, we discussed holidays and what they do. As we talked, the topic of school came up. Family is an extreme importance however, school is just as important. Since the school that Nico currently attends is a Catholic school, it is not a school that they are placed in. Nico apparently had visited the school and enjoyed the environment. He chose to go to that particular high school.

Nico's mother mentioned that it had been a rough 10 years for Nico, he went through the 2 preschool's the Oakland Unified School System; 2 years of homeschooling, and then finally catholic school. Nico's mom said, "For Nico it was a good fit to join the high school because it is a small school and small student body size. It is also affordable for a family that has two children in Catholic School." She continued on to saying, "For Nico, he likes school for its extracurricular activities, but for academic wise, it depends on certain subject and that depends on his feeling about the teacher."

Nico's mother is very supportive of Nico's schooling. The family attends his school activities as much as they can when they have time. When I asked, "Are there any career goals/ dreams that they have for Nico?" Nico's mom answered, "It is for him to develop a trade that he can make a living with. Nico is focused on

computers: software, games, etc. We would like him to develop a trade in the area of electronics. For Daisy (their daughter), at this time, she is too young to think past high school."

Although the family is supportive with his extracurricular activities I wondered about how involved the family is to his school life experience. Nico's mom mentioned "he'll talk about the extracurricular items but not much regarding what goes on in the classroom. He isn't forthcoming on the details of the day and can get irritated if pressed." This really caught my attention. Although, I didn't want to pry into what really happened at school. I followed up and asked her, "If they remember a time of extreme frustration vs. confidence that Nico had?" She said, "he gets extremely frustrated when he tries to explain himself. For example, he presented difficulties in Biology. However, when he thinks he understands a subject or has done a task really well. He will talk constantly about it to the point of irritation."

I asked, "What is Nico's personality like at home?"

"He is ADHD and a teenager. Therefore, his personality is constantly changing." Nico's mom answered.

At the end of our conversation, I was able to tour a house. They introduced me to a room that they provided for him in which Nico can get a quite space to do his homework. They make sure that everything is in order for Nico's education. "We ensure that he gets all his books required for the school year prior to the start of school. We provide assistance with his homework when he asks."

I wondered and questioned, "What are some of Nico's study habits?"

Nico's mom paused and said, "He doesn't have any good study habits. Due to his ADHD, he has trouble maintaining focus for an extended period of time. This affects his organization as well. Nico however, is expected to do his homework when he gets home in his room. Most of the time, he will wait until the last minute to finish his assignments."

"Does Nico have any particular talents or gifts?" wondering as I walked with Nico's mom down the stairs.

She answered, "Nico doesn't have any real inherent talent, however, he has taken about 8 years of piano and really enjoys it." I found out not only from my conversation with Nico but also his mother that he initiated to start a band club at the school with the help of another teacher. He plays football, piano for campus ministry, and even couple of pick up games of Ping-Pong.

With a wonderful conversation with Nico's mother, I thanked her once again before heading out.

CASE COMMENTARY

The knowledge that this family has is not necessary anything out of the ordinary. However, one great aspect that Nico has is the wonderful support that he has from his family. The family is very active in supporting Nico on his studies and even his extra curricular activities. They have a clear goal of what they wish for Nico to do, and it seems to also be something that Nico is interested in. Such information shows useful within the school because of how it helps motivate and stimulate the study and curiosity within Nico.

Being able to visit Nico's home environment and neighborhood allowed me to understand his thinking and behavior. It has made me realize how much of an impact I can have on Nico. I feel that this home visit has really made me closer to him as my student and his family. The main importance that I found out from this study is his study habits and his motivation to school. This really affects my teaching practice. The idea of implementing more routine and structure to help students learn organization is a big key. It will not only help Nico but my other students as well. Organization can help keep students on task in various aspects. All the many activities and the feelings he has in school allows me to think how I can included some of his interests within projects and will make it more interesting for Nico as well as utilize his "funds of knowledge."

Understanding his behavior at home allowed me to be more aware of my teaching style when it comes to Nico and the way I interact with him. Another big thing I learned is his "blue-green colorblindness" This aspect will really affect the way I teach and how to teach a student color with such disability.

This home visit really allowed me to take an inside look at not only the student but, the parents of my students. We are always able to discuss and get to know students at school. However, in a different environment there is always a different perspective. Open Perspective is what allows me see beyond our classroom and into the community in which we teach.