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Nature's Warrior



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Cover Sculpture

Brianna Flatfoot
Grade 12 student at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, Brandon

Artist's Description:

Nature's resources were used to heal and survive the developing world. A warrior set out to find peace within nature, finding medicines, food, and shelter to maintain his way of living. Once the settlers became a part of his world, he discovered his capacity for war, not only to protect his tribe but to protect his lands. With his face painted, the handprint represents the motion to "stop" the destruction of the land.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the ninth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 5, issue 1, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. I thank these educators for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of Manitoba-based articles that examine best practices in teaching.

- Sherryl Maglione's research report describes her journey toward teaching excellence via autoethnography as a female Aboriginal educator.
- Shirley Kilbride's refereed article celebrates the benefits of after-school programming for Aboriginal children.
- Rebecca Gray's refereed article applies the Restitution model to staff development.
- Reneta Angus's refereed article explains the role that storytelling plays in digital narrative counselling.
- Vanessa Rigaux's refereed article extols the virtue of student-centred learning as a catalyst for empowerment and social change.
- Karen Hargreaves' refereed article examines the lessons learned from delivering post-secondary programming in Aboriginal communities
- Amy Johnas's refereed article considers teaching approaches for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Blessing Emadedor's opinion paper reflects on his experiences as an international student from Nigeria.

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with projects and theses in 2012.

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RESEARCH REPORT

The Journey of an Aboriginal Teacher: Imagining and Living the Potential of Excellence Through Service

Sherryl Maglione

As an Aboriginal educator, teaching Aboriginal students has, over time and very simply, become my focus, passion, and life's work. My life's journey as an Aboriginal educator, through service to others, has been professionally and personally fulfilling, and is yet evolving. For instance, as my intertwined educational and life's journey progresses, I become more aware of the magnitude of wrongs that exist in the history and in the ongoing legacy of Aboriginal education in Canada. There is no doubt that these wrongs and deleterious effects are still evident today. These effects are most quantitatively and visibly demonstrated by the gap between Aboriginal and mainstream high school student graduation rates, post-secondary attendance numbers, and high unemployment figures among Aboriginal populations in Canada. As an Aboriginal woman whom the teaching profession has chosen, one of the critical wrongs that I am attempting to change, through my past, present, and future actions, is the legacy of residential school Aboriginal education.

I approach this task in the most humble and grateful way that will bring honour to the teaching profession and to Aboriginal youth and their education. Through engaging in positive action, creating harmonious relationships, understanding and encouraging development of their Aboriginal identity, and indigenizing the English Language Arts high school curriculum through the use of extensive First Nation resources, I am actively dedicated to facilitating hopes in my students' lives. As an Aboriginal educator, I can do no less than reaffirm my commitment, every single day, and with every interaction with students and staff, to providing the Aboriginal youth I serve and teach with positive choices that will help to build their skill set as they move past high school into adulthood. In the ethnography that comprises my thesis, I also explore the importance of relationships between the Aboriginal teacher and Aboriginal students and how *The Seven Teachings* have influenced my worldview as a Cree/Italian woman and an Aboriginal educator.

As an Aboriginal educator, I have taken and continue to take up the Creator's challenge with a dedicated heart and lifelong commitment to facilitating success for my Aboriginal students. However, my role is not only that of the teacher, but also of a student, as the students that I have met along my journey have also been my teachers. My teachers have taught me the embodiment of *The Seven Teachings*: Wisdom, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, and Love. In addition to teaching me patience, humour, and empathy, my teachers have also taught me how to understand and deal with their stress and frustration though encouraging them to try their best, approaching each challenge with a humble heart, and remaining courageous in the face of obstacles. My hope is that, through my stories about their perseverance, the reader will come away from my thesis with his or her own sense of hope for the future of Aboriginal education and Aboriginal youth in Canada.

The way that I chose to write my journey is through a series of stories that work within the First Nation paradigm of *The Seven Teachings*. The purpose of the journey, or *itohtêwin*, is not about the finished product, as my story does not necessarily follow the pattern of the traditional academic university thesis. Indeed, it can not be so and remain true to the nature of a journey, because the spirit of true storytelling is not logical and analytical in nature. First Nation people tell stories that wind their way here and there, around and about, and under and through. What one person learns from the story may not be what another person learns. Storytelling is an ancient oral and cultural tradition throughout the world and a way that First Nation people were

able to perpetuate and strengthen their culture before written traditions became available to them.

What I want my readers to understand is that to know my story is not enough. What is important to me is what the reader does with that knowledge. It is how the reader comes away from the story changed in some way that matters to me. It is what the reader can share with others about my story that matters to me. The stories that I share in my thesis reflect and represent the nature of traditional storytelling and the nature of Aboriginal learning itself.

Through the narrative inquiry that is framed around my experience, the nature of story and *The Seven Teachings*, I discover, reflect, and discuss the process of finding my own fit as an Aboriginal woman and educator. In my thesis I also write of the challenges inherent in the journey of being an Aboriginal teacher whose main purpose is, through *miyopimatisowin*, which means practicing a good way of living. Living in a good way means serving my First Nation students by helping them to create hope and build dreams for their future. It is my dedicated intent as an Aboriginal educator, through service, to help my students uncover and discover their dreams in order that they will be able to live a wonderful life for themselves and their children and grandchildren. *Ekosi!*

In the last chapter of my thesis, I describe what an excellent teacher should look like and should do, with the understanding that no one can be perfect and that we all have flaws and outside pressures that may temporarily derail us in our lives. The following list describes the teacher I am striving to become:

- Have a clear personal philosophy and understanding that students should always be the first priority in a school.
- Enter the school each day with a willingness to work with parents/guardians in the best interests of their child.
- Acknowledge the importance of recognizing and respecting the dynamics of First Nation culture and language.
- Remember not to judge students and their families and life conditions.
- Be there for your students, colleagues, and administrators every day, and be on time so that they can rely on your stability as their daily touchstone.
- Provide support for Aboriginal cultural knowledge in purposeful, meaningful, and practical ways.
- Help students to plan ahead for what will happen after high school.
- Operate from the vantage point of *heartfelt service* for your students. This part of their lives is critical to the success of their adulthood.
- Do not be afraid to show your own humanity. Be an advocate for your students and never stop trying to help them find the best solutions for their challenges.
- Realize and transmit the concept that “schooling is a vehicle for social justice” (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 1998, p. 19).
- Demonstrate a willingness to accept your own flaws and work to improve them.
- Realize that a sense of humour will go a long way toward developing and sustaining relationships.
- Understand that you have a true commitment to providing your students with a quality education.
- Set behavioural guidelines and follow up with loving, humane, and kind consequences.
- Constantly learn how to become a better teacher by taking advantage of professional development opportunities and sharing this information with colleagues.
- Develop a sense of empathy for each situation that you encounter.
- Develop the ability to take constructive criticism from supervisors and colleagues in order to better your performance.

- Understand and communicate the commitment to protect the safety of the students in your school through anti-bullying initiatives, conflict resolution, and anger management workshops.
- Help students and staff with cultural education.
- Empower First Nation students through success.
- Learn from elders and community members.
- Validate and support First Nation culture.
- Become more culturally sensitive and aware of First Nation history and First Nation Issues.
- Help to create a community of learners in the school.
- Be accountable through complete familiarization with how the provincial curriculum is structured, and be creative with how it is implemented.
- Promote positive attitude toward school and learning. Get excited about learning!
- Increase student self-esteem in creative ways.
- Increase literacy rates for First Nation high school students.
- Increase retention rates for First Nation high school students.
- Increase graduation rates for First Nation high school students.
- Support the proliferation of future First Nation authors.

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About the Author

Sherryl Maglione completed the M.Ed. program at BU in 2012, with a focus on indigenizing the high school ELA curriculum. From the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, “Miss Mags” has always taught in First Nation schools. Her interests include laughing, traveling, reading, shopping, and supporting the Sioux Valley Eagles senior high school basketball team.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Aboriginal After-School Programming: It Is Time

Shirley Kilbride

Abstract

Many Aboriginal students face extraordinary challenges as they enter and move through the school system. The risk associated with poverty plays a large role in an Aboriginal child's early childhood development, including delayed cognitive and social development. As well, many Aboriginal students feel the neglect of their cultural heritage and the ability to speak their language. An after-school program designed to provide cultural and linguistic enrichment to struggling Aboriginal students would be beneficial to their social and academic success.

Existing research supports the success of after-school programs. Examining a particular social group and the factors that put them at risk is part of the process of identifying a target population for an after-school program. Poverty is one of the factors that contribute to at-risk behaviours in Aboriginal children. Poverty plays a significant role in childhood development, as its effects can last a lifetime. The education system also has a history of contributing to the disengagement of Aboriginal students. A sense of disconnection has affected academic performance and high school completion for many Aboriginal students. The loss of language and cultural heritage are also factors that contribute to at-risk behaviours. The combined factors make it easy to choose Aboriginal children as the target population for an after-school program.

After-school programming for Aboriginal children needs to start in the early years, as this is a very important period of time in the development of an individual. A stimulating environment is crucial to the brain development of young children (McCain & Mustard, 1999, as cited in Neuman, 2009). Early childhood is a time of tremendous cell growth and neural wiring in the brain, which continues through life but is at its most intense in the first three years (Neuman, 2009). Having an environment rich in language, sensory input, and social interaction helps the neural pathways to develop and grow (Preston, Cottrell, Pelletier, & Pearce, 2012).

The impact of poverty on early life is profound. Children living in poverty experience stressors that affect brain development (Neuman, 2009; Schibli & D'Angiulli, 2001). The learning and social development of a child are then affected, which in turn influence a child's ability to succeed in the school environment. In 2009, 639,000 children in Canada lived in poverty (Family Service Toronto, 2011, p. 2). Thus, 10% of Canadian children live in poverty (Family Service Toronto, 2011, p. 1; Schibli & D'Angiulli, 2001, p. 17). Given these numbers, early intervention is imperative for poverty-stricken families and children.

Early intervention for families living in poverty has become an important part of Canadian government funding and programming. Educational programs that promote early childhood development are found all over Canada (Preston et al., 2012). For example, the Aboriginal Head Start Program (AHSP) provides education, support, and care to Aboriginal children and their families. AHSP also promotes Aboriginal pedagogies and strives to incorporate Aboriginal language and culture in its programming. Despite this early intervention, many Aboriginal students still display a lack of school preparedness when they enter kindergarten.

Lack of school readiness has become an indicator of at-risk behaviours in young Aboriginal children. When the Early Development Instrument (EDI) was administered to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kindergarten children in Saskatchewan, early childhood environment was found to play a key role in the children's developmental and learning abilities (Muhajarine, 2011). Poverty, lone-parent families, crowded households, neighborhood context, and marginalization

also played key roles in the at-risk behaviours found in young Aboriginal children. When a child's life begins with such deficits, risk behaviours inevitably arise in Aboriginal children as they move into and through the school system.

Aboriginal students are more likely to experience poor nutrition, obesity, dental problems, and other health issues, and to have exposure to drugs, alcohol, abuse, and neglect (Neuman, 2009). Most poverty-ridden Aboriginal children live in neglected neighborhoods and have less access to extra-curricular activities (Forsyth & Heine, 2008). As a result of these factors, children living in poverty experience numerous learning and developmental issues (Schibli & D'Angiulli, 2001).

The effects of poverty on children have lasting consequences. Issues with prosocial and anti-social behaviours are evident early in a child's school career (Muhajarine, 2011; Wright et al., 2012). In addition, the sense of being stigmatized by poverty can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and depression (Schibli & D'Angiulli, 2001). High school dropout rates for Aboriginal students are high, resulting in low employment rates (Maclver). The poor performance of Aboriginal students in the school system needs to be examined in order to understand why students struggle.

The educational system has led to the marginalization of Aboriginal students, due to the Canadian government's attempt to assimilate Aboriginal students into mainstream society (Muhajarine, 2011; Weenie, 2008). Godlewska, Moore, and Bednasek (2010) initiated an extensive examination of the Ontario curriculum from grades 1 to 12, with the aim of finding out how well curriculum covered Aboriginal issues. They discovered that the Canadian curriculum created purposeful ignorance in the lives of Ontario students. As a result, Canadian students have very little knowledge of Aboriginal issues. Godlewska et al (2010) also found that curriculum portrayed Aboriginal life as an historical phenomenon and not a modern one. In her study of place-based learning theory, Friedel (2011) found that Aboriginal youth were inundated by stereotypical images of what it means to be Aboriginal and often resisted or rejected notions that are presented in mainstream schools. The Aboriginal heritage content within the educational field has had negative educational, social, and employment consequences for Aboriginal people in Canada.

