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INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the fifteenth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 8, issue 1, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. The new “Spotlight on Undergraduate Scholarship” section features an article by one of our B.Ed. students. I thank all of these scholars for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles about current topics of concern for Manitoba administrators, teachers, counsellors, and special educators.

- Linda Dustan Selinger’s research report describes the findings that emerged from her Ph.D. study of the influence of non-Aboriginal social work educators on the retention of Aboriginal students in post-secondary social work programs.
- Marnie Wilson’s refereed article examines the problem of turning educational data into effective action within the school system.
- Kirsten Thompson’s refereed article explores the reasons for investing in the digital literacy and education of students.
- Eric Lowe’s refereed article considers the capacity of art to engage exceptional learners, regardless of the nature of their exceptionalities.
- Patricia Goodine’s refereed article recommends strategies to combat the rise of cyberbullying and its impact on adolescents.
- Jennifer Kreitz’s refereed article examines the role of the teacher in the complicated process of teaching children to read.
- Meagan West’s refereed article describes interventions that focus on improving social skills and communication in children with autism spectrum disorders.
- Lisa Clark’s refereed article highlights the importance of teaching literacy skill development within the context of collaboration, inquiry, choice, and authenticity.
- Shelley Tucker’s refereed article applies resilience theory and related research-based interventions to the issue of mental health promotion in schools.
- Kelly Otto’s refereed article advocates restorative discipline to build community, promote healthy decision making, and heal all involved parties.
- Barbara McNish’s opinion paper questions the balance between building trust through confidentiality and reporting safety concerns when counselling clients.

Also included in this issue is our “Celebration of Graduate Scholarship,” to honour M.Ed. students who completed their degrees with theses in 2015.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Teacher Self-Location, Experience, and Perceptions of Influence on the Retention of Aboriginal Social Work Students Enrolled in Social Work Education

Linda Dustan Selinger

Ph.D. Abstract

The voices of 11 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal adult social work educators who volunteered to participate in this qualitative research study represent a diverse range of practice and teaching experiences. Participants with experience teaching social work courses that included the enrolment of Aboriginal students were interviewed to gain knowledge about their self-location, lived experiences, insight, and perceptions of the ways in which they have and continue to support and influence the retention of Aboriginal post-secondary students who enrol in social work education. When educators retire, the extent of their experiences is rarely shared. Educators spend the most face time with students, and the study reveals the many ways in which they provide support that extends beyond their regular teaching responsibilities.

The views brought forward by the participants, based on their lived experiences, will contribute to and inform social work knowledge and practice in the further preparation of students for the challenges inherent in the social work profession. This study used phenomenology as a philosophical approach. The interview process was guided by a phenomenological investigation to identify and explore themes that emerged from the data. The participants in this study were recruited from universities with a First Nations social work specialization in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. The data obtained revealed many facets to the social work educator-student relationship. The major findings of the study revealed the ways that social work educators, with experience teaching Aboriginal social work students from northern and remote communities, are involved in providing personal and academic support. Examples of this support include the daily maintenance of an open door policy, reaching out and providing offers of help to students, and assuming roles as advocates, resource brokers, mentors, advisors, and counsellors.

About the Author

Linda Dustan Selinger took Brandon University's Educational Research Methods course as a nil degree graduate student in 2009, in preparation for Ph.D. studies at the University of Manitoba. She successfully defended her Ph.D. in Social Work in 2016, after retiring from a successful career as a social worker with 26 years of experience including 19 years working solely within First Nations communities and 12 years as a related studies instructor teaching Aboriginal post-secondary students in the School of Health and Human Services at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Becoming Data and Information Rich in Education

Marnie Wilson

Abstract

Despite wanting to make data-informed decisions, the educational system is experiencing the common problem of being data rich yet information poor. Educators have data, often a plethora of data; however, the system struggles to turn that data into effective action. Rising out of information poverty requires three shifts. First, the educational system requires an investment in human capacity building around data literacy. Second, greater attention to small-scale classroom-based assessment data has greater promise for improving student outcomes. Finally, a mind shift is needed so that educators embrace the value of data analysis not for accountability, but rather for instructional improvement.

In their quest for data-informed decision making, educators have made the wrong data investments and gathered the wrong data, all for the wrong purpose. While these missteps have resulted in the ubiquitous problem of being data rich yet information poor, they perhaps more importantly have mired the educational system's basic mandate of human capacity building. Investments in data-gathering and warehousing tools are meaningless without the human capacity to understand and use the resulting information. A focus on standardized test data can result in missed opportunities to build capacity around quality, authentic classroom assessment practice. Finally, using data for accountability checks impairs the ability to use data formatively to improve instructional practice. To this end, important mind shifts are needed. Only then will data-rich decisions be made by data-literate educators who use quality classroom-based assessments for the formative purpose of improving instruction.

Data Rich and Information Poor

The educational system is, as the adage goes, data rich but information poor (Slotnik & Orland, 2010). It is easy to be data rich in today's technologically advanced society, especially if data is viewed as "a synonym for information" (van Barneveld, 2008, para. 2). With data so readily available, "school leaders are often drowning in data" (Datnow & Park, 2015, "Principles, Not Just Practices," para. 4; Gerzon, 2015, p. 3). As it turns out, however, gathering data is the easy part. The system remains information poor when it fails to turn that data into effective action toward measurable gains. This failure to use data for effective instructional adjustments, programming decisions, and general educational improvements is evident in today's schools and school divisions (Datnow & Park, 2015; Gerzon, 2015; Piro & Hutchinson, 2014). It is therefore not surprising that little evidence exists regarding the effect of data use on student outcomes (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013). Being simultaneously data and information rich in education requires capacity to interpret data, to produce quality classroom assessment data, and to use data formatively to improve practice.

The Wrong Investment

A person can buy all of the tools available, but will accomplish little without the knowledge and skills necessary to use those tools properly. Over the last decade, ministries of education and school divisions have made a large "data-systems investment" (Slotnik & Orland, 2010, para. 3) by purchasing data gathering and warehousing tools. They have focussed on building

the “technological infrastructure” (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013, p. 34) necessary for gathering, holding, and summarizing the data. The educational system has not paid similar attention, however, to building the human capacity to use those tools (Mandinach, 2012; Mandinach & Gummer, 2013; Slotnik & Orland, 2010). Even when professional learning sessions have been offered, “supports were often focused on the use of the systems themselves rather than the use of the data housed in the systems” (Jimerson & Wayman, 2015, p. 20). It has been my experience that the singular focus on data tools creates a false sense of having solved the data problem. Simply stated, while the data tools are a necessary investment, it is short sighted to stop there.

If the lack of parallel investment in human data capacity building was due to a belief in educators’ data literacy skills, this belief was unwarranted. Evidence suggests that teachers and educational leaders do not have the skills necessary to turn data into action (see Dunn, Airola, & Garrison, 2013; Dunn, Airola, Lo, & Garrison, 2013; Gerzon, 2015; Piro & Hutchinson, 2014; Reeves & Honig, 2015; Slotnik & Orland, 2010). Basic data literacy involves understanding data types and their limitations, being appropriately critical of data in terms of validity and reliability, and having the ability to interpret and create graphs and tables (Lipton & Wellman, 2012, pp. 53-69). True data use, however, involves the “capacity to use data to improve teaching and increase learning” (Slotnik & Orland, 2010, para. 3; see also Gummer & Mandinach, 2015; Reeves & Honig, 2015). This broader notion of data literacy involves a cyclical data inquiry process (Bocala & Boudett, 2015; Gummer & Mandinach, 2015; Lipton & Wellman, 2012). Whichever way data literacy is conceptualized, it is “in short supply in today’s educational landscape” (Slotnik & Orland, 2010, para. 9). Stated differently, many educators now have the data tools at their fingertips without the knowledge or skills to use them.

Investment is now needed in human capacity building in the form of professional development around data use. Preservice training is currently insufficient around the development of data literacy (Mandinach, 2012), so in-service teachers require formal guidance to acquire the skills necessary to “draw meaning from data” (van Barneveld, 2008, “Lesson 3,” para. 1). This kind of data literacy takes time to develop (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013). Researchers agree that in-service training must be comprehensive, job-embedded and continually supported over time (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010; Dunn, Airola, Lo, & Garrison, 2013; Gerzon, 2015; Mandinach, Parton, Gummer, & Anderson, 2015; Reeves & Honig, 2015). Graduate education programs will also need to ensure that school leaders “have the requisite knowledge and skills to work with data” (van Barneveld, 2008, “Recommendation 2,” para. 1). For educational systems to see a return on their data tool investments, parallel investments must be made into improving educators’ capacity building to use those tools effectively.

The Wrong Data

In addition to focussing on the wrong investment, the educational system has failed to reach its data-informed decision-making potential partly because it has been focussing on the wrong data. Large-scale assessments, such as standardized tests, have predominated educational data conversations, especially in the United States (Bocala & Boudett, 2015). While standardized test data ostensibly benefit from high reliability, the value of these data for making classroom-level, and even division-level, decisions is questionable. Teachers themselves see little usefulness in the data they are normally required to analyse (Mandinach et al., 2015). At least in some studies, “teachers reported that large-scale assessment data were neither current enough nor aligned adequately with daily instruction to be particularly useful to inform classroom practice” (van Barneveld, 2008, “Lesson 2,” para. 3). It seems that large-scale data fall short because “the bigger the data, the less direct their effect typically is on instructional change” (Venables, 2014, p. 17). Consequently, the right data must be closer to the classroom.

In-depth examination of classroom assessment data has a greater chance of informing decisions and thus improving student outcomes. Large-scale benchmark assessment data have been minimized and overshadowed by the use of ongoing formative assessment data in high-performing schools (Datnow & Park, 2015). This more effective use of formative data is evidence that “the microdata are often more useful than the macrodata in improving teaching and learning” (Venables, 2014, p. 17). At the very least, classroom observation and formative assessment data can be used to triangulate the larger-scale data (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006). That being said, educators are cautioned about “a risk of excessive testing” and are advised that they may want to “consider promoting the use of assessments for learning as an alternative to district progress tests” (Marsh et al., 2006, p. 11). Indeed, I have heard many teachers say that classroom-based assessment data provide more timely and useful information than divisional or provincial assessments.

