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Special Issue on What Good Education Looks Like:
Perspectives from the Field



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Cover Painting

Medium: acrylic

Saul Arlan Spence
10-year-old student at Mary Duncan School in The Pas, Manitoba

Artist's Description:

The colors show my emotions. I am happy at school. I love to paint.

Please turn to the journal's back cover for a photograph of this artist.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the eleventh issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Most of our authors for volume 6, issue 1, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. This issue also features reports by researchers connected to the VOICE Pathways to Success project sponsored by SSHRC. I thank these educators for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles with a focus on exemplary education.

- David Nutbean's research report describes the findings that emerged from his study of teacher and student use of technology in the classroom.
- Natasha Palmer's refereed article describes the academic support methods that make Hapnot Collegiate a good school in Flin Flon, Manitoba.
- Chelsea Russell's refereed article defines Hapnot Collegiate in Flin Flon, Manitoba, as a good school, based on six criteria gleaned from the literature.
- Lori Lawrence's refereed article explicates the educational practices that cultivate student engagement in a northern Manitoba high school.
- Bryan Schroeder's refereed article explains how critically thinking educators empower students to question social realities in order to improve their world.
- Samantha Moore's refereed article overviews the role of Flin Flon School Division's mathematics consultant in optimizing students' math performance.
- Ron Constant's refereed article examines the qualities that define a good First Nation School.
- Connie Atkinson's refereed article uses student engagement as the defining characteristic of a good school.
- Miranda Bowman's refereed article recommends formal mentoring for novice teachers, as a means to support them through their first year in the profession.
- Ayodeji Osiname's refereed article recommends the transformative leadership framework as a guide to develop mentoring programs for adolescent students.
- Jodi Pawlachuk's refereed article focuses on values as a school's foundation for enabling youth to prepare for their future.
- Reports by the following VOICE researchers celebrate opportunities for community engagement by children and youth in northern, rural, and Aboriginal communities in Manitoba: Marcia Novo and Chris Brown.

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 2013.

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RESEARCH REPORT

The Effectiveness of Technology Integration into the Classroom in Rural Manitoba High Schools

David Nutbean

This report is a summary of a Master of Education thesis of the same name, completed in December, 2013. Over two years of data collection and analysis went into this work and represents teacher technology integration efforts pre-BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) or one-to-one computing integration models. However, given the availability of technology and the results of this study for this time-frame, some of the results of this study are noteworthy and point to more fundamental changes to teacher practice that are synergistic with technology change and not tied to any specific era of technology integration. As noted by Means (2008), despite decades of local promotion of educational uses of technology, classroom practice in most schools has changed little from that of the mid-20th century.

Students and society have high expectations of technology use in all aspects of our lives. A common phrase to describe today's student is that of a "digital native" (Prensky 2001, p 1). Students born into this digital age have instant access to information and technology, and are exposed to computers, video games, digital music players, and cell phones from a very young age. Waters (2007) described this generation of students as "hyperconnected" (p. 1), able to connect to people, devices, and information continuously and simultaneously. Their devices and internet content are becoming one, allowing them to be connected to technology anytime and anywhere. As technology becomes more integral to society's everyday functioning, are schools of today places where technology is used in the everyday activities of teaching and learning?

There is belief in the technology-infused classroom to change teacher practice. Changes in teacher practice to recognize that the student-as-learner rather than the teacher-as-instructor can change the classroom environment. Technology offers the possibility of instant access to information, connectivity, and the use of many amazing tools for learning. As technology becomes essential for learning rather than supplemental to teaching, education practice will necessitate a change from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches.

Technology as the forefront of educational change has been at the heart of technology integration by the government of Manitoba. Literacy with Information and Communications Technology (LwICT) is a developmental continuum of technology skills meant to formalize computer literacy skills required for students to be implemented by schools (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2006). It is a progressive framework for a student-centered approach using critical and creative thinking skills for the purposes of application, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge, in recognition that knowledge acquisition alone is only one part of learning. LwICT relies on inquiry and the application of knowledge and a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student, in order to provide a model of learning that students can use when confronted with unique learning situations. In short, LwICT promotes a method of learning using technology to promote higher level thinking skills applied on their own with support of a teacher.

This study was significant in that it provided regional data on the technology integration into high school teacher pedagogy. Other studies have indicated a disparity between overall technology usage by teachers and the use of technology in pedagogy (Gray, Thomas, & Lewis, 2010). By examining some of the factors identified in other studies in this local study, it is hoped that some correlative data may help to develop a solution to persistent incongruities to technology integration in the classroom. Local data to these research questions provide some regional context to technology integration research, most sources of data being from other provinces or countries. The resulting descriptive data and correlations developed may be used

to help evaluate how technology integration efforts can be improved to reflect the true intent of LwICT integration as mandated by the Government of Manitoba.

Technology integration into the classroom is seen as a way of improving teacher practice to accommodate student-centered pedagogy, and the availability of technology for teachers is generally extensive (Ward & Parr, 2010). Technology integration into teacher practice has also been shown as an effective way to engage and motivate students, enabling educational opportunities in a variety of students and settings (Baek & Freehling, 2007). This study helped to clarify possible solutions to teacher practice and technology integration issues.

Method

Using a survey-based approach, this quantitative study collected data from high schools in rural Manitoba to examine the relationship between teacher use of technology and pedagogy, based on developed criteria. The results helped to establish correlations between technology availability and frequency of use for teachers, and to provide insight into aspects that affect teacher pedagogy afforded by the availability of technology in rural Manitoba high schools.

The study's primary research focus was to determine where there were correlations between teacher personal ICT use, teacher professional ICT use, and student ICT for instruction in rural Manitoba high schools and examined a number of factors that may influence teacher ICT use. Specifically, this study examined the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant correlations between the availability of various forms of technology in the school and their frequency of use by teachers?
2. Are there any significant teacher demographic factors that impact teachers' personal, professional, and pedagogical ICT use?
3. Are there any significant correlations between teacher personal, professional, and pedagogical use of ICT?
4. Are there any significant correlations between teacher-reported pedagogical orientation and teacher professional and pedagogical use of ICT?

The target population for this study was high school teachers in rural Manitoba high schools or Manitoba rural schools that contained high school grades. A total of 11 rural Manitoba school divisions, which included 21 high schools (including some grades 7-12 schools) within these divisions, provided data for this study. School populations within these participating schools ranged from schools with fewer than 100 students to schools with over 1000 students. Geographically, schools were rural schools north, south, and west of Winnipeg. The majority of participating schools were in western and southwestern Manitoba.

A survey instrument was used to obtain information from teachers in the study. The survey instrument had mostly Likert-scale type questions, numeric responses, and some open-ended questions. This study was cross-sectional in design, establishing a clear picture of teacher's technology context with regard to demographic factors, technology availability, technology use, and technology integration into pedagogy. The following sections were in the survey:

1. demographic information
2. the availability and frequency of technology use
3. outlook on teaching and learning, examining the pedagogical orientation evaluation of teachers (either student-centered or teacher-centered)
4. teacher personal use of ICT
5. teacher professional use of ICT
6. student use (teacher pedagogical use) of ICT

An online survey was used to distribute and gather information for the study. The online survey was constructed using Google documents, specifically as a Google survey. The link was not public and could be completed only by using the link provided by a principal of a

participating school (as supplied by the researcher). Schools had as few as 10 teachers to 60 or more, representing an estimated total student population of 7015 students (Government of Manitoba, 2009). Out of a total of 66 completed surveys, 55 data sets were suitable for analysis, for a usability completion rate of 12%.

The study utilized both descriptive and inferential analysis to answer the research questions. Data were aggregated and compiled to develop a statistical picture of technological affordances for teachers. Descriptive statistics helped to convey a categorized aggregated representation and to visualize the data in a number of ways. Inferential statistics were used to examine the validity of the data within groups and between groups, and to examine hypotheses between variables in order to draw conclusions and answer the research questions.

The main inferential test used in this study involved the Pearson r Product Moment Correlation coefficient (Creswell, 2008, p. 109). The Pearson test is used widely in social science research, and the Pearson r is probably the best coefficient correlation to use in educational research (Adeyemi, 2009). Correlations and co-variations were established to answer the main research questions.

Results

The study's focus was to determine whether significant correlations exist between teacher ICT use and teacher ICT use in pedagogy in rural Manitoba high schools. To answer the first research question, a number of descriptive measures and correlative analysis were used. Computer availability in the classroom and on laptop carts and computers labs were measured as well as the frequency of use. The results show that there is greater usage of computers when they are within the classroom rather than in a computer lab or on a laptop cart. The results also show that the technologies that are most highly available for teaching activities (most significantly a computer display unit, and interactive whiteboard) are the most frequently used.

The findings from the correlative analysis indicated that there is a positive correlation between the number of computers available in the classroom and their frequency of use ($r = 0.286$, $p = 0.034$); the findings also showed that there is no correlation between availability and frequency of use for the use computers in computer labs or for the use of computers on laptop carts. Other analysis regarding this research question looked at specific technology availability in the classroom and frequency of use in the classroom. The finding showed a number of significant correlations between availability and frequency of use of computer/video projectors ($r = 0.435$, $p = 0.001$), interactive whiteboards ($r = 0.826$, $p < 0.001$), videoconference unit/distance education systems ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.001$), classroom response systems ($r = 0.756$, $p < 0.001$), MP3 player/iPod/sound systems ($r = 0.772$, $p < 0.001$), document camera/scanners ($r = 0.676$, $p < 0.001$), and handheld devices ($r = 0.793$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis of the data suggests that the less readily available a technology is, the less frequently it will be used in pedagogy. More specifically, a conclusion can be made that technology that is readily available directly in the classroom is most frequently used by teachers.

The second research question looked at demographic factors that affect teachers' technology usage. The results showed a wide range of participant teachers regarding experience, class size, and subjects taught. There was a typical distribution for factors including class size and subjects taught. Regarding years of experience, participants in this study had fewer years of experience than would be expected for the general population of teachers, with 47% reporting 10 years' experience or less.

Participating teachers had a wide range of experience and technology uses. The use of interactive whiteboards was positively correlated, indicating usage went up with greater teacher experience ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.05$). The use of MP3 players, iPods and sound systems were negatively correlated indicating greater usage by less experienced teachers ($r = -0.286$, $p < 0.05$). Teacher personal use of ICT results indicated negative correlations regarding social web sites ($r = -0.331$, $p = 0.013$), gaming ($r = -0.303$, $p = 0.024$), photo/video sharing ($r = -0.284$, p

=0.036) and media player usage ($r = -0.272$, $p = 0.044$), indicated greater usage by younger teachers. Teacher professional use of ICT results indicated similar trends, showing negative correlations for the use of word processors ($r = -0.288$, $p = 0.033$), presentation software ($r = -0.305$, $p = 0.023$), multimedia ($r = -0.267$, $p = 0.049$), laptop/netbook usage ($r = -0.289$, $p = 0.033$), and media players ($r = -0.377$, $p = 0.005$). With regards to student use of technology in the classroom, the findings show that there is no correlation between teacher experience and student (pedagogical) use of technology in the classroom.

The results for this research question indicated that personal and professional use of technology for less experienced teachers is higher than for more experienced teachers. The data showed consistent usage in what would be expected of a younger teacher, but greater usage did not correlate to greater usage by students in pedagogy. In fact, this study indicates a positive correlation between the use of interactive whiteboards and teacher experience, indicating that older teachers use interactive whiteboards more than younger teachers. One conclusion regarding younger teachers is that the correlations of greater usage of technology by younger teachers do not correspond to greater student (pedagogical) use of technology.

The third research question examined the correlations between teacher personal, teacher professional, and student use of ICT. Each type of usage was examined by measuring the parallel use of specific technologies in each of the three contexts and then analysing and correlating the results to answer the research question. Specific usage was measured from “always” (4), “often” (3), “sometimes” (2), “rarely” (1), and “never” (0). For all personal use of technology, the results indicated a total of 10 technologies scoring in the range of “often” usage (3 or above). For all professional use of technology, a total of 8 technologies scored in the “often” usage range. For student (pedagogical) use of technology, in total there were only 3 technologies used “often,” none of which are in the mobile technology category. Of note are the 3 “often” used technologies for student (pedagogical) use in the classroom: word processing, search engines and presentation software.

The inferential findings indicated a total of 23 significant correlations between teacher personal use, teacher professional use, and student (pedagogical) use, summarized in Table 1. A definitive conclusion for this research question is that there was a strong correlation between personal, professional, and student (pedagogical) use of technology in the classroom.

The fourth research question examined the correlations between instructional philosophy and ICT use in the classroom. The question of instructional philosophy regards whether teachers are teacher centered or student centered in their approach to instruction. A student-centred teacher may allow more student activity in the class with technology. A teacher-centred teacher may use more direct methods of teaching, which can limit student use of technology.

The study gathered and ranked teacher instructional philosophy based on a number of questions. Questions for this part of the survey were scored and teachers were ranked with a teacher and student centeredness score; teachers were then classified as teacher centered or student centered based on their scores. Most teachers in the study indicated that they were student centered in their approach (84%).

The study also correlated the measures of teacher centeredness and student centeredness to a number of specific technology uses. With regards to teacher professional use of technology, teacher centeredness correlated negatively with word processing ($r = -0.359$, $p = 0.007$), and student centeredness correlated positively with professional use of presentations ($r = 0.340$, $p = 0.011$). With respect to student use of technology, teacher centeredness negatively correlated with student use of presentations ($r = -0.331$, $p = 0.014$) and portable storage ($r = -0.332$, $p = 0.013$), whereas student centeredness positively correlated with student use of presentations ($r = 0.316$, $p = 0.019$), multimedia ($r = 0.469$, $p = 0.011$), and portable storage ($r = 0.384$, $p = 0.004$).

A conclusion regarding this research question is that teachers’ instructional philosophy does correlate to student (pedagogical) use in the classroom. This means that teachers who support a student-centered philosophy have more student usage of technology in the classroom. These

findings suggest that the use of technology, whether by a teacher or student, supports student-centered pedagogy.

Table 1.

A summary of correlations between personal and professional, and professional and student (pedagogical) use of technology

Correlation	Personal & Professional		Professional & Student (pedagogical)	
	r	p	r	p
ICT Use				
E-mail (i.e. Outlook/Outlook express)	0.447**	0.001	-	-
Webmail (i.e. Hotmail, Gmail)	0.285*	0.035	-	-
Search engines (i.e. Google, Bing)	0.454**	0.001	0.348**	0.010
Social web sites (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, etc.)	0.530**	<0.001	0.584**	< 0.001
Spreadsheets software (i.e. Excel)	0.621**	<0.001	0.415**	0.002
Presentation software (i.e. Powerpoint)	0.702**	<0.001	0.587**	< 0.001
Interactive Whiteboards (i.e. Smartboards) in lessons	-	-	0.796**	< 0.001
Subject specific technology (i.e. used only for Math, Science, etc.)	-	-	0.852**	< 0.001
Multimedia for instruction (audio, pictures, video)	-	-	0.442**	0.001
Gaming (i.e. Wii, Xbox)	0.327*	.015	0.523**	< 0.001
Web page creation (i.e. Frontpage or Google Sites)	0.632**	<0.001	0.500**	< 0.001
Blogs or Wikis (i.e. Blogger, Wikispaces)	0.772**	<0.001	0.592**	< 0.001
Social Bookmarking (i.e. del.icio.us, stumbleupon)	0.603**	<0.001	0.724**	< 0.001
Aggregators (i.e. Bloglines, Google Reader)	0.664**	<0.001	0.723**	< 0.001
Podcasting (i.e. podshow, podomatic)	0.465**	<0.001	0.696**	< 0.001
Photo/Video sharing (i.e. flickr, YouTube, UStream, Screencast)	0.656**	<0.001	0.577**	< 0.001
Chat/Video Conferencing (i.e. Skype, ooVoo)	0.531**	<0.001	0.655**	< 0.001
Cell Phone Calling	0.314*	0.019	-	-
Cell Phone Texting	0.366**	0.006	0.357**	0.007
Smartphone applications (email, web browsing, etc.)	0.611**	<0.001	0.356**	0.008
Laptop/Netbook computer	0.511**	<0.001	0.416**	0.002
Tablet Device (iPad, Samsung Galaxy Tab)	0.769**	<0.001	0.549**	< 0.001
GPS Navigation Device (Garmin, TomTom)	0.383**	.004	0.565**	< 0.001
Media Player (iPod, Zune)	0.446**	.001	0.629**	< 0.001
Gaming System (Nintendo DS, Sony PSP)	0.471**	<0.001	0.603**	< 0.001
Portable Storage (Flash Drive)	0.522**	<0.001	0.550**	< 0.001

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

One finding from this study was that the availability of computers for student use was high, although not universal or evenly distributed. While computer availability within classrooms was often low, the number of computers available elsewhere, such as a computer lab or from a laptop cart, was high. Computer usage by the entire class therefore often requires either taking a class to a computer lab or bringing in computers on a cart. Given that most students may be able to do research directly with their phone, this seems an archaic exercise and contrary to the idea of always on, instantaneous access to the internet (Jukes, McCain, & Crockett, 2010). It is important to note that the results of this study show that virtually all computers available had internet access. There was a correlation between availability in the classroom and frequency of

use ($r = 0.286$, $p < 0.05$); there was no correlation between availability and frequency of use regarding laptop carts or computer labs.

A number of reports identify mobile computing as an important technology for access to information and for use in education (Anderson & Rainie, 2010; New Media Consortium, 2012). According to the results of this study, teacher personal use of mobile technologies was relatively high, in keeping with what might be expected as normal personal use. The usage of technology changed dramatically when looking at teacher professional use and student (pedagogical) use of technology. In almost a complete reversal from teacher personal use, mobile (cell phone) technology use for professional purposes was very low. This downward trend continued with student use of mobile technologies, because the student (pedagogical) use of mobile technologies was virtually non-existent.

This research also revealed that the student (pedagogical) uses of types of interactive, collaborative, or social internet technologies were limited in the classroom. The use of web pages, blogs, and wikis was low (1.72, rated below “sometimes” use). Other web applications such as photo sharing and conferencing technologies also showed low student usage. More surprisingly (or maybe not), the use of social web sites (such as Facebook) was extremely low, which is quite the opposite of personal usage expectations of most high school students.

This study also reveals a lack of diversity in the types of technologies that students were able to use. Given the great importance that teens place on cell phone usage and the variety of technologies that they can access on a daily basis (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010), this shows minimal pedagogical opportunities in the use of these technologies by students. All forms of cell phone usage for school purposes – calling (1.35), texting (1.44), and applications (1.44) – were low in usage, barely above the “never” usage. Other mobile student uses showed similar lack of use. The only mobile devices that were somewhat used were laptops/netbooks (2.69) and portage storage (2.7); this was more likely because they were used in the classroom and used for storage, not for their mobile applications. The fact that a number of listed technologies were “never” used by teachers indicates that teacher choice plays a determining role in the lack of usage of technologies even if some of the usage of individual technologies may have mitigating factors regarding their use.

