


Chapter 8

Creative Empathy: The Importance of Support Systems and Advocacy

William C. Clark III
Independent Researcher, USA

Matt O’Nesti
Independent Researcher, USA

Pam Epler
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5655-369X>
Youngstown State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter is designed to inform and educate the reader about the trials and tribulations of two young men with disabilities. Their journey through the K–16 educational system is discussed, as are their triumphs and struggles as they learn to survive in a nondisabled world. The chapter relates the two men’s scenarios to the theory of social justice as well as breaks down the most common myths and misconceptions about people with exceptionalities. The chapter concludes by conveying instructional strategies developed by the University of Michigan School of Education’s Teaching Works and the University of Florida’s CEEDAR Center and the Council for Exceptional Children that can be used by any teacher to get to know their students well and develop successful intervention strategies.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7359-4.ch008

INTRODUCTION

People who have a disability need not be pitied or dismissed simply because nondisabled people do not understand them; many individuals who have a disability have made contributions to society. For example, Albert Einstein, developer of the theory of relativity, had a reading disability; Sue Thomas was the first deaf person to work as an undercover specialist, performing lip-reading of suspects for the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Henry Winkler is an accomplished actor and children's author despite being dyslexic; Beethoven composed beautiful music even though he was deaf; Chris Burke, who has Down syndrome, is an actor and advocate for the disabled; Sir Isaac Newton, famed scientist and key figure in the scientific revolution, had autism. These people and countless other disabled individuals—although they may not learn in the same manner that nondisabled students do—have contributed substantial, enduring benefits to society that continue to reverberate globally and impact modern-day life.

Like those notable figures mentioned above, William Clark and Matt O'Nesti have a story to tell. Their anecdotal experiences celebrate their successes and illustrate how they have overcome the struggles life throws at them. Their stories are inspiring and should be used to educate and inspire the preservice teacher to do whatever is necessary to ensure that *all* students, disabled or not, can be successful both academically and in a social setting.

WILLIAM'S STORY

A LETTER FROM A FRIEND

What defines a human?

*Is it the makings of our genetics, a random bonding
of chemicals?*

*Or is it something primordial and ancient that
Defines who we are?*

*I like to believe that it is the latter, that we are made
of the sum of stars*

*That we each burn bright with our universal longing
to be more*

To love more, to create more and

To soar to the stars with our boundless imagination.

This beautiful intangible thing of concessions

Has allowed us to heal the sick, it's made the

29 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/creative-empathy/288108

Related Content

Teaching Strategies Across Subject Areas

Srimani Chakravarthi (2022). *New Considerations and Best Practices for Training Special Education Teachers* (pp. 137-162).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/teaching-strategies-across-subject-areas/297218

Ethical Considerations in Counseling Students With Disabilities

Treye Rosenberger (2025). *Innovative Approaches in Counselor Education for Students With Disabilities* (pp. 33-58).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ethical-considerations-in-counseling-students-with-disabilities/364430

Dare Not to Compare

Nancy B. Hertzog (2022). *Creating Equitable Services for the Gifted: Protocols for Identification, Implementation, and Evaluation* (pp. 226-244).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/dare-not-to-compare/290602

Implementing Inclusive Education in Mixed-Ability Classrooms by Employing Differentiated Instruction

Afroditi Malisiova, Georgios A. Kougioumtzis, Georgios Tsitsas, Christiana Koundourou and Aristotelis Mitras (2023). *Perspectives of Cognitive, Psychosocial, and Learning Difficulties From Childhood to Adulthood: Practical Counseling Strategies* (pp. 155-178).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementing-inclusive-education-in-mixed-ability-classrooms-by-employing-differentiated-instruction/323637

Exceptional Children

Ridvan Karabulut (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusive Practices for Educators and Administrators in Special Education* (pp. 271-281).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/exceptional-children/292886