

Certain Proof: A Question of Worth

Discussion Guide



Icebreaker...

1. Dr. Karen Erickson dreams of a world where there are no special education classrooms. Would this be possible at your school? What changes would have to be made?
2. Were there scenes or moments in the film that resonated with your own experiences? Which ones? Why?
3. Which character in the film did you most identify with? Why?
4. Where would Josh, Colin and Kay be placed if they were students in your school?
5. In your opinion, should children with disabilities be expected to provide proof of what they are capable of before gaining access to a general education classroom? How does this change as the child ages?



Josh



1. At the beginning of the film, Josh is 6 years old and is assigned to a special needs classroom. Why do you think he wasn't in a typical kindergarten classroom?
2. What were your immediate reactions to Josh? In what ways did he need to 'prove' himself to you?
3. From very early on, Dawn believes that Josh isn't performing in the classroom because he is bored. After watching the film, do you agree or disagree with this assessment?
4. Why do you think Josh was able to communicate with the therapists at UNC, but not consistently with his teachers?
5. Why is having a clear 'yes'/'no' an important first step in teaching any child with communication challenges? Why do you think it took Josh until he was 9 years old to have a 'consistent' yes/no response?



Colin



1. Deby reminded us that Colin has to learn to do everything in his head (reading, spelling, math, etc.). How would this fact about Colin challenge you as a teacher and what would you do to accommodate for that fact?
2. How does the use of technology, such as a Dynavox, change the pace of communication? How much does pace influence your opinion of whether or not a child is competent?
3. When the pace of the classroom becomes overwhelming for a child with disabilities, what would you do? What are your concerns about differentiating curriculum for students with special needs?



4. Deby, Colin's mother, feels as though she has been forced to lower her expectations for her son because his education will no longer result in a path to college. What do you think were the barriers for Colin and could he have had a different outcome?
5. What skills does Colin need to be successful in the world academically, socially and emotionally?

Kay

1. How much does Kay benefit from being able to speak, even if not everyone can understand her? What do you think her experience would have been like without this ability?
2. Sandy quit her job to become a fulltime mother and advocate for Kay. How much do you believe a mother's involvement affects the child's outcome?
3. Despite being able to maintain an 'A' average, Kay was frustrated by the amount of homework she had every night. What, as her teacher, might you have done to support her?
4. How has Kay benefited from being in a typical classroom? How have her teachers and classmates benefited?