The Canadian school system continues to deal with the issues that Aboriginal students face. The Manitoba government has attempted to remedy the ignorance surrounding Aboriginal issues by including many outcomes in the social studies curriculum document for kindergarten to Senior 4 (Manitoba Education, 2003). Studies and research projects have been initiated to try to incorporate culture-based practices and Aboriginal pedagogy into programming. When Nielsen (2009) initiated the Learning for Understanding through Culturally-Inclusive Imaginative Development (LUCID) project in British Columbia, he found that language had positive effects on cultural transmission and community wellness. Hence, to be effective, Aboriginal programming needs to include Native language and culture.

Language is a fundamental part of cultural, social, and intellectual development. It also plays an important role in the socialization of a child. One's ability to think is dependent on language acquisition, so children who read and write well experience success in school (Nielsen, 2009). Also true is the startling fact that the number of Aboriginal people with the ability to speak an Aboriginal language is in decline (Guevremont & Kohen, 2011). Language fluency affects thinking and speaking, which affects school success, socio-emotional development, and the cultural continuity of a community (Nielsen, 2009). Efforts to teach Aboriginal students their language have been undertaken in many communities around Canada (Guevremont & Kohen, 2011). Language is therefore an important part of Aboriginal programming.

Language acquisition plays a key role in cultural transmission. In the past, Aboriginal parents had a rich and traditional orality (Weenie, 2008). Children acquired cultural knowledge through various forms of meaningful stories. Experiential learning took place outside the walls of a classroom and was a significant form of learning and socialization (Friedel, 2011). Activities such as storytelling, crafts such as knitting and weaving, and traditional dancing were valued

parts of a child's education. It was through these types of activities that language transference and social connections were made (Nielsen, 2009). Experiential learning and language infusion are thus necessary means of imparting cultural heritage and Aboriginal identity (Nielsen, 2009). All of these methods of learning can be incorporated into after-school programming, to supplement the teaching time that occurs during daytime school hours.

After-school programs have become a very important part of educational programming and childhood experience. Children spend about 67 hours each week engaged in free, unstructured activities (Boys & Girls Club of Canada [BGCC], 2011, p. 3). This free time accounts for more actual time than the structured time spent in school. In their longitudinal study, Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) found that after-school programs have a positive effect on academic performance, socio-emotional development, health and wellness, and risk prevention behaviours. Getting children involved early in meaningful after-school program activities is very important for future student success.

Early intervention is very important for school success. Children experience a significant amount of developmental change between 6 and 12 years of age (BGCC, 2011). The peer relationships that children establish during this time period are especially important, as they contribute to increased self-esteem, lowered aggression, lowered adolescent delinquency, and fewer emotional problems (Wright et al., 2010). After-school programs provide the supportive and social environment that nurtures this prosocial development. Since a targeted approach is more effective when designing an after-school program (Neuman, 2009), Aboriginal children benefit from an after-school program that focuses on their particular needs, including their needs for positive social interaction.

An after-school program that focuses on Aboriginal children and their families is one strategy that can help to minimize the risk factors associated with Aboriginal poverty and low academic achievement. The inclusion of family in an after-school program is very significant (Little et al., 2008). The success of any programming depends upon community support. In order to procure community support, there must be concerted effort to understand the targeted community (Nielsen, 2009). Friedel (2011) suggested that Aboriginal people desired more involvement in non-formal education programs for their children. For the success of a culturally-based after-school program, parental involvement needs to be built into the program from its inception (Fashola, 2002). With this understanding in mind, the inclusion of families in the organization of cultural activities, such as feasts, cultural dances, and sweats, are required elements.

After-school programs have greater success if they involve the community. The support of Aboriginal mentors is a significant factor in the success of the Rec and Read Mentor program in Winnipeg (Johnson & Halas, 2011). The success of this program has been credited to the mentorship provided to Aboriginal children by Aboriginal youth. Friedel (2011) also recommended that Aboriginal youth become more involved in the restoration of Aboriginal culture and language. Through the inclusion of mentorship opportunities built into after-school programming, Aboriginal students have the opportunity to be leaders as well as learners (Johnson & Halas, 2011). Opportunities to lead and to actively participate in an after-school program has positive effects on the youth involved (BGCC, 2011). MacIcver (2012) found that an investment in culturally engaging curriculum content, along with positive relationships with adults and teachers, can have an influence on Aboriginal student's completion of high school. Aboriginal children and youth need to have opportunities to socialize in positive ways, to experience leadership, and to reconnect with their cultural heritage, in order to break the cycle of poverty and dysfunction.

Aboriginal children are a marginalized group who experience poverty and the associated risk factors. Risk factors begin early in their lives and continue throughout their developing years. Having a program that begins in the early stages of a child's school career is crucial to building the prosocial behaviours, academic skills, and cultural and linguistic identity that Aboriginal students need for positive development. After-school programs are one way to

engage Aboriginal students, in order to engender the feelings of belonging and achievement necessary for high school and post-secondary success.

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Shirley Kilbride is currently enrolled in the curriculum and instruction stream of the graduate studies program at Brandon University. She is a teacher with the Brandon School Division. She is married with two grown children and two grandchildren. She enjoys reading and sharing her love of books with others.

Application of the Restitution Model to Staff Development

Rebecca Gray

Abstract

Staff development is most effective when undertaken in a supportive and respectful environment that promotes self-evaluation. These same principles are the basis of the Restitution model, which was created to provide specific direction for school staff in working effectively with students to address behaviour concerns. This model can be adapted to provide concrete steps for administrators to take when working with staff, thus ensuring that the ideal conditions are created for staff members to develop to their fullest potential.

The development of a skilled and collaborative staff team is a primary administrative concern in schools. Unfortunately, the practices that have historically been used in supervising and evaluating staff may not foster this desired outcome. While there are identified leadership qualities that are effective in assisting staff members to develop their capacity, a model that could be used by administrators in evaluation and problem-solving would provide specific and concrete direction for working with staff. Restitution is a model that was developed to provide teachers with specific steps to take in working with children to solve problems, build relationships, encourage self-evaluation, and strengthen skills. Because the basic principles of the Restitution model are identical with those that have been identified as important in an effective leadership approach, the model could be adapted to provide a structured format for administrators to take when working with staff.

The traditional approach to managing staff is based on external motivation (William Glasser Institute, 2010). The supervisor's role in this approach is to set the expectations for staff members, and evaluate their performance in meeting these expectations. When an individual meets expectations, he or she receives a reward; when expectations are not met, punishments are provided. The belief behind the traditional approach is that personal motivation comes from an individual seeking to acquire rewards and avoid punishments, and that without these motivators, people would be lazy and ineffective in their work (Pink, 2009). Part of the supervisor's role in this approach is to provide motivation for staff members.

The traditional approach is hierarchical because the supervisor has the power to make and enforce decisions. Information generally flows in one direction: from the supervisor down to the rest of the staff. Despite the significant problems with using this approach, it continues to be one that is valued in schools today (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008). There is a perception that assertiveness, decisiveness, and powerful are traits that a leader requires in order to be an effective administrator.

There are flaws in applying external motivation and top-down management to Canadian schooling contexts. When external motivators are the focus, dishonesty may be bred as people attempt to hide their deficiencies. They may take credit for things that others have done, or blame others for mistakes that they have made. In this type of environment, co-workers are seen as competition, and cooperation and teamwork may suffer as a result (Brown & Gossen, 2011). People may become hesitant to take risks or try anything new for fear of failing and being judged (Starr, 2011). Thus, creativity and high achievement may be stifled (Dweck, 2006; Pink, 2009). Ironically, the very factors that many people believe are key to creating motivation, in fact, have been shown to result in the exact opposite outcome.

An additional problem with external motivation is that it requires supervision to be successful. When people are behind closed doors, and no one is there to judge them, they will act in whatever way they choose, not necessarily in the manner set forth by the administrator (Khoboli & O'toole, 2011). In contrast, when people decide for themselves that they want to

behave in a certain way, they do not require supervision, as they are internally motivated to reach specific goals.

When administrators take on the role of boss and evaluator, it creates a hierarchy within the team. Those with less power frequently feel that they have no voice, which creates an “us versus them” division between administration and teachers (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008, p. 127; Starr, 2011, p. 656). Unless all members of a team feel valued and respected, there is a great risk that potential will be lost due to the hesitancy of the less powerful people in sharing their ideas and opinions, and the administrator being closed to hearing those ideas and opinions. When people feel coerced by others, such as when an administrator makes decisions without input from the rest of the team, the natural reaction is open resistance (Brown & Gossen, 2011; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008; Starr, 2011). People do not produce their best work when they are working in an environment that they feel is not respectful of their needs (Pierce, 2007). Thus, the top-down management approach results not only in good ideas not being brought forward, but also in staff members undermining what could be a good idea because they were not involved in the process of developing a plan.

A different approach to management has emerged due to the problems with traditional leadership. In this approach, there is recognition that people perform best when they are in a supportive, caring environment, not one that is filled with fear (“Maslow’s Hierarchy,” n.d.). Instead of the administrator being at the top of the hierarchy and telling people what to do, this type of manager believes that there are multiple ways to solve problems, and that by eliciting the perspectives of different people, not only will better decisions be made, but staff members will feel more valued and engaged in their work (Khoboli & O’toole, 2011; Pink, 2009; Starr, 2011). The focus becomes one of building on people’s strengths as opposed to confronting them on their weaknesses (William Glasser Institute, 2010). When individuals feel that they are valued and that others recognise the strengths they bring to their work, a sense of team is created. The administrator’s role in this approach is to facilitate learning and sharing, building relationships within the team, and creating common, shared values and vision (Piggot-Irvine, 2010; Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Instead of the focus being on the use of external factors, such as punishments or rewards, the focus is on helping people to self-evaluate, to reflect on their own personal values and beliefs, and to do their best work because they are internally motivated to do so.

Under this type of management, problems and mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning and growth. People are encouraged to be creative, take risks, and try new things without fear of being judged (Wise & Jacobo, 2012). Instead of giving up and feeling hopeless when things do not work out, challenges are seen as part of a learning process, and not failures (Heath & Heath, 2010). Staff members are more likely to stay motivated and feel positive, even when faced with difficult circumstances.

The difficulty for many administrators is that this type of management does not come naturally. Most people are very familiar with the traditional management model, having experienced it themselves in schools and workplaces. Although administrators may express a desire to work in a collaborative and supportive workplace, the specific skills for creating such an environment may be foreign to them.

The Restitution model was developed to give teachers direction in creating a supportive environment wherein children can learn from mistakes and reflect on their personal values and beliefs in order to find the internal motivation to reach their fullest potential (Brown & Gossen, 2011). In order to achieve these outcomes, the model identifies three specific steps to take: stabilize the identity, validate the individual’s needs, and encourage the examination of the personal beliefs and values that are important to the individual. Because effective leaders desire to create the same environment for their employees as Restitution aims to create for children, it follows that the use of these same strategies may provide direction for administrators in their work with staff.

The first step in the Restitution process is stabilizing the identity (Gossen, 2004). When people are asked why they are doing things the way that they are, or are asked to consider changing, it is natural that they may become defensive, and feel that they are being criticized. When people realize that there is a better approach to take than the one that has been utilized, they may feel guilty about having not done their best work. The step of stabilizing the identity reinforces to the individual that not being perfect is not an indication of inadequacy, but is simply a part of life, and that making mistakes can provide an opportunity to learn. If an open, low defensive and high trust environment does not exist, the process of evaluation and consideration of new learning may be hindered (Piggot-Irvine, 2010). People need to know that they are in a safe place, and are appreciated and accepted for whom they are before learning and problem-solving can effectively occur.

