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I was pleasantly surprised that out all the questions that I asked, only one question was not answered. To not put a ton of pressure on the teachers and administrators that I was interviewing, I told them from the very beginning that they only had to answer the questions that they were comfortable with answering. To save time the three people that I interviewed in the building thought it would be a good idea to answer the questions in one big group, since there are two other Cardinal Stritch students right now at Stormonth Elementary. Actually, having everyone sit down in one big group was beneficial because then I could see how the three professionals within the building work together and see how their answers either matched or differed. Surprisingly, all of their answers matched and really they only supported each other’s answers by adding to one’s thought or ideas. From what I have seen in the few weeks that I have been at Stormonth, there really is a sense of comradery amongst the teachers and administrators within the building which is really refreshing to see.

Out of all the questions that I asked them, the first one that I asked was the one that hit home for me, “What implications does this have on students learning in the classroom?” All three professional answered, “That the biggest disadvantage that the bused in kids have is their background knowledge.” They said, “That the majority of the students who participate in RTI are kids that get bused in.” Throughout my semesters at Stritch, every professor of mine has stressed the importance of background knowledge and how detrimental it is if a student’s background knowledge is lacking. I always knew that my professors were right, but it’s nice to see the results in the real world.

I was once again shocked when all three professionals answered the second question I that asked, “What “funds of knowledge” have you gained from your student’s families?” For some reason I thought they were not going to have anything to respond with, but they ended up surprising me. They informed me, “That they receive so much parent involvement that it can be a burden sometimes.” There are quite a bit of students who have been diagnosed with having Autism at Stormonth and the students’ parents are extremely active in their children’s education. For example, there is one parent that will scan in whole books for teachers to read via email. There is also another parent who has paid for a trip for a teacher to attend a conference with them regarding Autism. I have never heard of anything like this happening at a school before. I was glad to see that these parents are taking so much interest in their children’s education, but for the teachers they said, “It gets very overwhelming and sometimes it hard for them to do their jobs.”

In terms of the school promoting cultural awareness throughout the school, they really don’t do that according to my interviewees. They said, “That they have a very high Jewish population so culture is not really addressed at the school. They don’t use the word “Christmas” around the holiday time either. Although, they did say, “That cultural is addressed within the individual classrooms.” For example, right now first grade is doing a unit on the Chinese New Year. The school even goes as far as recognizing Jewish holidays by not sending any homework home during those times. On top of not sending home homework, students will also get off for Jewish holidays.

Right now Stormonth is working on meeting the needs of the 21st century student by implementing technology. As of right now, all first grade classrooms have a SMART Board within their classrooms. The special education department is currently a part of an iPad pilot program that issues iPad’s to all students with special needs and all the special education teachers. I have seen the iPad program in action and I can say that it works wonders for the students who have been diagnosed with Autism. I have seen how the iPad helps them communicate, keeps them organized, and most of all keeps them calm and at peace. The iPad’s have done wonders for the teachers. The teachers are able to communicate with parents fast and easy with the iPad’s. From what I’ve seen in classrooms today, most parents prefer to communicate via email because most of them have smartphones. Just the other week, my special education cooperative teacher contacted a parent because of a student who was out of control and sick and needed to go home. The parent was at Stormonth within the hour to pick up their child. From what I have seen at Stormonth, I can say that they are well on their way to meeting the needs of their 21st century students.

On top of being surprised by some of the answers to my questions, I also learned something new. When I asked my interviewees if they provide outreach services through the school, I learned that teachers have to be careful what they recommend to parents. If a teacher recommends a service to a parent, the parent then can turn around during the student IEP and say that the teacher recommended that and then the school would have to pay for whatever service that was recommended. No one ever told me that before. I think that is something all future teachers should know about. I can only imagine how much trouble you would get into if you recommend a service that would cost the district thousands of dollars. The teachers I interviewed said, “That if they were to even suggest something,” “They could leave information out on a table that would be suggestions for parents to look at and look into on their own.” Even though the teachers at Stormonth don’t make recommendations, they did start a summer pilot program. This last summer they rented the special education room from the school and privately were paid by the parents to take their students throughout the summer on weekly field trips. According to the special education teachers, it was very beneficial for the students to continue on a similar schedule that they do throughout the school year.

Overall, after interviewing the professionals at Stormonth Elementary, I would say the students, teachers, and administrators are all culturally proficient. All teachers within their classroom expose their students to various cultures through lesson and units. The school itself has a “No Put Down” curriculum that promotes respect, appropriate language, and all students have to sign a social contract that they are held to up hold. One of the reasons why students at Stormonth are so culturally proficient is because Stormonth is a very inclusive school. Students are exposed to students with special needs as soon as kindergarten and are with those students throughout their entire school career. Students end up being advocates for the students with special needs that are at their school.