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Individual Difference Student Profile

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EDUC 205 Development/Individual Differences

Online, Spring 2015

Individual Differences Student Profile

For this assignment, I had the pleasure of completing a profile on Rolando. I chose Rolando because he is from a different culture, and the education system in Salmon is doing its best to assist this young man. However, there are challenges in meeting his needs and the opportunity to examine them may help me in my career as an educator. I understand that addressing the concerns of multi-cultural students will be an important facet of becoming a successful teacher. In this profile, I will present an overview of Rolando’s physical, cognitive, and **socio-emotional** development. In addition, I will provide a summary of my findings which include the student’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as, strategies for educating students with the same hurdles.

**General Information**

Rolando informed me that he is 14 years and 11 months old. He moved to Salmon in December of 2012 from a large city in Ethiopia when he was adopted by a single mother, a veterinarian in Salmon. The family is made of up of mother, Rolando, an older brother, age 15 who was also adopted from Ethiopia (no relation), and the mother’s biological son who is 22 and currently attending college. He has a dog named Moose, a large lab who likes to jump on people. Monday through Thursday, Rolando attends Salmon Jr. High from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. After school, he completes his household chores, if he has any, and does homework. On Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings, he attends church with his family. On the weekends, Rolando enjoys hanging out with friends and also helps out with his mother’s business when needed. He worked at the golf course last summer picking up golf balls and cleaning up.

**Physical Development**

Rolando is an African male with black hair and dark brown eyes who is right-handed. He stands about 5’6” and weighs approximately 130 pounds. Rolando eats well and likes to bring his own lunch to school, which he makes for himself. He has no problems sleeping, and gets enough rest. He is well-cared for by his family, and his appearance displays that in his clothing and appearance, especially the smile that is always on his face.

Rolando is physically fit, active, and appears to be slightly more physically mature than his peers. This year, he participated in football and basketball, and enjoyed it very much. He is a very fast runner and loves competition. One of his favorite classes is physical education and he likes dodgeball the most, but thinks all of the activities are great, including strength training. As evidenced by his ability to excel in sports and the physical education class, his large muscles appear to be fully developed and coordinated. His fine motor skills are also developed as demonstrated through his handwriting which is legible and the talent he exhibits in assembling model airplanes and helicopters. There are no issues with his hearing or vision.

**Cognitive Development**

Rolando is currently in the **mainstream** classes as an eighth grader in the junior high school. He attends a tutoring class during first period to help him with any subjects with which he is struggling. He learns quickly, and for the most part, does well in his classes as reflected by his grades which are mostly A’s and B’s. His lowest grade is a D in Pre-Algebra because of his difficulty reading directions and comprehending the information on the tests. The Title I teacher in the tutoring class stated that Rolando is an avid learner, with a great attention span, and she has no problems with him as he participates in class and is respectful to all of his teachers. The school district has provided English as a Second Language (ESL) training for her and she will begin to use her training to help Rolando. She indicated that his reading level at this point is about third grade. He struggles with reading because he spoke no English when he came to Salmon. Rolando speaks broken English with a heavy accent; his original language is Arabic. There are some words he doesn’t recognize when he hears them, but is not embarrassed at all to admit if he doesn’t understand words that are spoken to him.

Rolando is in the **formal operational stage** of Piaget’s theory of **cognitive development**. He is able to use **deductive reasoning**, **analogical reasoning**, and **reflective ability**. He enjoys learning, and especially reading and history classes, as he expressed that it is like watching a movie in his mind as he reads or hears someone describe events. Geography is one of the subjects he loves, and his ability to retain geographical information in his **long term memory** is very impressive. As in **Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development**, the student receives support in learning when the instructors employ the strategy of reading questions on quizzes and tests orally to enable him to understand them more easily. Since Rolando has a hard time with spelling, he is also given assistance in writing long essay answers; dictating while the teacher writes it down. This is helpful in reducing the frustration that comes with attempting to spell words and also helpful to the instructors as they read and grade the work.