LwICT is a method of learning that places the student its centre, using ICT as a tool to help understand information and facilitate communication, giving choices to students to be more self-directed in their learning. Given the dearth of the uses of technology by students in this study, it appears unlikely that students were making choices. What were most “often” used in the classroom were search engines, word processing, and presentations. These results show that choice and expression are limited in these results, not supporting these aspects of LwICT.

Generalizing from the data, it seem likely that the average assignments require students to find information (search engine) and place that information in a document (word processing) , indicating a knowledge-based approach to the use of technology that does not reach into high cognitive levels such as application, analysis, evaluation, or creativity. This lower cognitive use of technology is supported by the fact that presentation software is the third highest used computer application by students and that other application uses were quite low in comparison to the three most highly used applications. Given the vast array of technologies and applications available to students (27 types were analysed in this study), the results show little use of the higher cognitive domains in teacher assignment choices for students.

In this study, the part of the teacher’s survey entitled “Outlook on Teaching and Learning” provided specific information about teachers’ reported pedagogical orientation toward teacher centeredness or student centeredness. Using a scoring system based on their responses, it was determined that 84% of teachers indicated that they were student centered in their approach to pedagogy. In looking at student (pedagogical) use of technology, the variety of technology uses was quite low, because only 3 of the possible 27 technology uses scored in the “often” range. Thus, although the majority of teachers in this study supported student-centered pedagogy, the applications of technology to pedagogy show that they did not. In other words, there was a

contradiction between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the application of technology that would support those beliefs. This is an interesting finding, since it suggests either a misunderstanding or a misapplication of student-centered pedagogy using technology. The prominent use of display units and interactive whiteboards by teachers, with the lack of other uses of technologies, suggests a significant proportion of class time involved in the transmission of information from the teacher to student – a more teacher-centered approach to instruction.

The predominant use of search engines and word processing by students in class also suggests that technology was being used to support pedagogy not changed by technology. Student assignments that often involve forms of research to look up answers to questions for worksheets, or to research topics to create papers, show that they can apply their knowledge of a topic. In the past, these types of assignments would likely involve books for research and notebooks to write out their responses or answers to the assignments. This implies pedagogy with technology being used to direct student activities in a teacher-centered way, using substitutive pedagogical approaches with technology.

In using technology in a substitutive way, replacing old technology with new, teachers may feel that they are teaching differently, when in fact pedagogically their methods are similar. Efforts to infuse technology into learning should therefore focus more on pedagogy than technology. Effectively using technology in ways that support the curriculum and the student using LwICT requires fundamental shifts in pedagogical thinking that have yet to take place.

The results of this study show that technology availability was adequate, able to accommodate a classroom of students when needed. As previous discussions have shown, generally there was not a change in teacher practice with regard to technology use. Also of note was that of the participants in this study, 31% reported five years of teaching experience or less, and 12% reported a year or less of experience (in other words, new graduates). Intuitively, it might be expected that there would be a correlation between general technology use in the classroom and years of experience of the teacher, but the results of this study showed no correlation. First, this indicates quite clearly that using technology does not equate to pedagogical use of technology regardless of how well one can use technology personally. Second, utilizing best-practices of technology integration into pedagogy is a professional skill set that needs to be taught to all teacher-candidates in their teacher-training programs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, a number of recommendations regarding teacher ICT use and the use of technology in the classroom can be made. A summary follows:

1. **Eliminate the use of computer labs and laptop carts.** This study showed correlations between the availability and frequency of use of computers for computers that are in the classroom. There were no correlations between availability and frequency of use for laptop carts or computer lab use. For the most effective use of technology, computers should be available in the classroom all the time and be available to every student.
2. **Allow students to bring (and use) their own devices.** Following on the first recommendation, an increased frequency of use of technology would occur by making the technology literally at hand for each student. BYOD (bring your own device) programs are already being run in a number of schools in Manitoba.
3. **Allow students to use their cell phones in class (and out of class).** Today's smartphones are often more powerful than many school lab computers and netbooks. Many high school students already have smartphones; let students use them.
4. **Use a variety of web applications and apps in the classroom (and beyond).** This study showed that there were only 3 computer/internet technologies that were widely used by students: search engines, word processing and presentations. The diversity of digital applications used should be increased.

5. **Provide greater choice to students.** The predominance of just 3 computer/internet technologies out of a possible 18 limits the choice of technologies for student use. This also suggests less of a student-centered approach to instruction than technology use affords. Results of this study suggest a more directed and lock-step approach to instruction that can be changed by offering students more choice in their assignments.
6. **Allow students greater creativity.** The choices for student technology use in this study indicate knowledge-level applications of technology that are not in keeping with LwICT principles to move learning to higher levels on Blooms taxonomy (Government of Manitoba, 2006).
7. **Use true student-centered pedagogy.** In this study, 80% of the teachers indicated a student-centered approach to instruction; however, the variety and types of technology used by students do not reflect a student-centered approach to instruction.
8. **Identify and eliminate substitutive pedagogical use of technology.** Pedagogy that does not change with the introduction of technology does not properly consider technology, content, and the context as one in the classroom. Technology and pedagogy can work together to create meaningful change (Harris & Estes, 2008).
9. **Provide professional development on new pedagogical approaches using technology.** Teaching with technology requires integrating technology into pedagogy. The key to the effective use of technology is to make a pedagogical shift first, then determine what technologies can be used to fit the new pedagogy. The pedagogical change has to occur only once; then teachers can pick, choose, and change the technological tools (which technology will require) over time to suite pedagogy.
10. **Initial teacher training must incorporate new pedagogical practices for technology infusion into the classroom.** Teaching with technology is a pedagogical skill and not a technology skill; this needs to be taught to teacher-candidates at university/college. Only by changing the teacher preparation process to reflect new pedagogical practices will teacher-candidates be trained in new pedagogical practices reflecting the proper infusion of technology into instruction.
11. **Reduce web filtering/blocking software usage.** Although teacher choice in the use of technology plays an important role in technology usage by students, the context of the classroom likely plays a role, as well. Internet/technology policies/rules and web filtering/blockage likely play a role in the decreased use of technology in the classroom.

Some of this study's results hinted at questions that were beyond its scope. A number of issues and incongruences remain in the findings, for which there are not clear answers. Further research will be required to answer questions that were raised as a result of this study:

1. What barriers exist for integrating technology into rural Manitoba classrooms?
2. How does filtering/blocking software limit access to certain web applications? This may explain some of the drop in technology usage for pedagogy.
3. What pedagogical approaches are being used by high-adopter teachers? The issue of substitutive pedagogy is important for technology integration, since even high-adopter teachers may not be using technology in a pedagogically congruent way.
4. How do one-to-one computing and BYOD programs affect teaching and learning? At some point in the future, one-to-one computing and/or BYOD programs will be the norm. The efficacy of these programs will need to be looked at in a rural setting.

Conclusion

Effective pedagogy with technology requires that established teacher practices change to embrace new pedagogical constructs. Today's teacher was taught to be a master of the classroom, to be in control of all activity all the time and ensure that every student is on track and following the curriculum step by step and word for word. It is still a teacher's job to make

sure that students meet prescribed outcomes, but the words can come from many places and the steps are there for the students to take. Students today expect to explore and construct, create and manage, play and show, and go and know. Students already have the tools to know whatever they want, whenever they want, and wherever they want. Teachers today need to accept that they need not be in control of all aspects of learning, but allow for diversity and individualization that reflects student wants and needs in a technological context. The world has changed greatly, and some fundamental aspects of teaching have changed. The challenge of teaching today is not the challenge of technology; for teachers, it is always been a pedagogical challenge. Students more than ever need our help to guide them along their path of learning. In an age when students need to learn how to learn, who better to learn from than a teacher?

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REFEREED ARTICLES

A Good School Revisited: The Philosophy and Practice of Academic Support Methods at Hapnot Collegiate

Natashia Palmer

Abstract

Academic success methods belong to the philosophy and practice of good schooling, and have been under continuous revision as the needs of society have changed. The revisions are also due to inefficient usage, dated information, and lack of results. Seven current academic success methods are inclusive schooling, differentiated instruction, individual education plans, educational assistants, academic motivation, resource and tutoring, and parental involvement in academics. These methods are under revision due to issues that have the potential to outweigh their benefits if not corrected. If used correctly, these seven methods can support students academically and prepare them to enter and meet the needs of society.

The philosophies and practices used in school systems are in a constant state of change from year to year as they attempt to meet the needs of society while also meeting the needs of each child (Hierck, Coleman, & Webber, 2011). Philosophies and practices also change as new educational issues arise and are addressed in critical pedagogy (Whitaker, 2012). Many philosophies and practices comprise the foundations of what is considered to be a good school (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). For example, the various methods of academic support are under constant revision due to challenges to their application within school systems (Hierck et al., 2011). As academic support methods are revised and refined, educational practice occurs more effectively at all levels within the school system.

Seven academic support methods are currently being used and challenged within Hapnot Collegiate in northern Manitoba: inclusive schooling, differentiated instruction, individual education plans, educational assistants, academic motivation, resource and tutoring, and parental involvement in academics. These academic support methods are applied and developed continuously as a part of the school philosophy and practice, because the community values them. Exposure to them supports student learning while also preparing students to meet the needs of society, thereby creating a good school.

Inclusive Schooling

The first method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is inclusive schooling. Within Canada and many other countries, inclusive schooling has become a common philosophy and practice in order to fix a dichotomy in teaching by providing non-segregated learning experiences for the “disabled” and “special needs” within the school system (Lim, Wong, & Tan, 2014, pp. 123-124). Inclusive schooling is designed to include all children, disabled or not, in order to encourage their participation within the classroom and to enhance their learning experience with their peers, whereas previously they were taught in separate classrooms or facilities. Inclusive schooling is a method of academic support and an example of best practice because it provides children of all cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities with the opportunity to work in a common space, thereby increasing their opportunity to work on their social skills while also working on their other needs (Kurth, 2013). Inclusive schooling also exposes students to the idea of disability and what it means to approach academics in alternate ways regardless of special needs labels (Ware, 2009).

Inclusive schooling is supported within Hapnot Collegiate due to the number of students in the community who have what could be labelled as disability or special needs. The students in Hapnot Collegiate range from hearing impaired to autistic, and all of these students have opportunities to participate in every course if it is safe for them. With the implementation of inclusive schooling, teachers at Hapnot also use differentiated instruction as common practice within their classrooms to meet the needs of the diverse students. Some issues with inclusive schooling include concerns that there should be better guidelines to differentiate instruction and support students with severe cognitive disabilities in the classroom, while also ensuring that everyone is getting the individual attention that he/she needs (Roy, Guay, & Valois, 2014). In many cases, a student with special needs works with an educational assistant (EA) who can help the teacher work with the student while also attending to the other students in the class (Lim et al., 2014). Hapnot works consistently to integrate students as successfully as possible, with consideration given to safety concerns or other obvious impediments to the students' success.

Differentiated Instruction

The second method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a method used by teachers to meet the learning needs of all students within the classroom (Roy et al., 2014). All students learn differently and require the information to be relayed in different ways in order for them to understand. Differentiated instruction is the use of "blended" strategies such as traditional teaching, demonstrations, projects, discussions, and internet-based learning (Demirer & Sahin, 2013, p. 518). Differentiated instruction is also a method of academic support and best practice when praxis is applied, because it increases the students' opportunity to understand by applying the information being taught to them instead of memorizing it after a traditionally styled lecture (Freire, 2009). In order for students to understand information, they require the lesson to be delivered in a written, verbal, and visually stimulating way, followed by the application of the information. If teachers did not teach by using differentiated instruction, then many students would not fully understand the material and would not learn to the best of their ability, nor would they understand its application or relevance in society.

Differentiated instruction is supported at Hapnot Collegiate because it is a common teacher practice taught in college, and more high school students are requiring diverse instruction in order to learn. Some issues with differentiated instruction at Hapnot involve working with students who require additional in-class support with their academics, as these students often have an emotional or cognitive disability along with other contributing factors that impede their ability to learn. Generally, a student who needs additional academic support will work with an EA according to an individual education plan (IEP), though on occasion they are not, or only one assistant is provided for several students with different instructional needs ranging from mild to severe. Some students require that the teacher read for them, write for them, or sit with them while they receive the lesson and do their work; this form of differentiated instruction is possible, but it becomes an issue when too much time is required from the student in a large class of other students with needs. Hapnot continuously works to improve its practice by providing differentiated instruction to all students, and additional support is provided to those who need or request it.

Individual Education Plans

The third method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is the use of individual education plans. IEPs provide teachers with guidelines on how to differentiate a student's learning instruction via adaptations, modifications, or other means (Sanches-Ferreira, Lopes-dos-Santos, Alves, Santos, & Silveira-Maia, 2013). Any students who are

funded or non-funded may receive an IEP if they require assistance in their learning; the IEP should be passed on and updated from teacher-to-teacher at each grade level, in order to ensure that the students are getting what they need, and to monitor progress. IEPs are a method of academic support because they provide clear instruction on how to work with students to increase their ability to achieve academically. Providing students with IEPs also cultivates reflective learning, as the students are required to reflect on themselves as learners in collaboration with their parents and teachers (Kurth, 2103).

Hapnot Collegiate supports IEPs, because there are students who require adaptations and modifications to their instruction in order to learn more effectively. Some issues with IEPs include the lack of training on how to write them, what adaptations and modifications are appropriate, who should receive them, and regular follow-up routines with teachers and students (Sanchez-Ferreira et al., 2013). If the process is not clearly defined and the students are not receiving properly planned IEPs or interacting throughout the process, then educational practice cannot occur properly. Hapnot is in a constant state of improving its practice of using IEPs with students by further developing how the IEPs are written, and by means of the follow-up techniques that monitor and guide student progress.

Educational Assistants

The fourth method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is the use of educational assistants. EAs can be designated to work with single students or with a class as general helpers (Keating & O'Connor, 2012). EAs help students with their learning when additional support is required beyond what the teacher can provide while working with the other students in the classroom setting (Lim et al., 2014). EAs also help to manage the classroom by assisting the teacher to maintain classroom control by acting as a second set of eyes, especially in large classrooms (Keating & O'Connor, 2012).

Hapnot Collegiate supports the use of EAs, because some students require additional support while a teacher is working with the rest of the class, which provides the students with a sense of value and inclusion within the school. Some students at Hapnot also require closer supervision during their work, especially if safety is an issue. One issue with EAs is the teacher and EA not knowing the EA's job expectations and requirements (Keating & O'Connor, 2012). Within Hapnot Collegiate, in some cases the EA works with entire classes and other times with just one student. There is no clarity on when the EA should work with one student or the entire class. Other times, EAs feel that they are not trained thoroughly enough on how to handle severely disabled students, which creates mixed feelings on dealing with them. Without the clarity of expectation of the role of the EA, there is potential for students to be left un-aided when they need academic assistance and monitoring. Hapnot improves the practice of using EAs in the classroom by clarifying their role when working with the students; clarification is achieved by instructing them to direct their attention to students who require assistance while the teacher is occupied with other students.

Academic Motivation

The fifth method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is academic motivation. Motivation is the encouragement for students to engage and participate in their school courses (Whitaker, 2012). Motivation is stimulated when students experience positive relationships with their teachers, cultural relevance, teacher enthusiasm, the feeling of worth at school, and interest in the subject (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). Motivation is a method of academic support because it is the hook that makes students want to be in school and learn about the subject. Motivation can change the students' view regarding their learning. If students are not interested in the subject matter for whatever reason, then they will not try and will therefore suffer academically (Chih-Yuan Sun, 2014).

Hapnot Collegiate supports motivation techniques by teaching its staff to try different teaching methods to engage the students. Teachers are also encouraged to create positive relationships with their students and to be passionate about their teaching; if they are motivated and passionate, the students are more likely emulate the behaviour (McGregor & Mills, 2014). Whether it is a geography course or an industrial arts course, teachers at Hapnot work to make the information socially and culturally relevant to the students. Some issues that teachers face with motivation are caused by lack of student attendance for many reasons, resulting in poor academic performance (Wilkie, 2012). It is difficult to motivate students if they are not present and their motivation declines due to apprehension about returning. At Hapnot, the staff are aware of the students who have motivation issues due to illness, absence, drug abuse, poor life circumstances, etc. The staff members work to motivate the students by getting them help for any issues, bringing in speakers relevant to their lives, and demonstrating how the courses can be applied in day-to-day life. Hapnot constantly works to improve the practice of motivating its students.

Resource and Tutoring

The sixth method of academic support that makes Hapnot Collegiate a good school is resource and tutoring. Resource and tutoring are additional supports provided to students who either need or request help with their academic work, though tutoring is also available for recreational activities as well (Bray, Zhan, Lykins, & Kwo, 2014). Resource assistance often takes place during school hours in a designated space where students are either assigned to go for academic help, or choose to go on their own (McGee, 2012). Tutoring is more personalized and can occur during school and after school by request (Bray et al., 2014). Resource and tutoring are forms of academic support because they provide students with the assistance they need to comprehend their work (McGee, 2012). Resource and tutoring encourage students to reflect on their learning while they participate in team-based learning (Fink Consulting, 2014).

Hapnot Collegiate supports the implementation of resource and tutoring to help the students comprehend their academic work. Students are encouraged to seek help with their studies if they do not fully grasp the content during class time. At Hapnot, issues occur with resource and tutoring when students do not seek out the additional help. Often, students will appear to be doing fine in class and attention is not given to them until their grade point average drops to a low point, by which time there is a huge learning gap and recovery is difficult. Hapnot is working to monitor students more closely by tracking previous academic issues and by encouraging students to ask for help when needed. Furthermore, students will be signed up for resource if they do not request help on their own.

Parental Involvement

The seventh method of academic support in Hapnot Collegiate is parental involvement. Parental involvement consists of parental support in the lives of the students, in particular their own children (Child Trends, 2013). Parental involvement includes attending parent-teacher interviews, extra-curricular events, taking interest in the students' work, being involved in the school, and many other potential contributions (Gurian, 2014). Parental involvement is a method of academic support because they can help to support their children with studying and the completion of their work (Child Trends, 2013). When parents are involved in a student's life, there is a team-based approach to the child's education, along with support for the child's work and teachers' instruction. Changing the children's view of their education from singular to team based creates a desire to succeed, because they know that they are supported and being monitored for success (Gurian, 2014).

Hapnot Collegiate supports parental involvement through many methods. Hapnot includes parents by inviting them to take part in the school website, events, parent-teacher, and

volunteer work. For parents who are less involved, teachers will call home to inform the parents of their children's academic progress. A couple of issues with parental involvement are when parents have no interest in the schooling of their children, refuse to support the teachers' requests or decisions, and do not participate in attempts to alter behaviours and practices that hinder the academic achievement of the students. Hapnot works diligently support the education of its students by providing them with counselling and offering additional support to show them that they are important and valued.