Administrators can achieve this step by speaking on a regular basis about their belief in lifelong learning, and that risk-taking and making mistakes are necessary components of improvement. The administrator may share that he or she has felt and acted in the same way in similar situations. When mistakes are made, or changes are suggested, there is no judgement of the person. Instead of acting as the expert and telling the teacher what to do, the administrator indicates that he or she believes that all behaviour is an individual's best choice in the moment, given the information that is possessed at the time.

The second step in the Restitution process is to validate the individual's needs (Gossen, 2004). The belief behind this step is that all behaviour is purposeful and that there is always a reason for the way that people behave. When talking to staff members about making changes to an approach or trying something new, needs can be validated by asking questions to understand the teachers' point of view, and acknowledging that their viewpoint is legitimate. Instead of behaviour being labelled as inadequate, bad, or a mistake, behaviour is seen as an attempt to meet a need. The needs that could be addressed through the implementation of a new approach or initiative can then be identified. The conversation changes from one about personal inadequacies to one that is focused on the search for more effective options.

For example, a teacher may appear resistant to trying a new literacy program. If the principal confronts the teacher about having a bad attitude, the relationship between teacher and administrator could easily be damaged, and the teacher may become even less likely to embrace the new program. If, however, the administrator seeks to find out the need behind the teacher's hesitancy, he or she may find that the teacher feels unable to implement the program effectively without training. Instead of the problem being identified as a personality flaw, a valid need is uncovered, and the teacher and administrator can create a plan to address the teacher's concern.

The third step in the Restitution process is to encourage people to think about the values and beliefs they hold, and what kind of people they desire to be (Gossen, 2004). This step can be applied both at an individual level as well as at a system level. At an individual level, people are encouraged to consider what is really important to them. When a person has a clear picture of what he or she desires, punishments or rewards are no longer required in order to elicit behaviour. Instead, behaviour is chosen because it is seen as the right thing to do. Allowing people an opportunity to examine their values and beliefs is key in developing self-motivation.

At a system level, discussion of values and beliefs builds relationships and a sense of community between people (Gossen, 2004). When people have conversations about beliefs, they develop a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, which promotes greater understanding between staff members. When common convictions are found, staff members are able to set clear goals for their work together. A shared vision is necessary for schools to work effectively (Piggot-Irvine, 2010; Wise & Jacobo, 2010). When a common mission is identified, it ensures that individuals within a team are not working at cross-purposes, and that efforts are all focused toward the same end.

To illustrate this step, one may consider a situation in which a teacher is engaging in yelling and threatening in order to manage the challenging behaviour of a student. Instead of the

administrator taking on the role of expert, and telling the teacher that this behaviour is not appropriate, he or she could instead inquire about what the teacher's vision is of an ideal classroom. In this writer's experience, most teachers identify that they desire a classroom that is safe and respectful. Once these values are identified, the teacher can be encouraged to consider whether yelling and threatening have been effective in creating this kind of a classroom. Given time to reflect, the teacher may recognize that he or she is not modelling respect for the students, and that the child's behaviour is escalating instead of improving. The teacher now becomes internally motivated to try a new approach because of the recognition that the current strategies are not effective. Facilitating a similar discussion with all staff members can create a common agreement with regards to behavioural interventions and a sense of purpose as a staff team.

While it may seem obvious that it is important to discuss the concerns of staff and take time to consider options, the reality in many schools is that there is little time available for this process to occur (Kaniuka, 2012; Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Without time for reflection being purposefully provided, the daily work of staff often remains focused on managing situations in a reactive manner instead of considering the overall vision of what is desired and planning for how to achieve it. While some people feel that conversations about beliefs take too much time or are superfluous, they are necessary in order for cooperative, collaborative, and proactive work to be accomplished.

Helping staff to constantly learn and improve is a goal shared by most administrators. Ironically, the traditional approaches that are frequently used, including the use of external motivators and outside evaluation, may decrease the likelihood of change occurring. The Restitution process, due to its focus on working with people to understand and validate their needs and encourage self-evaluation, provides a useful framework for administrators to utilize in their work with staff, which aligns with the characteristics that have been identified in the most effective leaders. The use of Restitution can create a caring and respectful environment, wherein making mistakes and learning are encouraged, and staff members are given the opportunity to reflect on what they want for themselves and their work, thereby creating the ideal conditions for people to develop to their fullest potential.

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Digital Narrative Counselling: Counselling Children Through Storytelling

Reneta Angus

Abstract

Digital narrative counselling, an extension of narrative counselling, offers students a communication medium that is natural in today's world and thus adds a highly motivational component to the narrative therapy programming in schools. The storytelling element is a powerful strategy, as it meets a fundamental human need to tell one's story. It focuses on how people construct meaning and identity and allows the student to externalize a problem by telling a story. What makes narrative therapy the effective tool for school counsellors is its ability to help students understand that they can be the authors of their own life stories.

Everyone has a story, especially children. Stories bring together our experiences, whether they are empowering or oppressive. Unfortunately, children's stories often go unheard or are misunderstood. Narrative therapy can be an effective tool in any comprehensive school counsellor's program with its therapeutic approach of using a child's narrative to explore ways of dealing with stress in that child's life. Narrative therapy is a respectful and collaborative approach to counselling which focuses on the stories of people's lives and the power inherent in each of us to rewrite our personal narrative. What makes narrative therapy an effective tool for school counsellors is its ability to provide students with the understanding that they can be the authors of their own life story.

Today's youth are naturally gravitating toward digital media, such as You Tube, Twitter, and Facebook, to communicate with others and to express themselves. Digital narrative counselling, an extension of narrative counselling, allows students to access a communication medium that has become most natural to them and thus adds a highly motivational component to the narrative therapy programming in schools. Incorporating digital devices and programs in the school counsellor's therapeutic approach, aids in building relationship between the school counsellor and the student. The story needs an audience, and this role can be filled by the school counsellor, or a small group of students that are experiencing similar stress or anxiety (Olsen, Korcuska, & Paez, 2007). Students do not feel alienated by a solely traditional approach to therapy, but rather learn that the school counsellor or small group "gets them" and their reality.

Amanda Todd was a 15-year old teenager who committed suicide after posting a video on You Tube in which she used a series of flash cards to tell of her experience of being cyber-bullied through the social networking website Facebook (Todd, 2012). People around the world continue to react to the death of this teenage girl who chose a popular tool to communicate her despair. Her decision to end her life, after sharing her story, highlights the urgent need for schools to take proactive measures to equip students in need with tools that may prevent such tragedies. Amanda Todd's story is a tragic example of a child who may not have had the support to rewrite her personal narrative in such a way that she would have been able to empower herself.

Although Amanda Todd was a junior high school student, her problems did not start there. Elementary children are constantly facing new pressures and stresses caused by changes in our society. Stressful events occur both inside and outside of school. Events such as environmental disasters and exposure to the media (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, crime, murder, war, etc.), family issues (financial, divorce, death, separation, illness, homelessness, etc.), and school issues (grades, expectations, peer interactions, bullying, etc.) all contribute to the stresses of elementary students. One way to deal with our "over-stressed" students is to reach out to them in their schools. Guidance counsellors and teachers often have more contact

with students each week than parents do. Therefore, school is a logical place to begin helping students acquire the skills needed to deal with stress.

Schools have begun to look at the causes of stress in elementary children, the steps that schools can take to alleviate some of the stress, and the ways schools can teach stress and anxiety-coping skills to students. Stress and negative emotions can interfere with higher-level thinking (Bluestein, 2001). When a student's ability to process information is compromised, they are unable to process, encode and transfer information properly. Therefore, information that is processed is more likely to become distorted. As anxiety or stress increases, a student's ability to focus and concentrate decreases, causing a drop in motivation for attending to his or her school work, or even for attending school (Merrell, 2008). The student becomes "trapped" in a cycle of steadily increasing stress, anxiety, and decreased performance. According to the Manitoba School Counsellor's Association (2012), society is evolving continuously, and "the guidance and counselling programs in our schools need to constantly renew themselves to better respond to changing needs" (para. 1). Therefore, guidance counsellors must use a variety of counselling methods and conflict resolution skills to assist students as they attempt to resolve their problems.

One of the therapeutic approaches available to school counsellors is storytelling, or narrative therapy. Storytelling is a powerful strategy when used in counselling programs, as it meets a fundamental human need to tell his or her story. As people, we always seek to make connections with each other while sharing information. Storytelling is found across all cultures and connects generations by sharing cultural traditions and conveying knowledge (Gladding, & Drake Wallace, 2010). The telling and sharing of stories has the ability to release emotion, open opportunities for insight, and create empowerment and a sense of control over one's life. The physical act of storytelling allows a person to relive and resolve problems that may prevent healthy emotional growth and development. In solution-based counselling situations, storytelling can be inspiring and give the storyteller the ability to overcome the cause of his or her stress and anxiety.

Narrative therapy is starting to be used in some schools to support students experiencing stress and anxiety. It focuses on the way in which people construct meaning and identity and allows the student to externalize his or her problem through the telling of stories (Finlay, 2008). Narrative counselling is based on the principle that life events and experiences are organized into stories that can be adapted and changed (Eppler, Olsen, & Hidano, 2009). Using narrative counselling in a school setting, allows guidance counsellors to intervene early with at-risk students, helping them turn their problem-oriented stories into personal narratives of success.

The primary goal of narrative counselling is to empower a student in his or her role as character within the story. Guiding the student through an exploration of his or her own personal narrative from the view of author, rather than a character within the story without any control of the story, the student is meant to realize the inherent power of influencing the story line to his or her own liking. Narrative counselling allows students to temporarily develop the distance needed to emotionally detach from the problem until an effective coping strategy has been explored by a fictional character in the story. By viewing one's own story narrative through a fictional character, a student might be more likely to express emotions such as anger, fear, and sense of intimidation from a safer emotional distance. Once the students have been allowed to express the emotions through a fictional character, they are now ready to explore strategies and methods to effectively deal with scenarios that imitate their own life situations and emotions.

Understanding that they have the power to distance themselves from a real-life situation and rewrite their own personal narrative, students can then create a character able to deal with situations in a variety of different ways, based on coping strategies provided by the school counsellor. Students experience "a sense of empowerment in knowing that, with the guidance of the counsellor, they themselves can redefine or retell their story" (Finlay, 2008, p. 8). Stressful life events become manageable. This control over the story line allows the student to

reconstruct a self-perception that is not overwhelmed by problems, but instead offers a problem-solving approach to successfully managing life events.

An innovative form of narrative counselling currently being explored for helping students deal with stress and anxiety is the use of digital narrative counselling (Sawyer & Willis, 2011). Digital narrative counselling programming connects a generation that is being raised in a technology-rich environment with the therapeutic benefits of storytelling. Children are eager to have an opportunity to use technology. The motivational aspect of the use of technology offers increased opportunities for school counsellors to draw stories out of students who are reluctant to share otherwise. By creating a virtual character, such as an avatar, set in a virtual reality, experiencing a similar life narrative to that of the student, coping strategies could be explored in a safer, "simulated" realm than if the student had to simply talk about his or her own story.

While the more traditional approach of talk-therapy might inhibit students to share their personal narratives, digital narrative therapy offers a secondary level to analyzing and interpreting a student's problematic situation. The narratives created by students in their digital narrative therapy program include written and visual images, in addition to simply verbal recordings and notes made by the school counsellor. By allowing students to create their own words, narrations, and visual images describing their personal and often very emotional stories, school counsellors have three rather than one source of information for the purpose of analysis and therapy development. As the usual method of "surface listening" involves listening for facts, adding the visual encourages the listener to go beyond the surface of the spoken word (Bissonnette, 2007). The school counsellor is able to focus in on specific and pertinent information and images rather than forming an immediate verbal response.

An additional benefit to using digital therapy is its ability to break down language barriers between the EAL students and English-speaking counsellors, as digital projects can be transferred to any language. With school populations becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, school counsellors need to experiment with a range of tools to assist EAL students (Westwood, & Ewasiw, 2001). Visual imagery created through digital therapy is enough to give EAL students support with identifying and developing positive social and behavioural skills (Sawyer, & Willis, 2011). Students, no matter what language they speak, need to learn ways to cope with stressful situations and feelings of anxiety. EAL students often need additional support. Factors such as, a limited knowledge of the English language and the traditional cultural expectations of an ethnic group may conflict with the culture within a school setting. Digital stories can be told using the student's native language, which allows the student the opportunity to share greater clarity and a deeper level of emotion than would not necessarily be possible with traditional counselling methods.

