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Philosophy of Special Education

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### Hakuna Matata

When I have the opportunity to shape the minds of our country's children, I pray I do so with an understanding heart and with their best interest uppermost in my mind. I believe that all children, no matter their ability, can learn if they have the right tools and are placed in the right setting. I and many others will play an important role in helping them reach their goals.

I have the opportunity to teach hundreds, if not thousands, of children over the rest of my life. I know that all children, no matter the disabilities they may have, can learn. That is not to say that it will be as easy as it can be for students without disabilities. Not only will the student have to actively try to learn the educational material, but also their teachers will have to put forth the effort to teach them in an acceptable way. As a regular classroom teacher, I plan on putting forth the effort to teach all my students in ways that help them to succeed. I will have been given the task of providing students with the tools necessary to learn and build a strong foundation for their school years to come.

I have the opportunity to teach students that face obstacles in many areas of their lives because of a disability. As teachers, it is the job of others and myself to include instructional strategies in our lessons to help them overcome the difficulties they face. I believe these obstacles can be used to build strong foundations for the child to grow. One obstacle they face is

dealing with the stigma that comes with having a disability. I want my classroom to be a safe place for all of my students. One way I will accomplish that is by being aware of my student's needs. For example, if I know that one of my students needs more time to process questions and answers, I will make a mental note telling myself not to put them on the spot in front of the class.

I have the opportunity to help students learn in the best setting to help them reach their goals. I believe the comfort of the child is an important thing to be taken into consideration when making decisions as to where and how the student receives their education. If being in a classroom with students that may answer questions faster or judge the student based on their disability would be a source of stress, it may not be beneficial for the student to be in the classroom full time. However, those on the child's IEP team should not base a child's placement on this factor alone. Other factors to consider are the long term goal for the child and the ability of the teachers. IDEA requires that students with disabilities are given a free and appropriate public education. The definition of appropriate changes with each student and can even change overtime with the same child. I believe the factors I mentioned above and others I have yet to realize, will play a part in the decisions of what is appropriate.

I have the opportunity to play an important role in the education of elementary students. The most important role performed by the special education teacher is being an advocate for the disabled student. I think this encompasses all of their roles as they must do what is best for the student, keep the parents involved and make sure the student is learning in an appropriate way as described in IDEA. The role of a regular classroom teacher is to support the student in the way that has been deemed best for them. This can be done in many ways by being aware of the student's IEP, adjusting lessons, and being open to parent involvement.

I pray that I continue to expand my knowledge and grow my ability to teach children in an appropriate way that sets them up for success in the rest of their life endeavors. Like The Lion King, I hope this will be my problem free philosophy, hakuna matata.