Honouring the data that are a natural outgrowth of the teaching and learning cycle addresses data validity, but may cause concerns about reliability. However, if focus on these data increases, so should professional conversations and training around assessment practices increase. It is my opinion that professional dialogue about assessment data pulled directly from teachers’ own assessments will naturally highlight assessment creation, questioning techniques, and rubric development. Making decisions based almost exclusively on standardized testing results sends the message that only external experts can reliably gauge student achievement. By relying on these macrodata, educators have been missing opportunities to build human capacity around assessment literacy.

The Wrong Purpose

Whether overtly stated or implied, much data gathering and analysis are undertaken in response to accountability policies. Increasing pressure exists from both government policies and public opinion for the educational system to use concrete evidence to prove its degree of effectiveness (Mandinach, 2012). Especially in the United States, accountability policies have created pressures to examine and use student achievement data (Marsh et al., 2006). Teacher effectiveness is especially emphasized by this process: “by 2011, almost half of the states had passed state legislation aimed at including student achievement in teacher evaluations” (Piro & Hutchinson, 2014, p. 96). This focus on accountability, with the purpose of gauging teacher effectiveness, results in the summative use of educational data (James-Ward, Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2013). While this use of results indicates attainment of some standard, it fails to provide the necessary support to build capacity because “an abyss has been created between data for compliance and data to inform teaching and learning” (Mandinach, 2012, p. 72).

Rather than the summative use of data, using student data formatively for instructional improvement and school improvement planning has the potential to build teacher competency, focus school-wide programming, and ultimately increase student achievement. For years, assessment and evaluation experts have stressed that assessments should be used not just for gauging how much a student has learned, but also to help them learn (William, 2011), a practice sometimes referred to as assessment for learning (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). Similarly, data inquiry needs to be a practice of assessment for teaching, in that teachers should use assessment data to “reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their instructional practices” (Datnow & Park, 2015, “Principle 3,” para.7; see also Mandinach, 2012). Although experimental designs testing the impact of data inquiry on student achievement are scarce, studies are emerging that document positive student outcomes when systematic data inquiry is employed (Data Quality Campaign, 2012; Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2009). In addition to classroom uses of formative data, these data can “be used to inform what should occur next in the school improvement cycle” (James-Ward et al., 2013, p. 24), thus resulting in assessment for leading. Using assessment data for learning, teaching, and leading inspires multi-level reflective practice with the goal of continuous and iterative system improvement.

Far from simple adjustments to data inquiry practices, the shift toward assessment for teaching and learning requires important mind shifts in education. Lipton and Wellman (2012) suggested that any effective data inquiry process requires various value shifts. Meaningful and iterative instructional improvement can only occur when certain habits of mind are explicitly emphasized and taught. Among these is the commitment to continuous reflective practice that “allows educators to *improve how they improve*” (Bocala & Boudett, 2015, p. 9). The formative use of assessment data to evaluate one’s own practice is driven by a teacher’s belief that he/she should strive continuously to “know thy impact” (Hattie, 2012, p. 6). These values are integral to building what some call a “culture of data use” (Gerzon, 2015, pp. 2-6). With such a culture in place, educators are empowered and internally motivated to use assessment data on a daily basis, thus realizing the full potential of data as information.

Conclusion

Data-informed decision making involves much more than collecting data. The ability to turn that data into effective action requires data literacy skills. It also requires a validation of teachers’ own classroom-based assessment data. Finally, it requires a mind shift of purpose from data gathering for accountability toward data gathering for improvement. These requirements involve increasing knowledge, gaining skills, and changing values. Such a holistic overhaul of current data practices in education certainly will not be easy or quick. It involves changes to both preservice programs and in-service training. Even though this change is daunting, the rewards may be immeasurable. Making the right data investments, gathering the right data, and engaging in data inquiry for the right purpose will benefit student achievement directly because educators will make smarter decisions. There will also be an indirect positive effect on student achievement through building capacity of the adults in the educational system.

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About the Author

Marnie Wilson is the Research, Assessment and Evaluation Specialist with Brandon School Division. Marnie obtained her first graduate degree in applied social psychology from the University of Guelph. She is currently enrolled in the Master of Education program at Brandon University, specializing in the area of educational administration.

Digital Literacy and the ICT Curriculum

Kirsten Thompson

Abstract

The paper explores the reasons for investing in the digital literacy and education of students. It argues that an ICT curricula that is implemented with purpose and support produces direct benefits for the students, such as enriched learning opportunities, ease of life, and practical post-secondary preparation. The paper also summarizes the initiatives implemented by the provincial and territorial governments of Canada that define the role of ICT for today's youth and showcase the necessity of purposeful education and skill development for all students.

As members of the future workforce and society, today's students require guidance and education, in order to successfully navigate and utilize the digital world that they were born into. Acknowledging the importance of becoming digitally literate, the provincial and territorial governments of Canada have been developing various forms of information and communication technology (ICT) curricula, which will assist students in their skill development. School-age children have a unique set of experiences awarded to them due to the digital age in which they were born. However, their birth date alone is not sufficient to equip them for navigating the digital world without support. Successfully utilizing technological tools and communicating within the digital world requires that students incorporate a skill set that differs from other aspects of their life. An ICT curricula that is implemented with purpose and support produces direct benefits for the students, such as enriched learning opportunities, ease of life, and practical post-secondary preparation. For these various reasons, investing in the digital literacy and education of all students is important, in order to help students navigate the digital world that continues to evolve before their eyes.

For some people, the technology knowledge of classroom teachers may seem lacklustre in comparison to the knowledge of the students in their classroom; however, classroom teachers actually rely on technology, for purposes in and out of the classroom, more than their students (Wang, Hsu, Campbell, Coster, & Longhurst, 2014). The relationship that many students have with technology is one centred on entertainment and communication (Wang et al., 2014). To illustrate, a recent survey of Canadian students found that online gaming, participating in aspects of social networking, and streaming media such as music, television programs, or movies, ranked in the top technology uses for students in grades four to ten (Steeves, 2014). Thus, today's students are primarily relying on only two digital realms: (1) rapid communication technology like mobile phones and social networking, and (2) web resources like games, videos and music (Teo, 2013). While students' experiences in the digital world appear to be narrow in focus, they embrace new web 2.0 skills and learn introduced programs rapidly (Wang et al., 2014). Furthermore, students have identified that they wish they had learned more digital skills in the classroom, with identifying how to critique the validity of online information, how to stay safe while online, and the legality of certain online practices topping students' knowledge wish lists (Steeves, 2014). While it can be easy to assume that students have an increased knowledgebase when it comes to digital literacy, having teachers provide purposeful education and ongoing modelling that is tailored to be relevant and meaningful for their students gives students support to build their digital skill repertoire.

Addressing specific concerns regarding ICT implementation has been the subject of discussion by education and government professionals the world over. In 1997, it was identified that traditional forms of literacy were not sufficient and that students required new skills such as searching for information through non-linear routes (Simsek & Simsek, 2013). Since that time, the required skill set of students has expanded to include the collection, organization, storage, and publication of information through a computer device in graphic, text, or number format

(Haddadian, Majidi, Maleki, & Alipour, 2013). It has been assumed that a focus on ICT would result in teachers becoming unfocused with their planning, because they would rely on computers to do the work they previously did, but research has concluded that the implementation of ICT lessons still requires teachers to use their knowledge of instructional strategies and the developing brain (Boschman, McKenney, & Voogt, 2014). Furthermore, the addition of ICT elements to a pre-existing curriculum has been proven to extend learning opportunities and accelerate the learning rate of students (Haddadian et al., 2013). However, with technology being a fast-changing world, educators need to resist the urge to jump at new ideas without thinking of how its implementation can be maximized, what problems may arise, and how sustainable the tool will be for students down the road (Latchem, 2013). These concerns need to be addressed by policy-makers and educators before and during the implementation of an ICT curriculum.

Defining the important and essential role of ICT education within the vast curricular network of public education has been the focus of recent initiatives undertaken by provincial and territorial governments within Canada. As of 2015, 11 of Canada's 13 provinces and territories have established ICT curricular policies that range from infusion and dispersal amongst pre-existing curriculums to structured cross-curricular models and specifically assessed benchmarks (Hoechsmann & DeWaard, 2015, pp. 15-17). Regardless of the format in which an ICT curriculum is organized, it is essential that Canadian students increase their digital literacy skills in order to participate effectively in the new "knowledge-age work force" (Information and Communications Technology Council, 2012, p. 1). In addition to the expanded skill set mentioned previously, students' digital understanding needs to reach beyond basic fluency tasks and include higher-level thinking skills such as digital composition and information analysis (Media Awareness Network, 2010). In a 2015 survey, it was identified that Canadian teachers need to educate students on the importance of utilizing digital literacy skills such as authenticating online information at all times and not just in the context of the classroom (Steeves, 2014). Furthermore, educators should focus on the transferability of a student's digital literacy skills, in order to ensure effective use on a wide range of technology tools (Steeves, 2014). Although these Canadian policies serve as a good starting point, much responsibility falls on the classroom teacher and individual school teams to ensure that appropriate implementation is occurring at the classroom level.

In Manitoba, the implementation of ICT content, including digital literacy, is outlined in the provincial document *A Continuum Model for Literacy With ICT Across the Curriculum*, which features a "holistic and pedagogy-focused approach" to ICT integration (Hoechsmann & DeWaard, 2015, p. 15). This document can assist school teams and individual teachers in their planning of grade/age-appropriate ICT tasks, how to include both literacy and citizenship aspects, and how to assess where students are developmentally. It not only identifies that students require a different set of literacies to thrive in the digital world, but also that students need to prepare to adapt to the ideas, attitudes and technologies that are ever changing in the digital world (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). In Manitoba, the incorporation of ICT elements has helped students to learn at their own pace, assisted students who do not have access to at-home supports, opened up more one-on-one time with teaching staff, and provided an opportunity for parents to stay more involved in their child's learning (Stephenson, 2013). It is important to note that Manitoba does not have a separate curriculum dedicated to ICT, but sees these skills as harmonious elements that need to be infused alongside pre-existing concepts (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). As such, the ICT curriculum is supported by seven guiding principles: (1) inquiry-based learning, (2) constructivist approach to implementation, (3) high-level critical thinking, (4) deep understanding of concepts, (5) gradual release of responsibility, (6) digital citizenship, and (7) multiple literacies (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). By outlining ICT implementation as a continuum, Manitoba easily assists teachers in identifying students' understanding and begin incorporation in a manner that suits their teaching style and comfort levels.