Finally, digital narrative therapy offers school counsellors a tool that encompasses the entire palette of student's intelligences. With the vastness of images, programs, and applications, available in the digital world, school counsellors can offer students strategies that address all of the multiple intelligences as identified by Howard Gardner (Smith, 2008). In this digital era, school counsellors, even when faced with students with limited verbal or artistic abilities, can help the students find the means to communicate their story, even if it is simply by finding and identifying with digital images or stories found on the web, or using voice-generated word processing devices.

In conclusion, the greatest asset to using digital narrative therapy in schools is its ability to empower students in their role as author of their own life narrative. Amanda Todd's digital diary resonates around the world, striking powerful emotion in people of all ages. In Amanda's case, there may not have been an opportunity for transformation, only a tragic ending. Her actions exemplify how emotional memories can trigger behaviour, and in some cases, end with fatal consequences. Guidance counsellors can not take memories away. By implementing digital narrative counselling, they can provide children with effective ways of dealing with these memories in such a way, that the memories or experiences do not control the student or render them helpless. She felt helpless and did not see a way out of her difficult life situation. Amanda

Todd tried to reach out through a digital medium telling her story, but may not have had the resources she required to resolve the conflicts within her personal narrative. There is no way of knowing for sure, yet, digital narrative therapy may have been just the resource needed to have changed the ending of Amanda's story.

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Empowerment and Social Change: Promoting Transformative Practice Through Student-Centered Learning

Vanessa Rigaux

Abstract

The responsibilities of today's educational institutions far exceed basic education. Aside from academics, schools are also responsible for developing citizens who can identify and rectify social injustices. Preparing students to engage in transformative practice requires student-centered classrooms wherein students first reflect on themselves and become aware of their belief systems, and then take ownership of their own learning by means of choice and decision making. The goal is for students to develop critical thinking skills that will carry over into their evaluations of the world as a whole and the choices that they make to initiate social change.

Over the years, there has been a great deal of discussion and debate surrounding what constitutes a "good school." Some educators believe that good schools provide students with a meaningful education, while others stress the importance of developing respectful citizens. Regardless of personal opinion, most would agree that one of the most important factors of any good school is that it prepares students for purpose in life outside the classroom through developing a sense of social responsibility and critical perspectives. Schools that engage in humanizing pedagogy are not just good schools; they are great schools. These schools not only give students an appropriate education; they also set the stage for the type of thinking and learning necessary for transformative practice by empowering students to initiate social change. These schools empower students by cultivating student-centered learning; providing opportunities for self-reflection, choice, and student ownership; teaching according to a meaningful and relevant curriculum; and fostering the development of critical thought.

Today's students are living in a world saturated with hidden messages concerning expectations for their behaviour and beliefs as well as information about their level of influence over others and events in their environment. The majority of these messages are intended to perpetuate the beliefs and desires of those dominant groups in positions of power. According to Henry Giroux (2009), one of the most influential critical theorists of our time, without recognizing their culpability, schools are also responsible for perpetuating the messages of dominant groups through both content and organization. In order for students to make meaningful contributions to the world around them, schools must instead teach students to look at these messages from a critical perspective and identify injustices as they appear. In addition, students must also learn a sense of social responsibility to initiate change when necessary.

In order for students to be prepared to take on this role, they must first develop the sense of empowerment necessary to identify and challenge age-old beliefs. According to McLaren (2009), "Empowerment means not only helping students understand and engage the world around them, but also enabling them to exercise the kind of courage needed to change the social order where necessary" (p. 74). In order for this transformative practice to occur, students must be aware of their own opinions and beliefs, feel confident in their abilities and responsible for their futures, and believe that they have the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to initiate social change. The development of all of this awareness begins at the school level, with the hope that the resulting sense of empowerment carries over into the interactions that students have with the world around them.

Teacher-Centered Versus Student-Centered Education

More traditional approaches to education, according to theorists such as Paulo Freire (2009), operate under the assumption that "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider

themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 52). Freire suggested that these teacher-directed banking models prevent students from engaging in meaningful thought about their surroundings, since "the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (p. 53). This teaching style suggests to students that they are inferior members of the learning environment, their job being to store the information passively without questioning its validity. As a result, students fail to develop the sense of responsibility necessary to engage in critical thought, developing their own perspectives, questioning their surroundings, and making meaningful and relevant connections. Traditional approaches often leave students feeling powerless, unaware of their strengths, and lacking in self-confidence. Without opportunities to engage in critical thought, combined with having their entire education dictated to them, students feel little responsibility for their future and are rendered incapable of transformative practice.

Schools that empower students typically take a student-centered and holistic approach in which "teachers and students both become actors in figuring out the world through a process of mutual communication" wherein "questions and not answers are the core of the curriculum; open-ended questions prod students to critically analyze their social situation and encourage them to ultimately work towards changing it" (Peterson, 2009, p. 306). Teachers model "social responsibility and critical engagement in community and global issues" (Peterson, 2009, p. 306), while demonstrating respect for the opinions of students and a willingness to consider their perspectives. The result is a classroom atmosphere "where students feel secure and confident enough to interrogate their own realities, see them in a different light, and act on their developing convictions to change their own social reality" (Peterson, 2009, p. 306). Students come away from this environment feeling satisfied and empowered, having been given the respect necessary to feel confident in themselves and to take responsibility to initiate change.

Self-Awareness and Opportunities for Reflection

Empowerment through education begins by teaching students to reflect on their own opinions, identifying how they developed these beliefs and what they are based on. In order to look at the world from a critical perspective, students must first be aware of their own personal biases and consider how these beliefs may influence their opinions and actions. Student-centered classrooms provide ample opportunity for this type of reflection through open dialogue and experiential learning. As students engage in discussions and decide whether they agree or disagree with the opinions of others, they have the opportunity to learn a great deal about themselves and their own personal belief systems (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Once students are aware of their opinions, teachers must then "help them reflect upon why they think the way they do" (Peterson, 2009, p. 315), analyzing how these beliefs developed and who or what influenced them. From this point, students can then think critically about these influences and decide whether they are reliable sources of information, worthy of impacting their own personal views. By thinking about their own thinking, students are engaging in metacognitive practices that promote critical thought and empowerment. Understanding oneself is crucial in having the power to influence social change.

Within my classroom, students engage in regular discussion on a variety of issues. On at least a weekly basis, I bring a current event or news topic to class for discussion. I am always surprised by the range of opinions and perspectives brought forward. These discussions give my students opportunities to become aware of their own opinions and to take into consideration those of their peers. In my experience, it is often difficult for students in junior high to adjust their opinions in light of new information, but because I make a point of creating space for everyone's thoughts, my students begin to realize that there often is no one right answer. With time, they are beginning to adjust their opinions when they encounter ideas they had not considered at first, but see some value in now. At other times, they are able to articulate exactly why they

disagree, this proving to me that they are not only able to consider many sides, but have enough self-awareness to explain why they believe so strongly in their own opinions. Through open discourse, my students are becoming more capable of critical analysis of a variety of opinions and so they are developing the first skills necessary for transformative practice.

I also make a point of discussing very controversial issues with my students, including topics such as euthanasia and the death penalty. Once students identify their opinions on these issues, I again have them attempt to identify where their opinions originated and decide whether the sources may be biased or unreliable. My hope is that my students will approach the development of their own points of view more critically, in order to ensure that they have reliable information before choosing a side or taking a stand. Surprisingly, students are very critical of the influences that they experience and can often easily identify potential sources of bias, both of which set the stage for their becoming capable of transformative practice.

Opportunities for Choice

The next step in providing students with an empowering education is identifying their interests and tapping into their strengths in order to increase engagement. When students are interested in what they are learning and are given opportunities to showcase their talents, the resulting sense of success guarantees engagement. Since student growth is the primary focus in student-centered classrooms, lectures are replaced with opportunities for active learning through hands-on experiences and often include individual interest-based projects that allow students to pursue their passions and explore their world in a way that appeals to them (Nanney, 2004). Assignments that offer choice in content and/or presentation increase engagement and effort, as well as the likelihood that every student will experience success within the classroom. Experiencing success while exploring the world and developing opinions within the security of the classroom cultivates the sense of confidence that students need to carry these skills over into the world outside of school. By providing students with opportunities for choice, teachers increase feelings of self-confidence and foster the development of a sense of curiosity about the world necessary to encourage students to continue to think critically about their surroundings for years to come.

I consistently take advantage of opportunities to offer choices to my students whenever I can. This year in particular, I have an enormous range in both ability and interest, and so I have realized much more success in allowing students to make their own decisions with regards to both content and presentation. The results are remarkable for several reasons. Not only does overall performance improve because students are much more actively engaged, but overall confidence and feelings of self-worth are also on the rise. I attribute this boost in confidence to increased engagement and therefore increased success, and also to students' learning about themselves, identifying their own strengths, and the realizing that they are capable of making good decisions. According to Giroux (1985), the key to developing the "civic courage" necessary to stand up to social injustices is to stimulate "their [students'] passions, imaginations and intellects so that they will be moved to challenge the social, political and economic forces that weight so heavily upon their lives" (p. 165). Feeling more confident in themselves and in their opinions and choices places my students in positions to approach the outside world more confidently. This confidence makes it much more likely that students will make valuable contributions and this, combined with being aware of their strengths, results in the feelings of empowerment necessary for transformative practice.

Ownership and Responsibility

As with confidence, student-centered classrooms also foster the development of a sense of responsibility. In traditional classroom settings, students rarely develop a sense of responsibility. Instead, they often develop a sense of irresponsibility as a result of being subjected to "teacher-

centered and textbook driven curriculum which serves to disempower children” (Peterson, 2009, p. 310). School experiences that prevent students from making decisions regarding their education result in their failing to develop “the responsibility and self-discipline necessary to be independent thinkers and actors in our society” (Peterson, 2009, p. 310). Student-centered approaches to education offer students multiple opportunities to take their education into their own hands by setting their own goals and monitoring their own progress (Lapan, Kardash, & Turner, 2002). Students within these classrooms feel as though their education is their responsibility, as they have a say in what they learn, how they learn it, and how they are assessed. Students are responsible for developing their own opinions and adjusting them in light of new information. As students begin to assume responsibility for their learning and success, they also become more independent learners. Once students have a desire to learn and are interested in their future, they will begin to take ownership in and responsibility for their own experiences, developing critical thinking and leadership skills necessary to “perceive the gaps in what exists and try to transform and repair” (Greene, 2009, p. 95). Learning that they have a responsibility for their future and that of others elicits empowerment, which inspires them to engage in the critical thought necessary to initiate social change.

In my classroom, students are highly involved in the assessment process. First, through self-reflection, the students have an opportunity to assess their abilities and performance. Surprisingly, they are generally very honest and accurate. This not only helps students to gauge their learning and identify areas that they need to focus on, but it also suggests that their opinions are important and will be taken into consideration. Second, students are major players in decisions concerning assessment. I often include students in the creation of rubrics not only so that they will be aware of how they will be assessed, but also because I want them to understand that I value their input. As a result, students tend to put forth a much stronger effort, as they feel a sense of ownership in their learning and are a part of the process every step of the way. They take their learning more seriously and in turn become more responsible classroom citizens. Taking pride in their careers as students sets the stage for taking responsibility for their futures outside the classroom, making mature decisions, and take the steps necessary to express their opinions and take action to change that with which they do not agree. Engaging in transformative practice so early in life provides students with the experiences that they need in order to continue these behaviours well into adulthood.

Relevant and Meaningful Curriculum

Because student-centered classrooms focus on the experience and interest of the students, those classrooms can easily offer students a relevant and meaningful curriculum. Classrooms that bring in the outside world encourage students to reflect on their lives, making connections, developing or modifying opinions, and building upon their own realities (Peterson, 2009). National studies have stressed that “schools need to do a better job of offering all students a quality curriculum. One often cited feature of a quality curriculum is the connection, whenever possible, to real-world applications that help students integrate their learning with possible futures” (Lapan et al., 2002, p. 10). By offering students a meaningful education, educators are making it much more likely that they will remain engaged in their learning, building upon connections, and developing or modifying their opinions along the way. With more and more information, students are in a much better position to make judgments about the world in which they live and, in doing so, identify injustices and the flaws in their surroundings in need of their efforts toward transformation. Relevant educational experiences, made possible through student-centered learning, are yet another requirement for initiating social change.

