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Book Review

Firstly, I would like to state that “Reading With Patrick “ is incredibly inspiring. It covers so many topics that directly and indirectly affects a students education. The author Michelle Kuo tells an amazing story of a teacher and her gifted student. Michelle Kuo takes teaching to another level, she shows empathy, compassion for all her students and teaches from a whole person approach. I agree with the whole person philosophy. The whole person philosophy is the mission of whole person teaching which speaks to increasing awareness of different learning styles. Whole person learning encourages students to connect academic materials to their lives outside the classroom. Whole person teaching also helps to facilitate reflective thinking and writing. The whole person approach takes into account the diversity of a classroom, students ethnicity, culture and religious backgrounds. I agree with the whole person philosophy because it is about educating beyond their academics. I also agree with the whole person teaching approach because it accesses the needs of students and can improve student outcomes. When teaching to the whole person philosophy students need more than a strong foundation in curriculum but they need support emotionally and socially. Through the whole person teaching technique teachers have a great opportunity to help students disclose their potential and identity. It also allows teachers to emphasize on a positive class environment providing academic and nonacademic support. Another reason i agree with the whole person philosophy is because it can strengthen student teacher relationship. When teachers are able to build strong bonds with their students engagement and performance is positively impacted. Even Though there's a possibility that the whole person technique may not work for all students, their is a percentage of students that this technique will be able to reach and effectively change student perspectives on education especially at risk students such as the students mentioned in the book.

When the author first started teaching she picked books that were based on African American people/culture or written by African American authors in hopes that her students

would share the same interest as her . The author choose books that she was inspired by.For example “ she handed out a Malcolm X speech , she also handed out a James Baldwin book and showed videos of Barack Obama, all historical African Americans that she connected to in hopes that these books would start a rally or start to burn a fire within the students that would spark a engaging class conversation. Instead the books bored the children, until she came across a play " Raisin In The Sun” students began to connect to the grandmother in the play. Saying things like “she doesnt play that " probably because the grandmother reminded the students of their grandmother or of someone in their family. The breakthrough in the class was when the teacher asked why did the students think the grandma had left Mississippi to move to Chicago?, a student answered “Because there isn't much for us down here," this begun to spark conversation through the class its then the teacher saw that the students can relate to the character therefore they were able to have a discussion about the reading. When it came to Patrick's selection of books she noticed that he was quiet but enjoyed poems and text that allowed him to think deeply. Therefore when visiting him in prison she brought poems , James Baldwin books, Walt Whitman and C.S Lewis book s . Books that would help his mind escape.

The factors that the author had to consider were students were at a fourth grade level of reading, their reading comprehension possibly could have been low as well. Another thing to consider was the lack of prior knowledge the students had about historical events including African American history. All these factors make it difficult for students in my opinion to grasp the concepts of historical biographies for any cultural background.

The author's view of teaching was that reading held power. This was seen when the author introduced silent reading to the class. Silent reading symbolizes a transformative power, the power to let your mind escape your reality . The author was convinced she can make a difference in the lives of her students.The word calling and vocation are very similar.The word vocation refers to a job or occupation that someone while a calling refers to Someone seeing what they should be doing or want to be doing.I believed the author falls into a calling camp because during a TedTalk in 2019 Michelle Kuo stated that she received an opportunity to become a lawyer and move away from Delta , Mississippi. Michelle Kuo then

graduated from law school and came back to help Patrick's case. Before making this decision a voice told her to come back after visiting Patrick for the first time in prison. In my opinion this was Michelle Kuo's conscience. A conscience in which it is placed within us and created by God. Therefore I believe Michelle Kuo falls into a calling camp. The voice as she mentioned was so strong that she knew it was the right thing to do. Michelle calling was exactly clear therefore she left teaching to pursue her career in law. She was able to complete her degree yet she was called back to finish her original plan. "Your true calling in life is using the talents and gifts that God has endowed you with to do great things for His Kingdom and in the lives of others" Michelle Kuo's calling allowed her to use her gift teaching to change and touch children's lives especially Patrick's.

Some of Patrick's challenges in life was that he had been held back for in school, as well as his battle with absenteeism, he sat in the back at class very quite and staying to himself. Patrick faces challenges such as growing up African American in a society that offers little to no support to help you succeed. Patrick is exposed to drug abuse, dysfunctional families, long histories of poverty, and a educational and legal systems that is not designed for him to progress in life. Patrick's assets in life is that he is humble, he has a fanstic taste in reading, authors such as Langston Hughes catch his attention. Patrick also has a natural gift of writing. Through Patrick's whole life he has seen progression and regressing. His success can only be measured personality and subjectively. He is caring and loving, he works hard and loves his family especially his mother and daughter. Through these qualities Patrick's life can be seen as successful because he is not bitter about the hand that life has dealt him instead he remains focused and grounded.

The overall is inspiring both personally and professionally. My take personally that I would like to apply to my own teaching philosophy is the cliché saying "never give up". Michelle Kuo really embodied the phrase of never giving up. Even when her own colleagues in did agree with her teaching style and her students showed no interest in her lessons she never gave up on herself and most importantly she never gave up on her students. Michele stuck to her love for reading and continued to introduce books and poems to the students despite their interest she knew the students held more purpose then they themselves believed therofroe it was important thatthey knew about their historical ancestors, it was important that they knew they

came from slavery and yet with the odds against them for hundreds of years they still have the power to overcome, this is why she instructed them to learn about African American figures who have paved the way for them. As a teacher she realized she also realized as a teacher she has to be flexible, meeting children where they are and working with them from that point out. The professional take away that i would use in my class is the silent reading. Before reading the book I never thought of silent reading as such transformative power. Growing up silent reading to me was more of a punishment it seemed liked. While reading the book I discovered that silent reading holds power. The way I was able to watch silent reading transform the class then transform Patrick while being incarcerated was beyond astonishing. In a way silent reading held the students captive but in a way that was positive it allowed students to concentrate and become absorbed in a world beyond their own. I would like to introduce silent reading to my students and use that time to walk around the classroom to take a few minutes each day to work with a student independently on a comprehensive skill. I would allow the student to pick any book of their choice but I would make a conscious effort to have books in the classroom library that held meaning ranging from different reading levels. The purpose of the different reading levels is because I would want students to feel comfortable reading at a stage where they feel most comfortable. Then with my daily individual engagement i would take note of the levels each individual student is reading at then build their fluency and reading comprehension skills from there.

Reference:

Nelson, S. (2020, December 24). How To Find Your Calling From God. Retrieved January 07, 2021, from <https://www.womanofnoblecharacter.com/calling-from-god/>