Integration of an ICT program is not only the responsibility of policy-makers and classroom teachers, but also the responsibility of the administrative team at a school and division level. Teachers have identified that new technology programs and activities would be easier to implement if they could work as part of a team to support one another and exchange ideas (Stephenson, 2013). However, it has been found that although most school leaders have positive opinions about technology, they fall into two very different categories in regards to their approach: (1) distributed principals who work closely with their teachers and ICT teams to ensure effective implementation, and (2) formal principals who offer positive encouragement toward ICT ideas but do not personally participate in planning or training (Peterson, 2014). Of the two types of leaders, the schools that commit to ICT development as a team initiative and focus on collaboration and communication are more successful in their implementation than those schools who force a top-down approach with minimal support (Peterson, 2014). In order to support their teachers effectively, school leaders need to keep up to date with new technology programs and tools, and model appropriate use for their staff (Waxman, Boriack, Lee, & MacNeil, 2013). Furthermore, an effective ICT implementation should be one that includes long-term planning with school leaders and addresses budgeting, hiring of necessary specialists, teacher training, and long-term maintenance plans (Peck, Mullen, Lashley, & Eldridge, 2011). Thus, in addition to provincial ICT policies, an effective administrative team that is committed to the purposeful implementation of an ICT program also contributes to successful implementation, which benefits both staff and students.

In conclusion, it is necessary that today's students receive guidance and education in order for them to navigate successfully and use the digital world that they were born into. In their initiatives to define the role of ICT for today's youth, the provincial and territorial governments of Canada have also highlighted the necessity of purposeful education and skill development for all students. Being born into the digital age is not sufficient in equipping students for the higher-level skills required for being successful in the digital world. The different ICT applications and level of transferability that is required of students require modelling and skills training in a variety of contexts. An ICT curricula that is implemented with purpose and support produces direct benefits for the students, such as enriched learning opportunities, ease of life, and practical post-secondary preparation. Therefore, in order to ensure that ICT programs are implemented successfully, and that students are prepared, it is necessary to provide education and support from all stakeholders.

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About the Author

Kirsten Thompson is a rural educator in Turtle River School Division, where she teaches grades 8-11 science, social studies, math, and art. She is currently working toward her M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction, where she aspires to focus on the purposeful implementation of technology to expand curricular expectations in the classroom.

Engaging Exceptional Students Through Art Activities

Eric Lowe

Abstract

Art has the capacity to engage exceptional learners, regardless of the nature of their exceptionalities. Students who experience difficulty with academic subjects may enjoy visual art activities with which they engage holistically to learn problem-solving skills and interact positively with their environment, including the social environment of the classroom. When art educators are included in the teams that develop students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs), they can support the teams' efforts to meet the students' learning needs by finding hands-on ways to develop skills that apply to other classroom contexts. Whether gifted or challenged by physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, or behavioural disabilities, exceptional students can find personal success in art.

New demands are increasingly placed on educators of exceptional students. Educators need to provide more challenging daily lessons, which engage students in creative and critical enquiry to assist everyday problem solving. Visual art is a part of our society and our history – it belongs in every student's learning process (Harris, 2012). When students learn through visual arts, such as drawing, painting, printing, collage or sculpting with clay, they experience real problem solving and critical reflection and observation. They can express themselves freely, with a medium that caters to their strengths. The art room is also an interactive social environment. Students with learning disabilities, whether they are physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, or behavioural, will benefit from art activities and this unique social experience. When participating in art activities, the student is the creator, constantly making new decisions through trial and error; this is why art is engaging. An art-integrated curriculum offers a unique hands-on learning experience. Developmental disabilities were very common in my art classes. Some students had vision impairment and learning disabilities, and intellectual disabilities were most common.

Art rooms are mini social environments where students have the opportunity to move around and socialize with others. Social behaviours of students with developmental disabilities are usually monitored by educational assistants. Problem solving by using various mediums and art techniques can be very satisfying for students. The challenges for students with developmental disabilities are minimized in an art room environment. Building on student strengths in an inclusive art classroom gives students a chance to participate and achieve success. Students learn how to create. "The visual arts are a powerful teaching tool that can enhance the cognitive, emotional and social development of children . . . create a more holistic approach . . . the therapeutic process of creating art can improve self-esteem, promote self-expression, and encourage independence and social skills . . . art to accommodate the individual needs of students makes it a powerful tool in aiding special education programs. (McCarthy, n.d., pp. 21-22). A student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) that includes art would serve and support students with developmental disabilities. Alternative curriculum development such as life skills should include personal hobbies and skills where a student finds personal satisfaction. These students often find success in their strengths, and this can carry them through life's challenges. Educators of exceptional students have the opportunity to personalize their art-integrated lessons across the general curriculum.

Knowing and building on the strengths and unique qualities of the students is essential for every student's success. Creating a challenging IEP for each student that includes the arts will help prepare individuals for independent living and a possible career (Thurlow, 2012). Because

struggling learners with disabilities require special supports (see Beech, 2010; Loesl, 2012), “input from the arts teacher is essential” in order for the IEP to identify “specialized materials or environmental designs and/or assistive technologies” that are needed in the art room (Malley, 2013, p. 10). Only then can the arts can provide individually meaningful and rewarding experiences that can engage exceptional learners. When the educator can set the expectations for the students higher and the students also feel that they can obtain the goals set for them, this is a solution for success. Success builds confidence: the more confidence a student with disabilities has, the easier it will be for the student to communicate through his/her successes. The arts offer the students a visual and interpretive language to communicate their ideas and express their feelings, which is especially important for the 40% of students with specific learning disabilities who have problems “processing involving use of spoken or written language” (Malley, 2013, p. 4). Artistic expression enables these students to extend their comfort zone, building new areas of knowledge and learning. The arts teach new perceptual skills that heighten students’ awareness of the world around them, which makes it the easier for them to cope with everyday life.

Exceptional learners require student-appropriate art activities. These art activities can provide the support required by individual students. The lessons engage the students, heightening their observation skills and improving their motor skills. Art is a visual language that can give students an increased awareness, respect, and understanding for their environment. This sensitivity is a vital component for a sense of personal wellbeing and students will become excited when physically and mentally involved in a deep-rooted educational experience. Developing art-integrated lessons across the general curriculum should address many of the needs and goals that students and society have today. Teachers of exceptional students need new ideas and age-appropriate lesson plans that will motivate students while meeting a wide range of exceptionalities. “The arts help create the kind of learning environment conducive to teaching and student success by fostering teacher innovation, a positive professional culture, community engagement, increased student attendance, effective instructional practice and school identity” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 15). In my art room, I have seen the joy of learning on the faces of students with learning disabilities and their educational assistants as the students become engaged in their own educational process.

Art-integration can accommodate diverse learning styles and learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities often become disengaged with their learning process. This personal frustration leads to low personal self-esteem, causing anxiety. Art-integration can help students to rebuild their self-esteem through its therapeutic qualities. A holistic approach to student learning focuses “on the whole child, including their psychological and physiological wellbeing” (McCarthy, n.d., p. 7). “The use of art within the curriculum will promote a more constructive approach to learning in which the child has a more active role in their education” (McCarthy, n.d., p. 8). Engaging students in a meaningful way encourages them to do their best and enjoy the learning process and regular classroom activities. Diversifying the students’ instruction and adapting techniques that build on the students’ strengths will help them to make connections as they gain an understanding of the curriculum content.

Art-integration also provides visual illustrations that can support learning concepts for students with learning disabilities. Visual images can help students who have problems with reading and writing to comprehend information required for understanding. “While art can be frustrating and stressful for children, this can be minimized by selecting art projects that are suitable to the developmental stage and special needs of the child, while simultaneously being challenging enough to take ownership” (McCarthy, n.d., p. 20). Appropriate assessment is required for students with learning disabilities. This will help educators to organize and target the students’ Individual Education Plans. Art-integrated assignments have the advantage of motivating students with different learning styles and disabilities who “need access to art making experiences as much as or more than their peers” (Loesl, 2012, p. 48). For students whose disabilities are physical, art classes provide “more and longer opportunities to move their hands

and bodies and to increase their strength and independence,” and art can become “a refuge” for students whose disabilities are social and emotional (Loesl, 2012, p. 48). In addition, “students with cognitive challenges learn to concretely work through their understanding of abstract concepts” in the art room (Loesl, 2012, p. 48). Art-integration helps students to develop the physical and mental skills required for lifelong learning.

Monitoring a student’s personal achievement is very important. The student’s IEP must consider the student’s capabilities mentally and physically, and art assignments should be monitored and assessed following the student’s skill levels. Strategies for assessment should be available and an ongoing process of monitoring a student’s achievement is very important. Student goals need to be obtainable and realistic. Intervention needs to take place if a student appears to be frustrated or overwhelmed by completing art projects. Simpler or more basic assignments will need to be created in order to target the student’s skill levels. Considering a student’s support needs is also very important, because educational assistants may make a difference in the student’s success or failure. Collaboration with all members of the education team is always important when monitoring and assessing the success of an IEP. Celebrating a student’s achievements is only possible if the student personally feels success and a goal has been successfully achieved.

Gifted students are exceptional learners who often demonstrate creativity in the arts. Gifted students need to be challenged. Creative problems will give them the opportunity to make new decisions and experiment with different perspectives. When gifted students have the opportunity to invent and to resolve problems that will satisfy their curiosity, their rate of learning can be self-directed in order to broaden their scope of interests and expand their learning horizons. The special interests of gifted students can be easily adapted into art projects. Self-directed art projects are also self-motivating. The subject matter chosen by the student and the media can constantly change, making new decisions through trial and error. Gifted students who are underachievers will be rewarded with personal satisfaction by seeing their completed art projects. This meaningful hands-on experience will engage the students and personally challenge them. Whether the student interests lie in visual art, music, or performing arts such as dance and drama, areas of the curriculum can be adapted so that the students may pursue personal areas of interest. All of these areas provide gifted students a chance to excel at their own rate, by means of self-directed and open-ended activities. The arts offer gifted students with the limitless opportunities to advance to the level of their choice.

Educators can adapt the curriculum for exceptional students in the art room. Students with learning disabilities often struggle in a regular classroom. Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Asperger’s Syndrome tend to be creative, imaginative, and enthusiastic, often thinking outside the box. As an art teacher, I have found these students creative and enthusiastic to learn. They are outgoing risk-takers willing to experiment with artistic techniques and subject matter. In the art room, step-by-step instructions and the self-motivating atmosphere will provide the assistance that students with ADHD require. Students with Asperger’s Syndrome especially enjoy the social atmosphere of the art room; they tend to be unique visual thinkers who like to share their artistic gifts with others. A teacher can always build on the strengths of students and the rewards can be dynamic. Teachers need to think outside the box as well, like a student with ADHD or Asperger’s does.