Regardless of subject or topic, I make attempts to relate everything that we are studying back to real-life examples. If I can show students that what they are learning is both important and relevant, not only will they develop a deeper understanding of the material, but they will also build connections to previous knowledge, thus gaining a more thorough grasp of the workings of

the world in which they live. In my experience, the activation phase of lessons is often overlooked or omitted for the sake of time. I tend to take the opposite approach and spend just as much time activating previous knowledge as I do in acquiring new information. The resulting deeper level of understanding has proven to me the importance of creating an environment that nurtures the building of connections between old and new knowledge. Understanding their environment motivates students to develop their own opinions and to identify that with which they do not agree. From there, students can begin to decide whether transformation is necessary and, because they have such a meaningful and solid understanding of the event, topic, or issue, they can identify just how to go about initiating change.

Critical Thinking

Student-centered classrooms also promote critical thinking skills, yet another requirement for transformative practice. Three types of classroom interactions promote the development of critical thinking skills: “the extent to which faculty members encouraged, praised or used student ideas; the amount and cognitive level of student participation in class; and the amount of interaction among the students” (Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995, p. 25), all of which are major parts of a student-centered classroom. Within the walls of a student-centered classroom, students are free to express their ideas, pursue their interests, and engage in open dialogue with their peers. In doing so, students not only receive the support that they need to discover their own points of view, but also have the opportunity to critique dominant views within society and to suggest alternatives. As a result, students “learn to question and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominate culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming, rather than merely serving, the wider social order” (McLaren, 2009, p. 77). This type of critical thinking is what will eventually lead the student to a point where they naturally begin to question “the way things are and imagine alternatives, so that the word and the world may meet in history for a dream of social justice” (Shor, 2009, p. 301).

In my opinion, critical thinking is difficult to define but very easy to model, and therefore can be taught only through demonstration. During the first month of school, I spend a great deal of time, particularly in my social studies classes, not only reading about historical events, but critiquing them as well. Using a more teacher-directed approach, we look at an event critically, identifying the key players and what led up to the event. Next, we discuss how different decisions or choices may have led to different results, and then we decide how that different path would have changed the face of history and whether that would have been beneficial in the long run. As the year progresses, I gradually release responsibility for these assignments, allowing them to be more student-directed. Students decide which events to look at, journal their ideas, and then present their opinions to the class. This often leads to problem-posing debates wherein students critique each other’s opinions and suggest alternatives. These types of assignments create a safe and healthy environment for students to express their opinions and challenge those of others. Although this process consumes a great deal of class time, the resulting critical thinking skills are well worth the effort.

Conclusion

Preparing students for life outside the classroom should be the focus of any school. Today’s world is imbued with hidden messages intended to control and persuade the population to certain opinions and actions. Aside from preparing students for what is to come, educators must also give them the skill sets and confidence to navigate through these messages, analyzing their worth as they go. When students find themselves facing situations they feel are in need of change, they must have the ability and sense of empowerment necessary to initiate the transformation needed to right the wrong. “Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela, 2003, line 33), and so it is the responsibility of schools to

prepare students for this task. Student-centered classrooms provide teachers with both a method and forum for engaging students in the type of education necessary to achieve these skills. In these classrooms, teachers “strive against fitting students quietly into the status quo” (Shor, 2009, p. 301) and instead create individualized education programs that allow students to achieve their full potential while learning about their world and being given opportunities to look at it critically and engage in changes to that world. These classrooms offer opportunities for students to “learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for granted assumptions about the way we live” (McLaren, 2009, p. 77). The key to promoting transformative practice is creating learning environments that inspire students to develop their strengths, self-confidence, sense of social responsibility, and critical thinking skills. Engaging in the type of humanizing pedagogy necessary to achieve these types of classrooms is one of the most important characteristics of a good school.

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Providing Post-Secondary Education Programs in First Nations Communities: Lessons Learned

Karen Hargreaves

Abstract

Assiniboine Community College (ACC) has been delivering community-based post-secondary programs in First Nations communities throughout the province. Many factors contribute to the success of these educational partnerships, including the incorporation of new program delivery strategies. ACC has made significant strides in the direction of Aboriginal education. This article explores ACC's delivery of programs in Aboriginal communities and identifies lessons learned. Aboriginal people are Canada's largest growing population, and providing effective delivery of higher education positions this population to better their lives, while also providing a trained workforce to meet labour market needs.

Providing Post-Secondary Education Programs in First Nations Communities: Lessons Learned

Assiniboine Community College (ACC) has been delivering community based post-secondary programs in First Nations communities for many years and has become a “college of choice” in many Aboriginal communities throughout the province. As one of three colleges in Manitoba, it would be worthwhile to identify why ACC is being sought out above other provincial colleges, including a northern college. Many possible factors may contribute to these educational partnerships, including the incorporation of new program delivery strategies that result from lessons learned in previous programs. What are those lessons learned and are they what is making ACC a “college of choice”? This article explores ACC's delivery of programs in Aboriginal communities and identifies lessons learned while exploring the available research.

Background

Based on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada publications (2013), the Aboriginal population is the fastest growing population in Canada. In addition, the number of Aboriginal people living in urban centres in Canada has grown significantly and, in some areas, the Aboriginal population has more than doubled. One example is in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where the Aboriginal population makes up 10% of the city population – more than four times what it was 25 years ago (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013, para. 3).

According to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC, 2012), colleges across Canada are committed to improving education outcomes for Aboriginal people. However, of the self-identified Aboriginal students in post-secondary education (PSE) in 2006, 62% were in a college or institute compared to only 16% in a university (Statistics Canada, 2006, as cited in ACCC, 2012, p. 1). Colleges may be cited as the educational path of choice because they –

- offer a diverse range of programming that includes certificate, diploma ,and apprentice training
- embed traditional cultural knowledge in curriculum and offer support services to graduation, including employment readiness
- develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities in order to address specific community needs

The purpose of this article is to explore current practices undertaken at ACC in the delivery of community-based PSE programs. The focus is on ACC's models of delivery of certificate and diploma programs in various Aboriginal communities, and the evolution of the delivery based on lessons learned. I also refer to two programs currently being delivered in two very different FN communities in Manitoba, one very remote and the other more urban, and I compare and contrast the impact of these differences. ACC's experience and model of delivery are measured against the available literature in order to identify possible gaps in the research on this topic.

Aboriginal education has been a topic of great discussion and debate, with the most significant impact remaining from residential schools. Although the responsibility of education lies within provincial jurisdiction, Aboriginal education is under the auspices of the federal government, and this has resulted in some substantial inconsistencies in the delivery of education programs to Aboriginal communities versus non-Aboriginal. There is a need to go beyond who is responsible for education and how we arrived here, to identifying and modelling successful practices.

Literature Review

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges has had an active voice for Canadian colleges' Aboriginal education initiatives. In a 2010 submission to the House of Commons, ACCC made several recommendations on opportunities for the Government of Canada to enhance skills development and innovation in rural and remote communities. One of these recommendations was for the government to include provisions in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) that would allow Aboriginal organizations and colleges to plan and coordinate educational activities. In doing so, they also recommended that this planning should include the provision of longer programs that would allow for upgrading of literacy levels and a focus on essential skills development before moving to employment-oriented programs (ACCC, 2011).

King (2008) wrote of the need to increase Aboriginal enrolment and completion rates in Canadian post-secondary institutions. From a college educator perspective, it is quite striking that she referred to a "remarkable historical document involving every education stakeholder (Aboriginal political territorial organizations, Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, Canadian universities and Canadian governments)" (King, 2008, p. 1), which could shift the future of academic achievement for all Aboriginal students.

Why would this group of stakeholders exclude community colleges that are already working closely with and in First Nations communities? King (2008) spoke to what she believed post-secondary institutions should be doing, such as providing necessary support services and programming that would help improve Aboriginal achievement, but she appeared not to have done any research on what already existed. In addition, she stated that "most Canadian college and universities have a few or no staff in Aboriginal student services" (King, 2008, p. 13), but did not support her comment with any data. I was surprised by this comment, as ACC has had a strong Aboriginal presence in student services for some time.

Silver, Klyne, and Simard (2003) conducted a study of Aboriginal adult learners in Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) in Manitoba, in order to determine what keeps the learners attending school and what contributes to their success. Silver et al. identified some common factors that contribute to success of the students surveyed:

- a holistic learner-centred approach to instruction
 - strong social, emotional and practical supports
 - a warm and highly personalized atmosphere that is non-hierarchical
 - dedication and passion of not only instructional, but all staff
 - a non-judgemental and respectful atmosphere
- (p. 1)

Silver et al. (2003) also summarized that there was a “powerful and effective” approach to education in that the centres fostered an environment that was friendly, informal and personalized (p. 2). In addition, they were staffed with dedicated, warm, and energetic personnel who had a holistic approach to adult education. These characteristics are not only important to the success of the Aboriginal learners, but are also consistent with the literature on adult education (Silver et al., 2003).

Silver et al (2003) also found that a large number of the learners interviewed carried a great deal of pain. These learners had difficult lives, suffered from a lack of self-esteem, and had experienced racism in previous educational settings which, in some cases, resulted in long-standing scarring. Silver et al. surmised that the roots of this damage lay in the impact of colonialism because “they have come to believe, in a culture which constantly denigrates them, the false claims of their inferiority” (p. 44). They quoted Michael Hart as stating, “Aboriginal people start to believe that we are incapable of learning and that the colonizers degrading images and beliefs about Aboriginal people and our ways of being true” (Silver et al., 2003, p. 44). This sentiment mirrors Toulouse’s (2008) finding that paramount to the success of Aboriginal learners is self-esteem, and therefore the pedagogy in classrooms must include Aboriginal culture, language, and world views.

Cappon and Laughlin (2009) stated that that Aboriginal people in Canada have been long advocating for lifelong learning, recognizing it as a way to improve community well-being, address poor health rates, high unemployment, youth suicide, and incarceration rates. In order to improve “community wellbeing through lifelong learning,” there is a need first to identify appropriate tools that will measure and assess “what is working and what is not” (Cappon & Laughlin, 2009, p. 1). A key challenge is to define what is meant by “learning success,” as existing measures of success tend to highlight deficiencies. Moreover, there is no framework that measures or provides clear statistics on the status of Aboriginal learning in Canada. Key attributes of an Aboriginal view of learning are that it is holistic, lifelong, experiential, rooted in Aboriginal language and culture, spiritually oriented, commands activity, and integrates Aboriginal and Western knowledge (Capon & Laughlin, 2009).

In 2008, more than 50 experts came together in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, to discuss strategies for success. As with the findings of Cappon and Laughlin (2009), rather than focusing on the challenges faced by Aboriginal communities, this roundtable highlighted successful learning strategies (St. Denis, Silver, Ireland, George, & Bouvier, 2008). These strategies shared five common features: they were community-based, holistic, strength based, transformative, and anti-colonization. The purpose of the roundtable and subsequent report was to “share stories of transformation, hope and success,” in order to inform educational institutions serving adult Aboriginal learners (St. Denis et al., 2008, p. 6).

Recapping the main findings in a series of roundtables held in 2006, Saunders (2007) stated that in an economy wherein skills and technological needs are in constant change, it is imperative that Canadians have access to learning opportunities throughout their lives. Those with lower levels of education must be given the opportunity to improve their education and skills in light of concerns over adult literacy level., because “nine million Canadians aged 16 to 65 years have literacy skills below the level considered necessary to live and work in today’s society” (Saunders, 2007, p. 1). Thus, though the proportion of the population with weak literary skills varies across the country, it is highest in Aboriginal populations.

Saunders (2007) gave examples of promising practices, citing Manitoba and Nova Scotia’s dual credit programs as allowing adult learners to pursue both a PSE and high school credit at the same time. Other recommendations that came from these series of roundtables included the following:

- offering more flexible delivery in terms of course load and time to complete;
- governments should provide funding so programming can be tailored to specific community needs;

- funding for pilots on a multi-year basis with sustained funding for successful pilots;
- developing programs that foster life skills no just job skills;
- developing curriculum and delivery processes that has community input, is sensitive to the culture of the community and reinforces a sense of community (Saunders, 2007, pp. 9-10)

Motivated by a projected shortage of Aboriginal nurses, and by recurring difficulties in Canadian schools and the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal peoples, Martin and Kipling (2006) conducted a critical ethnography of the experiences of Aboriginal undergraduate nursing students in two schools of nursing. Major findings cited by the students surveyed related to inadequate funding and the lack of available childcare.

