

Initially, I answered that the problems in the Jim Colbert case were that the school's location is unsafe, a language barrier exists between Carlos's parents and Jim, Carlos rarely receives homework assistance at home, Carlos's reading group may be too advanced for him, and Jim has too few allies in his school. I would now add that the largest problem of the entire case is that Jim did not use the resources available to him to the best of his ability. Jim did speak frequently with Paul, a fellow teacher, and enlist the help of Mrs. Rush, a floating aide, for as long as she was available. However, Jim should have put forth much more effort toward finding someone to help Carlos improve his phonics and spelling scores.

Although this case study does mention that Jim asked the principal why Carlos was placed in the 3-A class, it does not state anywhere that Jim specifically talked with either the principal or assistant principal (if there was one in his school) about the difficulties he was encountering with Carlos. Both of these people would have most likely been able to offer an ample amount of suggestions. Generally, principals are highly qualified people who have a vast amount of knowledge about problems that arise in schools. It is possible that Jim's principal may have even dealt with a similar occurrence and was successful at making the situation better for everyone involved. In addition, I believe that the principal would have appreciated knowing what was currently happening in Jim's classroom.

In *Social Class Difference in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital*, Annette Lareau describes middle and working class culture. On page eighty two, Laurette says, "Middle-class culture provides parents with more information about schooling and promotes social ties among parents in the school community. This furthers the interdependence between home and school. Working-class culture, on the other hand, emphasizes kinship and promotes independence between the spheres of family life and schooling." It is evident from the

information Jim divulges about Carlos's parents that he believes them to come from working-class culture. It is unfortunate that Jim makes assumptions such as these because he does not have enough information to do so. Making assumptions about Carlos's parents further negates the situation as well as makes conversation between Carlos's parents and Jim more difficult than necessary.

Another possibility could have been for Jim to speak with someone in the faculty of his school or community who was a fluent speaker of Spanish. He could have used this person as a resource to help facilitate communication between Carlos' parents and himself in a conference. Alternatively, Jim could have also tried to get in touch with Carlos's sister. Regardless of which family members Jim was able to come in contact with, a conference would have allowed Jim the opportunity to voice his concerns about Carlos's progress in spelling and phonics. In retrospect, I believe I overlooked how large a problem it was that Jim did not use the aforementioned resources to his advantage.

1) Which problems are within Jim's control? Why? Which are outside of his control? Why?

It is important to remember that while some of the problems that arise in this case are within Jim's control, others are not. I initially answered that Jim is able to control amount of allies he has in the school, which I view to be very few. I also said that Carlos' reading group is a factor that Jim can control. I would now add that he can also control his attitude. Jim's attitude is a feature of this case that only he has the power to manage. Similar to most things that happen in life, a positive and upbeat attitude will get a person closer to a solution than being negative.

I initially answered that Jim cannot be held accountable for the fact that the school's location is not in a safe area, that Carlos' parents speak only Spanish, and that Carlos receives limited assistance with his homework at home. These aspects of the case are simply reality and

Jim is not able to influence them. I would now add that he is also unable to control the fact that a problem has arisen in his classroom. His student, Carlos, is struggling in spelling and phonics. This is now Jim's reality and he must strategize ways for Carlos to be more successful.

2) What are Jim's strengths as a teacher? What are his weaknesses?

Initially, I answered, "Jim is organized, passionate and concerned about the welfare of Carlos. He wants Carlos to do better and is willing to try different strategies." Looking back, I do still think that Jim is concerned about the well being of Carlos. However, a truly dedicated teacher would have pushed himself as hard as he or she could to solve the problem that he encountered with Carlos. I cannot say that I believe Jim was truly dedicated to solving the problems he had with Carlos. He is far from exhausting all possible ways to that could lead to solving Carlos's spelling and phonics issues.

In terms of his weaknesses, I initially said, "Jim appears to have given up at the end of the excerpt. Has he really exhausted every last resource that could possibly be available to him? Did he speak with the school principal and other teachers?" I still feel Jim gave up for many reasons. He seemed to be giving up on Carlos by not speaking with everyone he possibly could to seek help from. He didn't seem to believe in himself at the end either. If he did, he would have been much more confident that he would figure out a way to make the situation better. Finally, a weakness of Jim's was that he tried to solve the problem he had with Carlos by asking him to do book reports every night. While I do believe that it could be a good strategy to immerse Carlos in print, requiring him to complete a book report each night will likely have a negative effect. Daily extra assignments might further frustrate Carlos and cause him to lose interest in improving his spelling and phonics achievement.

I believe there are several accommodations that Jim could have made to get Carlos on the right track. After Jim finds out that Carlos has stopped attending the after school tutoring sessions, Jim should have questioned Carlos to see why those sessions did not work out. Jim also could have offered to tutor Carlos himself, either before or after school. I do not think that Jim realizes how important it is to be flexible for his students and accommodate them in any way possible.

4) What are Carlos's strengths as a student? What are his weaknesses?

I think it is essential to keep in mind that Carlos is only in third grade. He is a young child who is most likely unable to grasp what sort of impact learning English well will have on his future. I initially thought that, "Carlos tries hard most of the time and uses the dictionary at home when Jim tells him to." I would now add that specifically, Carlos's strengths include reading comprehension, math and that he has a desire to learn.

Carlos's weaknesses are that he finds great difficulty in spelling and phonics. In addition, I thought a weakness on Carlos' part may have been that he did not ask his sister to provide more opportunities for him to practice English. However, I noted that he may be too young to take the initiative to do this. When I look back on this question, I now feel very strongly that that would be something that Jim, the teacher, should have taken the initiative to do. Carlos' sister is a great resource and she is a person could also be very concerned about the educational well being of Carlos. She would be an excellent person to provide Carlos with opportunities and assistance in learning English.