Conclusion

Schools are constantly changing and adapting their philosophies and practices in order to be good schools. Academic support is huge part of what makes a good school, and it has many methods that can be altered as necessary to meet the needs of the students and society. The methods of academic support listed above are some of the many that Hapnot Collegiate values as a part of its philosophy and practice. Each method is constantly being adjusted as educational issues arise in critical pedagogy, in order to make educational practices more effective at all levels. Academic achievement methods used by Hapnot do have flaws, but their value within the community gives them support and purpose. If any of the seven methods used by Hapnot assist in meeting the needs of every child while also teaching him/her to find value in education in preparation for entrance into society, then they are worth practising as a part of the school's philosophy.

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About the Author

Natashia Palmer is in Brandon University's graduate studies program, specializing in educational administration. As a Flin Flon School Division teacher, her passion is to teach the value of knowledge, continuous learning, and having a voice. She will soon be married and looks forward to everything that she can learn and experience in life.

Hapnot Collegiate's Qualities of a Good School

Chelsea Russell

Abstract

Politics and hegemony create barriers that public schools must endeavour to overcome in order to provide a quality education for all students. The diversity of students, mixed with society's demands upon schools, makes educators search for solutions to create quality schools. Public schools must take it upon themselves to create safe schools, have parental involvement, offer various educational programming options, have high academic standards, nurture a sense of belonging, and provide professional development specifically designed for teachers. Hapnot Collegiate fits this definition of a good school.

Good schools strive to break free of hegemonic and political rules, by creating a safe and inclusive environment to promote higher education. It appears that public schools now face political struggles and hegemonic rules that force teachers to conform to these ideals. Schools also struggle to meet the ever-changing and growing needs of today's children. Breaking free of the hegemonic rule and political ties will cultivate a quality education for all students. Good schools, such as Hapnot Collegiate, function as an open school, have parental involvement, strive for academic excellence, provide various educational programming options, nurture a sense of belonging in staff and students, and support continuing education for all staff members.

What is an Open School?

An open school has a clearly defined leadership structure that shares and collaborates, while respecting staff members' and students' individual needs to keep everyone safe (Cameron, Woods, & Campbell, n.d.). Hapnot Collegiate is such a school, wherein relevant information is shared between staff and administration, instead of the dated top-down system. In a closed system, administrators expect information to travel upwards, apparently without reciprocation. This type of system can cause negative feelings and valuable information to be withheld. Hapnot's former principal paved the way for creating an open school and giving staff and students a voice. Staff members felt that they were treated as trustworthy equals and there was reciprocal flow of information between students, staff, and administration. When teachers have a voice and it is acknowledged, a sense of ownership occurs, resulting in safer schools (Cameron et al., n.d.). Hapnot's students were given access to *PSST*, a website wherein they could report anything bothering them at school. An open school gives people a chance to speak up and be acknowledged. Administrators are paramount to developing this open school climate.

Hapnot Collegiate's School administrators play a crucial role in creating an open school, wherein teachers and students follow the principal's lead. A strong principal recognizes that optimum leadership comes from staff and students in order for everyone to be successful, because "the principal is only one of the leaders in the school community" (von Frank, 2008, p. 26). School principals must model leadership in order to have teacher leadership skills flourish. A good school will have principals and teachers who "share similar concerns, blend roles, and ask tough questions" (von Frankte, 2008, p. 27). A strong, well-balanced administrator is one foundational pillar of many in good school setting. As an open school, Hapnot Collegiate has a strong leadership administration team, which creates a warm environment wherein everyone feels welcome, including parents.

Parental Involvement

Parental participation in the school system is beneficial for students, staff, and parents, because parents can help to “generate a wider variety of possible solutions” (Cowley, 2004, p. 11). A well-functioning Parent Advisory Council has the power to update an old playground or offer a lunch program. A good school also has open and ongoing communication for parents to know how their children are doing and note any concerns. Hapnot Collegiate keeps parents informed of progress through Maplewood, the online attendance and grade book. Many teachers now have class websites, and email parents on a regular basis. Nevertheless, Hapnot teachers have reported a decline in parental involvement, from daily reading homework to parent-teacher interviews. Last year, for example, only 12% of my parents attended the spring interviews, and I have also found that students are not completing homework at home, therefore causing a decline in academic performance. Parental involvement is one key in producing academically successful students, but it requires monitoring because “the white middle-class parents are very powerful and their perspectives and desires tend to dominate this relationship” (Crozier, 2014, p. 280) in schools such as Hapnot Collegiate. In an absolutely good school, parents are heavily involved.

Parental involvement in schools may be viewed as a hegemonic ideal. In addition to being under involved, parents may be overinvolved and try to run programs at the school to suit their own needs, instead of the school as an entity. A good school recognizes overly involved parents as a concern, and works with parents to ensure that all students’ needs are met. In general, parents tend to respond favourably to teachers’ invitations to participate in their children’s education (Rodrigues & Elbaum, 2014). When teachers take the initiative to include parents and give direction, schools see “higher student performance on standardized achievement tests and better psychosocial adjustment” (Rodrigues & Elbaum, 2014, p. 69). Hapnot Collegiate’s teachers endeavour to provide a warm, welcoming environment to all parents and to maintain clear communication at all times.

Clear communication characterizes good schools, but sometimes open, clear communication can be lost between the school and parents. Parents may feel under informed or even misinformed, depending upon how the information is relayed from school to home. Relationships between schools and home can be damaged and a dangerous separation can occur. In a good school, communication can “transform and repair” relationships between school and home (Greene, 2009, p. 95) beyond the classroom level (Keller-Guenther, Rosenberg, Block, & Robinson, 2014). In Hapnot Collegiate, this communication takes the form of weekly newsletters, an up-to-date website, and, most importantly, ongoing communication between the teachers and parents. When parents are informed of school and classroom events, procedures, and activities, parents are encouraged to support their children to achieve success.

Academic Success

Good schools strive for academic excellence based on the mandated curriculum. Students must meet the curricular outcomes in order to earn credit for a high school class. However, students today are under pressures that range from difficult home lives to working part time. Schoolwork can be lost in the shuffle, and the quality of work teachers receive can be subpar. Many high school students seem content to meet the minimum expectations, rarely pushing themselves to excel. Schools, such as Hapnot Collegiate, could go back to the days of Saturday schools, summer classes, and detentions to show students the importance of an academic education. A mission statement, like that of the Frederick Douglass Academy, wherein students know what their role is, and how the school will make sure that they fulfill it, is key to academic success (Cowley, 2004). In addition, various course options will ensure that students are engaged and excited about what they are learning.

A good school offers a variety of courses in educational programming that meets a wide range of interests. Hapnot Collegiate's course offerings include a Cooperative Vocational Education program, cosmetology, French Immersion, and a business diploma. Canadians recognize that students need a "strong foundation of reading, writing and numeracy," and that public schools currently excel in providing that (Ungerleider, 2004, p. 20). Private schools are being created to meet the individual desires of parents and students (Langlois, 2004). Realistically, public schools cannot meet all the demands, but many are trying very hard to offer a vast selection from fine arts to the trades. Hapnot Collegiate offers a wide variety of options to engage students and make them feel more connected to the school environment.

School Environment

The environment in a good school is welcoming and inclusive of all staff and students. This environment can be difficult for schools to achieve, however, because of the added pressure to accommodate all individual needs. Hapnot Collegiate uses extra-curricular activities to give students this sense of belonging, whether through various groups like Student Council, the newly formed GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) group, intramurals, or Dinner Theatre. Here, students connect with each other and creates ties to the school. These activities bring teachers and students together, whereby common interests are founded and groups are formed. Teachers may also feel a need for connection to their work and peers. Staff wellness activities, such as Hapnot's yoga at lunch, team building activities during staff meetings, and the new GSA group, help to create positive environments that nurture a sense of belonging for staff, as well.

Schools endeavour to ensure that every student and staff member has a sense of belonging. One new Hapnot Collegiate school group that has been the topic of controversy is the GSA group. Manitoba schools are promoting the creation of these groups within schools to provide a sense of belonging to students who may feel out-casted because of their identity. In today's society, hegemonic sitcoms and TV shows still reinforce "classist, racist, and sexist stereotypes" (Leistyna & Alper, 2009, p. 502). Therefore, schools also have to deal with what students are exposed to in their own homes, as students bring to reality the thoughts and behaviours that they have witnessed on television. GSA groups have been "inconsistent; due in part to the prevailing belief that talking about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning) issues is inappropriate" (Ratts et al., 2014, p. 388). Many resources are available to staff and students, such as the website *My GSA* (2012), a Canadian website that promotes inclusive, safer schools for the LGBTQ community. This site contains links for educators, students, and parents, with helpful documents such as lesson plans and peer support anecdotes. Good schools such as Hapnot Collegiate are fighting the hegemonic battles that students will encounter for years to come, and are creating equality for all staff and students. In order for schools to be in touch with staff and students, all staff members require access to continuing education.

Continuing Education

In Hapnot Collegiate, there is an expectation that teachers will continue with professional learning opportunities, because the world is constantly evolving, and practices and methods change commensurately. Schools should be more than credential mills; they ought to be places that create independent global citizens and prepare students for the working world (Aronowitz, 2009). Teachers are expected to find a balance of educating students for the world, without conforming to hegemonic practices. Professional development for teachers yields "positive outcomes for students' engagement, learning, and well-being" (Muijs et al., 2014, p. 246), which can educate and empower students to achieve success.

Conclusion

The definition of a good school is fluid and ever changing. Educators in public schools, such as those at Hapnot Collegiate, benefit from safe schools, parental involvement, various educational programming options, high academic standards, a sense of belonging, and professional development specifically designed for teachers. A safe school includes a principal who will trust and delegate responsibilities to staff members. Rich parental involvement can take place only when teachers and principals keep parents informed and make them a part of the learning process. For students to feel a connection with the material that they are learning requires many programming options. Academic success is written into most schools' mission statements, but it is the sense of belonging that keeps students and staff coming back through the doors day after day. Professional development endeavours to provide the best educational experience for educators and students alike. In a good school, teachers focus on educating students, rather than on politics or on conforming to dominant societal pressures.

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Chelsea Russell is currently enrolled in a Master of Education, specializing in educational administration through Brandon University. She taught at the high school level before moving to the beautiful West Coast. Chelsea is now a stay-at-home mom, focusing on her children and her coursework.

How a Northern Manitoba High School Encourages Student Engagement

Lori Lawrence

Abstract

Exemplary practice within a northern Manitoba high school encourages student learning. Through the utilization of collaborative practice in consistent school-wide plans, teachers have provided beneficial education to learners (Sagor, 2011). The direction of educational programs can be provided through the expertise of teachers within the school. By contributing consistency and increasing cooperative learning among staff, school plans have contributed to student engagement in learning, and to positive student-teacher relationships (Greene, Lee, Constance, & Hynes, 2013). Relevant and inclusive learning with purpose draws student interest, and increases successful learning. Critical thinking makes the acquisition of knowledge an enticing endeavor for learners.

When viewing schools through a critical lens, educators are aware that change needs to occur as student requirements dictate. Critical pedagogy and exemplary practice play important roles in engaging students in good schools. With the changes made under the scrupulous observation of successful learning, educators can meet the learning needs of students, empower students, and make knowledge acquisition meaningful (Giroux, 2009). School-wide planning under strong leadership, a collaboration of knowledgeable educators, positive student-teacher relationships, purposeful learning, and cultural inclusion lead to greater motivation in learners within a northern Manitoba high school. This high school manifests the definition of a good school.

School-Wide Plans

With the implementation of a school-wide plan for educating youth, clear goals and expectations can increase student engagement (Sagor, 2011). A plan administered within the entire system generates coherence, which leads to benefits for students (Hierck, Coleman, & Webber, 2011; Sagor, 2011). Through the creation of unequivocal goals, and a rationale for those objectives, students are provided with a consistent learning environment and active engagement results (Gebre, Saroyan, & Bracewell, 2014). Cohesion school wide is further increased when the educators utilize a common language in teaching and making assessments (Glaude, 2010). Through the articulation of challenges to be solved, teachers approach matters with a better understanding of the critical changes to increase student engagement in learning.

School-wide planning within this northern high school incorporates new ideas from all teaching staff during administration days to maintain cohesiveness. Following group-wide discussions, instructors in similar teaching areas meet to ensure that assessment is consistent within subject areas. Through attending to standardized testing, indicators pinpoint focus areas for classroom instruction. Teachers pursue solutions through common professional development days focusing on those topics. Improvements and collaboration stem from the whole school, under strong leadership, taking responsibility for student success in the learning environment (Glaude, 2010; Hierck et al., 2011).

Leadership

Strong leadership is required to carry out a school-wide plan for educating learners. A positive learning environment requires commitment from teachers and administrators with shared leadership roles (Glaude, 2010; Hierck et al., 2011). Contributions from experts in the

areas of study, that require greater student activation, provide information to assist leaders in directing the essential changes. Like a conductor of music, the leader orchestrates the activity taking place, adjusting the speed and direction as student needs dictate. When all educators within the school work to create the same environment, exemplary practice has a greater chance to optimize results under strong leaders.

Within this northern high school, several teachers with expertise in the areas of literacy and technology have provided leadership in revising the learning programs. Province-wide courses in reading and thinking have been added to the curriculum to increase literacy skills. One instructor has piloted the course for two years, and instructs students in reading at the high school level. A pass or fail credit is given to students who make gains in their reading ability through this program. As an additional course to English classes, this program supports the skills that students require to become proficient readers and critical thinkers. Another teacher has designated time within the day to enlighten staff in current technological methods for engaging students. Through the use of chrome books and updated computer programs, this educator activates learning and enhances programs for teachers and students. Connecting with schools on other continents, and the variety of people, in different learning situations, alters the students' view of the world. With strong leadership, collaborating instructors can initiate critical changes in student thinking.

Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers can alter students' behaviour, to increase their engagement in learning and to empower them with knowledge and skills. When students understand "the basic human principles of respect, discipline, dignity, and ethical responsibility" (Lipman, 2009, p. 576), they can begin to question the world and seek to find solutions to intolerable situations. Consistent topics for discussion within multiple classes transfer knowledge from one area of study to another. Teachers assist one another in keeping engagement alive through this process. Social responsibility provides a platform of discussion to activate critical thinking and keep students focused on learning.

This northern high school utilizes the survey "Tell Them From Me" (TTFM, 2013), which equips teachers with information on student expectations and concerns. Once the behaviours that require consideration are identified, the attention of staff and students can be directed toward changing that undesirable behaviour within the school (Strand, Christensen, & Halper, 2006). Weekly meetings attend to academically, socially, and emotionally distressed students through the discrete sharing of student disengagement evidence. Follow-up sessions are arranged to evaluate student progress, and plans are established for future actions required from designated staff. Communication with staff has been increased through the sharing of information with technological aid. Faster transmission of vital messages has been achieved between parents and staff. With collaboration among staff, the school learning climate has been transfigured, and constructive student-teacher relationships have increased.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Positive student-teacher relationships are instrumental in engaging student learning. Caring staff members in a safe, supportive environment increase attendance and frequent participation by the youth (Greene, Lee, Constance, & Hynes, 2013). Teachers' generosity of time, in an effort to encourage students, helps to create a caring relationship at school (Darder, 2009). Beginning each day with an optimistic view of learning provides teachers with a positive approach to persevering when progress may be slower than expected. Through emboldening learners to question ideas, teachers inspire learning. Critical thinking about knowledge is necessary to "instill a sense of hope and possibility" (Lipman, 2009, p. 373) for future change in students' lives. Smaller schools have closer student-teacher relationships, and therefore

students are more engaged in school and community (Hutchins & Akos, 2013). Strong connections among school populations foster change (Kezar, 2014). The manner in which good schools approach students contributes to their sense of belonging and acceptance within the school setting.

Attention to diverse groups in the northern high school increases positive student-teacher relationships. A group supporting students of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender orientation has created connections between several students and teachers with an interest in the rights of all people. Other youth groups focus on musical theatre, clothing design, art, travel, and photography. Positive communication within each of these clubs instills a sense of acceptance for its members, and prompts students throughout the school to revise their thinking. Bonds between students and teachers elevate student learning when connected to meaningful material.

Purposeful Learning

Teachers need to make knowledge meaningful to students in order to escalate learning (Giroux, 2009). For example, increased student engagement and improved academic performance can be attributed to the use of digital resources inside classrooms (Beld et al., 2014; Edwards, 2014). When computer skills are used to educate individuals, knowledge is increased along with self-reliance (Gebre et al., 2014). Current trends in technology have been implemented in this northern school and the courses required in computer use have been in place for more than two decades. Career courses at this school provide the opportunity for youth to research post-secondary institutions on line, and determine future vocations. Restructuring the skills and information provided in the classes is an ongoing process. Through the use of computers, students' engagement and learning continues to have an intrinsic place in this school's planning for purposeful learning.

Students exert greater focus on activities when they envision purposeful learning as education for future work. Identity investigation, combined with connections to school and community, can be linked to high-quality programs offered after school hours (Greene et al., 2012). Out-of-school time programs can be used to connect engagement to enjoyment, interest, and challenge within activities. When the program contains content related to new skills for the future, including learning about jobs and college, engagement has been stronger for older youth. Internal motivation supported through these activities has a greater positive influence in high school students' learning than financial incentives. Extra-curricular programs offered throughout the school year at this northern educational facility offer opportunities for students to participate in a variety of activities that build skills and boost confidence. When learning materials are purposeful and support future work skills, inclusive student-centered education leads to lifelong learners.

Cultural Inclusion

Cultural inclusion, along with Indigenous content in teaching units, assists students in making sense of learning material presented in the classroom (Kearns, 2013). When historical content informs the First Nations students of the reasons for power and privileges, students have the opportunity to amend colonial patterns through education (Burleigh & Burm, 2013). In utilizing the talking circle and intergenerational knowledge, students gain a healthier view of their world in traditional ways of living (Kulnieks, Longboat, & Young, 2013). The voice of these students rises with hope as their interest in learning is activated, and they "consider new structures and systems" (Aquash, 2013, p. 132). Each group of students is more engaged in learning when materials are relevant to their world.

With the population shift within this school, inclusion of *Braiding Histories* (Dion, 2009) has provided new learning material relevant to the incoming student population. Teachers and fellow

learners all gain an understanding of the previously ignored pieces of the past. With the inclusion of this cultural material, more students are engaging in critical thinking through the weaving of history into classroom work (Lorenz, 2013). Activities surrounding culture have been celebrated annually with community days around the beginning of each school year. Change is slowly taking place with the shifting of ideas, surrounding colonies and racism, as a result of cultural inclusion.

Conclusion

Exemplary educational practice necessitates that educators attend consistently to learning, with a critical eye to encouraging student engagement. Educating students requires school-wide planning under strong leadership, a collaboration of knowledgeable educators, positive student-teacher relationships, purposeful learning in the context of the current world, and cultural inclusion. Truly good schools create a “thirst for understanding” (Aquash, 2013, p. 132) and knowledge through critical thinking. Through exemplary practice, this high school aspires to increase student engagement. Just as life transforms around the learners, the methods that educators utilize in the educational system can be transformed to activate successful student learning in a good school, such as this northern school.