In terms of the faculty perspective, Martin and Kipling (2006) found that many nurse educators “misunderstood the gross inequities inherent in being an Aboriginal nursing student educated in an Aboriginal community” (p. 692). Faculty members expressed resentment based on a perception that Aboriginal nursing students received more resources than other students despite being “well funded by their band and ultimately, Canadian taxpayers” (Martin & Kipling, 2006, p. 693). As an educator who has provided programming for Aboriginal cohorts, I have often heard similar remarks about ACC’s Aboriginal students. These misconceptions disappoint me, because I recognize the need to provide additional resources for these students.

Methodology – ACC Model

For many years, ACC has delivered programs to Aboriginal students, both on campus and in Aboriginal communities. Are we doing a good job? Do our methods of community-based training reflect the current literature? What have we learned, and have we been able to increase our success from lessons learned? Although community-based training programs are the primary focus of this article, some of the methodologies also apply to on-campus training, and are applied to an upcoming program that will be delivered at the Brandon, Manitoba, campus.

The Beginning

The first series of programs began when ACC entered into partnership with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) to deliver seven practical nursing programs over a five-year time period in various communities throughout the province. Though I entered into these projects with experience with Aboriginal people as a home care nurse, this was my first experience with education and working in FN communities.

I recall, with a great deal of clarity, the first of seven programs delivered in Thompson. The students were recruited from surrounding communities, many fly-in¹, resulting in a cohort of students who were away from home, away from their families, and away from everything familiar to them. In addition, these were mature adult students ranging from 20 to 60 years in age, many of whom had not completed grade 12 and were returning to school for the first time. Thus, the journey began.

Misguided Assumptions

I entered this program believing that all Aboriginal people had commonalities and would therefore be able to relate to one another. I was shocked when students from FN communities ostracized a Métis student whom they resented for being in a program funded by an FN

¹ A “fly-in” community generally refers to a FN community that can be accessed only by plane, winter roads, or boat, depending on the season.

organization. I was astonished to hear that students who were attending class had no housing. Where did they sleep at night? The transition for these students, from life on reserve to life in an urban setting, created many new variables. I learned that if one did not have basic items, such as toilet paper or food, a common practice on reserve was to acquire resources from family or neighbors. When our students ran out of items and were short on funds, they had great difficulty problem-solving and often went without. Most importantly, I entered this project assuming that my main focus would be providing these students with an education. I had not factored in the social and personal variables that would interfere with their success.

In terms of student supports, I entered these programs, particularly the first, believing that my site visits and support as a coordinator, and the support of FNIHB home and community care coordinators, would engender student success. We initially did not recognize the need for ongoing student supports that were related not to academics but to the personal challenges that these students faced. As I got to know the students on a higher level, they would share challenges of being away from their children and the difficult phone calls, young children crying for mom or dad to come home, or spouses resenting their absence and devaluing the importance of education. Lastly, I entered these programs with a naivety that I, with limited knowledge of Aboriginal culture, could incorporate an Aboriginal culture component by facilitating sharing circles: that one size fits all.

Lessons Learned

After seven programs, what did we learn and how did we apply these lessons to future offerings? In the first program, the attrition rate was quite high, so the key was to determine the reasons for attrition and to build in supports to reduce the attrition rates in future programs. Once we started to apply some of the new supports, the incidence of student success became evident. According to Simpson (2002), the majority of programs are geared toward the learning needs of non-Aboriginal students, which leaves Aboriginal students with minimal knowledge that they can apply in their own communities. Once we began delivering programs in First Nations communities, we realized how important it was to listen to the communities and deliver programs that would meet their specific needs. Listed below are some methods that were incorporated to address lessons learned and improve the success of the students.

Community based. ACC has delivered programs to a central location, such as Thompson, which enables students from various surrounding communities to join, but ultimately the community-based model is by far the most successful. Though students are required to travel in order to gain full practicum experience, they have expressed that it is much easier to cope with short trips away from home versus extended trips. Community and family support is critical to student success, and many students have explicitly expressed that having the program offered in their community was the only way that they could have taken it. In the Thompson program, for example, many students said that when they returned to their communities, they were often faced with resentment and the perception that with an education came a change in who they were – perhaps adopting the western ways. When the students are educated in their own community, there is a sense of pride by the community members and the students express a commitment to be successful so that they can then serve their community as nurses. I am not saying that all Aboriginal programs should be community based, as not all Aboriginal people live in FN communities, but when considering delivery to a cohort in a remote area, taking the program to the community will yield more positive results.

Preparatory program. One very significant change to the program was the development and incorporation of a six-month preparatory program that not only provided the students with a refresher, but permitted those students without a complete grade 12 to enter the program. Manitoba is one very few provinces that have dual credits, whereby college courses can be

used as credit toward a mature grade 12 diploma. The six-month preparatory program included some basic grade 12 English and math courses, modified to be relevant to nursing. For example, math equations were based on medication dosages. Including the nursing component peaked the students' interest early, as many were eager to get into the nursing theory as soon as possible. With the dual credits, students had much to celebrate at the end of the program, because they graduated with both a mature high school diploma and a nursing diploma.

Curriculum adaptation. The first change made was to do an adaptation of the nursing curriculum so that each course outline (syllabus) had a learning outcome related to FN communities. For example, the nutrition course had a learning outcome that pertained to the Aboriginal Canada Food Guide. A medical-surgical course had a learning outcome that focused on the prevalence of diabetes in Aboriginal people. Each learning outcome had several learning activities, so that students could apply that outcome to an activity that made sense in their own community. An example of this would be to run a blood sugar clinic or blood pressure clinic in a common community venue. An example would be a blood pressure clinic that students in St. Theresa Point First Nation ran at the local northern grocery store. Not only was it a huge success for the community, with high participation from community members, but the students saw how they could make a difference as future nurses in their own community.

On-site counsellor/Elder supports. In our first few deliveries of the program, we ensured that we had a coordinator, who was employed by ACC to oversee the delivery of the program. As it was desirable to have a coordinator with an understanding of the college and college programs, the coordinator was not necessarily someone who lived in the community, but someone who would make frequent site visits and help trouble-shoot either in person or via telephone. Though the coordinator was necessary and could help with academic matters, there were student issues beyond academics that impeded student success. In fact, very rarely was a student unsuccessful because of academic weakness; personal issues had a more direct impact on their ability to be successful.

The funding formula for future deliveries now includes a counsellor who is someone from the community and, at times, also an Elder in the community. If they are not Elders, being part of the community ensures that they are aware of community supports and will bring cultural aspects to the program, a model referred to by Chartrand (2010) as "place-based training" (p. 15), which enables instructors to access cultural knowledge from community experts. Sharing circles are frequently held when students face challenges. The circles are effective because they are facilitated by a respected Elder. As students must leave their community for practicums, the counsellor will also travel with the students to ensure that supports are available while the students are away from home. In an upcoming program, this position is being referred to as a "job coach," which is relevant because this position reinforces employability skills and thus ensures readiness for employment.

Community/Stakeholder Involvement. Lastly, we found that the success of the program depended on input from all stakeholders, including Chief and Council, provincial and federal funders, and local education authorities. Involvement included student selection, student progress discussions, staffing, deliverables, and timetables. Timetables were adjusted to allow time for students to participate in community events. In the past, issues with student attendance often related to community events that the students chose to attend with their families. Incorporating breaks in the program for special events specific to those communities provided students with a better balance in their school and home lives, resulting in less absenteeism.

Conclusion

Writing this article resulted in a great deal of self-reflection on not only the growth of ACC's delivery of Aboriginal programs, but also my growth as an educator working with these groups. Though I found many articles on this topic, most were based on roundtable discussions or government recommendations and not on actual research studies. There are some commonalities in what the literature recommends, but the primary focus is on what is not working well, with repeated reference to the impact of colonization. As stated by Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimer and Muir (2010), Aboriginal researchers tend to claim that student success is affected by a multitude of influences that include "linguistic, historic and cultural realities which undermine the education experiences of Aboriginal students in Canada" (p. 335). I believe that it is time now to focus on what is working and find ways to improve.

The work being done at ACC is supported by most of the literature. One gap, though, is in the use of Aboriginal instructors in the delivery of the program. We do strive to find interested Aboriginal instructors, but it is not always possible. The use of Aboriginal counsellors and Elder support helps to close this gap not only by facilitating the incorporation of cultural aspects in a program, but by educating non-Aboriginal staff about the culture.

In a 2008 discussion paper, the Coastal Corridor Consortium (CCL) wrote that accessibility to higher education is not a single issue. Post-secondary institutions need to incorporate strategies to improve accessibility, such as "leadership, awareness, community-based training, Aboriginal instructors, learner readiness, transition support and learner awareness" (CCL, 2008, p. 6). The model that has been used by ACC has incorporated similar components through trial and error, resulting in increased student success as described by CCL. In addition, there are Canadian success stories based on utilizing strategies similar to ACC, as outlined by Richardson and Cohen (2000). ACC's success is evidenced by the fact that ACC has become a "college of choice" by many FN communities throughout Manitoba.

Unfortunately, the literature has focused on barriers instead of best practices. Although the literature includes some recommendations, there is a need for more research into programs that are being successful and why. Writing this article has reinforced my belief that ACC has made some significant strides in the direction of Aboriginal education and should make future efforts to share its lessons learned. Aboriginal people are Canada's largest growing population, and providing effective delivery of higher education will position this population not only to better their lives, but also to provide the country with a trained workforce to meet labour market needs.

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Special Learning Considerations for Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Amy Johnas

Abstract

Children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) face difficulty in classroom situations due to their lessened ability to learn by conventional methods. Children with ADHD excel in some tasks, but perform poorly in others because of differences in the ways that their brains acquire and retain information. Slower learning pace, memory issues, decreased motor skills, and lack of sustained focus contribute to lower academic functioning within the ADHD population. Ability is not decreased, however, and considerations can be made to ensure that the quality of education for children with ADHD is as high as for typical developmental (td) children.

Children with ADHD face many challenges because they do not learn in the same way that typical development (td) children do. Problems with inattention, lack of inhibition, and increased motor function cause difficulty within the classroom setting and may disrupt learning for not only the child with ADHD, but his or her classmates as well. Children with ADHD have different brain wiring, so they process and store information differently than td children. They lose their focus more easily and stay off-task longer than most other children in the classroom. Slower language comprehension causes delays in communication, but does not affect understanding of the information provided. They may have excellent verbal communication, but have serious deficits in nonverbal communication. They also have difficulty reading social cues because dividing attention in a highly stimulated environment, in addition to working memory deficits, depletes recognition of these cues. Because of these obstacles to learning, special consideration for alternate learning methods and increased time for tasks should be given to children with ADHD, in order to enable them to reach their full potential in academics.

Children with ADHD may have high IQs and score in the upper percentile for verbal communication skills, yet they may not have the ability to express the language of nonverbal communication (Melillo, 2010). There may be a significant point difference between the two, with genius scores and sizeable deficits found within the same individual. This point difference causes a type of disconnect that considerably affects the way the individual functions. While brain function might excel in some areas, the deficits in other areas create a distorted picture, which exhibits as poor functioning. Children with ADHD who function poorly both in and out of the classroom are aware of their difficulties, but still lack the ability to change (Klimkeit et al., 2006). This awareness can translate into psychological and emotional problems, which further affect a child's functioning within a school environment. "Fitting in" with other children at school fulfills a basic social need (Cherry, n.d., para. 1). Lack of such belonging may lead to frustration and to deviant behaviours (Brook, Brook, Zhang, & Koppel, 2010). Providing alternate ways of evaluating learned material, such as use of oral tests, could enable children with ADHD to articulate ideas that would otherwise be lost. This strategy would normalize the education and allow them to contribute to class development as well as to maintain their self-esteem due to their academic success.

