The article, "First, Discover Their Strengths" published in *Educational Leadership* in October 2012 was written by Thomas Armstrong. The article talks about neurodiversity and positive niches. Neurodiversity is a positive way to think about kids with learning disorders or special needs. These kids are simply people whose brains are wired a little differently. When looking at a child with ADHD or ASD as a child who is different neurologically, it becomes a matter of diversity in which there are many ways to tailor a classroom. This is where "positive niches" come in. A positive niche is basically an environment that emphasizes strengths. The article briefly describes seven different ways to construct this strength-focused environment: strength awareness, positive role models, universal design for learning, strength-based learning strategies, enhanced human resources, affirmative career aspirations, and environmental modifications.

Just like the title says, first discover their strengths. A child with autism may be able to focus on details while a child with ADHD likes seeing the big picture. If a teacher knows these things, it becomes easier to create an effective lesson plan thereby using strength-based learning strategies. All children need positive role models, and they doesn't always have to be an adult. A student who excels in reading could be paired with a special needs student who needs the assistance. "Universal Design for Learning refers to the process of removing barriers to learning for students with disabilities in ways that also enhance everybody's capacity to learn" (Armstrong 14). This could include the use of assistive technology. The last three items are fairly self-explanatory. It's important for kids — no matter who they are — to have good, positive relationships and something

to aspire to. A safe place for an autistic child to calm down or an assigned activity for a kid with ADHD to do are good examples of ways to modify a student's environment.

"Neurodiversity: accepting autistic difference" focuses on an autistic person's rights as a "service user." It's written by Thomas Owren and Trude Stenhammer and was published May 2013 in *Learning Disability Practice,* a journal for professionals working with people with learning disabilities. The article advocates for people with autism to be called autistic people and that they simply have a different mind where others may have different skin color or sexual orientation. Autism is a form of diversity not deficiency. This article also talks about universal design as a way for autistic people to become more involved in society.

The authors address an issue called indirect discrimination. "Indirect discrimination can happen 'when there is a rule, a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but which disadvantages people with a particular disability' (Government Equality Offices 2010)" (Owren 36). Problems that may arise include challenging behavior, sensory overload, differences in self-expression, as well as preconceptions and expectations on the part of the staff.

Both of these articles further supported the ideas that were presented in class by Devin from ASCEND. Autism is not a disorder but a difference, another diversity to be addressed within a general classroom just like a different culture. The ways to build a positive environment can be included not only in the classroom but also at home. The idea of strength-based learning is most important to me. It's the way I wish to teach no matter what type of students I have in my class.

To address issues of diversity — neural or otherwise — the seven ideas on how to build a positive niche are a great start. Having a separate, quiet place for an autistic student to calm down is wonderful and should be easy enough to accommodate. Procedures within the classroom which address a variety of different needs can also help make things run more smoothly. Overall, I found both articles very interesting and great steps towards recognizing another type of diversity to account for in the classroom.