

Innocense
Response to Rocky Choices
The Met School - Arthur Baraf
Justice in Schools- Ethical Dilemmas in Educational Ethics
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Rocky Choices is a case study about a child named Kate who regularly has emotional outbursts. Though she does not have a specific diagnosis, she did receive an IEP (Individualized Education Program), which allows her to remain in a regular second grade class. Kate has her emotional breakdowns in school where her teacher, Ms. Brown, and her principal, Mr. Thomason, are debating whether or not to preemptively move Kate to an isolation room or keep her in the regular class when she is feeling escalated. The case study specifically focuses on a situation when the class is having a lesson on rocks and their classification. A discussion between two of the boys in Kate's group starts to turn into an argument and this causes distress to Kate, causing Ms. Brown to be faced with the decision to separate the group, make Kate go to a different "think room," or switch to a class discussion.

Though the authors of the case study gave only three options to fix the situation, there are always other solutions to a problem. Ms. Brown should take Kate out of the class so she could have a minute to calm herself down outside the class door. Then Ms. Brown should talk to the other students about how they need to be more sensitive to Kate's disability, how to be aware at all times, and that if they needed Ms. Brown for any situation that might occur, they should raise their hands and call her over. Then she should go back to Kate and check to see if she is all right to come back in, bring her back to the group, and then tell all three students to continue discussing the rocks' classification in calm manner.

Though this is a solution to the problem presented, there is more than one that needs fixing. Kate is in jeopardy of having another outburst in class, which could lead to the children complaining to their parents of Kate's disruptive behaviors resulting in parent complaints to the principal, creating a bigger problem for Ms. Brown, who was told to take Kate to the "think room" or risk the superintendent getting involved. So there must be a solution to solve the larger problem of whether to keep a special needs child in a regular class or to move them.

The solution to the underlying problem is to give Kate one-on-ones with a special teacher, both academically and emotionally supportive, and also to give the class lessons on children with disabilities, not only for their understanding, but also to improve their respect and attitude towards Kate and all other children.

Kate was catching up on the work that she had missed the past year, but she hasn't quite caught up yet. In my experience, most children who have one-on-ones excel amazingly. For example, home-educated students typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests¹ and they are almost always taught one-on-one. Overall, most children who have one-on-ones score higher on tests and understand better. Furthermore, if Kate talks with someone about her learning differences, she may have fewer outbursts because she would be able to express herself and have a chance to calm down. This support will help her learn how to better control herself.

Ms. Brown should also give the class lessons on understanding children with learning differences because when you don't understand something you become uncomfortable with it. Teaching the children in this way will open their eyes to all types

of differences that people have. Many teachers are able to teach successfully about tolerance and diversity. One example of how to do this powerfully comes from the well-known Jane Elliott, who first did her anti-racism exercises with her third grade class. She taught them of racism by pretending that children with blue eyes were superior to those with brown eyes, and later to diminish the blue-eyed pride, she put the brown-eyed children on a pedestal. This experiential approach teaches children and adults to respect and not discriminate against people's differences – whether they be racial or ability level. Jane Elliot's example shows us why teaching the children about differences is important, and it may just solve the problem that involves Mr. Thomason and the parents.

Each child is special in their own way and to restrict them from something because they are different doesn't help them excel but may make them decline in all areas of life. Giving Kate one-on-one support and teaching the class more about students with learning differences is a solution that not only benefits Kate, Ms. Brown, Mr. Thomason or the children, but everyone, for no one is less than the other.

Footnotes:

¹<https://www.nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html>