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About the Author

High school teaching requires clear articulation and informative discussions to stimulate critical conversations with colleagues and learners. Through the graduate program, Lori Lawrence's experience of over 20 years in the educational profession is expanding to include a more critical focus on education, and increase engagement of adolescents in learning.

How Good Schools Empower Students

Bryan Schroeder

Abstract

Today's students require educators who will guide them to think critically, grow in character, and value relationships. These students become empowered to change their world and overcome social and racial oppression and marginalization. Empowered students are those who attain skills and knowledge with their teachers, and become equipped and motivated to question the dynamics of reality around them, in order to transform and improve society. Problem-posing and dialogue-based education also empowers students to examine their knowledge and the world they live in, and train students with a voice to be heard and a perspective to share.

The challenges that today's students face range from social class and racism to low quality educational norms. Meeting these challenges successfully requires good schools and educators who think critically to empower their students. Educators' pedagogical practices can empower students to improve society (McLaren, 2009) by enhancing the students' personal character, critical thinking skills, and healthy student-teacher relationships. Although education is "complex, non-linear and to a great extent unquantifiable" (Shaker, 2004, p. 13), and "certain pedagogical practices become so habitual or natural in school settings that teachers accept them as normal, unproblematic, and expected" (McLaren, 2009, p. 71), students deserve the best education possible. Brunson and Vogt saw empowerment as a process whereby an individual learns and grows within a social and educational context that is supporting and encouraging (as cited in Sullivan, 2002). Many students are deprived of their power and influence because of oppressive living conditions, racial marginalization, or hegemonic bourgeois norms (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009; McLaren, 2009; Ungerleider, 2004). Schools grounded in critical theory empower students with society-transforming skills and knowledge despite their exposure to oppression.

Oppression in Education

Students' internalization of self-limiting ideological formations, given their contextual living conditions, accentuates the unknowing acceptance of their social reality in the face of oppression (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Many students are striving to survive (Shaker, 2004) and are struggling to learn in school because they are trying to use their everyday knowledge (McLaren, 2009) as "critical intervention in reality" (Freire, 2009, p. 57), in order to respond to the problems in their world. Parents are increasingly absent in the home because they work multiple jobs to pay bills (Ungerleider, 2004). This "lack of supervision affects [the children's] conceptions of education and life" (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 117), and students become more likely to internalize feelings of defenselessness and shame as personal failure (Greene, 2009). These students have high demands of survival, which can be met when teachers assist them to think critically, in order to shift their internalized self-limiting ideological formations toward empowered and educated perspectives of hope and influence.

Social class and race issues have marginalized individuals and groups in schools for centuries because of the unequal "social distribution of power and its structural allocation" (McLaren, 2009, p. 65). Hooks (2009) emphasized the connection between the biased offering and receiving of knowledge within the prejudiced confines of social relations and values, which undoubtedly acknowledges class issues in education today. The understanding of power within society and how it influences and connects schooling to the larger social order imperatively molds working classes, and ostracizes races, to the predetermined ideology of marginalization within schools (Aronowitz, 2009; McLaren, 2009; Shaker, 2004). As the walls of domination

squeeze out the values of the working class, the oppressed begin to behave as victims and often passively accept any title, role, or biased social relation bestowed upon them (Greene, 2009; hooks, 2009). It is this social repression in school classrooms, “through the daily implementation of specific norms, expectations, and behaviors, that incidentally conserve the interests of those in power, students are ushered into consensus” (Darder et al., 2009, p. 6). Teachers need to stop conducting “their classrooms in a manner that only reinforces bourgeois models of decorum” (hooks, 2009, p. 136). For example, they need to stop rewarding students who consistently conform to the perceived approved cultural and class practices, and acknowledge the significance of race and class diversity among students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009) – and empower them by celebrating such uniqueness.

Oppression in education exists among educators who maintain styles of domination and logic of standardization, which leaves little room for critical thought (Freire, 2009; Giroux, 2009). Consequently, John Dewey believed that “for most students school is endured rather than experienced as a series of exciting explorations of self and society” (as cited in Aronowitz, 2009, p. 106), which is expected if the teacher uses a dominant force of power over students to provoke them to an attitude of powerlessness (Sullivan, 2002). Hegemony is “the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school” (McLaren, 2009, p. 67). McLaren (2009) acknowledged his maintenance of the hegemony of the dominant culture, because as a classroom teacher he “did not teach [his] students to question the prevailing values, attitudes and social practices of the dominant society in a sustained critical manner” (p. 67).

Students are disempowered when they are controlled by teachers and withheld from asking questions that would augment their learning (Shaker, 2004). Freire’s (2009) statement is an accurate observation of such domination: “Education is suffering from narration sickness” (p. 52). His primary example of oppression in education is the banking concept, because “instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat . . . knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire, p. 52). Through this dominant process, an ideology of ignorance is directed toward students and they inadvertently adapt to this fragmented perception of reality, do not learn critical thinking skills, and do not develop any process of cognition (Freire, 2009; Peterson, 2009). Good schools and educators who think critically are vital, because as students are provided learning opportunities that consist of critical consciousness, they will be empowered to change their reality and have the ability to make a difference in society.

Good Schools

Good schools ensure that students learn and pursue their potential (Langlois, 2004). Components of a healthy learning environment include critically thinking educators, the maintenance of emotional and physical safety, and the accommodation of individual learning needs (Langlois, 2004; Shaker, 2004). “An atmosphere in which individual students are supported by the classroom community to take responsibility for their lives in trying to meet their needs within learning settings” (Sullivan, 2002, “Empowerment,” para. 8) requires an educator who is concerned for the well-being and holistic learning of each child. Student-initiated and student-centered projects are a good start toward empowerment, but good schools go beyond respectable beginnings to equip students “to think deeply, to invest mental effort in their learning” (Ungerleider, 2004, p. 21), and to experience creativity and excitement during the progression of learning (Shaker, 2004). A hunger for learning is invaluable. As students practise critical consciousness and learn with their teachers, they will develop the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue lifelong learning and reach their potential.

A good school cultivates a culture of justice and relational emphasis, in order to teach students to honour people and “to treat others as [they] would like to be treated” (Ungerleider, 2004, p. 21). The call for equality and justice (Greene, 2009, p. 95) echoes because

any worthwhile theory of schooling must be partisan. That is, it must be fundamentally tied to a struggle for a qualitatively better life for all through the construction of a society based on nonexploitative relations and social justice. (McLaren, 2009, p. 62)

Students must connect not only the academic lessons of education, but also the components of social learning, with the world they live in, in order to engage in justice-oriented causes that uphold the value of people (Ungerleider, 2004). Good schools expects students to “treat others with respect; have the ability to work co-operatively with others; appreciate and act upon the values and principles that make us human . . . ; and . . . exercise a critical intelligence that is adaptable to circumstances unforeseen” (Ungerleider, 2004, p. 21). Good educators strive to break hegemonic rule through pedagogical practices that enhance students’ experience-based knowledge for the purpose of emancipation and justice for the oppressed (Giroux, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009; Peterson, 2009).

How Good Schools Empower Students

Students become empowered critical thinkers when teachers use problem-posing education to reveal and connect learning with reality, rather than a banking concept of education (Freire, 2009). Freire (2009) believed that critical thinking required intentionality and a consciousness of consciousness to support his communication-focused problem-posing pedagogical concept. Sullivan (2002) discovered that student empowerment could be enhanced by a consistent approach by committed teachers who were determined to see students empowered as positive forces to dispel race and social class issues in school. Because “critical pedagogy is fundamentally committed to the development and enactment of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students” (Darder et al., 2009, p. 9), these students need teachers who will widen their perspectives of reality (Greene, 2009). Good schools have teachers who are not only presenting class material that challenges the bourgeois norms, but who are also being transformed through a pedagogical process (hooks, 2009) that confirms the influence of the problem-posing education concept. As teachers aspire to understand how a student’s world is assembled, they will recognize how knowledge can marginalize or liberate the student depending on the presence of critical thinking skills (McLaren, 2009).

Good schools have educators who implement pedagogical practices to empower students and improve school community “through dialogue and working collaboratively” (Sullivan, 2002, “Empowerment,” para. 4). Freire defined dialogue not just as “permissive talk, but conversation with a focus and a purpose” (as cited in Peterson, 2009, p. 313). The knowledge and perspective of each student is valuable and is the platform upon which critical thinking and learning are built. Therefore, a key role of the critical educator is to enhance meaningful communication among students and the teacher by provoking authentic thinking and unheard voices (Freire, 2009; Greene, 2009; hooks, 2009). Educators create such a context by generating “an overall positive atmosphere in the classroom and by planning very specific activities which stress self-awareness, respect, and cooperation” (Peterson, 2009, p. 311). This counter-hegemonic educational approach creates emancipatory academic and social space to draw in the students who in the past resided at the margins of the learning atmosphere and social framework (Darder et al., 2009).

A dialogue-based learning environment, coupled with acceptable critical discourse, will deconstruct dominant discourse and focus on student-relevant issues, thus producing knowledge (McLaren, 2009). As students hear their classmates’ perspectives, questions, and

opinions, the race and social class issues begin to fade, new social realities form, and students develop greater aptitudes to learn together (hooks, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009). This dynamic sharing of power establishes a worldview of interdependence based on the learning relationships between teachers and students, because a good educator is both a teacher and a student (Freire, 2009; Sullivan, 2002). Peterson (2009) described empowerment and the importance of the right dynamics within a learning environment as follows:

Empowerment does not mean “giving” someone their freedom. Nor does it mean creating a type of surface ‘empowerment’ in which one gives the students the impression that they are “equal” to the teacher. The challenge for the teacher who believes in student empowerment is to create an environment which is both stimulating and flexible in which students can exercise increasing levels of power while regularly reflecting upon and evaluating the new learner-teacher relationship. (p. 312)

Students are empowered by dialogue-based education because it promotes liberation from the established hegemonic rule, due to both the student and teacher contributing dialogue and analysis in the context of critical pedagogy (Darder et al., 2009; Peterson, 2009).

Good schools recognize that the product of dialogue-based education is socially formulated knowledge that endorses the reconstruction of a student’s perspectives of reality, while the collective and individual experiences of the totality of life are reflected upon (Aronowitz, 2009; McLaren, 2009). Students are empowered to pursue suitable social goals as they become more cognizant of social relations and cultural traditions (McLaren, 2009; Sullivan, 2002), and will likely seek to establish justice among local and global communities (Giroux, 2009). Educators of good schools empower students “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). People who search for meaning in the world look beyond themselves to gain a critical perspective of the oppression that other people are experiencing, and then strive to demonstrate honour and appreciation for people of diverse race and social class. Knowledge is constructed as students are exposed to various social conditions and experiences of people of various race and social class backgrounds. “Critical pedagogy asks how our everyday commonsense understanding – our social constructions or ‘subjectivities’ – get produced and lived out” (McLaren, 2009, p. 63), but educators need to care about people and the world they live in before they can empower their students to live justice-oriented lives based on critical thinking.

As students are empowered by the teachers of good schools to think and live differently, they become active participants in the world “in the interest of social change” (Aronowitz, 2009, p. 120; Giroux, 2009, p. 34). Developing students who will transform society for good is one goal of a good school. When empowered students act and reflect upon their world, they begin to create an environment in which oppression, hegemony, and traditional illogicality can be overcome (Freire, 2009; Giroux, 2009; McLaren, 2009). As critically thinking students grow into adult citizens, they will continue to project a better society by evaluating what exists and persistently trying to repair deficiencies (Greene, 2009), because “knowledge acquired in classrooms should help students participate in vital issues that affect their experiences on a daily level rather than simply enshrine the values of business pragmatism” (McLaren, 2009, p. 74). People with such consciousness are the result of problem-posing education and are empowered to transcend themselves by constantly seeking to understand the past in order to “more wisely build the future” (Freire, 2009, p. 59). McLaren (2009) summarized these thoughts,

Knowledge is relevant only when it begins with the experiences students bring with them from the surrounding culture; it is critical only when these experiences are shown to sometimes be problematic (i.e., racist, sexist); and it is transformative only when

students begin to use the knowledge to help others, including individuals in the surrounding community. Knowledge then becomes linked to social reform. (p. 80)

There are many obstacles to overcome for one person to transform society, but good schools empower students with the context, skills, knowledge, and character to take action and live out their hope and vision for a better world.

Analyzing Empowered Students

Empowered students are students with character, liberated critical thinkers, and people who value relationships. Aronowitz described a component of empowerment as “the process of appreciating and loving oneself” (as cited in McLaren, 2009, p. 77). Students who are empowered have a high level of self-esteem and love for themselves. They demonstrate self-awareness and humility, which translates as someone who has recognized what

society as made of them, how it has incorporated them ideologically and materially into its rules and logic, and what it is that they need to affirm and reject in their own histories in order to begin the process of struggling for the conditions that will give them opportunities to lead a self-managed existence. (Giroux, 2009, p. 47)

Students of character have perseverance, integrity, honesty, and patience. They pursue their goals passionately because they have been empowered and motivated to lead purposeful and fulfilling lives (Sullivan, 2002).

Liberated critical thinkers are people who, in the midst of cognition, experience freedom to break through the obscurities of hegemony and bourgeois norms that stifle passion and compromise hope for the oppressed (Greene, 2009; Freire, 2009). Empowered students are those who learn to question and transform, rather than accept and serve (McLaren, 2009). Therefore, past barriers are demolished while modes of inquiry and critical examinations of reality fuel a newly imagined life of affirmative pedagogy (Giroux, 2009). Education becomes the practice of liberty for the empowered student, and achievement of any personal goal becomes attainable (Freire, 2009; Sullivan, 2002).

An empowered student values people and pursues relationships. The power in relationship can be positive or negative, but students who learn well with others maximize the potential for social change by understanding their own incompleteness, the power of interconnectedness, and the dynamics of exploring greater possibilities of transformation (Darder et al., 2009; Greene, 2009). Mutual humanization requires trust in other people and partnership with people in critical thinking and dialogue, in order to optimize the potential for social change (Freire, 2009). Empowering education produces students who wholeheartedly approach living in relationships with others while not succumbing to a perceived need for control in relationship; finding such a balance is the beauty of partnering with people to accomplish great things and requires a lifetime to discover.

Conclusion

The threat of hegemonic rule and systematic oppression perseveres, but the goal of transforming society will be met as good schools empower students to think critically and question the dynamics of the reality that surrounds them. Social class and race issues are minimized as students' need for power is satisfied through gaining “power-with peers or the teacher rather than gaining power-over them” (Sullivan, 2002, “Importance of Student Empowerment,” para. 2). Good schools have evidence of student learning, justice-oriented perspectives that seek a better quality of life for everyone, and school cultures that foster relational learning between teachers and students. Problem-posing and dialogue-based

education empowers students to examine their knowledge and the world they live in, and gives students a voice to be heard and a perspective to share. Socially constructed knowledge becomes potential power for transforming society to overcome oppression and deconstruct systems of marginalization and domination. Empowered students are students of character, liberated critical thinkers who value others and believe in the power of relationships. Students' possibilities in life will be widened (Aronowitz, 2009) as educators in good schools strive to empower, influence, and learn alongside students for the purpose of transforming society and leading functional and fulfilling lives.

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Math Recovery: Making Our School Good and Our Students Successful

Samantha Moore

Abstract

This article is an overview of how Flin Flon School Division in Flin Flon, Manitoba, used money received through grant funding to revamp its math programming in order to meet the needs of the students within the division. A combination of standardized test scores and individual teacher assessments revealed where student mathematical understanding was lacking. Specific teachers were then trained in particular math programs purchased through this funding. As well, additional math specialist positions were created to help the division's students learn better, and therefore become more successful with the math curriculum.

Having a focused goal, with a structured plan to reach that goal, is integral to designing a school for success. If a school does not have a structured plan to motivate its staff and students, focus can be lost. "Without a goal, a vision for the future, hope can be denied" (Brantmeier, 2013, p. 250), and subsequently the students' achievement suffers. A school has a positive climate when students feel successful and accepted within its walls, because "students who feel extrinsically and intrinsically rewarded tend to value their education experience" (Fan & Wolters, 2014, "Theories of Motivation," para. 1), and this feeling increases student achievement.

Flin Flon School Division identified the problem that many elementary level students were not meeting math skills standards required to experience success in math at the high school level. This lag in skill development posed significant concerns, because "competence in mathematics is a crucial goal for early schooling and directly affects the demands of formal schooling" (Smith, Marchand-Martella, & Martella, R. C. 2011, p. 247), as was being observed at the high school level by the math instructional staff. Success in math programming in "elementary school is a strong predictor of subsequent achievement, school completion, and college enrollment" (McCormick, O'Connor, Cappella, & McClowry, 2013, p. 621), and is therefore critical for high school students' subsequent successes. The teachers identified problems surrounding math achievement, and related them to several factors, including lack of individualized instruction for struggling students, students transferring from other divisions without the adequate level of skills required, and not enough focus on memorization of basic facts. They noted a need for change in the current math education delivery being provided within the school. As a result, the school division decided to make math skills recovery a focus for its time, energy, and monetary allowances. These focuses included the following:

1. collecting data from CATIV (Canadian Achievement Test 4) standardized tests in order to establish what skills students were struggling with at various grade levels, and then using this data to drive teaching practices to improve deficient skills, but with recognition that this testing was to be used a tool to guide instruction, not control it;
2. implementing the Math Recovery program for students, focusing mainly, but not solely, on the primary grade levels, taught by local teachers who received specific training for this program;
3. providing funding for a teaching position within the division of a specialized math teacher consultant, whose role was to help teachers find relevant material to aid in teaching math, co-teach in various classrooms to help diversify student learning, and collect data on student achievement in the area of student memorized multiplication facts, and;
4. purchasing teaching aids, such as the *JUMP Math* program and *Mathletics*, to promote and improve students' learning of math.

All of these strategies and programs are being used in collaboration with teachers and support staff within Flin Flon School Division and Ruth Betts Community School, in order to improve

student learning, and unify the school by making students feel successful and validated. These measures help to create a positive student learning environment and a good school.

CATIV Testing

Starting in 2011, Flin Flon School Division implemented the standardized CATIV test to assess student learning in several areas, including math development. This test was chosen because it is a Canadian curriculum-based test that aims “to improve the measurement and evaluation of student ability and achievement” (Canadian Test Centre, 2014, “Mission Statement,” para. 3), and it follows much of the Manitoba math curriculum. The division wanted to pinpoint student skill deficits in math outcomes, and then use this information to “guide action” (Novak, 2014, p. 2), by making adjustments in lessons and curriculum delivery to students. Teachers were instructed to assess student marks on the test, and then use the information as feedback for determining how they could adjust their teaching practices in following years to improve upon areas wherein students were identified as being weak or lacking understanding.