Students who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have difficulty with social interaction, communication, and motor skills. The art room can give these students an opportunity to communicate and express themselves visually with hands-on skills to increase their motor functions. Students can be empowered through success with art activities and through social interaction with other students, which eases the stress built up in students. Students who have autism may be able to express and improve communication through their art activities with others. The following benefits are listed by Evans (n.d.) for autistic students involved in art activities: “increases self-awareness, develops social skills, changes behaviors, develops problem solving strategies, allows an individual to engage in creative thinking in a safe

environment, and allows an individual to focus solely on the activity at hand and shut out other thoughts that may be intrusive” (Evans, para. 5). ASD students working in the art room are brought into a co-operative environment. Here they can share creative experiences and gain self-respect while they improve their motor skills and social skills.

When students are engaged in the art-making experience, they are free to explore and manipulate several types of media. Working with clay could be a door-opening experience for an autistic student who is tactile defensive. A visually impaired learner can discover clay as the perfect medium to etch visual designs and fulfill a dream of making an artistic object appreciated for its textural qualities. The plastic nature of clay means that it can be manipulated and changed several times, or recycled and worked on again another day. Art provides the opportunity for students to make something of their own. Regardless of whether final project is successful or not, the process and the final product are theirs. I still treasure the little gifts that my children made in class and brought home from school for me, from their early years’ classes. The pieces are not great works of art, but my children made them for me, which makes them special.

When I was the coordinator of an ArtsSmarts project a few years ago, one of my artists told me of her day in class. The subject teachers of the school that she was visiting warned her of two students diagnosed with HDHD. These students would be disruptive, and they could stay on task for only two hours, so the teachers would take them out of the room when they started to be a problem. Well, the day went on and all students remained on task, following the artist’s instructions and completing the projects. These two students in particular were very excited to take their projects home to show their parents what they had accomplished. Either these students with behavioural issues worked through their personal issues in class, or they were just too busy and engaged working for the issues to become a problem. “There is something inherent about the creative process within each of us that can help us become creative and productive members of society” (Loesl, 2012, p. 60). Eisner (2004) described how the skills that a student develops in art are transferable into other classes, such as critical thinking and multiple perspectives for problem solving. These new skills will find students being more willing to become involved in other subject areas. The students who have gained personal confidence are now willing to take greater risks and express themselves in different ways.

I have seen art become a stepping stone to success for a number of students. “The arts may be a great equalizer in education because, regardless of language and ability, music, visual art, and drama are accessible to all, are largely nonverbal, and focus on creativity and self-expression” (Hutchinson, 2014, p. 272). There was an exceptional art student in my Senior I art course. He loved to draw, so much so that he was always drawing in every class, not only art. I adapted an art program for him – all art, all day, every day. The Senior III and IV students loved his work and he began working with them, more as an “artist in school” type of relationship. He began researching artists in different periods, thus studying art history. He was very interested in Escher and his illusions, thus studying mathematics and geometry. He wrote explanations about his own art, which meant that he was using language arts. I found a number of elective courses that I could offer him. He completed that school year, and then completed his high school compulsory courses and graduated two years later. He went on to university and graduated.

Educators can be proud of their success stories, but the reality is that many more students are in need of help. Art-integration techniques work, but art-specialists are few and far between. Educators need to reach out to administrators for help. “Despite convincing research and strong public support, the arts remain on the margins of education, often the last to be added and the first to be dropped in times of straining budgets and shifting priorities” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 18). From my experience working with exceptional students as an educator, art can be the medium to engage students in successful educational endeavours that they and their parents can be proud of. The evidence in the literature, and information from art educators such as me, and other teachers, compels educators to consider art as an essential part of the IEP process. For

many students with exceptionalities, art can be the key to unlocking their potential for academic enjoyment and success. Engaging exceptional students in the arts can enable these students to overcome their disabilities and attain the goals set out in the IEP. Academically challenged students can acquire the targets the team has set for them but probably more important targets are the ones the students themselves have achieved.

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About the Author

Eric Lowe came to Brandon University in 2007 as a sessional lecturer after 18 years of teaching in the public school system, which included coordinating ArtsSmarts and hosting PD sessions for educators. He has two M.Ed. degrees from BU and is currently completing a third M.Ed. in special education.

Exploring and Mitigating the Impact of Cyberbullying on Adolescents' Mental Health

Patricia Goodine

Abstract

There are many unique characteristics of cyberbullying that are impacting adolescents in many negative ways. The anonymity, 24/7 invasion of privacy, and the vast audience that the perpetrator takes advantage of have taken bullying to a new level. With greater access to advanced technology and youths' obsession with it, cyberbullying is on the rise, and its effects on youth are being seen at school and at home in devastating ways. Fortunately, there are many strategies that all those concerned can take to combat the rise of cyberbullying and its impact on adolescents.

Over the past decade, the world has witnessed advances in technology that have brought wonderful opportunities. However, with these opportunities come risks that can be devastating. Recently, Canadians have been shocked by the tragic, high-profile stories of Amanda Todd and Rehteah Parsons, who ultimately committed suicide as a result of cyber attacks (MacDonald, 2014). Although suicide is not the final outcome for all victims, cyberbullying brings a whole new set of characteristics that are powerful and widespread, and the predictions are that with improved technology and greater access (Holladay, 2012), the impact of cyberbullying on adolescents will only become worse (Baek & Bullock, 2014). The trend of cyberbullying is on the rise; therefore, it is crucial that youth, parents, schools, and the community at large are equipped with strategies to deal with this crisis before more innocent youths fall victim to cyberbullying.

The Characteristics of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is distinctly different from traditional bullying in several ways. First, the internet allows anonymity, which could serve to embolden the cyberbully. Second, the unlimited access that perpetrators have to the internet enables a 24/7 invasion of the victim's privacy (Gordon, 2014; Swearer, 2012). Finally, cyberbullying has a potentially infinite audience, which could give it an immeasurable reach (Uhls, 2014). These characteristics are not only distinct from traditional bullying, but they also make cyberbullying a formidable force that can be better understood by the examination of its key features.

Anonymity of the Perpetrator

The anonymity of cyberbullying allows the perpetrators to disconnect and de-individualize, thereby voiding any empathy and criticism that could make them question their conscience. As a result, cyber attacks can be very vicious (Alexander, 2012). For example, anonymous cyberbullies often post harsh insults (Hoffman, 2012), disclose personal information, post inappropriate images and video clips (Papatraianon, Levine, & West, 2014), and stalk, lure (Hinduji, & Patchin, 2010) and harass their victims (Gillespie, 2006). The possibility of anonymity may also encourage people who would not normally engage in bullying to do so online because they become invisible (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2013), "allowing their actions to be separated from the consequences" (Uhls, 2014, p. 30). Indeed, new apps such as Burn Book and Yik Yak are being created for the sole purpose of anonymous cyberbullying (Elliott, 2015). Cassidy and her colleagues (2013) stated that because the internet is such a global resource, authorities can not supervise its usage, which enables perpetrators to go undetected and to pursue their victims for an extended period of time, making the attacks more harmful. All of

these characteristics combined not only make cyberbullying a very powerful force, but they also let the perpetrator take advantage of the internet which is fertile ground for an unprecedented rate of invasion of privacy and harmful attacks.

Invasion of Privacy

Today, bullying goes beyond the school yard and into victims' homes where they once felt safe (O'Brien & Moules, 2012; Papatraianon et al., 2014). While traditional bullying often starts at school, the brunt of it can now continue in the form of cyberbullying outside of the school, invading the victim's home from near and far via digital devices. Consequently, the ubiquitous attacks that surround the victims can cause increased fear and stress, since they feel that the attacks are inescapable (Baek & Bullock, 2014). Finally, once cyber attacks are initiated and perpetuated, the victim will likely feel threatened, vulnerable (Cassidy et al., 2013), and afraid to ask for help.

Vast Audience

The extensive audience to which cyberbullies have access adds another dimension to their power (Hoffman, 2012). Youth around the world are absorbed in electronics such as phones, computers, and iPods (Holladay, 2012). Students spend extensive time interacting, communicating, and being entertained online. As a result, when a message is sent via social media, it can reach millions of people, it can travel internationally in minutes, and it can invite many to participate in whatever comes next (Holladay, 2012). In the past, the malicious note that was passed around the classroom stayed in the classroom. Today, written attacks reach far and wide and become permanent in seconds. More specifically, the first person to send a message may do so only once. The message can be potentially shared by their friends and their friends and so on, growing exponentially until it becomes viral (Cassidy et al., 2013). Compared to a single classroom perpetrator, a malicious anonymous viral mob can wreak devastation on a victim's life.

With the combination of the anonymity, the invasion of privacy, and the vast audience that digital technology affords its perpetrators, cyberbullying has become a very powerful avenue to attack victims. Realizing that the characteristics of cyberbullying are unique from those of traditional bullying is prerequisite to understanding the power of such attacks.

The Effects of Cyberbullying

When malicious online posts are directed at already vulnerable adolescents, the results can be grave (Gordon, 2014). For example, depending on the motive behind the attack, victims of cyberbullying can experience low self-esteem, poor concentration, headaches, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Cassidy et al., 2013). Adolescence can be a tough time, and the added pressures of cyberbullying can make it even more overwhelming both at home and at school.

At School

Victims of cyberbullying are often too embarrassed and afraid to attend school, for fear that the entire student body is witness to the attacks on them. Moreover, because of the anonymity of cyberbullying, the victim often has no idea who the perpetrator is or how many are involved (Gordon, 2014). As a result of cyberbullying, victims are often truant from school (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). When a victim of cyberbullying does attend school, it is often difficult for him/her to concentrate because of his/her pre-occupation with what has happened which often contributes to poor grades (Cassidy et al., 2013). Teachers and friends often notice the

victim's withdrawal from sports and other extra-curricular activities (Cassidy et al., 2013). The effects of cyberbullying have the power to transform a normal school experience into something dreadful.