Staying focused on the task at hand is a known difficulty for children with ADHD (I. McIntyre, psychiatrist, personal communication, May 24, 2012). What has been less well known is the very rapid repeated oscillation from attention to inattention (Rapport, Kofler, Alderson, Timko, & DuPaul, 2009). Differences between children with ADHD and td children include a faster loss of focus for children with ADHD, plus a longer time of unfocused behaviour. After the time of unfocused behaviour, focus does return to the required task. However, focus is again lost after a shorter period of time in comparison to td children (Rapport et al., 2009). Focus becomes even

more difficult in an active environment. Staying on track is a necessary function for any human to learn anything. For example, if $A + B = C$, but B was missed because the student saw an airplane through the classroom window, the equation will not be complete. This could be one reason that children with ADHD have major deficits in their learning, as it may not be noticed that important information was missed. Any concept that builds on a formerly learned concept is at risk. Subjects such as math and spelling may become frustrating, as they depend upon a solid understanding of basic knowledge in order to advance into more complex ideas and applications. A good strategy to use is to check a child's understanding of the concepts within a short amount of time that the lesson was learned. Any information gaps can then be filled before the deficit becomes a major handicap.

Children with ADHD have slower language comprehension of complex sentences, as compared to td children (Wassenberg et al., 2010). Although comprehension is delayed, understanding remains within normal range. Complex language is often used in the classroom to give instruction. Several instructions may be given at one time. Due to a delay in receiving and transmitting within their brains, children with ADHD may appear to ignore or misinterpret instruction. The child may not realize that he or she did not receive the entire communicated message. Furthermore, the child may not ask for the instruction to be repeated in the classroom due to normal social power hierarchy among teachers and students, or because of possible embarrassment in front of classmates. Strategies such as giving one simple direction at a time, giving written instruction, or pausing between instructions, would give the child with ADHD more time to process new information. Devices such as e-readers and ipads with a "read text" feature may offer children with ADHD a way to connect complex sentences with individual words as they hear them (A. Tavares, psychiatrist, personal communication, November 8, 2012). These devices and their content can be tailored for the individual, according to speed, reading ability, and personal preference.

Working memory deficits, plus a stimulating environment, contribute to an inability to recognize and comprehend social cues (Kofler et al., 2011). Central executive is one of three parts of working memory. It is this function that allows td children to "read" other people and react appropriately to their words and gestures. A dysfunction in central executive function occurs in children with ADHD, which causes quick decay of immediate memory, and allows excessive irrelevant information to interfere (Kofler et al., 2011). Thus, for a child with ADHD, holding a normal conversation with a peer or teacher is a great deal of work. It requires an exhausting amount of attention, possibly more than that child is capable of at that time. For example, when a dialogue ensues, it contains verbal messages along with nonverbal messages. These may be subtle or not-so-subtle cues. If concentration is lacking from either party, some cues are missed and communication starts to deteriorate. With enough deterioration or interference, the message is lost. For children with ADHD, interference can consist of environmental stimuli or stimuli from their own bodies and minds. These could be distractions such as shiny objects, movement in the environment, or the children's own thoughts on a subject totally unrelated to the situation or subject matter. Children with ADHD best understand short, precise messages, and benefit from written instruction (B. L. Geeky, community school counsellor, personal communication, November 24, 2011).

Spatial learning, when used in conjunction with textual learning within the general population, serves to increase retention of information (Caterino & Verdi, 2012). However, visual learning, followed by reading, shows no advantages for persons with ADHD. Caterino and Verdi (2012) found that ADHD-diagnosed persons did not have increased learning when exposed to these two different types of information on common subject matter. In fact, they noted that the extra information provided by the spatial display actually increased anxiety and decreased concentration, and therefore limited learning. Different methods of learning information became a burden, rather than its intended purpose, which was to serve as a learning tool to retain information more easily. This burden may be due to another kind of working memory deficit experienced by children with ADHD, which limits the amount of information that can be gained

and retained in a certain amount of time. Therefore, the limit of productivity is reached faster for persons with ADHD than for td persons, though the limit is not less. The ADHD population may benefit from decreasing the amount of learned text within a time span, from summarizing, or from simplifying spatial information.

Handwriting skills are essential to academic success (Tucha & Lange, 2005). Because automation of handwriting is affected by both visual and mental control, the functional physical deficits in motor skills and focus issues can interfere with the handwriting skills of children with ADHD. Fluency of handwriting, neatness, and legibility are important factors in completing classroom work and homework. Children with ADHD have difficulty completing assignments on time and are known to have a high rate of dysgraphia (Nicholas, 2009). Although other factors also contribute to non-completion of assignments, handwriting offers a measurable evaluation of a child's functioning. Handwriting analysis is a scientific method that can evaluate different aspects of a child's script. Rosenblum, Epsztein, and Josman (2008) reported major differences between the handwriting of children with ADHD when they used stimulant medication and when they did not. Children using stimulant medications had markedly better penmanship. Another noteworthy discovery is that children with ADHD have difficulty timing fine motor applications (Nicholas, 2009). Since fine motor skills are necessary for legible, accurate script, it would seem logical that writing would be messy, with poor formation of letters, and poor readability if timing and accuracy were diminished. Nicolas (2009) pointed out that complex stories with detailed story lines may be told orally by children with ADHD, but those same children may scarcely be able to write a coherent, legible paragraph. Recommendations for improved assignment output and faster completion include dictation methods (live or recorded) or use of a typing mechanism (ipad or laptop).

Daily life for children with ADHD is full of opportunity to build success or to break down self-esteem. Each life experience affects the way that they perceive themselves, whether it is a view of success or of failure. Great care must be taken to support them in and out of the classroom in a way that allows them to use their natural ways of thinking. Persons with ADHD are particularly susceptible to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Diep, 2011). These issues may be due to the added pressures that children with ADHD feel when they realize that they are different from their peers. A stable environment with appropriate boundaries is essential for any child. It is imperative that children with ADHD receive the same, in order to reach their full potential. It is unnecessary to provide a "free ride" or dismiss them as incapable. Children with ADHD simply need a different toolbox from which to draw, and a supportive someone who has the skills to use those tools.

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About the Author

Amy Johnas is a B.Sc.P.N.-prepared mental health nurse experienced with children and youth in the clinical setting, in school, and within the community. Her focus for graduate studies in education is counselling and special education. She enjoys her many farm animals and large galloping spaces around her rural home.

OPINION PAPER

The Beauty of Transition: My Personal Experience

Blessing Emadedor

It is almost impossible to succeed in a new environment that demands from you what you have not been prepared for or have to give. I believe though that life does not demand from us what we do not have the ability to produce or reproduce. The initial experience creates fear and panic and the impression that one has failed, because of inadequacy and lack of potential to provide that which is being demanded by the new environment. Life is about perspectives and opinions, and the first stage of being an international student is like a fish out of water. The fish lives inside water and it thinks that all there is to life is the water in which it lives, but when out of water comes face to face with an environment that feels unstable, because it is an environment where coping is difficult and almost impossible. Therefore, the first thing the fish does when out of water is fight for life. This is exactly the picture of what international students go through in Canada, amidst the great feelings of stepping into a new country. Reality begins for us as our planes touchdown in Canada and we realize we have left family, friends, and the place we have always known, travelled through places we have never been, to a place of which we had only dreamed. I also think that the case is slightly different for each one of us international students, because how we succeed at what we do is depended on how we grew up and the challenges we have faced and how we have been taught to face them.

My interest to study in a foreign country was informed by my dream to have an international education, and my motivation came from my Dad who had promised to sponsor me to any level of education I wish to attain. I first had the thought of studying abroad when I was in grade nine. Even though I did not know much about the international community, I was sure that I would have an international education. I said it to my friends with so much confidence and they believed me. After my high school education, I went to college for a diploma program in community development. I went back to school for my degree after two years, and graduated with a B.Sc. (Ed.) in social studies, and immediately went for my one year of compulsory national service.

I had just finished my service when my dad presented the idea of going further with my education in a foreign country. I had three options, which were America, United Kingdom, and Canada. I knew from that very moment that Canada was going to be the place, though I hardly knew anything about Canada. However, the more I researched about it, and the more my dad spoke about it, the more I prayed and hoped to come to Canada. When all was said and done, I left my country of Nigeria, a place I have always known, and I went through countries and places I had never seen, to Canada. According to Sandhu (1994), the courage, initiatives, and ambitions of international students, who leave everything behind to venture into a far distant land several thousand miles away from their homes and families, deserve unqualified admiration and praise. The journey was long, I slept almost through it all, and I remember thinking, where are we going?

My point of entry to Canada was through Toronto international airport and then a connecting flight to Winnipeg at 2130 hours on Friday, January 22, 2010, and the first person that I spoke with was a cab driver, who walked up to me and said, "Hello! Where are you going?" My response was, "Brandon University" and his response was, "Oh I think they are closed for the weekend, but you could stay in a hotel until Monday and take the Brandon Air Shuttle to Brandon." He gave me twenty dollars to buy food and a calling card to call my dad and let him know I had arrived safely. That experience was so amazing, because I felt I was in for a great time in Canada. He said he would bring a Nigerian friend to come pick me and he did, because

his Nigerian friend came the next day and took me to his home. He also spoke to one of the men working at the airport, who told us that there was a place I could stay at the airport if I did not want to stay in a hotel. So I spent my first night in Canada at the airport. He came the next day to see how I was doing, He and the Nigerian friend were, however, concerned that I did not have the right winter jacket on to withstand the cold, so he bought a winter jacket for me.

My first time ever to experience how it felt to be in a winter weather condition was on Saturday morning, January 23, 2010, when I said to myself, "Let me just go outside and see how it feels." It was minus thirty degrees celsius and it was so windy that I almost fell, but I quickly ran back into the airport and called my dad and told him how cold it was. He had a good laugh and said, "Yeah, I could sense it in your voice," and he asked if I wanted to come back to Nigeria because of the cold. Of course my response was a no, because I came with a prepared mindset. I came prepared to face whatever challenge Canada had for me. I also knew it was not going to be an easy one, but I was confident that I had what it took to succeed. And so my attitude was and is still different, because with challenges comes opportunities for growth and development. One must be determined and willing to persevere through the toughest situations and circumstances, because with pain comes gain. According to Bridges (2004), "To be up in the air as one so often is in times of personal transition, is enduring if it means something and if it is a part of a movement towards a desired end" (p. 4). Sometimes the night is so dark and gloomy that it makes the light hard to see, but the morning is inevitable, when faith and patience are exercised.

It was really nice to finally put faces to the names of the Faculty of Education staff, Admission's Office staff, University Residence staff, Financial and Registration's staff, and the Director of International Students Activities. I was not sure what to expect in class, but I certainly looked forward to my first day in class and it was very exciting and challenging at the same time. It was exciting, because I felt that my dream of international education had begun. And it was hard, because I had to learn to listen and respond to my new classroom environment, my instructors and classmates. After my first day in class, I realized that what I needed was time and patience to get myself acclimatized with my new educational environment. As McLaughlin (1966) explained, "The only courage that matters is the kind that gets you from one moment to the next" (p. 2). Thus, slowly but surely I have evolved and continue to evolve in my new environment and home. One sure thing that helped me in adjusting to Brandon University and living in Brandon is that I told myself right from the very start that the best way for me to go through the transition process successfully was to see and embrace Canada as my new home and country, though I am not Canadian.

The difference in educational systems between Nigeria and Canada made it more challenging for me. Canada's educational system is more standardized, more structured, and more academically demanding. I have encountered an experienced team of instructors who care enough to spend the extra time needed in order to ensure the educational excellence of their students. This expectation has made it a worthwhile experience for me. I spent my first term at Brandon University in residence, and it was a rewarding experience as it afforded me the opportunity of making friends more quickly than other international students who lived off campus. It also afforded me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the university environment and the different departments and faculty, and the behavioural pattern of students living in the university residence.