5) How has Jim opted to respond to the problems that arise in this case? How would you evaluate his response?

When I first looked at the case, I responded that he frequently speaks with Paul, a fellow teacher at his school. I also said that he tries other methods with Carlos when he finds that a particular one is not working. I believe that I neglected to add that he does try to fix some of Carlos' problems by looking at his past educational history, speaking to one of his old teachers, and enlisting the help of Mrs. Rush, an aide who works in the building. However, I still maintain that I do not think Jim did everything he could to help Carlos.

When asked how I would evaluate Jim's response, I initially said that I thought he seemed disappointed that he was working so hard for Carlos and nothing appeared to be working. I would now characterize Jim's response as being caught up in a hopeless mentality. While it is clear to me that Jim has not exhausted all possible solutions, Jim in actuality believes that he has. At the end of the case, he is stuck in a rut because he has a bad attitude about the situation and he has no game plan of what to do next. I think it is very unfortunate that the excerpt of the case ends this way.

- 6) What resources does Jim have available for his use? Which does he use to his teaching advantage? Which does he fail to use? How would you evaluate his use of resources?

One of the resources that Jim has available for his use is Mrs. Rush, a retired school teacher who now works in his school as a floating aide. She is able to provide some assistance to Carlos for a period of time, but then must stop because school funding is cut and there is no longer any money available to pay her. Jim uses her to his advantage during the time that she works with Carlos. Jim also talks to Paul, a fellow teacher, who appears to offer some support and suggestions to Jim. It would seem that Jim would have more allies within the school in which he works who would also be able to offer additional support and suggestions to him.

While he uses Mrs. Rush and Paul to his advantage, I strongly feel that he was very lackadaisical in his approach to seek the help of others in the school. Jim fails to use the school principal, guidance counselors, and other teachers at the school. I would add to my initial answer that Jim could have also asked a school social worker, English as a second language teacher, and possibly even a speech teacher for assistance, given that they were employed at his school.

I would evaluate his use of resources as half baked. His effort seems to decline when Mrs. Rush leaves the school. Jim should have stretched himself to see the possibilities that could have greatly impacted Carlos's learning, had they been taken advantage of. Jim should know that as a teacher, he must work diligently to solve problems until they are successfully taken care of.

7) What else should Jim do at this point and why?

When I first responded to this question, I said that Jim should somehow speak with Carlos's parents and sister, as well as speak to the principal and other teachers in the school. In retrospect, I think I should have been more adamant in expressing how essential it is that Jim follows through with this. It is clear by Jim's comments at the end of the excerpt that he does not know what to do next. Seeking the help of others is the only way that Carlos will be able to improve his spelling and phonics scores.

I would now say that if I were in Jim Colbert's shoes, there are several steps I would take in an effort to help Carlos become a more successful student. First, I would see if I was able to come in contact with the teacher of Carlos' "average second-grade class". I think that anyone who had Carlos as a student should be able to offer some type of input. Whether the input is suggestions for strategies that have worked in the past, or filling Jim in on Carlos' previous educational background, it is clear that any information would be helpful. To come in contact with this previous teacher, I would talk with the secretaries in the school office to see if they had

any phone numbers, addresses, or the name of the school where he or she currently works. If they are unable to provide any contact information, I would ask them which teachers taught at the school when he or she was employed there. It is possible that one of the teachers still currently on staff has kept up with that teacher. If all of those ideas led to dead ends, I would move on. Although it would be great to hear what he or she had to say about Carlos, there are still other ways to figure out how to proceed.

I would next try to schedule a conference with Carlos's family and Jim. Whether it included his parents or his sister, any family member that was present would indicate that they are concerned about Carlos's status in school. If Carlos's parents attended the conference without his sister, Jim should find someone who is available to translate during the time that they meet. During the conference, Jim would have the chance to speak about the trouble that Carlos is encountering and voice his concerns about Carlos's well being. He would also be able to see if anyone might be available to assist him more at home, or if they can offer any suggestions that would help the current situation.

Finally, Jim should make a great effort to connect more with the faculty and staff at his school. I think that Jim would find it very important to surround himself by others who share a common background. He would find that it will be helpful to have people to turn to when questions or problems arise, such as what he is encountering with Carlos. I believe that he will ultimately find that allies can be used for support and guidance during the times he needs it most. If he was able to create a group of allies within his school community, he would see what a wonderful tool they can be to help ease and enrich the classroom teaching experience.

I am deeply saddened by Jim's final remarks in this case study. Jim said, "I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't know how we can expect Carlos's reading and writing skills to

improve, given the reality of his life and the limited resources here. I just don't know what to do to help him." Jim may have in fact answered his own questions in that statement. It may be very well that Jim himself does not know how to help Carlos. However, this is not the first situation that where a child and teacher encounter a language barrier and it is to the student's detriment. There are people whose jobs specifically train them to deal with these sorts of issues. Jim should have searched high and low until he found someone that was knowledgeable to help him. I believe it is likely that if he had simply talked to a few teachers in the school, someone would have either been able to help him or steer him in the right direction.

In addition, what is even equally frustrating in Jim's comment is the fact that he practically says that he is giving up. While Carlos's circumstances may be unfortunate, they are reality. Jim's negative attitude is likely to cause further frustration for both Carlos and himself, in combination with not helping Carlos's spelling and phonics skills to improve.