At Home

Victims of cyberbullying often demonstrate atypical and even abnormal behaviour at home. For example, parents of children who are cyberbullied often notice their children withdraw and disconnect from regular family routines (Kouri, 2012). The children may retreat to their rooms for extended periods of time, on a daily basis, in an effort to avoid family and friends. Parents have also noticed emotional changes such as depression and sadness. In extreme cases, the children turn to drugs and alcohol to relieve the pain and to escape the stress of the cyber attacks (Cassidy et al., 2013). In addition, youth affected by cyberbullying may inflict self-harm such as cutting and suicide attempts. Leiden University researchers found that adolescents who had been cyberbullied were 3.2 times more likely to consider suicide than those who were not cyberbullied (MacDonald, 2014, para. 3). While other issues may contribute to the completion of suicide, cyberbullying is a significant contributor and may exacerbate the victims' preexisting mental health problems (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Reinberg, 2012; Swearer, 2012). While the range of behaviour of victims of cyberbullying may go from mild to extreme, the warning signs are often apparent in the adolescents' home life.

Reducing the Impact of Cyberbullying

Perhaps due to their stage of incomplete brain development, adolescents are more apt to participate in risky online activity without considering the outcome. When cyberbullying is the outcome, victims often do not know where to turn and do not have the strategies to lighten its impact. Cassidy (2013) stated that it is society's responsibility to provide training, strategies, and support for reducing the risk and impact of cyberbullying on adolescents who engage in online activities. Essentially, it is crucial for parents, school staff, and the broader community to become cyber smart and to collaborate to provide students with strategies to protect themselves from the harmful effects of cyberbullying.

Why Adolescents Avoid Parents and Adults

Depending on the relationship that a parent has with an adolescent child, the parent may not always be the first person the adolescent will turn to when he/she has been cyberbullied. Studies have found that 32% of children reported being victims of cyberbullying, but only 11% of their parents were aware of it (Cassidy et al., 2013, p. 592). Fear of losing privileges such as phones or access to technology (Cassidy et al., 2013; Kouri, 2012), and being blamed and punished, are common reasons why a child would not turn to a parent. For many youth, access to technology is a lifeline to their social world and entertainment. Holladay (2012) stated that 93% of youth use some form of electronic device such as computers, phones, iPods, and iPads (p. 41). Many adolescents have become so attached to this type of communication that they will risk dealing with the attacker secretly or without proper direction and support, rather than losing their electronic privileges. Some youth lack faith in their parents' ability to intervene, because they believe that they are technologically illiterate (O'Brien & Moules, 2012). In addition, some children view their parents as controlling and invasive, and they therefore hesitate to trust their parents with such sensitive issues (Hoffman, 2012; Swearer, 2012). Consequently, adolescents who are victims of cyberbullying often turn to friends for support, instead. However, teenage friends are often not equipped with strategies required to solve the problems caused by cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2013). To overcome the obstacles that stand

in the way of children's safety in this domain, it is important for parents and adults to be open minded, to act rationally, and to develop strategies to understand such issues

Strategies for Parents and Adults

Many effective strategies are available for parents and children who are dealing with cyberbullying. The most helpful first option may be for a child to tell an adult; however, most adolescent victims are reluctant to do so. If a child decides to confide in an adult, the adult should then initiate and maintain an open dialogue with the child regarding his/her online activity. Additionally, it is important for all parents to educate their children about using technology cautiously and safely (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013), because the internet provides a haven for cyberbullies, predators, and other criminals. Furthermore, being pro-active can also be an effective approach to combating cyberbullying. The onus is on the parents to become aware of abnormal changes in their child's behaviour that may require further investigation and intervention (Kouri, 2012). It is also crucial for parents and adults to preserve cyberbullying evidence (Hoffman, 2012). In addition, in order to reduce the risk of attacks by predators, it is important to block messages and set alerts to monitor devices involving questionable and suspicious activity (Hoffman, 2012). Finally, many parents and adults may be relieved to know that formal programs and strategies exist that can help them to become better skilled at dealing with cyberbullying issues (Cassidy et al., 2013).

School Strategies

Specific strategies can be effectively used by school staff to defeat cyberbullies (Cassidy et al., 2013). First, guidance counsellors should provide ongoing assessment of the victim, share their expertise, and collaborate with parents and police. Second, since they are often very literate in terms of social media, it could be helpful to have other students actively involved in co-constructing criteria for intervention strategies. This involvement could foster pride among students and help to decrease the occurrence of cyberbullying and risky online activity. Additionally, all students must be made aware of policies and the consequences of cyberbullying, such as loss of technology privileges and school suspensions. Finally, in order to encourage students to feel safe and comfortable when seeking support from staff, providing a positive school environment is very important.

Physician Intervention

There is an increasing need for physicians to become involved in supporting victims of cyberbullying. Due to the increase in the prevalence of cyberbullying noticed by mental health care workers, they are encouraging physicians not only to screen for victims of cyberbullying, but also to educate them (Moyer, 2012). Physicians are in a good position to screen patients by looking for signs of depression and suicide ideation (MacDonald, 2014), through questions such as "Do you use the internet and if so how often? What kind of activity do you engage in online? Do you use social media? Have you ever felt threatened?" and finally, "Have you ever bullied?" (Moyer, 2012, p. 65). Once it has been determined that there has been cyberbully involvement or effects, the doctor can then engage the parent or guardian and other appropriate resources, to collaborate in supporting and educating the patient (Moyer, 2012). Physicians can be an important part of a support network for victims of cyberbullying.

Authority Intervention

When students, parents, schools, and physicians are ineffective in dealing with severe cases of cyberbullying, it may be necessary to engage legal authorities. Because intimidation,

harassment, intent to harm, and other such attacks overstep the right to freedom of speech (Murphy, 2012), a perpetrator can receive sanctions including imprisonment for cyberbullying attacks (Baek & Bullock, 2014). For example, in Canada Bill C-13, known as the *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act*, came into force on March 10, 2015. This bill grants police more authority to search and seize personal internet data, and to impose penalties of up to five years in prison for perpetrators who expose intimate pictures of others online without their consent (*Bill C-13*, 2014). In cases such as those of Amanda Todd and Rehteah Parsons, wherein the severity goes beyond what typical intervention is capable of dealing with, this amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada better aligns the law to the reality of cyberbullying.

Adolescence is a stage wherein many youth feel invincible and are more apt to take online risks that may lead to negative and permanent effects caused by cyberbullying. These occur on a continuum ranging from mild to severe. Therefore, it is important that any support person on the intervention spectrum be well versed in the dangers of cyberbullying and how to help adolescents protect themselves from online perils.

Conclusion

Youth are absorbed in technology and social networking, and cyberbullying can be an unfortunate result of this means of interaction. When cyberbullying does take place, mental health in youth is negatively impacted. Recognizing the power of 21st century technology that is in the hands of adolescents, and equipping them with effective and positive ways to use it, requires a broad-based effort by society. Early detection and intervention of any incidence of cyberbullying by students, parents, schools, and the community will help to decrease the harm that it may cause the victim. Finally, for the safety of adolescents' online activity, and for the sake of cyberbullied victims like Amanda Todd and Rehteah Parsons, finding ways to decrease cyberbullying is essential to secure opportunities that the internet and technology offer this generation of adolescents and those to come.

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About the Author

Raising three boys put Patricia Goodine's idea of completing her M.Ed. on hold until she moved to Dauphin with her husband who is an RCMP officer. When BU brought the graduate program to Dauphin, Patty jumped on board and started her M.Ed. in counselling.

Identifying and Supporting Struggling Readers

Jennifer Kreitz

Abstract

Teaching children to read is a complicated process. Children begin school at varying levels of ability, yet are all required to meet a set standard of achievement. It is up to teachers to assess each student, identify individual learning needs, and provide support. A motivating, literacy-rich program that includes whole-class, small-group, and individualized instruction is beneficial to struggling readers. Scripted and non-scripted literacy programs have proven to be effective, but it is the teacher who has the greatest effect on student success.

One of the goals of elementary schools is to teach students to read. Teaching reading can be one of the greatest challenges faced by teachers because of the complex nature of reading and because students learn in different ways and at different rates. The task of identifying students at risk of difficulty, and then supporting their learning, can be as complicated as learning to read itself. With multiple approaches and programs available, finding effective methods to identify and support struggling readers is a quandary that many teachers encounter.

Identifying struggling readers is a first step to providing the appropriate support needed to help children succeed in reading. In order to become proficient readers, children need to understand the association between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) in writing, and simultaneously create meaning of a series of words within the context of a sentence (Duff, Mengoni, Bailey, & Snowling, 2015). Learning the association between letters and sounds in reading can be considered an abstract skill that some children are not developmentally ready to acquire (McIntyre, Rightmyer, & Petrosko, 2008). Quickly determining the correct phoneme that corresponds with a grapheme can be challenging for young learners. Students who struggle with learning phonemic skills are often also the students who struggle to read. Once struggling learners have been identified, a plan can then be created to meet their specific learning needs.

Assessment and Identification of Struggling Readers

When beginning the school year, early years teachers often assess the literacy skills of their students. Common assessment tasks may include letter recognition, phonemic awareness, phonological knowledge, word reading, and spelling skills. As an alternative to assessing phonological knowledge, early years teachers could begin by assessing what is familiar to students as one way of assessing a student's degree of future reading success. Teachers can use the information gathered in a test such as the non-alphanumeric rapid naming test, in order to determine whether early supplemental literacy support is required for students who fair poorly at rapid naming of familiar objects (Kruk, Mayer, & Funk, 2014). Rapid naming of numbers, letters, colours, and objects can help predict decoding, reading speed, and comprehension. The non-alphanumeric rapid naming test consists of teachers presenting a student with familiar, concrete examples of colours and objects, and assessing the student's ability to name the objects quickly. If the child struggles to recall the names of colours and familiar objects, it is likely that the student will also struggle with letter and sound naming. Students who succeed in the non-alphanumeric test may then have their phonics skills assessed.

Children entering grade one who have not yet learned the association between letters and sounds may be considered at risk of reading difficulty, since they lack phonic decoding skills (Duff et al., 2015). One method of assessing phonics skills is the phonics screening check. The phonics screening check is a compulsory assessment instrument used with year one pupils in the United Kingdom, in order to detect students who are at risk of reading difficulty. The check includes 40 words: 20 real words, and 20 pseudowords. Words range from three-letter

consonant-vowel-consonant words to two-syllable words with consonant clusters and digraphs. Students who accurately read 32 or more words are determined to have met standards. Those who read 31 or fewer words are considered at risk of reading difficulty. In addition to this assessment task, teachers may also choose to have students apply phonics in a written task. A student who can apply written phonemic skills demonstrates mastery of the grapheme-phoneme connection. Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words is a test that measures a child's ability to phonetically write words (Clay, 2005). Teachers can see which letters and sounds a student has mastered, and which need more teaching.

