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EDUC 6380
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Assignment #9

Respond to the "Ability, Maturity, and Parental Perspectives" Case Study. Be sure to consider the following questions in your response:

- 1. Do the parents have a right to demand retention based on immaturity?**
- 2. Do you think an exception should be made in this case to grant the parents' request for retention? How does this relate to the ethic of justice for the child, parents, teachers, and administrators?**
- 3. Are all the professionals described in this dilemma operating under the ethic of the profession? If not, explain with examples.**
- 4. Is it fair to retain a student based solely on immaturity? How does this notion relate to the ethic of critique?**
- 5. Are the parents operating under the ethic of care for their child to request the retention? Explain. Have they considered the feelings of their child to be retained and its impact on him?**
- 6. Is the school team (principal and teachers) demonstrating the ethic of care with regard to their opinions on retention for this youngster. Explain.**
- 7. What decision should the principal make? State specific reasons for your response.**

This case study is a difficult one for several reasons. For one thing, John has been making some great strides through implementation of his IEP and tutoring with another teacher ("Ability, Maturity, and Parental Perspectives", n.d., par. 7). And although his misbehavior was a concern initially, (par. 3), he has already illustrated improved behavior, and his reading level is only half a year behind his contemporaries (par. 7). Most of those involved in the process, at least on the Happy Times Elementary School (talk about a misnomer) side of the issue, believe that John is making authentic, real progress, and keeping him behind a grade would be very detrimental to him.

As to the question of whether the parents have "a right to demand retention (repeating the third grade) based on immaturity", I'm not sure that they do. It seems that the school is making every effort to aid John in his academic needs (especially reading comprehension), and he is making marked improvement, and excelling in near everything else. I believe that an exception in this case, to grant the parent's request that John be held back, is ill-advised and would be detrimental to John's learning. Though his parents and his teacher-tutor (whose relationship to Happy Times Elementary is unclear, as he/she is from "another building", whatever that means) believe otherwise, upon examination, this entire situation, especially the parental response, is ignoring the most important person's opinion regarding the issue: John himself.

Regarding the ethic of justice, yes, the parents have the right to request that John be tested (which they did, and have made subsequent accommodations and changes for, to great effect). They also have the right to (in writing) request that their son be held back another year. However, the final decision, with input from the Child Study Team, who include the special education teacher, his regular education teacher, the special education supervisor, and the principal, among others, is up to the principal. The parents and teacher-tutor feel that their desires are being ignored, although that is only marginally true. John's other teachers feel that they have thus far made the right choices, and should carry on as they have, as does the principal, and if I were in his / her shoes, I'd be siding with them.

But what about John? None of us know what he wants, and I think that before the principal makes a final decision, he / she ought to have a conversation with John, and another member of the Child Study Team. According to our reading from *Chapter 3 - A Model for Promoting the Student's Best Interests*, respect is defined as a "more positive, mutual interaction, focusing on the individual" ("Chapter 3", n.d., p. 25). Certainly, this aspect has been lost in the argument, and we have no idea what and how John feels about this. And certainly he deserves to have his

voice heard, I think. His parents thus far have apparently ignored that, but I don't believe as his principal I would have that luxury. He needs to be heard, and I would give him a chance to speak his mind.

Meanwhile, not everyone in this situation is acting under the ethic of the profession. Mr. / Mrs. Teacher-tutor is not really looking at the big picture, and their demand that only retention can help John is irresponsible and problematic. As I mentioned before, it is unclear if this teacher works in the same district, a nearby school, etc., but I would also schedule a meeting as the principal with several of the Child Study Team and this individual, to try and understand what exactly they are thinking, and then in turn share our perspective (putting myself in the principal's shoes) and how we and the rest of the Child Study Team believe that academically and behaviorally, John is progressing well, and ought to continue as he has previously, rather than being retained. Obviously, we would also take John's opinion of all of this into account as well, but I can guess that he is not interested in repeating instruction in social studies, math, science, etc. again, covering the same curriculum, for another year.

The school team is considering the ethic of care well for the person to whom it matters most: John. His parents and tutor do not agree, but have they asked him? It would appear they have not, and given the information that we do have, it seems wise to follow the path they have already chosen, given the results they have witnessed thus far. Thus, as the principal, I would deny their request for retention, based on the following factors:

1. John currently has an IEP and subsequent SPED accommodations that have, over the last few years, resulted in his improved reading abilities and skills. He isn't quite up to speed with his peers, but he is getting there.
2. John's behavior has markedly improved, and he is going in the right direction. These accommodations have worked, backed up by data. Retention would be a step back, not progress.
3. To retain him would send a clear message that he is a failure, that he is inadequate, and he would most assuredly lose all motivation to learn, having to repeat the same curriculum, material and skills that he covered last year, and in nearly all cases, has proved mastery of.

I believe that this is the right decision, despite the flak that the principal would assuredly get from the parents and teacher-tutor. Nevertheless, all things considered, it is what is best for John, who by no means deserves to repeat an entire grade, simply because his reading and behavior are a bit late in development. Hopefully, the principal can meet and discuss their reasoning with the family, and John can continue to make improvements under his current plan. Not an easy choice by any means, but I believe it is the right one.

Resources:

Ability, Maturity, and Parental Perspectives [PDF]. (n.d.).

Chapter 3 - A Model for Promoting the Student's Best Interests. (n.d.). (pp. 17-27).

Rebore, R. W. (2001). *The ethics of educational leadership* (1st ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.