**Socio-emotional Development**

Rolando is an outgoing, confident young man who exhibits a healthy **self-esteem** and **self-concept**. His peers’ opinions of him are important to him as he is in Erikson’s stage of **Identity versus Role Confusion**; however, he is not afraid of being his own person. He enjoys friendships with his classmates, and shares a close companionship with three other boys that are the same age. He interacts well with teachers, staff, and other adults and is fairly confident in conversations; maintaining good eye contact while he speaks and is spoken to. Trying new things and failing doesn’t hinder him, although failing is uncomfortable for him, so he practices to do better. His mother and Title I teacher describe Rolando as a “good kid” with a smile on his face and never in a bad mood. His teacher said, “He is extremely thankful for the opportunity to be here and learn.”

His activities outside of school include: playing sports; working at home, mom’s office and the golf course; riding four-wheelers with friends; building remote control airplanes and helicopters; and watching YouTube videos to learn about whatever interests him.

**Summary, Conclusions, and Implications**

Rolando is an extraordinary young man, who has overcome the adversity of losing his birth parents, spending time in an orphanage, and being moved to a completely different country and culture without knowing the language. He exhibits a maturity in behavior that is above his peer group as he is able to remain focused and stay on-task for long periods of time. His cognitive development is equal or above his peers as he displays an ability to comprehend information and concepts that he is taught—despite the language barrier. He is also diligent in his schoolwork; coming in for help at lunch, and re-doing work whether it helps his grade or not. He demonstrates a great attitude, good character, and a desire to succeed. Rolando conveys interest in going to college after high school as he looks forward to the future, and is currently content with his life both at home and school. He is a physically active young man who exhibits a healthy lifestyle. His family is loving and supportive, and they have the support of church members to help them. The teacher who works most closely with Rolando is attentive and helpful and thinks highly of him. He has excelled in a short period of time and seems to be well-adjusted.

As he perseveres through difficulties, perhaps Rolando’s biggest strength is his commitment to succeed. He is a cooperative student who is **self-motivated**, and receives satisfaction from learning and repeating an assignment until it is correct. As I observed Rolando in an English class, he was quick to answer questions in a verbal discussion and had no problem if the answers were wrong. All of the challenges in school seem to be related to his ability to read and write English. This causes him difficulty in all subjects where reading and writing are needed. Writing and spelling are also a hardship for him presently as he writes phonetically, which takes time and is difficult for teachers and others to read. He has his own way of taking notes in class lectures, and his system works for him.

It is my belief that because Rolando visualizes as he reads or listens to lectures, he is using the **dual coding theory** to learn. It is possible that the visualizations are stored as **episodic long term memory** since he sees everything like it is happening in a movie or in pictures. Since Rolando is a visual learner, incorporating that into his language education may be helpful. He also displays the ability for independent **observational learning** as he learns by watching videos on YouTube. Perhaps finding computer programs that utilize spelling and sentence writing games would be a great tool to increase grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. With his love of geography, Rolando may also benefit from using **concept maps** or **structured overviews** which would give him a “road map” of new concepts and information that will be taught in his classes.

Additionally, it might be beneficial for him to choose a book he’d enjoy and have someone take turns reading aloud daily. A reading journal might be another helpful tool. According to an online article by Neas (2013), “ESL reading journals aid in building vocabulary, strengthening oral reading and developing writing skills in students learning the English language. **Scaffolding** the four language skills increases the student's ability to master English.” It goes on to explain that the student’s journal entry would include the name of the book title, the author, any words he doesn’t recognize from his reading, and words he recognizes but lacks knowledge of the definition. The teacher can use various methods to help the student add these new words and definitions to his/her vocabulary. Given that Rolando possesses **word decoding** skills, it might be helpful to continue in a reading program starting at the third grade level, and move him to more challenging books as he masters each level. Whatever method the teacher decides to use, I’m sure Rolando will do well as his desire to learn will overcome his language obstacle.

It was very fulfilling to complete the individual student profile on Rolando as it gave me a chance to see how the concepts I’ve been learning apply to a real student. Educating someone from another culture can be intimidating, but understanding who he is as a person, what makes him learn, and how he processes the information is very helpful. Making a plan that fits with his abilities and needs would be an important step in the process to help him succeed. I look forward to using these skills when I become an educator.

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