Middle years students are more easily identifiable as requiring support. Teachers generally administer a reading assessment by using leveled books followed by comprehension questions. Teachers of struggling readers in upper elementary grades may also access documentation of previous interventions and educational plans that have been used with their students.

Once struggling readers have been identified, teachers then need to determine the course of action to support the learners' needs. With the many approaches to reading instruction and reading interventions available to teachers, deciding upon the appropriate approach for students can be difficult. Canadian teachers are provincially mandated to follow the local curriculum, but research from the United States has a strong influence on the lessons that Canadian teachers deliver in classrooms. After completing an extensive study, The National Reading Panel report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) recommended five essential components of reading instruction that include (a) alphabets, (b) fluency, (c) comprehension, (d) teacher education, and (e) computer technology. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada suggests an approach that includes teaching for (a) oral language, (b) fluency, (c) comprehension, and (d) motivation (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

Reading Interventions

Response to intervention (RTI) is an American-based three-tiered model of instruction that responds to the diverse learning needs of students (Johnson & Boyd, 2012) and is mentioned in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's (2009) recommendations for effective teaching practices. Tier 1 of the model includes whole class instruction, tier 2 is small-group intervention for the students who require additional support, and tier 3 is special education. By following the RTI system of whole-class lessons, small-group intervention, and individual support when required based on reading performance, and following strict principles of effective reading instruction, teachers should implement a program with positive effects for all students.

Many commercial programs are available to teachers. Most programs are now designed to include the essential components suggested by NICHD. Some programs are highly scripted, which may benefit teachers who are new to teaching reading and may increase consistency of instruction from classroom to classroom. Scripted programs are often accompanied by scientifically proven data to endorse their teaching methods. Other programs are less scripted. The less scripted programs permit teachers to use their professional discretion in delivering lessons. The program structure appears to have little effect on student performance (McIntyre et al., 2008). This finding suggests that the teacher's adaptation of lessons to meet the needs of individual students has the greatest effect on scholastic achievement. The claimed scientifically proven methods do not work for all learners because they do not address the specific needs of the individual. These programs are designed to teach children who acquire literacy skills in a typical fashion, not struggling readers who may have gaps in learning.

Early Years

Reading interventions for early years students often focus on phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. These programs concentrate on teaching letter and sound knowledge because they are keys to decoding words. However, some young students are not yet

developmentally ready to take in the abstract concept of print (McIntyre et al., 2008). These students require more phonemic awareness teaching before proceeding to phonics instruction. A phonemic awareness program provides additional exposure to letters and sounds, rather than teaching words and sentences in a book.

Middle Years

Older struggling readers face different challenges. Middle years students have often mastered phonemic awareness and phonics, but struggle to maintain comprehension of the texts that they read. Few reading intervention programs teach comprehension strategies, but instead focus on decoding skills when a mere 10% of struggling readers in middle years experience problems with decoding (Allington, 2012). Common reading intervention strategies serve only to widen the gap between struggling readers and their at-level peers because the common strategies do not address the reader's area of need (Robertson, Dougherty, Ford-Connors, & Paratore, 2014). Rather than focusing on decoding, teachers working with struggling readers in middle years may develop a thoughtful, literacy-rich reading program (Allington, 2012). Teachers following a thoughtful literacy program would use research-based comprehension strategies to teach for meaning and comprehension through various text types. This type of literacy program could support the learning needs of older struggling readers.

Engagement

An element missing from many literacy programs, whether scripted or non-scripted, for early years or middle years, is motivation. Without proper motivation to read, students are less engaged and may not appreciate the importance of the goal of reading. Implementing a teaching plan that includes motivation and engagement, instructional intensity, and cognitive challenge to support struggling readers can lead to success in reading for all students (Robertson et al., 2012). One way to motivate and engage struggling students is to use their interests and ideas in the course of a lesson.

Story innovation is a highly motivational and engaging teaching method that can be used with students of all ages. Story innovation is recommended to develop reading vocabulary and improve reading fluency in young readers (Griffith & Ruan, 2007). This approach uses the structure of a familiar text to create a new story through the substitution of specific words. A page from a storybook or verses from a poem are examples of familiar texts that can be used in story innovation lessons. This method provides students with a bridge from the familiar to the new or unknown words in reading and writing. Students are engaged in the process, since their words are chosen to replace words from the original text. Story innovation is a simple way of reinforcing and repeating words and sentence structures. Teachers introduce new vocabulary at the students' pace of learning within a familiar context. The students feel successful because the new text is written within their level of mastery. Story innovation is an effective means of improving reading fluency, because students are not working to decode the words but are freed to focus on fluency. Students are engaged in the newly created story and are motivated to read their own version of the text.

Instruction

Regardless of age or ability, schools should include one-to-one or small-group instruction to help students become more proficient readers (Education Endowment Foundation, 2014). Although phonics instruction is valuable to begin the reading process, schools should also focus on comprehension strategies with older struggling readers as an alternative to phonics instruction. Teachers of all levels need to be mindful of the urgency and importance of providing students with effective strategies to close the gap between struggling readers and their peers.

Conclusion

Teaching children to read is a complex assignment. Identifying and properly supporting struggling readers can not be viewed from a one-size-fits-all approach. Essential teachings such as phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension are important to students' success. The teacher who adapts the program to suit the needs of the students is the greatest catalyst of change.

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About the Author

Jennifer Kreitz is a graduate student in the special education program at Brandon University. She has taught for 15 years, and is currently teaching grade two in Pembina Trails School Division in Winnipeg. Jennifer is kept busy with her two children's activities and her own marathon training.

Interventions in Autism

Meagan West

Abstract

Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) and other therapies for autism have been developing and changing in recent years, and have moved away from clinical settings to options that can be used in the classroom and at home. Common current therapies focus on improving social skills and increasing communication. The therapies and treatments that are available for children with autism spectrum disorders are as varied as the children whom they support. As PRT and other therapy plans evolve, parents and clinicians develop higher expectations that children with autism will develop lost skills.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was first diagnosed in 1943 to describe children with the most profound social withdrawal (Autism Ontario, 2011), although it is now known as “a complex neurological disorder that affects the function of the brain” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005, p. 3) and affects each diagnosed child differently. Children diagnosed with autism exhibit limited communication abilities, poor social interaction, and restricted behaviour patterns and interests (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005). Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) and other therapies for autism have been developing and changing in recent years, and have moved away from clinical settings to options that can be used in the classroom and at home. Therapies currently focus on improving social skills and increasing communication. These therapies often focus on improving multiple areas of deficit that an autistic child may struggle with, instead of working on a single area of concern.

Interventions Focused on Social Skills

Social skills are important for all children to learn how to get along with others in their daily lives. This skill is especially important to children diagnosed with autism, because many autistic children struggle to read facial cues (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005) and have compromised peer relations (Autism Ontario, 2011). Children are constantly learning how to behave in different social situations and “early social engagement is crucial . . . [for] typical child development” (Sroufe, 2005, as cited in Kroegel, 2014, p. 69). Inclusion of students with special needs into classrooms with their typically developing peers has enabled autistic students to interact with children their own age in everyday situations. As the following evidence suggests, this change in setting will not result in great change in the social skill abilities of autistic children, because in-depth therapies are needed to accompany the change in educational settings.

Studies have shown that autistic children “who are in mainstream classrooms have increase in the complexity of their play and decrease in the non-social activity, when compared to how they behave in special education settings” (Mandelberg, Frankel, Cunningham, Gorospe, & Laugeson 2014, p. 255), and this increase in play and social time seems to insinuate that these children would be happier at school. This would be a dangerous assumption to make, because it has been found that autistic children continue to “feel lonelier and have poorer quality friendships” (Mandelberg et al., 2014, p. 255) than their non-autistic peers. Therefore, children with autism can not simply be put into a mainstream environment and be expected to make gains in attaining meaningful friendships.

As children with autism join mainstream classrooms and inclusion becomes the norm, many students are supported by educational assistants. An educational assistant’s role is to support the child throughout the school day in academic and social situations, yet recent research suggests that educational assistants “may unintentionally negatively affect the social

development of the children they support by either hovering . . . or remaining [too] uninvolved” (Klein Feldman & Matos, 2012, p. 169). Educational assistants without specific training in working with autistic children can not be relied upon to teach and support social skills activities.

Klein Feldman and Matos (2012) conducted research to determine what effect Pivotal Response Treatment training would have on the abilities of three educational assistants and their ability to support social skills development. The educational assistants who took the training generalized it to non-trained activities, and they continued to use the training after the study was complete. In addition to the educational assistants continuing to use the training after the completion of the study, the level of social engagement and reciprocal play increased dramatically for the three children involved in the study.

Increased training of educational assistants benefits not only the student with autism, but also the teacher, classmates, and the educational assistant. As a resource teacher, I have worked with Sean¹, an educational assistant, and Jack, a boy with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis. Sean has worked with Jack since grade one and has struggled with his explosive behaviour, restricted interests, and lack of willingness to be around other children. In 2011, Sean had the opportunity to take the Educational Assistant Diploma Program through the University of Winnipeg and gained training in how to deal with Jack’s behaviour and how to introduce Jack to new experiences without overwhelming him. After completing the program, Sean reported that he felt “calmer when dealing with Jack . . . and that [he] had more tools to use when something goes wrong” (S. Smith, educational assistant, personal communication, October 21, 2012). Sean’s ability to stay calm influenced the students in the classroom, who eventually saw past Jack’s anger and outbursts and attempted to befriend him through play. Through advanced training, educational assistants develop a deeper understanding of the challenges that autistic children face.

Social skills are more involved than the ability to play with peers in the classroom and at recess. They are a labyrinth that needs to be navigated on a daily basis by autistic children, in which the expectations are ever changing. For example, the ways that children greet other people depends on the type of other person (such as peer versus adult) and the setting (such as mall versus school) (Autism Network, n.d.).

Teaching social skills involves more than breaking an action down into steps like an arithmetic problem. Teachers and parents instead turn to therapies that teach social skills in smaller chunks, in order to navigate the complexity of each social action. A commonly used strategy is the social story developed by Gray (2010), in which parents and teachers create stories tailored to the child and to specific tricky social situations (Autism Ontario, 2011). The social stories can be designed with pictures of the student, school, and peers to individualize each story. This type of intervention breaks social skills down into smaller less complex pieces that help autistic children to function and play with their peers.