Although the division wanted teachers to use the CATIV as a tool to improve their teaching practices, it was also acknowledged that some of the students who struggled with these tests would fall in the minority category. Ruth Betts Community School provides education to the children of many low socio-economic families, several of whom are new to the community or are relatively transient. The school also has numerous First Nations students, many of whom come with varying skills and abilities at each grade level. Standardized tests, such as the CATIV, can intimidate these students, creating anxiety that is “negatively associated with performance on math assessment” (Galla & Wood, 2012, p. 120). These negative effects “fall most heavily on the poorest children, minority children” (McNeil, 2009, p. 394), and can make them experience feelings of discomfort, failure, and unworthiness. Flin Flon School Division’s teachers recognize this dissonance, and try to make the testing experience less stressful for all students, by providing support and comfort in the forms of smaller rooms with individualized teacher support, and extended testing periods for students who may have been absent on original testing days. In this way, positive learning experiences can still fit into a standardized framework.

Math Recovery Program

Identifying student learning issues in the early years and providing adequate and appropriate instructional support are pivotal steps in preventing major learning gaps from occurring in the later years of education. This teaching philosophy is “fundamental to school reform efforts and teaching practices” (Ding & Navarro, 2004, p. 239), and is recognized in Flin Flon School Division. As a result, support for math in the primary grades has been given priority through funding and teacher training. One program that has been implemented with success is the Math Recovery Program (Martland, 2014), whose purpose is to help students build a stronger math foundation. This program focuses on identifying and analyzing children’s numerical knowledge, designing and implementing teaching interventions to address students’ math deficits, and incorporating assessment in numeracy programs (Wright, Stanger, Stafford, & Martland, 2006). If students’ learning deficits can be identified and additional individualized instruction can be given at this early stage of their academic development, significant changes can be made in improving their abilities, thus creating more confident students. These feelings of success are directly related to school climate, as they “engender relational trust and a strong sense of community” (Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2011, p. 83) within the schools. Student success in the area of math drives many other aspects that create a positive school environment, fostering a learning atmosphere wherein students will feel confident to challenge more in-depth problems and issues as they grow older, which is when true learning takes place.

Specialized Math Consultant

Well-trained, experienced teachers who are not only available to help the students, but also willing to aid teachers in various capacities, are an invaluable asset that Flin Flon School Division has built into its math program. Starting in 2008, the division applied to Manitoba Education to funding an extra teaching position that would fall under the category of a math specialist. This person supports math programming within the division in various ways, including “combining talents and knowledge” (Harvey, 2012, p. 5) through collaboration to create more effective teaching strategies. This teacher’s role includes providing team teaching support in the classroom, facilitating individualized and small-group student instruction, collecting and distributing teaching resource material, and gathering data on student achievement.

Within each school, time is available with the math consultant for any teachers who are interested in team-teaching possibilities in math. Combining lessons creates “memorable lessons and experiences” (Harvey, 2012, p. 5) that enrich student learning. There is therefore more time for individualized instruction with students. The specialist also has various ways of presenting lessons and can give teachers ideas and feedback on the ways that they are presently delivering their lessons. The Manitoba Education, Training and Youth *Success for All Learners* handbook (Thomas, 1996) recognizes that differentiated instruction for a diverse range of students is necessary in order for all students to have the ability to reach learning outcomes. This variation in instructional delivery gives the students a variety of avenues to comprehend the material being presented, which is the essence of best practice in teaching.

Having two instructors in the classroom offers flexibility in organizing small-group work and individualized pairings of direct teacher-to-student instruction. Both teachers can assess the levels that students are at in their math skills, in order to target specific areas of difficulty for working with students on a personal level. Students also have the opportunity to learn in small groups, while still being guided by a teacher. These groups can be organized based on common skill levels, which helps many students to avoid becoming frustrated. They may collaborate with others at their same skill level, without holding anyone back or rushing ahead of others who may be struggling with concepts, creating more harmonious working environments.

Because the math consultant does not hold a regular classroom position, he has time to research resources in addition to the classroom textbooks, curriculum guides, and other materials that teachers are already using. During a professional development session, the consultant showed teachers how to use a computer program that generates innumerable variations of worksheets simply by entering the type of concept and the corresponding numbers. The consultant also provided posters for classroom display and self-generated worksheets. He even enrolled interested students in a Canada-wide math enrichment contest, and supplied instructional time to take these students out of the classroom and help them to prepare for the event, something that would be difficult for an individual classroom teacher to facilitate alone.

Student testing can be difficult for individual classroom teachers, because “documenting student math achievement is a challenging task, particularly if one wants to trace such achievement growth at the individual level” (Ding & Navarro, 2004, p. 238). One of the division’s goals is to improve students’ automatic recall of multiplication facts. It was identified that lack of skill in this area was seriously deterring students from achieving better math marks at the higher grade levels. Therefore, the consultant took individual students out of class at the beginning of the year and tested their ability to recall multiplication facts during timed testing. The consultant then found resources to help teachers provide more practice to their students during class time. A second round of testing is currently being conducted after students had several months to practice their recollection of times table facts during the previous school year, and comparisons will be made at the end of this school year to see whether any progress has been made (R. Hall, mathematics consultant, personal communication, March 21, 2014). The data will provide teachers with feedback about where to direct learning goals in future years.

Divisional Funding of Math Curricular Material

Good schools use the knowledge that they acquire to make long-term, sustainable change for the benefit of students. Standardized testing creates accountability that “redefines what it means to be a ‘good school’” (Lipman, 2009, p. 366), and helps to guide instructional practices. One of the culminating results that occurred through all of Flin Flon School Division’s testing of student math achievement levels was the appropriation of funding to continue purchasing materials to improve teachers’ math program delivery. These materials included new math textbooks from the series *Math Makes Sense* (Appel, Brown, Chichak, Harcourt, Jeroski, Kinsman, . . . Wortzman, 2008), which is published and distributed by a Canadian company, and has been created to follow current Manitoba math curricular outcomes.

The division also purchased a subscription to a computer program called *Mathletics*, which is an interactive math educational website intended to supplement math lessons. The website contains “essential material for school students in Canada” (Mathletics, 2014, H.), and follows much of our curricular outcomes. It also diversifies learning for students who are interested in using technology. This diversification helps to build success pathways for many students for whom more varied connections will foster an interest in math education.

Most recently added to the cache of math instructional resources is a set of student workbooks and teacher directive guides for a program called *JUMP Math* (Mighton, Sabourin, & Klebanov, 2009). This program operates on the premise that “every child has the capacity to be fully numerate and to love math” (*JUMP Math 5.1*, 2009, p. 3), which is essential to success in their math endeavours. It consists of leveled student booklets with step-by-step directions and examples for students to follow when they are learning a new concept and doing the practice work. The exceptional aspect of the program is that the various leveled booklets can be used to tailor IEPs (Individual Educational Programs) for students who are of a certain age, but who are not functioning at that grade level in their math skills. In this way, teachers can incorporate inclusive learning more smoothly into the classroom, which gives students a sense of personal accomplishment and investment in their learning, and thus a connection to the school.

Conclusion

Good schools send graduates on their way not only with the tools and skills that they need to be successful in their future school and job-based careers, but with a feeling of confidence in their abilities and fulfillment from their time spent within that school. Educators are responsible for finding ways to help all students become successful, no matter what level they start out at, or what background or abilities they enter the school with. This is what we are doing in Flin Flon School Division, through all of our current programming measures in math. The success that will accrue from this level of instruction will carry forward into other facets of our students’ education, because “numeracy has a profound effect on overall quality of life, self-identity, and the capacity to function in an even more complex world” (Meadows, Herrick, & Witt, 2008, p. 491). This is one of the biggest successes gleaned from a good school program. If we could only find a standardized test to measure student feelings of happiness and achievement, then we would truly find a testing standard that is destined to succeed.

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Qualities of a Good First Nation School

Ron Constant

Abstract

In the continual reformation of the nature of schools, one central theme appears: the concept of a good school. A good school has a clear sense of purpose, dedicated staff, strong leadership, parental involvement, and continual improvement. To transform current educational pedagogy, one must take risks, read the literature, and seek the desire continually to improve. These qualities are desirable in every good school, but they are essential in a good First Nation school.

The concept of a good school is not that difficult to fathom. A good school contains these common themes: a clear sense of purpose (Lipsitz & West, 2010), dedicated staff (Hulley & Dier, 2009), parental involvement (Kirkness, 1999), strong leadership (Lipsitz & West, 2010), and continual improvement (Hulley & Dier, 2005). Each of these themes affects the atmosphere and educational standards of any school. Time used ensuring that good school practices are followed equates to having an effective school conducive to high student achievement, especially when that school is located in a First Nation community.

Clear Sense of Purpose

Most school improvement teams begin with an investigation of a sense of purpose from which all pedagogy within the school is generated. Vision statements articulate to everyone the goals of the school, what the school identifies as its priorities, and what it holds itself accountable for (Lezotte, 2009). The school is the centre of a community and, as such, should articulate to its students the desires of all educational stakeholders, which are imbedded in the school's vision.

A vision statement or purpose statement gives school personnel and the student body a clear path to follow, pedagogically speaking. Each school has a unique vision statement that has been generated by means of consultation with the community, staff, and students. If we liken teachers to atoms, we can use the following analogy. A non-magnetic substance has all of its atoms moving and spinning in random directions. A magnetic substance has all its atoms spinning in the same direction. A school with a clearly articulated vision statement is like a magnetic with all of its teachers, support staff, and students following the same pedagogical path. Clearly, one can see the educational benefits of everyone (administration, teaching staff, support staff, and students) moving in the same direction, pedagogically speaking.

Administrative teams, when identifying vision statements, must first identify what values the community holds dearly. In a First Nation school, consultation amongst the Elders, community (Chief and Council and the Board of Education), parents, staff, and ultimately the students must take place. Historically speaking, the process of identifying community values was not done; traditional western values were forced upon First Nations communities, creating a "gross misreading of the nature of difference, opening the door for the proliferation of deeply cynical theories of racial superiority" (Grande, 2000, p. 186) that were entrenched in residential and day schools. This misreading created several generations of First Nations people who lost their unique culture. This problem still is true to some extent; however, today's First Nations communities have built up human resources who are certified specialists in the education field, effectively taking control of their own education (Assembly of First Nations, 2010). To ensure that assimilation does not reoccur, it is paramount to identify the values of the community before attempting to create a First Nation school's vision statement.

The wording in a school's vision statement refers to accountability. To whom and by what measure is the school accountable? Accountability is a measurement of how one holds up to

expectations (Loeb & Figlio, 2011). There are many different tools to measure a school's accountability, depending on what has been identified in the vision statement. However, with the patriarchal Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), formerly Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), First Nations schools are subject to extra accountability regardless of the vision statement as mandated by the First Nations Student Success Plan (FNSSP) (Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada, n.d.). This program is not negative, as it provides funding for literacy and numeracy with the intent to bridge the educational gap between Canada's First Nations and the rest of the country. It is difficult to add the FNSSP mandate to the values that a First Nation community has identified, because its priorities may be different. Still, each school has to be accountable to itself and ultimately the community.

When initiating school improvement, administrative teams may at times face adversity from naysayers. Fortunately, through negotiations progress can be made. After identifying community values, a vision statement can be created. Once the vision statement is generated, one can begin to take steps to identify measures of accountability. This task can be daunting, but it is well worth the effort. One must also keep in mind that the vision statement is a living document that must be continually evaluated for its effectiveness, and tweaked as necessary to maintain proper standards of education as set out by Manitoba Education. In the end, any school with a clearly articulated vision statement is well on the way to be considered a good school.

Dedicated Staff

Education is not a solitary profession; staff members must work in unison to achieve the vision that the school holds in regard. A good school has staff members who are willing to work together, keep abreast of fundamental changes and trends in education, and take educational risks. Gone are the days when a teacher would sit in the classroom unbeknownst to the world outside; teachers must now be armed with the latest practices that enhance learning in society.

Integral to a good school is staff dedicated to working together to make decisions that have a direct bearing on the school's planning process. To achieve a willingness to collaborate, administrative teams must create an atmosphere that is conducive to everyone being seen as an equal member of the school community, regardless of position. This collegial atmosphere is the premise behind Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (DuFour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). Administrators must believe in the staff's ability to guide the educational programming of the school now and into the future. Staff participation in a PLC leads to better academics, school atmosphere, and teacher retention (Phelps & Benson, 2012). Having many minds geared towards solving any difficulty is an excellent trait of a good school.

In direct consequence to the ideals of a PLC, teachers must be dedicated to keeping themselves abreast of any recent practices that will enhance student engagement. In doing so, the staff maintains an ever-changing repertoire of skills to choose from when attempting to maximize student engagement. PLC meetings, whether whole school or subject specific, benefit all, because a technique that may not be working for someone may be replaced by another technique tried and suggested by another. The sheer dynamics of having many different minds collaborating give a school a huge educational advantage over one that does not employ a PLC determinant of staff professional development.

Strong Leadership

Strong leadership can always be found in good schools. Anyone can lead, but it takes a true leader to take the time and set up his/her school so that it "fits" the criteria of a good school. When practising principals were asked what they should do when they move to another school, their answers mirrored the overall themes of a good school (Lipstiz & West, 2010). Still, the principal cannot do it by him/herself; it has to be a shared responsibility by all involved (Hulley &

Dier, 2009). Good First Nations schools have dynamic leaders who demand the best out of all, staff and students alike.

In the field of education, there has been a recent shift over the past couple of decades with regards to shared leadership (Hulley & Dier, 2009). The school principal no longer runs the school as he/she sees fit; rather, there is a fundamental shift, transforming the leadership role to that of a shared leadership among all staff members. The ability to use the collective ideals of each staff member and community member creates an atmosphere that is conducive to student engagement, because of skilled leadership.

Parental Involvement

Having a clear vision statement and dedicated staff are not enough; without parental involvement, a school is not complete. The school is part of the community and is accountable to all stakeholders. Residential schools have had a lasting effect on many generations of First Nations (Reforming First Nations education, 2011). Now is the time to reawaken their lost cultural values (Grande, 2000), which will re-establish their identity. The adage that it takes the “whole community to raise a child” is well suited for First Nations communities, because everyone must contribute to raising their children and provide them with the educational opportunities to lead them into the future.

Parents can be a powerful ally or roadblock in the education of their children. School attendance has been declining in Manitoba schools (Adams, 2012). If students are not present, they cannot be expected to learn. Because parents see communication as one of the major factors (Adams, 2012), early intervention, combined with constant communication, should be paramount issues for a First Nation school to work on.

Continual Improvement

It is not a coincidence that a good school is always evaluating its progress and continually seeking ways to improve. What works in one school will not necessarily work in another. Schools are unique and have definitive cultures. It is up to the school to create and/or update its vision statement, gather and analyze critical evidence based on the vision, create SMART goals (specific, measureable, attainable, results-focused, and timely) through PLC collaboration, put the goals into action, and continually monitor the effectiveness of the plans through data collection. This cyclical process is ever changing, always bringing with it the changes that are required to answer the needs of today’s society (Hulley & Dier, 2009).

Change means taking risks. Educational risks are not typical life risks such as cliff jumping, but they still have direct bearing on students’ lives. Examples include a new formative assessment format (William, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004), a self- and student-based efficiency rating (Bordelon, Phillips, Parkinson, Thomas, & Howell, 2012), an interdisciplinary approach to teaching subjects outdoors (Fägerstam, 2014), and a positive or negative attendance policy (Self, 2012). This list gives insight into some of the new trends taken in regard to school policy and personal pedagogy. Unless teachers are willing to take risks and change their personal current pedagogy, they cannot transform current educational trends to keep up with the innovative ways of teaching through technology.

Conclusion

To create a good school is a daunting task; all of the pieces must come together, working in unison. Having a clear vision (set of values), dedicated staff working together in unison, a strong leader, community assistance, and a continual effort to improve best practices are the qualities of every good school, including a First Nation school. It is not a job to take on by oneself, nor can one take complete credit for having created one; rather, it is a group effort. The next time

the reader goes into a school, he/she should look around and see whether he/she is entering a good school and would want his/her children, and grandchildren, to attend there.

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Student Engagement: The Most Powerful Measure of a Good School

Connie Atkinson

Abstract

This article asks the question, "What makes a school good?" Although this question is subjective, and therefore can be answered in a multitude of ways, the most powerful measure of a good school is student engagement. Therefore, it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that students are actively involved in all aspects of their learning. Such a feat can be achieved through the use of relevant lessons and creative strategies that are designed to engage, through the development of personal relationships aimed to cultivate trust, and through the use of effective feedback intended to inform. These strategies all support the belief that students should take primary responsibility for their learning.

Many different measures determine whether a school should be considered good. Community involvement, parental engagement, teacher efficacy, and leadership are typically strong indicators of effectiveness. However, the most powerful measurement of the effectiveness of a school is the level of engagement that students display. For many, the desire to learn is an intrinsic motivation, but there are a number of ways that teachers can provide an extrinsic context for students to be engaged in their learning. Student engagement can be achieved through teaching methods that are designed to invoke critical thinking and deeper understanding, through the purposeful development of teacher-student relationships, and through the use of effective feedback. These strategies work toward the same goal: to engage students in a meaningful way so that they become active participants in all facets of the learning process.

Teaching Strategies and Methods Designed to Engage

Many believe that the main responsibility of teachers is to educate students, or to prepare them for the next stage of their life. However, such a feat is nearly impossible if students do not have the desire to learn. Therefore, a more accurate description of the responsibility of an educator is to engage students in their learning, because "student-centred practice is at the heart . . . of . . . the teaching profession" ("The Future," 2013, p. 16). Most students believe that teachers are in control of what and how they learn, and unfortunately in most cases their assessment is accurate. Teachers who truly want students to be engaged in what they are learning will share some of their control in the classroom, thereby providing students with the opportunity to make decisions about what and how they learn. That is not to say that teachers must give up full control of their classrooms and lessons, but rather find the balance between instructing, facilitating, and activating. Therefore, the primary responsibility of teachers is not to impart knowledge, but rather to encourage students to become involved in their learning. One way to engage students is to make learning fun and interesting for the participants.

People put more effort into, and take more pride in, an activity in which they are invested. Students will make more sense of, and be more engaged in, an activity that interests them, because "knowledge is made meaningful by situating it in an activity that relates to the context or culture of the participants" (Conner, 2013, p. 476). With this knowledge in hand, teachers will find ways to motivate students, and to "create an environment in which students will want to gain the knowledge presented in the classroom" (Cirimo, 2014, p. 12). The most logical way to accomplish this challenge is to give students the context wherein they learn about what interests them. This may seem like a utopian ideal, but there are ways to achieve this goal if teachers become facilitators and activators of what is being taught in the classroom, as opposed to the gatekeepers of information. Such a scenario raises an important question: if students are in

control of their learning, how then do teachers ensure that students are meeting the curricular outcomes? Following the curriculum, thereby ensuring that all students have the opportunity to meet the outcomes, is not optional for educators. It is a clear expectation, and there is very little flexibility unless students are on a modified academic program. Therefore, educators who share control of learning with their students must do so in a creative and purposeful way.