My coming to study in Canada has been like coming to a crossroad with points of intersections in life. The most amazing thing about it is that no one ever remains the same way they were when they come to a crossroad in life. There is usually a paradigm shift that occurs at such point in one's life, and I do think that such occurrence has happened and continues to happen to me. The fear of the unknown and of failure often stops people from starting their journey into whatever venture or adventure that is important to them in life. When one comes to a new environment there is usually that feeling that one has lost control, because of the feeling of unsteadiness in the new environment and so one feels very vulnerable but it takes time to

gain stability. The adventure of the transitional process in a new environment enhances personal diversity, which ultimately leads to long-lasting success. In going through this transition process, especially as a student, the energy level usually differs, depending on the student's initial motivation to study in a different environment and country like Canada. Thinking about all that I have being through and am still going through, I could unequivocally say that I have adjusted to the Canadian system faster than some of my friends have, because I think that my level of preparation in terms of coming to Canada to study and the readiness to face challenges and overcome them was very high.

In saying this, I holistically consider every aspect of it and how it has affected me academically, socially, culturally, materially, financially, emotionally and psychologically. What happens when one starts using the less developed parts of the body, especially during exercise, is that one feels instability and lack of control, and there is the natural propensity to stop, but if one has enough courage and perseverance to keep at it, after a while both stability and control are gained and when that happens, balance is achieved. The initial motivation is what gives one the staying power to keep going even in the weakest moments of one's life's journey. This has greatly helped me in my transition process while studying at Brandon University.

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Blessing Onovwakpo Emadedor is an international student from Nigeria, in the Master of Education degree in educational administration at Brandon University. He is a self-motivated person who enjoys teaching, singing, travelling, making friends, and cooking. He also enjoys volunteering in church and singing in the choir, and he is a team player.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. projects and theses in 2012.

Maryanne Manning

February 13, 2012

Thesis Advisor: Dr. M. Terry

Examining Bullying in Rural Manitoba Schools Implementing Positive Behavior Support

In response to her rural Manitoba community's desire for positive change in its 7-12 and K-6 schools, the researcher initiated this mixed methods, action research study in the fall of 2008. Research in the two school sites extended over three years for the purpose of (a) determining whether the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) model, with a bullying prevention program used as a primary intervention, could be implemented with fidelity, and (b) whether the prevention program would be effective in reducing bullying. The qualitative portion of the study examined how the process impacted five students who self-identified as being involved in school bullying. This research addressed gaps in three areas of literature: (a) implementation of SW-PBS in Canadian high schools, (b) execution of a bullying prevention program, based on Olweus' principles, as a primary intervention of SW-PBS, and (c) evaluation of bullying prevention programs' effectiveness.

Results showed that the high school faced challenges similar to those identified in American studies. However, based on School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) scores, the researcher predicted that both schools would reach full power of SW-PBS within five years. Modest reductions in the number of students involved in bullying were achieved. Issues related to the evaluation of bullying prevention programs were discussed. Interviews revealed that the schools' efforts served to increase five sample students' resiliency against internalizing and externalizing effects of bullying. The researcher recommended that (a) schools align their SW-PBS behavioral expectations with the learning behaviors identified in the proposed provincial report card, (b) a bullying prevention program based on outcomes from Manitoba core subject area curricula and best practices of assessment be designed, and (c) a study should be instigated in order to examine whether the target/perpetrator role in bullying actually exists.

Jeannine Tremblay

February 24, 2012

Thesis Advisor: Dr. I. Huggins

Developing a French Version of an Auditory Processing Assessment Kit

Being able to process auditory information efficiently in a classroom setting is important for student success. It is also important that teachers have a tool to help them identify those children who are experiencing difficulty in understanding and recalling information that is delivered orally, so that they can intervene quickly and in the most efficient manner. The *Auditory Processing Assessment Kit: Understanding How Children Listen and Learn* (Rowe, Pollard, & Rowe, 2006) is a practical tool to assess children's capacity to process oral information in English.

The purpose of this study was to develop a French version of the *Auditory Processing Assessment Kit*, to be used by classroom teachers to assess the auditory processing skills of French Immersion students. A French version of the Auditory Processing Assessment was developed and trialed with students in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island. The

research questions were as follows: (1) What are the specific characteristics of the English sentences that can be used to develop a set of French sentences? and (2) Is the development of a French version of the Auditory Processing Assessment useful for assessing the auditory processing abilities of French second language learners? The data analysis indicated that the students made the expected steady growth through the early years (kindergarten to grade two), repeating more complex sentences and a greater number of digits. However, the data also indicated that in subsequent grades students were not able to repeat more complex sentences consistently from grade to grade. Further research is needed to determine whether the French version of the Auditory Processing Assessment can be used with French Immersion students.

Eric Lowe

March 5, 2012

Project Advisor: Dr. L. Whidden

An Argument for Art in the General Curriculum

The purpose of the project was to identify deficiencies in the Draft Manitoba K-12 Visual Arts Curriculum Framework and then propose strategies to correct these deficiencies, with a focus on integrating art in teachers' daily lessons in all subject areas.

The method chosen was as follows. The researcher analyzed the draft curriculum in relation to art educators' answers to a survey that was completed as part of the curriculum development procedure. Then, he enhanced the curriculum in response to the educators' expressed needs: he made recommendations for the curriculum implementation process, and he developed an appendix of supplementary art lessons. Finally, he field tested the art lessons to ensure that they addressed the deficiencies in the draft curriculum.

There are four anticipated outcomes for the project. First, teachers in all subject areas will feel confident in using integrating art into their daily lessons and classroom activities. Second, the students will learn to express themselves through art. Third, the students will use art as a visual language for learning, especially for creative problem-solving. Fourth, selected art lessons introduce Aboriginal art. Aboriginal approaches and related environmental issues are useful as catalysts for integrating art into all school subjects.

Graham Avon

March 30, 2012

Thesis Advisor: Dr. C. Symons

Advanced Placement Programs and the Transition from Secondary to Post-Secondary Education

The transition from secondary to post-secondary education is problematic for many students. Attrition rates at post-secondary institutions with the attendant loss of human capital continue to be a source of concern. This case study concerned the transition of students from secondary to post-secondary education and was conducted during 2010 and 2011 in south-western Manitoba. In particular, this transition was examined from the perspective of current university students who had taken Advanced Placement courses in high school.

Findings from the study shed light on influential aspects of the educational landscape of the participants during this period in their lives. In the process the findings reveal potential reasons for the high levels of attrition currently experienced. The findings suggest that the overwhelming majority of the participants experienced a successful transition to university. The participants felt that this was in large part due to the content of their AP courses, and

also due to being exposed to challenges that were similar in nature to those they could expect at university.

The dynamics of the learning environment at both levels of education were found to be instrumental in the development of the participants, both in a positive and a negative direction. In general the findings suggest that the pedagogical philosophies of the two levels of education are not consistent and the degree of articulation between the two levels of education is not sufficient to ensure a smooth transition. Recommendations for improving the articulation between the two levels of education are included. Changes on both sides of the transition appear to be necessary in order to reduce the difficulties that are currently experienced by students.

Richard DeGagne

May 3, 2012

Project Advisor: Dr. C. Symons

Responding to Legislative Change: Extending the Neelin High School Off-Campus Alternative Program

This research documented, first hand, the process of how a decree from the Minister of Education is viewed, analyzed and interpreted; and of how a specialized program is eventually implemented to meet this new legislative mandate. The project takes the form of a first-person narrative, tracing the arc of this program's development from the point of view of the individual who would eventually become the program's administrator. Development of the new initiative is traced from the proclamation of legislation, through initial informal discussions within the school division, to the planning processes and negotiations that eventually result in the creation of a new educational facility and program for at-risk students in the City of Brandon. The narrative is informed throughout by reference to the literature in the fields of self-directed learning and alternative education.

Leo Landers

June 25, 2012

Thesis Advisor: Dr. J. Kirk

Examination Learning and Pedagogical Practices in the Context of Video Games

Curiosity into what skills students learn while playing video games and how teacher pedagogy in the classroom should change in accordance to this new digital learning platform is at the heart of this study. The research looked at pedagogical practices of teachers in grades 3, 4, and 5, to (a) see if pedagogical practices interface with the new digital learning platform (b) to see if teachers were cognizant of the teaching opportunities presented by video games and (c) to see how pedagogical practice can be changed by the type of digital skills learned by students.

Results revealed that all three teacher's pedagogy styles were one of rote learning, which was the style they learned during their placement years. As a result all three teachers decided to continue introducing outcomes in the classroom and only using the video game format to reinforce learned outcomes. This pedagogical decision effectively alters the video game student-centered platform to one of teacher-centered rote learning which further entrenches the teacher's pedagogy of rote learning.

The researcher recommends (a) classroom pedagogy practices should change when using the video game learning platform from a teacher-centered one to a student-centered one to give the learner more responsibility for their learning and (b) video games should not just be

used to reinforce outcomes already learned (rote learning), but they should be used to introduce new ones.

Sherryl Maglione

September 19, 2012

Thesis Advisor: Dr. M. Terry

The Journey of an Aboriginal Teacher: Imagining and Living the Potential of Excellence Through Service

The purpose of this autoethnography is to provide an overview of the successes and challenges of being an Aboriginal teacher who teaches First Nation students in on-reserve schools. The thesis framework is provided through *The Seven Teachings*, which is a First Nation worldview or guide to living a good life and in a good way. In addition, the thesis discusses how the teachings provide a source of emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual support for an Aboriginal teacher and, in turn, her First Nation students. The thesis demonstrates how cultural and familial history results in cumulative acquired values and how these values affect teacher/student relationships. The thesis also discusses the necessity of understanding, accepting, and constructing an Aboriginal identity. Further, the thesis tells the story of an Aboriginal teacher who works to empower First Nation students during their high school experience by indigenizing the senior high English Language Arts curriculum. The thesis contains extensive discussion about importance of constructing positive relationships in order to create an atmosphere of learning for both student and teacher. The thesis will be of interest to Aboriginal teachers and other school staff that work with Aboriginal students. As many more Aboriginal teachers are graduating each year, they will be interested in different perspectives of the journey in order to provide them with touchstones of similarity as they work through their own educational journey. It is important for future and present Aboriginal educators, and all educators who work with Aboriginal students, to understand the struggles, challenges, and triumphs that Aboriginal people face in their pursuit of education in Canada.

Todd Monster

October 11, 2012

Project Advisor: Dr. T. Skinner

A Forgotten People: Supervising and Evaluating Substitute Teachers

The number of days that substitute teachers are used to cover classes is on the rise, and research indicates that student achievement is negatively affected when the classroom teacher is away. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to collect data that would identify the key components in an effective substitute teacher supervision and evaluation model for Manitoba school divisions. In order to address the purpose, three objectives were identified: (a) determine the need for a model of supervision and evaluation for substitute teachers, (b) identify the role each of the various groups should play in such a model, and (c) identify the key components of a substitute teacher supervision and evaluation model. Four elementary school principals, four classroom teachers and three substitute teachers in two school divisions in southern Manitoba, were given a questionnaire followed by an interview. Findings indicate that participants felt there was a need for an effective substitute teacher supervision and evaluation model, but were tentative about adopting a formal evaluation process. In general, these individuals felt that a supervision and evaluation model should focus on improving preparations for substitute teachers before they enter the building, providing specific, descriptive feedback to substitutes, and generally improving communication at all levels.

The Impact of Health & Wellness Club: Students Helping Students

For the first time in human history, overconsumption of food has replaced malnutrition as the world's biggest health problem (Brownell & Horgan, 2007, p. 3). The Arabian Gulf and Kuwait in particular, have been especially hard hit with what the World Health Organization (2003) calls this "global epidemic." In Kuwait, 9 out of 10 people are overweight and Kuwait has the world's third highest level of diabetes (Atkinson, 2012, p. 33). Schools have a vested interest in obesity because of related co-morbidities affecting academic achievement. A 12-week after-school health and wellness club was created at a private bilingual school for adolescent Kuwaiti girls, with the purpose of giving participants the skills and knowledge to meet their own health goals. Almost all participants expressed the desire to lose weight. The researcher had three primary foci intended to explore the following: (a) student goal-setting for participants wishing to improve their health, (b) the impact of knowledge regarding health and well-being upon the participants, and (c) the effects of a single-sex, after-school support group that draws upon concepts of cognitive-behavioural therapy as outlined in the New Moves intervention program (Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Hannan, & Rex, 2003). One of the central questions that this researcher was concerned with is the role that the individual teacher can or should play in the fight against obesity, and the most effective and appropriate role for schools in obesity prevention. Participants self-reported positive changes in habits, attitudes, and behaviors toward adopting a healthier lifestyle.

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