Building on the complexity of social skills, Mandelberg et al. (2014) used the Child Friendship Program (CFP) to study how involving parents in homework sessions after group social skill building sessions would influence long-term success. Participants in this study were tasked with completing homework assignments based on clinical therapy sessions. The children practised social skills in a guided and highly structured setting, then were given a specific task as homework to be completed with their parents’ support, while the parents attended simultaneous training sessions. At the study’s conclusion, it was determined that the participating children were interacting with their typically developing peers outside of school situations, were invited to play at other homes, and were experiencing less conflict than before the study. Moreover both parents and children reported that new friendships had been made. This increase in play outings and friendships is vitally important to the development of children with autism, because children tend to learn from each other how to act in social situations. Increased friendships and reciprocal play give autistic children increased possibilities to learn to

¹ In order to protect individual identities, pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper.

navigate social mazes as they age. The parents' involvement in the therapy sessions helped their children to make increased social skills gains in real-life situations.

Social skills encompass the ability to make and keep friends, to interact with others in society, and to form bonds with people whom they care about. Through intensive therapies, children with autism can gain the skills that many children learn naturally. Through friendships and bonds with loved ones, children with autism function better in an inclusive setting and understand the world that surrounds them.

Interventions Focused on Pivotal Response Treatment

Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) is not a new therapy in the treatment of children with autism, yet it is not well known to those outside the special education field. PRT is based on activities initiated by the child and focuses on play as therapy. The purpose of PRT is to develop communication skills, increase positive behaviours, and limit destructive behaviours ("Autism Speaks," n.d.), which often enables parents to be active in their child's treatment plan. PRT methods focus on developing language abilities through games and natural activities, which ultimately decreases other skills deficits.

The PRT model has proven effective with babies who are at risk of an autism diagnosis. Koegel, Singh, Koegel, Hollingsworth, & Bradshaw (2014) studied the effect of an early intervention program on three infants who had been referred for a deficit in social skills. The researchers chose to use a modified version of PRT in an attempt to increase the infants' social abilities. A social response was categorized as eye contact with the parent, high affect, and response to name. When the researchers used activities that the infants found pleasurable and slowly introduced activities that had no social response, the non-preferred activities eventually produced a social response. This ability to improve an infant's social skills is vitally important in the treatment of autism, because early intervention is the key to developing friendships and social relationships later in life.

Jack's teacher and educational assistant inadvertently used this gradual introduction of non-desired activities. Through visual schedules and choice boards, Jack learned that for each non-preferred activity he completed he could attain a reward, a positive activity. Although the staff working with Jack had no knowledge of the PRT method, they attempted many of the techniques in an effort for Jack to attain academic and social success in school. With educational assistant support Jack learned, as did the infants in Koegel et al.'s (2014) study, that completing a non-preferred task resulted in a positive consequence, which in turn helped him to achieve success at school.

PRT is not limited to improving only autistic children's quality of life. Recent research has found that "the parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) show higher levels of anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders than parents of . . . typically developing children" (Weiss, 2002, as cited in Minjarez, Mercier, Williams, & Hardan, 2013, p. 71). I have worked with Jack's parents, who have four other children in the home. Jack's parents have expressed frustration at not being able to understand their son, his inability to make friends, and his initial reluctance to attend school. When Jack was in kindergarten, his parents often had to force him to attend school, with Jack engaged in melt-down behaviour. Both parents often expressed feelings of despair at the difficulty in raising Jack and the minimal support that they received from their family and community, which influenced the quality of life for the whole family.

PRT could have given Jack's parents tools to work with their son and help him to make progress in his language and social development. Minjarez et al. (2013) studied the effect of PRT training on parents who were reporting extreme stress levels within the family. Through PRT training, the parents were taught strategies over a ten-week period for working with their autistic children in order to promote growth in language development. At the conclusion of the study, parents reported feeling empowered and many parents felt that PRT had lowered their stress levels. Although these parents reported lowered stress levels, their stress levels were still

above the clinical range for high stress. In a conflicting study, Buckley, Ente, and Ruef (2013) worked with a single family, to teach PRT methods in the home. These parents reported a better quality of life after learning PRT and having the support of the researchers in their home. This family may have experienced more success with PRT because it was an individualized approach with the researchers working in their home, as compared to the parents in Minjarez et al.'s study who were primarily in a clinical setting. This in-home approach may have been what Jack's parents were searching for in their community: service providers who could tailor their approach to specific children and families. PRT gives parents, teachers, and clinicians the opportunity to work with an autistic child in a natural setting with the child dictating the pace and activities. Through games and play, autistic children learn to use new language, improve existing communication abilities, and increase their social skills.

Interventions Based on Communication

The ability to communicate effectively is a vital skill for children to master in order to function in today's society. Every interaction involves communication through verbal or physical cues. Children with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis struggle with verbal and non-verbal communication. To communicate effectively, all people must give information and receive information correctly, which is particularly difficult for those diagnosed with autism (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005).

Jack struggled in school to be understood, and to get his basic needs met on a daily basis. Jack had limited spoken language abilities when he started school, and he frequently grunted or made unintelligible vocalizations in order to achieve or escape activities. Jack would tantrum and melt-down when he was not understood, which in turn would frustrate the school staff members who worked with him. Unfortunately for Jack, he lived in a remote community and had no access to programs that could have helped to develop his language abilities far sooner than his actual progress.

New technology is becoming available to support autistic children who have limited communication abilities. Couper, Meer, Schäfer, McKenzie, & McLay (2014) investigated the ability of nine children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder to learn and use an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. Five of the nine children met the criterion for success with the AAC devices. Using the AAC devices, such as an iPad or picture exchange system, enabled the children to request a toy that was desired from a given selection. Some of the children eventually gained minimal oral language skills while using an AAC device. While the researchers in this study were not specifically looking for this outcome, it is a benefit for autistic children and their development. Technology is also particularly interesting to autistic children because it gives reliable results and does not require understanding of social situations for the user to be successful.

While the success of Couper et al.'s (2014) study shows promise for communication deficits in children with autism, it is not a definitive solution. Many children with autism are rigid in their thinking and are unable to transfer what is learned in one environment to another. The same can be said of learning any particular skill. Children with autism may learn to ask for a specific toy through a communication therapy, but be unable to transfer that knowledge to ask for a different toy. This rigidity can make teaching any new skill difficult, because it can not be guaranteed to be successful from one day to another.

In an attempt to quantify the ability of an autistic child to generalize use of an AAC from one situation to another, Tan, Trembath, Bloomberg, Iacono, & Caithness, (2014) studied three children with ASD diagnoses. Using key word signing as the only form of AAC, the participants learned specific signs in a clinical setting. In a post-intervention follow-up, the baseline conditions were recreated, followed by a situation similar to the intervention process. The goal was to understand whether the three participants could generalize the use signs that were learned to a different play situation. Two of the participants generalized some key word signs to

another environment, leading to unclear results for this study. While both Tan et al. and Couper et al. (2014) demonstrated success in gaining some functional language ability, neither of these studies conclusively developed a program to improve language abilities that can be used in multiple settings.

Functional communication remains a goal for many children with autism, with a variety of therapies aimed at improving language and speech. As I experienced with Jack, effective communication is a struggle that must be worked at every day. Jack learned oral language through repeated attempts by dedicated teachers and his educational assistant. Jack struggled to understand figurative language, and the adults around him had to learn to speak clearly with no hidden meaning to their words. Children with autism struggle to receive and express language, and each language skill needs its own treatment plan for the child to attain success and improve communication abilities. As the technology and therapies evolve, so does the ability of parents, teachers, and clinicians to support children with limited communication capabilities.

Conclusion

The therapies and treatments that are available for children with autism spectrum disorders are as varied as the children whom they support. A variety of therapies are available to parents, teachers, and clinicians who wish to improve the children's language and social skills. Many of these programs also help the children learn to function in the classroom, in the community, and in the larger society. As Pivotal Response Treatment and other therapy plans evolve, parents and clinicians develop higher expectations that children with autism will develop lost skills and reach milestones similar to their typically developing peers.

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About the Author

Meagan West is the resource teacher at Carman Elementary and is currently enrolled in the Master of Education program at Brandon University. In her spare time, Meagan pursues her passion for photography, touring Manitoba to find the perfect shot.

Making Literacy Relevant to Adolescent Learners

Lisa Clark

Abstract

Adolescent learners will engage in literacy learning if they understand its relevance to both academic pursuits and future success. Exploring the literacy skills that are embedded in the technology that saturates adolescents' lives helps to establish the relevance of literacy education. Educators who design lessons around collaboration, inquiry, choice, and authenticity increase the chances that students will judge the activity to be relevant and choose to engage. Additionally, explicit literacy instruction is essential to ensure that comprehension deepens as content becomes more complex. Those educators who emphasize the relevance of literacy skills provide adolescent learners with a solid foundation for future success.

When adolescent learners recognize the foundational role that literacy plays in their success, both as students and as productive citizens, they are more likely to engage in literacy learning as a relevant pursuit. While the call for literacy skills that accommodate an ever-broadening understanding of text has increased in the digital age, not all learners are responding to that call. Exploring the literacy connected to real-world technology applications reveals the deep relevance that comes from infusing learning with digital forms of text. The nature of literacy continues to evolve as technology expands the existing modes and the pace of modern communication. In response, literacy skills must be supported by deeper comprehension to support the selection, storage, and retrieval of vast quantities of information. Increased engagement is fundamental to support the skill development essential to successful literacy instruction. Student engagement increases when educators design lessons that incorporate collaboration, inquiry, choice, and authenticity. Once engagement is established, explicit instruction can take place to equip adolescents to tackle the challenge of more specialized content. Adolescents invest their energy in what they perceive to be relevant, so educators must help them to recognize the undeniable power that literacy has to shape their lives.

Literacy for the Future

Strong literacy skills, including digital literacy linked to the technology that has become ubiquitous, are essential to every phase of life: post-secondary education, career, and even productive citizenship (North Central Regional Education Laboratory [NCREL], 2005). Nearly 60% of today's jobs require a post-secondary education (Haynes, 2014, p. 1). The global economy is fueled by workers who possess advanced literacy skills. Conversely, 40% of employers say that today's high school graduates do not possess the level of literacy necessary to compete. The current generation of learners is preparing to work in a knowledge economy, confronting vast quantities of information, which must be mined for the data relevant to each application (Jacobsen, 2010). This glut of digital information demands the ability to read and understand a variety of texts and to communicate digitally, with both speed and accuracy. Targeted inquiry, collaboration, and innovation are the essential skills of the 21st century worker. These lifelong capacities are built on a foundation of strong literacy skills.