A number of teaching practices lend themselves to student engagement. Using prompts and compelling questions to stimulate critical thinking is one way in which teachers can encourage students to take ownership of their learning. A constructivist approach, wherein connecting new knowledge to previously learned knowledge to enhance students' understanding, is another method that can be used (Conner, 2013). By making this connection in an explicit and meaningful way, students will realize that they have a base of knowledge to draw from, which will make them more confident learners. In a constructivist classroom, "teachers are expected to provide students with a variety of experiences from which learning is constructed" (Conner, 2013, p. 474). Teachers who stimulate critical thinking, build on prior knowledge, and offer learners the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways will successfully engage their students.

Cooperative learning is another strategy that can be used to engage students. This teaching practice relates back to the idea of making learning fun and interesting, because learning is more enjoyable and more meaningful when students have the opportunity to share their experiences with their peers (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). Such a strategy requires teachers to create opportunities for students to interact with each other in a meaningful way. One may think that in this context the teacher would have minimal control over what is happening in the classroom; however, the opposite is true. Effective cooperative learning requires the teacher to be more organized and more involved in the learning process, in order to ensure that students are getting the most out of their experience. Cooperative learning also encourages critical thinking and evaluative skills, both of which facilitate deeper understanding (Harris, 2010). Used correctly, cooperative learning is a powerful teaching method that can be used to engage students.

Metacognitive awareness is another strategic teaching practice. In other words, teachers should provide students with the opportunity to become aware of how they learn. This awareness is a key component of student engagement because "it is a process whereby learners purposefully monitor and regulate their own learning needs" (Conner, 2013, p. 477). Students who understand the way in which the learning process works will be engaged in their learning by default, because they will become more involved in the process. Teachers who offer students a variety of learning opportunities, and who use questioning, constructivist strategies, cooperative learning, and metacognitive awareness, will be effective in engaging their students, who will thereby become active participants in the process of learning.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Another important facet of student engagement is building strong teacher-student relationships both inside and outside the classroom. The learning process is somewhat risky because students often have to step outside of their comfort zone when participating in the process. Therefore, teachers need to spend time developing trust in their relationships with students (Hung, 2013). If students feel secure, then they will become more willing to participate in classroom activities. The first step in building a trusting relationship with students is taking the time to learn about them. This may seem like an unrealistic expectation, especially for high school teachers, who may see more than a hundred students in a single day. However, becoming familiar with students does not have to be a one-on-one conversation. It can be accomplished through checklists, journal entries, whole-class discussions, or any other creative strategy that a teacher can think of to learn personal information about individual students. Becoming familiar with students serves two distinct purposes: (1) it shows students that their

teachers have an interest in who they are, and (2) it provides teachers with insight that can be used to plan engaging lessons and activities based on the interests of the participants.

Finding the right balance between teacher control in the classroom and teacher-student interactions is another vital component of building teacher-student relationships. Teachers and students alike prefer a classroom where there is a high degree of control, and where teachers and students interact on regular basis (Veldman, van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2013), because “there is more engagement, and more respect of self and others” (Hattie, 2010, p. 119). As a result, students tend to achieve better in these classrooms as opposed to classrooms wherein either control is lacking or teachers and students have minimal opportunities for interaction. In such an environment, teachers create “democratic learning environments where students become accustomed to being treated as competent and able individuals” (Bartolomé, 2009, p. 342). By finding the balance between control and interaction in the classroom, teachers will not only develop positive relationships with their students, but they will also provide the best learning environment for them.

Although a teacher-student relationship typically begins in the classroom, it should not remain within the confines of those four walls. Children are intuitive; if they perceive that teachers want to get to know them only because the teachers want them to perform well in school, then students are less likely to believe in or put trust in those teachers. Teachers have a number of opportunities on a daily basis wherein they can authenticate their relationships with their students. Greeting students with a smile when they enter the school, spearheading a conversation in the hallway, and having an open-door policy are a few simple ways to solidify these relationships. Coaching or leading extra-curricular activities is another way to further teacher-student relationships. Students perceive teachers who lead after-school programs more favourably, and are therefore more likely to be connected to the school (Massoni, 2011), “because high-quality extra-curricular activities build relationships between students and the competent, responsive adults who supervise such activities” (Holloway, 2002, p. 80). Leading an extra-curricular activity and taking the time to interact with students outside of the classroom are wonderful ways for teachers to strengthen their student relationships and increase student trust. This trust will transfer into the classroom and students will thereby be more engaged in the learning process.

Feedback as a Tool of Engagement

Using effective feedback is another way in which teachers can engage students in their learning. The purpose of feedback is to help students make improvements, thereby deepening their understanding (Van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijaard, 2013). In order for feedback to be effective, it must have a clear and attainable goal, and be specific, timely, and consistent (Wiggins, 2012). Providing feedback as formative assessment, as opposed to a numerical score or letter grade, is time consuming. However, it is time well spent, because it will not only inform students about what they need to do, but it can also advise teachers about deficits of skills or understanding, and teachers can then use this information to plan accordingly (Fisher & Fry, 2012). Feedback should be not only teacher directed, but also a part of what students do. When engaged in the process of learning, it is natural for students to provide feedback to teachers through questioning. Teachers should attend to these questions and other forms of feedback from students, because “when teachers seek, or at least are open to, feedback from students . . . then learning can be synchronized and powerful” (Hattie, 2010, p. 173). Therefore, giving effective feedback to students, and accepting feedback from students, will increase their level of engagement.

Conclusion

Using a variety of teaching strategies and methods, developing and authenticating teacher-student relationships, and providing effective feedback all serve the purpose of engaging

students in the learning process. This purposeful objective of engaging students is best practice because the learning is student-centred with the intention of facilitating a deeper understanding. It is not only what teachers do in the classroom, but also the way that teachers feel toward their students that is at the heart of student engagement. Although a number of facets, such as community involvement, parental engagement, leadership, and teacher efficacy may be used to determine whether a school is good, the most representative, and therefore the most powerful, measure of a good school is student engagement. Thus, it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that students are not learning in a superficial way, but rather are engaged in the process of learning. This practice will facilitate a deeper understanding in students, who will then become active participants who are invested in their learning.

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Teacher Mentoring as a Means to Improve Schools

Miranda Bowman

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to identify the various reasons that teacher mentoring within schools is beneficial for schools, teachers, and students. Mentoring within schools promotes teacher retention and consistency among educators. Mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction and help teachers to emerge as leaders within their schools, but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement. Teachers work collaboratively with each other as valued team members. When schools implement mentoring programs effectively, the sharing of knowledge between teachers becomes an inherent quality whereby students, teachers, and the school climate benefits.

Businesses world-wide have adopted various mentoring and induction programs in an effort to help new employees become acclimatized to their jobs. Mentoring programs are meant to help new hires with job expectations, to increase job satisfaction and productivity, and to identify and develop leaders within the organization. Mentoring programs work much the same in education systems, but instead of making money, mentoring programs in schools develop high-quality educators who then promote student achievement. Schools with mentoring programs remain consistent in their transfers of knowledge, help to foster leadership, and promote teacher retention. Instead of working in isolation, educators collaborate and critically assess new knowledge. The shift in teacher collaboration is a welcome change from the isolated practices that educators have become accustomed to, and is a benefit to teachers, students, and school climates.

Consistency

Schools benefit from consistency, and mentorship can provide new teachers with a level of consistency that may otherwise be overlooked. With mentoring, novice teachers have direct access to the mentoring teachers who can share their knowledge, thus reducing the time that it takes to acquire necessary information. Principals are often too busy at the start of the year to sit down with new staff and go over the many details that are necessary to learn, and therefore rely on their mentoring teachers to assist and guide the new teachers. Mentorship promotes rapid learning (Stanulis & Floden, 2009) and builds a level of consistency useful in all aspects of the day-to-day school practices: student learning, expected behaviours, and the overall positivity of the school's climate.

School climate refers to the quality and character within schools. It is based upon experiences, goals, teaching practices, relationships, and organizational hierarchies within schools (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Nicholas, 2009). When teachers mentor, they teach the novice teachers about the school climate. This transfer of knowledge is invaluable for new teachers who are struggling to remember and conquer many tasks. Jennifer (a pseudonym) discussed how, at her first job, she had no mentor, and there seemed to be no consistent expectations. She would often see teachers purposefully ignore negative student behaviours, claiming that they did not know the procedures. Jennifer felt that the school climate was unruly, inconsistent, and manipulated by the students. Eventually, she left the school and took a job at another school, because she did not think that the school climate was going to change. When teachers feel such negative emotions, they are unable to maintain an ideal level of efficacy (Vesely, Saklofske, & Leschied, 2013). At her current school, Jennifer has a mentor and feels like valued team member, whereby teachers are invested participants who uphold expected

standards. She said that one of the reasons for the positive school climate is the mentors, who guide and teach the novice teachers.

Team Teaching

Many teachers long for connections to their peers. Traditionally, co-teaching and collaborative work was not considered a necessity, which is why there are still professionals who are used to, and more comfortable with, addressing issues on their own and working in isolation (Grillo, Moorehead, & Bedesem, 2011). The pressure that a novice teacher feels can be greatly alleviated by working and team teaching with a mentor (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Mentor collaboration is learning that is put into practice and benefits teachers and, therefore, students.

Opportunities for teachers to collaborate and team teach are beneficial to students because they provide more balanced instruction and consistencies among educators. By using The Atmosphere, Instruction/Content, Management, and Student Engagement (AIMS) test (Roehrig, Dolezal, Mohan, Bohn, & Pressley, 2001), Stanulis and Floden (2009) measured the effectiveness of teaching practices and found that mentorship creates more balanced instructional techniques, which invariably results in higher student achievements. Through team teaching and collaborative learning, teachers lessen the time required to learn and master new practices, becoming more efficient in classrooms and in their professions. It is difficult for any professional to work alone (Hargreaves, 2009), and team teaching not only enables, but also encourages, teachers to view student learning as part of their ongoing responsibilities (Grillo et al., 2011), instead of sending students on to the next grade and having no continued interest in their subsequent education.

Team teaching is a form of collaboration that enhances teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies, promoting competency and confidence in their profession. The first years of teaching are busy, and the opportunities to team teach with a mentor or other teacher diminishes the amount of time and preparation required to plan units or lessons (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014). Team teaching provides new teachers and their mentors with chances to observe new teaching methods, learn new skills, reflect upon teaching practices, and motivate each other (Grillo et al., 2011). The learning that takes place is more meaningful to new teachers (Orland-Barak & Hasin, 2010; University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014), because they are collaborations that the novice teachers are actively shared members of, thus encouraging self-reliance and feelings of confidence among themselves.

Leadership

In the past, teachers were seen not as leaders, but as people who were led by their administrators. Understanding that learning must take place, there has been a change in traditional educational pedagogies and reforms: from institutions to learning organizations (Msila, 2012). Teachers who have opportunities to mentor other teachers emerge as leaders within their professions, thus developing learning organizations and improving their own credibility with their colleagues (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008). These are the teachers seen continuously developing their own careers (Portner, 2008). Through mentoring, they have acquired levels of ownership and responsibilities in the programming that takes place within schools.

When teachers feel that they are part of a team, they are more likely to be invested in every student's learning, not just the students in their current class. These teachers work well, are passionate about what they are teaching, and are more concerned with student learning than they are about themselves (Hargreaves, 2009). At école Mclsaac School, all of the mentors show the new grades 1-3 teachers how to use the Barton Spelling Program. All of the teachers know the spelling rules and how to deliver the program, and therefore any grades 1-3 teacher

can help any grades 1-3 students, using the same language and methods as their current classroom teachers. Student progress is tracked each term, on a spreadsheet accessible by any teachers in the school. They see positive results because they are consistently working on a program together and are therefore invested in its success.

Teachers who take the time to mentor novice teachers invariably feel revitalized within their own careers. Many mentors report that mentoring not only energizes them, but also helps them to improve their skills (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008), and reflect on and improve their own decision-making abilities (Mathur, Gehrke, & Kim, 2012). Mentors motivate, challenge, and respond to new teachers, thus enhancing their own professional knowledge and keeping up to date with new developments in education. Mentors encourage new ideas, question the novice teachers, and help them to find effective ways to solve problems (Jones & Brown, 2011; Orland-Barak & Hasin, 2010). Mentoring relationships benefit entire schools (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson 2009), because they are a form of professional development that directly affects the school in which they are taking place. Often, this professional development continues long after the year of mentorship concludes, and fosters enriched feelings for both the mentor and the new teacher.

Teacher Retention

Teacher retention is an ongoing issue in education, particularly for new teachers. In university, B.Ed. students are told that most of them will not last in the profession. New teachers leave universities and collaborative student teaching environments to enter their first years of teaching, which are often described as isolated ones, wherein other teachers are primarily concerned with their own situations. When novice teachers leave their professions, it affects the schools and the educators who remain. Mentoring programs show educators that the assumption that teachers need to go into their classrooms, close their doors, and figure it out for themselves is archaic. Instead, they become more team and process oriented, thus benefitting the students and the school's climate.

There are significant changes to a school's climate when the school is unable, for whatever reasons, to keep teachers in their schools. Retaining teachers in schools is just as important as the process of hiring them. When schools retain their teachers, they keep professionals with organizational knowledge, whereas novice teachers require time to develop essential skills and deliver unfamiliar programs (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Low retention rates mean that schools continuously have to start over instead of dealing with the larger educational issues they may have (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). More pressures are put on the teachers who remain at the schools, because they are now faced with the task of continuously trying to maintain the implementation of specific educational programs, with no continuity for the following years. Low teacher retention rates create a lack of professional continuity and situations wherein parents do not know teachers and teachers do not know the other teachers, either. Similarly, low teacher retention rates can have negative effects on a school's climate, disturbing staff cohesion and community, which may also result in the disruption of student achievement.

As many as 50% of teachers leave their profession within five years of teaching, at times when they are most likely reaching their maximum influence on student learning (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 112). If new teachers were effectively mentored, they would be more likely to stay in teaching professions, because they would experience more support and better working conditions. Mentoring provides instructional assistance and promotes socialization between novice teachers and the rest of the staff. Stanulis & Floden (2009) found that new teachers who received intensive mentoring remained in the profession, exhibiting a retention rate that far exceeded the national average. Mathur et al. (2012) learned that 39 of the 41 novice teachers who received mentoring remained in the teaching profession. Having a mentor promotes efficacy, alleviates some of the stress of being in a new profession, and encourages teachers to remain in their chosen career.

Conclusion

Mentoring is meant to help attract, motivate, and develop new leaders in educational systems. In many instances, there are even more benefits attributed to the implementation of mentoring programs. Schools that have mentoring programs have a strong effect on novice teachers, primarily in the areas of teacher retention, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). When teachers work together, there are more consistencies within schools, with a resultant positive effect on school climate, student engagement, and student learning. Teachers feel confident and are more likely to remain in their chosen profession when they have the support of fellow teachers and work with them closely, collaboratively, and as valued team members (Vesely et al., 2013). Moreover, mentoring programs help experienced teachers to emerge as leaders and reflect upon their own teaching practices in terms of assisting a beginning teacher. Mentorship challenges the perceived norms in education. Teachers are no longer expected to suffer in isolation, encouraging students to seek help when they need to, but not taking this initiative for themselves (Grillo et al., 2011). Businesses implement mentoring programs in order to increase productivity, and therefore revenues. When schools implement mentoring programs, the sharing of knowledge becomes an inherent quality, and the result is an increase in student learning.

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Miranda Bowman teaches in the Flin Flon School Division. She has taken on various leadership roles in the division, including the creation of a Mentoring Program that has been implemented by two elementary schools and three high schools. Miranda plans to continue to work on staff development and programming.

Transformative Leadership Framework: Designing a Peer Mentoring Program for Middle School Students

Ayodeji Osiname

Abstract

This review of the literature considers the development of the peer mentoring program by using a transformative leadership framework. Positive relationships are essential to an inclusive, safe learning environment for all students, especially middle school students. Peer mentoring plays a major role in creating this kind of relationship and helps to create a positive school tone and culture. Using transformative leadership as the theoretical framework to develop a peer mentoring program has the potential to exposing students to various meaningful cross-cultural experiences. It provides equitable and socially responsible learning for adolescents by creating schools that value diversity and prepare students to challenge forms of social dominance in the school and in their environment as they grow.

Positive relationships are essential to an inclusive and a safe learning environment for all students. Positive role models are especially important during adolescence, in order to prepare middle school students for life by exposing them to various and meaningful experiences, and helping them to reach their potential. Peer mentoring plays a major role in creating this kind of relationship and helps to create a positive school tone and culture. Strong social structures foster positive relationships among peers, provide a sense of inclusion and acceptance, and create just and equitable schools. The transformative leadership framework characterized by an overriding commitment to social justice, equality, and a democratic society (Theoharis, 2009). It is therefore an ideal theoretical framework for the design of a peer mentoring program for middle school students.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring involves an intense interpersonal exchange between an experienced person (mentor) and a less experienced person (protégé or mentee) for whom the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback for growth and personal development. The peer mentoring process therefore involves two or more individuals working together to develop the abilities of one individual (Shanklin & Brumage, 2011). The mentors guide, teach, and influence their mentees in important ways. Peer mentoring in schools helps students to develop social support networks that will build their self-confidence and enable them to thrive among their peers (Good, Halpin & Halpin, 2000). Bergerson & Petersen (2009) explained that the mentors also nurture the mentees' academic aspirations. Through role modelling, emotional support and positive feedback, mentors influence their mentees' perceptions of identity, self-worth, and the values that they place on schooling.

Peer mentoring builds strong relationships and cultivates a positive sense of belonging in students (Carlisle, 2011). A positive sense of belonging, furthermore, correlates with constructive peer relationships. Goodenow (1993) also found that positive peer relationships and a sense of belonging in school are associated with students' academic expectations for success (as cited in Carlisle, 2011). Peer mentoring helps students to build positive relationships with their peers, which heightens their sense of belonging to their school and contributes to a positive school community.

Peer mentoring offers care and support that challenges the negative views that adolescents often hold of themselves (Bergerson & Petersen, 2009). The mentors provide advice and support when their mentees face challenges in schoolwork, social issues, or generalized

pressure or tension. Having an older youth to talk to or spend time with, and who provides encouragement and friendship, helps adolescents to develop positive attitudes toward school, and to develop strength and self-confidence to resist the pressures of being involved in antisocial behaviours. Peer mentoring provides important extra support that many adolescents need to make it through difficult periods in their lives.

Peer mentoring builds leadership capabilities in both mentors and mentees. The mentors are likely to be thrust into leadership roles (Garringer & MacRae, 2008), thereby providing mentors with active leadership responsibilities. When adolescent mentees contribute to the decisions that affect them, it increases their participation in their own growth and development, which helps them to feel confident, to be self-regulated, and to develop leadership capabilities (Carlisle, 2011). Peer mentoring helps adolescents to feel empowered and enhances the overall self-esteem and confidence that will help them to develop leadership skills.

Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership is an ethically based leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long-term interests of stakeholders and society, and honoring the moral duties that organizations owe to their stakeholders (Caldwell et al., 2012). Transformative leadership thus integrates ethical mandates, behavioural assumptions, and standards of excellence that are important in leading effectively. Transformative leadership as a reciprocal process whereby one or more individuals engage with others in a way that leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation and morality (Shields, 2003). Transformative leadership is therefore value based in a given social context that can bring about changes that are needed in society. Transformative leadership incorporates charisma to create compelling morally-based personal relationships that inspire and empower others in pursuit of a noble purpose (Caldwell, et al., 2012). Transformative leadership creates a personal connection and displays moral principles that help followers to examine their lives, fulfill their potential, and create a better world.

Leadership does not reside in an individual but in the relationship between individuals (Ryan, 2006). The transformative leadership model is characterized by a shared vision in pursuit of a grand ideal to touch hearts, to create personal relationships that bring about the best in others, and to change the world. It is the leadership that inspires and creates connections with others, redirecting their lives in pursuit of a changed society. Transformative leadership resonates when leaders treat individuals with a commitment to their welfare, growth, and wholeness (Caldwell, et al., 2012). Transformative leadership is perceived as authentic and genuine because it possesses the ability to touch hearts, inspire great sacrifice and demonstrate courage to change the world.

To attain excellence in education, there must be effective school leadership present (Brown, 2006). Exemplary leadership that points out the necessity for change and then helps to make that change happen is transformative leadership. A transformative leader provides guidance, direction, and influence for others to bring about fundamental change (Brown, 2006). Transformative leaders commit people to action, convert followers to leaders, and influence people as agents of change. Transformative leadership is characterized by its activist agenda and its overriding commitment to social justice, equality, and a democratic society (Theoharis, 2009). Transformative leaders inspire and transform individual followers to develop a level of concern about the condition of humanity at large (Ncube, 2010). Transformative leadership has the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it (Caldwell, et al., 2012). Choosing to offer supplementary services to those who most need them is an example of transformative leadership. Transformative leaders connect with followers, earn their support, trust, and commitment – and bring out the best in them – which creates sustainable connection and leadership.

Transformative Leadership as a Framework for Peer Mentoring

Transformative leadership is an ideal framework for a peer mentoring program because it exposes students to various meaningful cross-cultural experiences within and outside their schoolwork. It addresses deeper issues related to diversity, such as racism, classism, sexism, multiculturalism, oppression, prejudice, and discriminatory practices among students. Most schools are heterogeneous: students come from different races, social classes, etc. Using the transformative leadership framework for peer mentoring may solve the problems of heterogeneous issues in school by exposing students to cross-cultural experiences that will create a positive school climate. Transformative theory understands diversity in schools, takes into account changing school population, and develops images of inclusive, caring and high-performing schools that prepare students for life in a global knowledge economy (Shields, 2003).

The transformative leadership framework fosters successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning for mentors and mentees by creating schools that value students. Because transformative leadership is committed to moral cause, taking a stand, and teaching social justice, it can equip students (future leaders) to understand and grow in their perceived ability to challenge various forms of social oppression, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, and classism. The transformative leadership framework is perceived as authentic and genuine (Brown, 2006), because it focuses on ethics, morality, and change to resolve injustice and inequality (Shields, 2003). As a result, transformative leadership creates more just and equitable schools that peer mentoring programs can build on as a foundation.

The transformative leadership framework inspires followers' commitment to seeking excellence, finding moral and ethical solutions, and making measurable differences in the world (Caldwell, et al., 2012). This framework promotes trust, cohesiveness, security, and empathy so that all learners feel safe to participate freely in the peer mentoring program. Greater exposure to, and involvement in, a transformative framework for peer mentoring programs will deepen students' understanding and acceptance of diverse groups, openness to different ways of thinking, and awareness of social inequalities.

Using the Transformative Leadership Framework to Build a Peer Mentoring Program to Assist Grade 9 Transitions

Transformative leadership provides an ideal framework for peer mentoring to assist grade 9 transitions. Young adolescents benefit from having positive role models to guide and support them. When a transformative leadership framework is used to build a peer mentoring program older students serve as the "mentor" role models for grade 9 students. The mentor provides academic support, social support, sense of belonging, and positive influence. These supports will help the grade 9 students to develop positive attitudes towards school and will expose them to various experiences to fulfill their potential.

Using the transformative leadership framework will assist the "mentee" grade 9 students in identity formation, which is a fundamental component during the transition of adolescent development (Carlisle, 2011). This creation of self-identity is highly influenced by the activities within the school and the relationships that adolescents have with others. The transformative leadership framework will assist mentors to provide direction for mentees in choosing hobbies and interests. These relationships built around shared activities are the key factors in adolescent identity formation. The transformative leadership framework assists students in identity formation by offering inclusion, acceptance, and direction during the transition of adolescent development.

Using the transformative leadership framework to design the peer mentoring program will eradicate forms of bullying that are common in adolescents. Verbal teasing and intimidation are the most common forms of bullying in schools (Carlisle, 2008). When adolescents are exposed

to different experiences, cultures, orientations, and moral teachings, they will shun social dominance or bullying among their peers and at school as a whole. The transformative leadership framework provides equitable and socially responsible learning for adolescents by creating schools that value diversity, in order to prepare adolescents to challenge any forms of bullying and social dominance in the school and later in life. Applying the transformative leadership theoretical framework to a peer mentoring program will expose students to various meaningful cross-cultural experiences and foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning for mentors and mentees.

Designing a Peer Mentoring Program Based on a Transformative Leadership Framework

The following steps can be used to develop a peer mentoring program based on the transformative leadership framework.

Step 1: Mentor Selection

Select grade 11-12 mentors from all of the groups that exist in the school: race, ethnicity, social class, student type, special needs, etc. The mentors need to come from many diverse groups of students in the school, because the transformative leadership framework creates just and equitable schools that make all students feel valued, safe, included, and respected.

Step 2: Mentor Training

Train all students participating as mentors prior to partnering them with the mentees. This training will include the following topics:

- different power structures
- social justice and inequalities
- racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.
- moral and ethical conduct
- the scope and limits of their role as mentors
- the skills and attitudes that mentors are expected to perform in their role
- the concept of positive adolescent development
- confidence building as they prepare to start working with their mentees
- program requirements and supports for mentors
- ground rules and expectations for mentors

Step 3: Mentee Selection

Select the grade 9 mentees. Mentor-mentee pairing will be determined by age (such that each mentor is at least two years older than his/her mentee) and by student needs.

Step 4: Mentor-Mentee Meetings

Schedule regular mentor-mentee meetings at weekly or bi-weekly intervals, in order for the pairs to develop a lasting relationship.

Step 5: Activities

Design activities to establish a comfort level for mentors and mentees

Conclusion

Fostering healthy relationships in any school will build a positive school community wherein students work together in a culture of learning and affirmation. Because adolescence is a time of rapid change and development (Carlisle, 2011), relationships with others are key components of this transitional stage. Peer mentoring provides positive role models to support, guide, and influence adolescents to make it through this period of their lives. The transformative leadership model addresses issues related to diversity, identity formation, social dominance, and bullying. The principles of transformative leadership will help to prepare student mentors and mentees to challenge various forms of social oppression, injustice and inequalities among individual students, in the school, and in society at large. Transformative leadership theory offers an ideal theoretical framework for the design of a peer mentoring program for middle school students.

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A Values-Based School

Jodi Pawlachuk

Abstract

Students today encounter numerous life challenges. The ability to overcome these obstacles depends on the educational system's ability to prepare youth to make healthy decisions. Values-based schooling requires substantial standards of value to be placed on students in order to meet the growing needs of society. An emphasis on love, relationships, care, and empowerment by educators serves as a foundation to prepare youth for their future.

Schools are always faced with pressure and criticism as well as opportunity to be considered values based. There are many factors to consider when seeking the right school. One must first determine the values that are important, because different schools have different approaches. Values such as love, relationships, care, and empowerment serve as a foundation for enabling youth to prepare for their future.

Love

There are many interpretations of the word *love*. When Freire referred to the notion of love in regards to the school system, he signified the type of love that is vivacious, influential, stimulating, analytical, and thought-provoking (as cited in Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). It is a call to humanity in this economically, socially, and politically oppressed world. Teachers in a values-based school often feel responsible to create solid relationships with their students to educate, equip, enable, and empower them to fight for social justice in the aggressive world they live in. Although teachers do not have the power to emancipate their students, teachers instead have the opportunity to encourage their students' freedom by empowering students to want to take initiative to defend themselves and the rights of others. In order to attain this commitment to humanity, teachers must effectively create relationships with their students based on humbleness as well as valour, and rooted in love.

Relationships with Families, Communities, and Students

A values-based school is possible only when dedicated educators invest their time to discuss the viewpoints of its students, families, and communities, and collaborate on what will most benefit the children (Lipman, 2009). The development of relationships with students and their families, and the collaboration among teachers and administrators, are two key factors for a successful school (Eslinger, 2014). The shift of the principal's role from a leading and controlling position to a caring and supportive position provides an environment of care for the teachers to flourish and, in return, incorporate such practices into their own classrooms (van der Vyer, van der Westhuizen, & Meyer, 2014). The collaboration among teachers, administrators, families, communities, and students will bring about changes that will meet the students' needs.

Reciprocal Relationships

The teaching-learning process requires a reciprocal relationship. Since teaching is a social profession, both teachers and students contribute to successful learning, as both offer valuable insights that can be built from one another's ideas (Hagenauer & Volet, 2013). The teacher is merely the facilitator who creates opportunities for students to inquire and share their ideas about the concepts, rather than the teacher dictating what is to be memorized for understanding. Reciprocal relationships can form with daily interactions between students and

teachers, which is meaningful for social development and creates the classroom climate necessary to instill productive conversations (Salminen, Hannikainen, Poikonen, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2013). Through these close relationships, students can be guided into making socially responsible choices.

The best teachers build relationships with their students (Hattie, 2009). These relationships require the teachers to be caring, empathetic, positive, and good listeners. When teachers lack these skills, students may dislike their teachers and be reluctant to attend school or to participate in school activities. Teachers can exhibit value in their students by seeing the students' perspective, and enabling them to feel purposeful and prioritized.

Relationships with the School

School connectedness has played a significant role in decreasing problem behaviours from students (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013). A connection with the school has been associated with decreased drug use, decreased teenage pregnancy, increased self-concept, higher GPA, greater attendance, and more positive feelings of support and personal strengths (Scales & Leffert, 2004). Having teacher support and feeling valued are substantial factors to create student connections with the school. One intervention that schools implement to support school connectedness is the provision of extra-curricular programs. These extra-curricular activities in schools have shown a positive influence on test scores and on the attendance of low-income youth (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). Students' relationships with the staff show that the staff members care, and the provision of activities designed for the interest of the students encourages participation and a connection with the school.

Care

Caring teachers familiarize themselves with their student population. The more teachers know their students, the more the teachers will care about each student (Starkman, Scales, & Roberts, 2006) and feel accountable to individual students. In multicultural Canada, various ethnic groups are dispersed within the population, requiring individualized awareness with respect to expected differences among some cultures. In contrast, teachers who use generic teaching practices would expect the same results from every student, negating opportunities for growth in individualization. Schools are attempting to implement minority groups' culture, language, and history into the curriculum and everyday practices in an effort to end the inequitable practices that dehumanized students in the past (Bartolome, 2009). Through reflection, educators can create learning environments that are sensitive to the current needs of the students by taking the time to get to know them and understand them.

Implementing culture in the classroom is deeper than superficially enjoying ethnic cuisine or using various cultural names as examples in classroom studies. Instead, culture and curriculum must be brought together actively and simultaneously, and established within and through relationships amongst various cultural groups (Grande, 2009). The historical relevance and the emotional stigma that numerous cultural groups have endured should also be explored in respects to creating an equitable learning environment and a socially just future. Inviting guest speakers into the school, in order to share and communicate ideologies, provides opportunities for understanding. Discussion and real-life experiences from the heart have the power to clarify understanding, more than a textbook is sometimes capable of. This opportunity for openness to be shared by oppressed cultures attempts to create a balance between cultural honour and critical opposition to leadership, by educating students of the actions and effects that have been imposed on people.

Empowerment

Within society, questionable practices are attempted constantly; without addressing these issues, opportunities for inequalities arise. In order for these issues to be addressed, citizens need not only to be aware of the social injustices, but also to be empowered to believe that they can stand up against the status quo and change the current system (Peterson, 2009). Critical literacy encourages people to stand up for their beliefs in order to create a society based on justice and equality (Shor, 2009). Students should be given the opportunity in the classroom to express their beliefs and question current practices, rather than simply accept authority for what it is. Although many leaders may prefer not to be challenged, questioning current methods develops critical thinking, and forces the justification of why such practices are obeyed. Students should be taught to analyze current policies, and see the possibilities available to them to create a change for the better (Giroux, 2009). The education system has the power to create either passive citizens who will accept authority robotically, or citizens who will stand up for their beliefs and the rights of others, and question the social order imposed by those in power. It is up to the school system to develop critical thinkers who believe that they have a powerful voice within a democratic society.

Schools such as Creighton Community School have attempted to improve students' growth and development through the integration of programs such as "40 Developmental Assets." This program attempts to develop healthful, thoughtful, and reliable students through the implementation of the program by caring individuals (Roehlkepartain, 2009). The developmental assets are categorized in the areas of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Incorporating these assets cultivates wisdom regarding everyday choices to guide positive decision-making and decrease the likelihood of the children's involvement in problem behaviours (Roehlkepartain, 2009). In the developmental assets program, youth are encouraged to demonstrate empowerment by getting involved within the community and are given useful roles. When youth are invited to share their ideas on a project, they feel valued and are more likely to contribute and work with others to establish a common goal. Youth are empowered by being included in the practice, and are invited to participate to make necessary improvements.

Conclusion

Schools have always tried to deliver the best educational experience for youth, in order to prepare them for any challenges they may face in the future. The educational system relies on teachers to serve as lifelong learners who dedicate themselves to seek and implement the necessary changes to meet the evolving needs of society. In order to instill the skills necessary for a successful future, students must be educated about the values that will enable them to make the best choices for themselves and for society. A values-based school regards love, relationships, care, and empowerment as a foundation for best practices in teaching.

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Biography

Jodi Pawlachuk has been a classroom teacher for five years at Creighton Community School, Saskatchewan, and is presently both a grade 5 teacher and a special education consultant. Jodi is currently pursuing her Master of Education in special education.



VOICE RESEARCH REPORTS

The *Vital Outcome Indicators for Community Engagement (VOICE) Research Project* is a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. VOICE brings together community partners, organizations, and Brandon University and University College of the North for the purpose of helping children and youth from Manitoba's First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) in Northern Manitoba to achieve educational and career success.

The VOICE research project has received provincial, regional, and national interest because of the unique partnerships and the intention for all of the projects to be community initiated and governed. Each community establishes a community circle that creates success pathways and drives the research process by developing research plans. University researchers provide support to carry out these plans and analyse the data, making communities and researchers true partners in the co-creation and dissemination of knowledge. One of the most important aspects of the VOICE research is how it can lead to sustainable change in the community.

We are pleased to present the following reports based on VOICE research conducted in Manitoba communities in 2013-2014:

Community Connector
Marcia Novo, The Pas Community Circle

VOICE IT: Cultural Proficiency Work in Thompson
Chris Brown, Thompson Community Circle



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Community Connector

The Pas Community Circle

Marcia Novo

VOICE research relies on community circles to direct their success pathways and the research plans that emerge from these pathways. The community circle that existed at the beginning of The Pas' involvement in VOICE consisted primarily of Kelsey School Division administrators. The goal of the "Community Connector" research plan was to strengthen our "Community Connections" pathway by expanding the membership in our community circle to include a broad range of business, educational, and cultural groups that are committed to enhancing community engagement for children and youth in The Pas.

Method

As the community connector who was hired to conduct this research, I initiated and attended meetings with various organizations and agencies in The Pas, MB. I tracked attendance at the meetings for data, which were used to expand our community circle and to support a "pilot project" community engagement initiative from January to May 2014. A primary community-based indicator of success would be an established The Pas Community Circle that represents our community. Other indicators would include community participation in, satisfaction with, and desire to continue any community engagement initiatives that we implemented between January and May 2014. Our research questions were as follows:

- What are organizations/agencies currently doing to engage youth in our community?
- What would organizations/agencies like to do to engage youth in our community?
- What role should Kelsey School Division (KSD) play in youth engagement in our community?
- What should a Community Circle look like in The Pas, MB?
- What can we do to facilitate community engagement between January and May 2014?

Results

I tracked my monthly attendance at meetings. The initial meetings were one-on-one meetings with community agencies and organizations. The purpose of the meetings was to inform them of the VOICE research project and ask whether they would be interested in participating in a community circle for The Pas. Then I scheduled a group meeting to coalesce participation in The Pas Community Circle and embark on a pilot study community engagement project under its direction.

Preliminary Meetings with Community Service Agencies and Organizations

Of the 36 meetings that I scheduled to build capacity for The Pas Community Circle, I ended up attending 27 as a representative of Kelsey School Division and the VOICE Research Project. (The other 9 were either cancelled or rescheduled.) Along with initiating meetings, I was invited to participate in developing an Urban Aboriginal Strategy for The Pas Family Resource Centre and contributing to a community resource directory for the Social Networking Committee put on by The Pas Community Renewal Corporation.

Building Capacity for The Pas Community Circle

Of the 22 people whom I invited to attend a community circle meeting on March 5, 2014, only 14 (64%) attended. The good news is that the people who attended met our goal of expanding The Pas Community Circle to include a broader cross-section of the community, and they are very committed to enhancing community engagement for children and youth in The Pas. Of the 14 people who attended the community circle meeting, 8 are not affiliated with Kelsey School Division.

Sustainability Art Pilot Project

A school division-wide Sustainability Expo on April 22, 2014, served as the pilot project attached to the Community Connector research plan. Students in grades 5-10 used Norvel Morriseau paintings as an inspiration for their own artwork to auction off at the Sustainability Expo. Of the 25 students who participated, 17 completed paintings for display and the other 8 completed their paintings after the event. More than 50 paintings resulted from the project, because the students had an opportunity to complete extra paintings for themselves. The silent auction raised \$360 for donation to a local soup kitchen. Two of the paintings have been accepted for publication on the cover of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*.

Discussion

The intent behind this pathway was to develop a community circle that reflects our community as a whole. Two ideas for VOICE follow-up research emerged from The Pas Community Circle discussions: barrier-free extracurricular activities and revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail. I also made important connections with The Pas' Urban Aboriginal Strategy and Kelsey School Division's Sustainability Committee.

The Pas Community Circle

It took time to establish the relationships that created an enhanced community circle. We now have a group of committed individuals on The Pas Community Circle. At our meeting in March 2014, the circle members recommended ways to engage youth in our community and to support potential VOICE pathways for success.

Barrier-Free Extracurricular Activities

One of the main suggestions from the community was for Kelsey School Division to consider barrier-free extracurricular activities, defined as accessible to all youth – no cost, limited transportation, personal supplies or equipment.

This recommendation could be actualized by using the gym at Mary Duncan School. X-Roads (pronounced "cross roads") used to run an after-school program in Mary Duncan School on their Wednesday Community Nights. There was also an evening cooking program run out of Mary Duncan School's kitchen by a nutritionist from the Norman Regional Health Authority. It therefore seems entirely feasible that the Mary Duncan School gym could be made available for community-based extracurricular activities for youth at no charge.

Revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail

The community also supported the idea of revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail as a land-based education opportunity. They saw this as beneficial to the students in school as well as the

community as a whole. Youth groups such as 4H and Girl Guides would use it, as would youth camps in the summer time.

The trail is close to a community pond and our community walking path. The community as whole indicated interest in enhancing both as part of a 5-year community plan done by The Pas Community Renewal Corporation.

Urban Aboriginal Strategy

Another aspect of the community connector role was attending community meetings on behalf of Kelsey School Division and the VOICE research project. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy committee met monthly to consult with community members and organizations on creating a strategy to identify and work towards solving some of our community's challenges, notably lack of community engagement.

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy brought in a facilitator for Community Engagement Workshops. At these workshops, we were asked to commit to hosting community conversations on the topic of envisioning a better community. I hosted three conversations with youth in the community – students from grades 2, 4, and 10 – and then I submitted the information verbally to The Pas Family Resource Centre for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy committee.

Through connecting with the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Social Networking Committee from The Pas Community Renewal Corporation was established. I also attended monthly meetings and contributed to creating a community resource directory.

Sustainability Committee

Lastly, I participated in Kelsey School Division's Sustainability Committee. This committee supports a land-based education pathway being developed in The Pas. Our committee also hosted a division-wide Sustainability Expo in April 2014. VOICE supported the student engagement art project that served as a pilot study for youth engagement research. Grades 5-10 students created paintings to auction off for charity. They chose to donate the \$360 to a local soup kitchen.

Recommendations

My recommendations focus on the roles of the community connector and community circle, and the two recommendations that came from The Pas Community Circle meeting in March 2014: barrier-free extracurricular activities and revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail.

Community Connector

The community connector role was vital to creating The Pas Community Circle in 2013-14. A community connector is needed to continue this connection between Kelsey School Division and the community.

Community Circle Protocol

The Pas Community Circle should develop a protocol for operations, which would include having a chair to serve as coordinator. This role would help to ensure that ideas from the community circle are not just suggestions but action.

Barrier-Free Extra-Curricular Activities

There must remain connections to community organizations for activities such as barrier-free extra-curricular activities to happen. There are organizations already in action that would like to work together, such as The Pas Friendship Centre with its X-Roads program for youth.

We discussed the possibility of providing gym space for the students, especially during the winter months. The Friendship Centre's current facility does not accommodate organized sports, which is something that the youth are interested in participating in.

This venture could easily become a research plan connected to the Community Connections pathway. The Pas Friendship Centre tracks its youth involvement for funders. Many of the youth are students attending Kelsey School Division. Their attendance at the after-school program could be correlated with their in-school attendance and academic achievement, in order to collect data that would drive decision making based on this phase of our "Community Connections" action research pathway.

Revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail

The Pas Community Circle also supported the idea of revitalizing the Rosie Mayne Trail as a land-based education opportunity. The Pas Community Renewal Corporation has a grant available to help with fixing the boardwalk so that the trail is usable. The team members are currently exploring grants through Manitoba Hydro from their Forest Enhancement Program, specifically Forest Education Projects. Tolko has offered woodchips for the trail.

University College of the North would like its Kenanow B.Ed. students to facilitate land-based education for students in Kelsey School Division. The division's Sustainability Committee has offered support in creating educational resources for use by individual teachers or UCN students. The Sustainability Committee is also applying for grants to prepare these materials.

The Pas Community Circle believes that this project will benefit the community as a whole. The trail site will also be developed for after-school use by community members. This project will extend the *Into the Wild* summer program, which has operated the last five years with the involvement of over 300 students each summer.

The Rosie Mayne Trail revitalization project has research potential. The anticipated benefits will be realized through high levels of student engagement and academic success, a higher level of engagement by teachers in land-based activities, and families and individual community members using the land-based side for engagement in guided and self-directed learning. The information that is collected would drive decision making based on this phase of either the existing "Community Connections" pathway or a new "Land-Based Education" research pathway.

About the Author

Marcia Novo is an adult education teacher in The Pas, Manitoba. She obtained her B.A. from the University of Manitoba, then decided to return to home to further her education. In 2010, she graduated with honours from the Kenanow B.Ed. program at University College of the North. Marcia is mother to an active two-year-old, and she is an active Girl Guide leader.

VOICE IT: Cultural Proficiency Work in Thompson

Thompson Community Circle

Chris Brown

In 2011, the School District of Mystery Lake (SDML) embarked on a journey to create a more culturally proficient learning environment. This work, started before the VOICE research project, continues to provide a positive example of how to engage in social justice pedagogy in northern Canada.

SDML invited Terrell and Lindsey (2009) to speak at an in-service on cultural proficiency in Thompson. As well, SDML re-instituted the Thompson Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (TAEAC) to further support Aboriginal learners. This committee became the Thompson Community Circle for the VOICE research project.

Definition of Cultural Proficiency

Cultural proficiency is not about becoming proficient in one's own culture or about appropriating another's culture. Cultural proficiency provides tools to learn about, understand, and value diverse perspectives with the aim of creating a more socially just society (Nuri-Robbins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2012). It is a deceptively simple approach to changing institutions and those who work within them so that they are more supportive of diversity (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). The concept of cultural proficiency currently includes the multiple intersections of difference that exist in society, and concepts such as gender, sexual preference, able-bodiedness, and other ways that people are advantaged or disadvantaged by beliefs, values, and assumptions in society about their group affiliation (Lindsey, Nuri-Robbins, Diaz, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2013).

In Thompson, culturally proficient work involves professional development for teaching and support staff, as well as community and industry leaders to ensure minoritized groups can become more active citizens in democracy (Nuri-Robbins et al., 2012). From a school perspective, cultural proficiency is about teaching staff how to address the achievement gap through learning pedagogical, interpersonal, and content area instruction that supports minoritized learners (Nuri-Robbins et al., 2012).

Method

Thompson Community Circle members, who were invested in the cultural proficiency VOICE research, have worked through the following three stages of the project.

Cultural Proficiency Planning Committee (2012-13)

The strategic plan for SDML and the City of Thompson also included cultural proficiency as a major theme in moving the community forward. In 2012-13, the Cultural Proficiency success pathway was developed with the Thompson Community Circle through an appreciative inquiry process. Four themes emerged: engaging children and youth/ healthy relationships, professional development, school support/district administration, and fostering partnerships. These themes and the results of the appreciative inquiry were merged into the Cultural Proficiency strategic plan for SDML. Building capacity to teach in culturally proficient ways was divided into three items:

- Develop and implement workshops on cultural proficiency within SDML and with community partners, which may also include fostering other programs (such as doing virtues work and infusing different cultural perspectives into curricula).
- Engage students in land-based education and enhance our understanding of the impact of land-based education through the lens of SDML.
- Support the knowledge mobilization of research findings.

At the end of this process, we prepared our success pathway and had it approved through the voice governance process. As well, we also moved our committee from the work of planning to implementing and evaluating cultural proficiency in SDML and Thompson. During this time, various activities around cultural proficiency were already ongoing within SDML, and knowledge about them was being widely distributed.

Cultural Proficiency Implementation Committee (2013-14)

The Cultural Proficiency Implementation Committee began in the fall of 2013 and was constituted by the same members as the planning committee, but they worked to implement and evaluate the initiatives. The implementation committee worked on the following items:

- Establish roles for the committee members.
- Establish a timeline to work on building capacity to teach in culturally proficient ways, and increase understanding of land-based education through the lens of SDML. Specifically, the committee developed short, medium, and long-term goals, activities, and indicators of success.
- Coordinate and plan for the development and implementation of building capacity to teach in culturally proficiency ways, and increased the understanding of land-based education through the lens of SDML.
- Coordinate research efforts in the aforementioned areas.

Cultural Proficiency Evaluation Committee (2014-15)

The final stage in the Cultural Proficiency pathway is to evaluate the success of the initiatives. The Cultural Proficiency Evaluation Committee is composed of the same members as the planning and implementation committees, but the focus is now on providing evidence that this pathway works (or doesn't work) and has reached the point of being self-sustaining, once the VOICE research project is complete.

Results and Discussion

One of the important outcomes of this project is that the Cultural Proficiency team within the Thompson Community Circle has developed a professional development model that appears to be creating a more culturally proficient community. This model is of interest and in demand by private and public sector interests in the Thompson area. Other benefits of the pathway include the development and implementation of an overarching and dynamic model of cultural proficiency throughout the district in partnership with community stakeholders. Thus, there is a greater capacity to provide culturally proficient education, and enhanced community-based research capacity.

As well, this project has led to change in the community, as evidenced by feedback from participants learning about cultural proficiency. There is also evidence that this change is occurring because of the interconnected nature of the stakeholders. Research is also providing evidence that culturally proficient school change is occurring. It is hypothesized that school

change is occurring because the team has a large and diverse social network, and because they are able to draw from the best practices that already exist in the school. As well, institutional practices are changing because cultural proficiency has been positioned as a legitimate focus in the division. This sustained attention to cultural proficiency at the divisional level, with the support of the broader community, is leading to systemic change. The adage that leadership is critical for large-scale change to occur has proved most important in this project: having highly motivated and invested leadership has proven to be critical in this project.

Recommendations

The Cultural Proficiency model provides an example of a way to engage in positive and systemic social change that leads to greater inclusion for previously marginalized groups. While this decision rests with the Thompson Community Circle, it is clear that they will continue and extend the work on cultural proficiency within Thompson and the School District of Mystery Lake. Community work such as this is vital for the community, but it would also be prudent to continue to document and write about what is happening, so that other communities can benefit from the success of this project. As well, given the importance of this model to the community of Thompson, it would make sense to continue to grow the cultural proficiency network in Manitoba by developing alliances with sister organizations interested in building culturally proficient schools and personnel.

As a researcher, the challenge has been to keep up with all of the good work that is being done and to report it in a way that is authentic, supportive, and can lead to further growth within the School District of Mystery Lake, Thompson, and beyond. It is also important to acknowledge that this type of community-based social justice work is best fostered through community-based participatory action research models like the one that was principally incubated at Brandon University.

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About the Author

Dr. Chris Brown is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University, where he teaches courses in educational psychology, counseling, and special education. Chris has experience as a teacher, principal, resource teacher, and guidance counsellor in Manitoba. As a practising therapist and educator, Chris is deeply invested in providing culturally proficient and anti-oppressive practices in teaching and counselling.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M. Ed. projects and theses in 2013.

Joseph Choji

March 21, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. H. Armstrong

Factors that Contribute to Academic Success for Students from Low Socio-economic Backgrounds: A Comparative Study of Two Selected Schools – One in Saskatoon, Canada, and another in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria

My thesis research addresses the factors that contribute to students' academic performance with special reference to children that come from low socio-economic backgrounds. It is a comparative study of two schools: one in Saskatoon, Canada, and the other in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria. I had the experience as a child of coming from a low socio-economic background. I also worked in the sampled school in Nigeria as one of its principals. Many of its students come from low socio-economic backgrounds. The sampled school in Saskatoon also has a considerable number of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The basic question I tried to answer in my study is how students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds can best be helped to achieve academically.

In my study, I have learned that the insightful and helpful steps on helping students in the sampled school in Saskatoon are the early focus on literacy, responding to data-driven record keeping, the online survey on *What Did You Learn In School Today (WDYLIST)*, the *Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP)*, and the *Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility, and Respect (STARR)* program. In my research findings with the sampled school in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria, scouting for financial sponsorship, subsidizing school fees, providing educational learning materials, and organizing competitions, debates, and quizzes are essential for helping students from impoverished backgrounds excel in academics.

In the sampled school in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria, the fact that it is a Catholic mission school helped it to meet students' needs and made a big difference in the moral upbringing of the students. As well, the examination promotion policy kept the students alert and working hard so as not to be retained or repeated in the same class. The poverty level in Nigeria cannot be compared to that of Canada. The poverty in Nigeria is so visible that there can be no mistake about who is poor and who is rich even when looking at the schools that the children attend. I have gathered from my study and my life in Nigeria that the government has a good national policy on Education but poor implementation. The sourcing for sponsorship is a big need for children from poor families to be engaged in school.

Yvonne Hodge

March 22, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. H. Armstrong

Diversity and the Need for Inclusion

Appropriate educational programming legislation received Royal Assent in Manitoba, Canada, on June 10, 2004. This public schools amendment act speaks to the diversity of people in Manitoba and ensures that school boards in the province deliver inclusive education at all neighborhood schools. Since 2004, schools in the province of Manitoba are

legally expected to differentiate general classroom instruction to accommodate diverse student abilities, interests, intelligences, and learning styles. Today, the implications of inclusion go far beyond the traditional issue of placing students with special needs into the mainstream. Inclusion has become a philosophical issue of equal access to education and involves efforts to remove barriers to full participation in the educational environment for all students. In this thesis, I have chosen to deal with how to implement inclusive practices in schools and in classrooms. Throughout the five chapters, I have addressed many of the factors emerging as critical to supporting inclusionary practices, such as establishing a school wide philosophy that supports appropriate inclusionary practices; implementing extensive collaborative planning to include all those affected by what is planned; and differentiating the general education curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

Georgina Nepinak

May 10, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. H. Armstrong

Mina'igoziibiing: A History of the Anishinaabeg of Pine Creek First Nation in Manitoba

This thesis provides a unique view of a Manitoba First Nation community from an Aboriginal perspective. It is a history designed chronologically from the pre-contact era to the present time. This thesis is especially written for Anishinaabe children and youth so they will know who they are and where they came from. Developing a positive identity and pride in the Anishinaabe ways, language, and history is the starting point of healing from the impacts of 100 years of forced assimilation and finding our rightful place in Canadian society. It is also written for professionals who work with Anishinaabe children, youth, and families in education, justice, health, and child welfare to give them a better understanding and cultural awareness. Primary data included archival documents from the Pine Creek Historical Research Collection including elder and other community interviews, photographs, maps, and reports. Secondary data included past and current books and articles on the Ojibway history of Manitoba, Canada, and other First Nations across Turtle Island. This history will form the basis for more detailed research by future generations of Anishinaabeg.

Karla Turton

June 18, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. K. Rempel

A Case Study of Lessons Learned from Successful Experienced Teachers

As a socio-cultural learning approach which has its foundations in socio-cultural learning theory, mentorship is a powerful instrument in maximizing the effectiveness of beginning teachers. This case study research examined the reflections of experienced teachers with the purpose of informing the practice of teacher mentorship in the School District of Mystery Lake in Thompson, Manitoba, Canada. The guiding research question for this case study research was: How is teacher mentoring best achieved? Sub-questions include: Whose goals are to be met – the mentee, the mentor, or the system? How are they met? Is mentoring simply a hierarchical relationship based in the expert concept; or is there possibility for two-way learning and benefit? Analysis consisted of two episodes: (1) emerging themes and, (2) a priori concepts derived from the review of literature. This case study research employed a qualitative approach and used a narrative inquiry methodology and qualitative data analysis of text to inform the practice of teacher mentorship. Data collection involved individual interviews, focus group interviews, and written narratives of ten experienced teachers. Results of this case study research revealed that mentoring support

achieved through group or individual interactions with several more experienced colleagues provided the best support to beginning teachers. Findings confirmed that experienced teachers acting as mentors are a valuable source of emotional and instructional support. Through revisiting the research questions, the role and importance of beginning teacher mentoring support was discussed in light of the new information shed by the participants in this case study framing mentoring as a socio-cultural approach to learning.

Lisa Maxwell

August 13, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. C. Symons

Using a Yoga-based Program as an Intervention for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Case Study

This case-study thesis examined the efficacy of using a yoga-based program as an intervention for a student with behavioral and attention difficulties. The research had three primary foci: (i) to explore the efficacy of using a yoga-based program as an intervention for a student with behavioral problems, (ii) to determine the most effective method of teaching the activities, and (iii) to explore the efficacy of applying techniques used in assisting those who have experienced trauma to those who are exhibiting symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or other behavioral challenges.

The yoga program included a combination of physical poses/postures, breathing exercises, meditation and focused attention exercises. A qualitative approach utilizing a participant action research paradigm was used to assess the utility of the program and provide descriptive information and insight into the participants' experiences with ADHD.

The findings confirmed the efficacy of a yoga based program for a student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The research also revealed clues about the types of instructional strategies that could be most effective with this type of student. The research also provided insight into the individual's subjective experience of living with ADHD.

Susan Gilleshammer

November 19, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. J. Leseho

The Active Affiliation Group Program as a Process for Engagement and Social Change: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experience of culturally diverse student participants in the Active Affiliation Group Program using a hermeneutic phenomenological research orientation. The Active Affiliation Group Program was comprised of ten one-hour sessions in which group members shared their stories, struggles, achievements, and plans for the future. At the conclusion of the 10-week program, one-on-one interviews took place with each group member who was available to do so.

Designed and implemented for the first time as a part of this study, the Active Affiliation Group Program provided participants with structured opportunities to build connections with other group members, the facilitator, and the school environment. Two questions guided the development of this qualitative research: What were the experiences of the participants in the Active Affiliation Group Program? What were the common themes of the lived experience of participation in the Active Affiliation Group Program?

Analysis of the interview data revealed common themes regarding the experience of participation in the Active Affiliation group program. The four central themes were: (1) Positive Experience of Participation, (2) Safe and Supportive Environment, (3) Opportunity to Explore Future Goals, and (4) Valued Connection to Adult Facilitator.

David Nutbean

December 2, 2013

Thesis Adviser: Dr. G. Cockerline

The Effectiveness of Technology Integration into the Classroom in Rural Manitoba High Schools

One of the biggest challenges facing education in the 21st century is effectively integrating technology into pedagogy. This quantitative study (n = 55) examined various factors that influence the use of technology in rural western, southern, and central Manitoba high school classrooms. Teachers were surveyed about their personal, professional, and pedagogical use of information and communications technologies (ICT) as well as their pedagogical orientation toward student-centered approaches to instruction. The study considered the availability and the frequency of use of technology in the schools and demographic factors that impact teacher ICT use. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out.

Findings suggest a number of strong correlations between teachers' personal, professional, and pedagogical use of technology. Among the findings were that the availability of technology in certain contexts is high and that internet access in rural schools is ubiquitous. The study also found that a number of technology uses were high for teachers' personal and/or professional use, but not for pedagogical use in class. Results from the analysis on teachers' pedagogical orientation showed possible incongruities for technology integration efforts. Recommendations to improve technology integration efforts through pedagogical change are addressed.