Today's adolescent learners are digital natives, who are more likely to see the relevance of literacy within the context of an online application. Members of the net generation, including all those born after 1982, possess strong visual skills but are weak textual learners, with a preference for experiential learning (Roos, 2007). This generation finds creativity and connection through social media and gaming. If schools fail to incorporate some aspects of the digital experience, engagement is less likely. Today's learner thinks with a hypertext mind,

connecting and reconnecting snippets of sound, images, and text to make meaning. Speed is paramount. Individuals practise attention economics, filtering high volumes of digital information, while discarding anything that is deemed boring or irrelevant, but rarely reflecting on those selections (Sanford & Madill, 2007). Literacy learning that embraces the digital world is the key to convincing the net generation to buy in, as demonstrated through several technology-based learning projects.

Innovative literacy learning projects are exploring the integration of technology to build relevance and, thereby, engagement for adolescent learners. The Borderzone project explored the convergence of school-based literacy learning and out-of-school literacies (Skerrett & Bomer, 2007). This experimental program involved teachers and students collaborating to connect out-of-school literacies with curriculum-based, in-school, literacy learning. Students were challenged to explore the forms of literacy that they engaged in outside of school and to find ways to connect those experiences with learning outcomes. "Invitation" activities included student-led research into the nature of literacy, interest inventories, and the collection of "literacy memories." By identifying and validating real-world literacies, learners began to identify themselves as readers and writers, capable of expanding their literacy skills. Another program studied the design and application of video games to expand the definition of literacy in the digital age (Sanford & Madill, 2007). Participants demonstrated operational literacy as they applied their skills within the context of gaming by writing instructions, using semiotic systems, and conducting research. Cultural literacy increased as gamers learned to function within the social norms, both spoken and unspoken, which exist in their digital community. Researchers pointed to the opportunity for critical literacy, which has yet to be explored in the context of the video game world. Bias, value, and social justice issues are inherent to this medium, but are rarely explored (Sanford & Madill, 2007). Educators should find ways to utilize this medium, which is so appealing to the adolescent learner, to encourage the development of critical literacy skills. The potential to connect literacy learning to relevant, technology-infused lessons as a means of increasing engagement is undeniable.

By exploring the expanding definition of text, the need for a broader range of literacy skills becomes evident. At its most essential level, literacy is reading for comprehension and writing with clarity (NCREL, 2005). However, as subject areas become more specialized in higher grades, so, too, do the form and function of the literacy skills required to manage that information (Wendt, 2013). As technology advances, the definition of text expands. Images, sounds, and language have merged to produce the multiple literacies of the 21st century (Hill, n.d.). Video games, movies, blogs, wikis, and social media all depend on these literacies. Literacy skills have thus become synonymous with technological savvy (Roos, 2007). After all, technology is no longer defined by the specific device or software, but rather by the activity it enables. Much of today's technology exists to facilitate communication, collaboration, and connection. Educators must respond by teaching the skills necessary to manage these multiple literacies today, and in the future.

Comprehension is inexorably linked to literacy. The more complex the mental model created, the more information can be stored and retrieved for later (Kirby, 2012). When literacy is low, the brain stores only isolated ideas and is unable to make meaningful connections. Without connections, little will be remembered. When literacy improves, the brain organizes information into main ideas supported by a few details. More information is stored. When literacy levels are high, the brain is able to add structure, interpret abstract concepts, and make implications, thereby maximizing the storage and retrieval of information. Deeper learning builds intrinsic motivation (Kirby, 2012). Activating prior knowledge also deepens comprehension by providing for meaningful connections between new learning and established understandings ("Make Room," 2013). This complex mental model means stronger connections, deeper relevance, and increased engagement. Targeted instruction of literacy skills that support deeper comprehension helps to develop real-world literacy, which is constantly constructing meaning (Wendt, 2013).

Student Engagement

For adolescent students, engagement deepens when they see the topic of study as relevant, so building engagement is the key to literacy development. Engagement is the intersection of motivation with purpose (NCREL, 2005). Motivation plays a crucial role in literacy development among adolescent readers (Marchand-Martella, Martella, Modderman, Petersen, & Pan, 2013). Students first need to identify themselves as learners who possess the confidence that comes from self-efficacy or a belief in their own power to affect change (NCREL, 2005). Educators who structure a learning environment that incorporates collaboration, inquiry, choice, and authenticity foster deeper levels of engagement in their students (Hill, n.d.). These components correlate with the adolescent learners' desire for belonging, autonomy and control, while supporting the engagement necessary to support skill development.

Adolescent learners value social connectedness, so collaborative learning opportunities build relevance into literacy learning. Teachers who value the young adolescents' need to talk about their learning facilitate measurable gains in student literacy (Fletcher, 2014). Collaboration is a form of networking, akin to the social media that dominates the lives of the 21st century learner (Roos, 2007). Teens are used to being perpetually connected, thereby craving interaction. Social media is used by adolescents to define their evolving identity and to connect with others who share similar characteristics, in order to build a sense of belonging (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). This drive can be incorporated into the classroom by encouraging students to engage in meaningful dialogue, both within the room and across the globe, by using the internet (Wendt, 2013). The distance and anonymity afforded by online communication may even promote positive risk-taking, helping shy students to share their ideas. The social literacy of collaborative learning increases the meaningful context for students, thereby attaching greater relevance to the experience.

Adolescents question everything, so literacy learning based on the inquiry model is more likely to be judged as relevant. Explicit instruction is necessary to scaffold students as they build their inquiry skills (Wilhelm, 2007). Using guiding questions, adolescent learners direct their energy to answering questions of their own design. This problem-solving model enhances motivation and engagement, encourages deeper understanding, and increases positive attitudes toward the learning, regardless of the subject. A variety of modes, including print and digital, text and images, still and video, etc., is essential to accommodate students' interests (Wendt, 2013). Incorporating technology to access audio, video, software, and online connections also creates a learning environment capable of meeting the widest variety of learning styles and needs. Inquiry learning that involves posing, and then answering, questions ensures literacy learning that is relevant and engaging.

Adolescent learners strive for autonomy, so the more opportunities they have to make choices and control their own learning, the more personally relevant the learning experiences become. Choice greatly influences engagement, which consequently improves comprehension and retention (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Students need opportunities to choose their own reading material from a wide variety of high-interest, accessible texts, in multiple modes, in order to ensure that they can practise their literacy skills in a context that is personally relevant (Morrow, 2014). Adolescent learners need to be aware of the reason for, and scope of, the activities that they are asked to do. Quality literacy instruction is based on lessons whose purpose is clear to both the teacher in their creation, and to the student in their implementation (Fletcher, 2014). Learning goals need to be clear and feedback should be timely and frank, acknowledging the positive and suggesting improvements. The opportunity to make choices, based on personal interest, while striving to meet clear objectives, contributes to a sense of control, and thereby encourages engagement.

Finally, if literacy learning is made authentic through connections to real-life scenarios, it is infinitely more appealing to adolescents who are figuring out the role that they will play as

productive global citizens. Students want to know whether the learning activity parallels what someone in a real-life situation would do (Tovani, 2004). Adolescents believe that they have the power to change the world. They see themselves as global citizens, committed to social justice (Roos, 2007). Learning by design speaks to this commitment by connecting real-life skills to in-school learning (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Literacy learning that is connected to authentic, real-life applications becomes more meaningful. We use language not in isolation, but to understand and analyze the world around us. Similarly, reading should be linked to a purpose (Tovani, 2000). In the upper grades, literacy instruction needs to occur within the context of the course material being studied. Vocabulary acquisition, skills and process, and data collection and analysis all require advanced literacy skills (Tovani, 2004). Understanding the practical application of literacy, especially connected to future career aspirations, increases the chance that students will engage to master a skill set that will support their long-term goals.

With engagement established, explicit instruction of the comprehension strategies can take place. To build 21st century literacy skills, today's learner should continue to receive explicit reading instruction through adolescence (Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). Educators who use modeling, mentoring, and monitoring to scaffold learning experiences empower students to construct their own understanding (Wilhelm, 2007). Students benefit the most when expert teachers deliver responsive lessons, as opposed to pre-packaged programs (Ivey & Fisher, 2006). Reading needs to go beyond decoding by building comprehension within the context of relevant texts, rather than through isolated vocabulary exercises. To improve reading and writing skills, students must spend time engaged with text in meaningful ways. In the higher grades, teachers need to shift the focus of their reading instruction away from teaching literacy and focus more on using literacy to teach (Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). Gains in literacy for adolescent learners hinge on explicit instruction that focuses on building comprehension within the context of more specialized content areas.

Conclusion

All learning is enhanced when students are willing to engage in a process that they see as relevant and meaningful, and literacy learning is no different. Technology has increased the pace and the scope of the information that must be processed to function successfully, both on the job and off. Literacy, including digital literacy, is the means through which one interprets and responds to the world. Therefore, literacy learning, built on a solid foundation of comprehension skills, is essential. Several key components of planning and instruction have been proven to support the engagement necessary to support strong literacy learning. Adolescents strive for independence, so choice and authenticity are key elements to build relevance. They strive to belong, making collaboration, a natural fit. Finally, inquiry-based learning, supported by explicit instruction, provides the strategies necessary to tackle literacy in the new millennium. It remains the responsibility of educators to prepare our youth for the future by helping them to recognize the critical significance of literacy in everything they do.

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About the Author

Lisa Clark is a middle school teacher at Mackenzie Middle School in Dauphin, Manitoba. Additionally, she leads an extra-curricular philanthropy group, empowering students to build leadership skills while tackling issues of social justice. She still finds time for yoga, musical theatre, and furthering her professional learning.

Resilience and Mental Health Promotion in Schools

Shelley Tucker

Abstract

Students enter schools with greater personal challenges today than in the past. Although mental health promotion is not new to the educational system, the approach to it needs to change. Despite the adversities that students experience, many enter the system with the capacity to manage and overcome these challenges in their lives. Often, this quality of resilience is neither recognized nor fostered in schools. Educators need to consider resilience and the related research-based interventions to foster positive mental health in students.

Students enter the hallways and classrooms of schools every day as willing and eager participants in the educational system. Many carry with them challenges that include poverty, family dysfunction, victimization, transiency, and marginalization, yet they overcome these adversities to achieve success and mental wellness. This quality of resilience is among an array of mental health themes that has contributed to a recent shift from mental health programming that was centered on deficit-based approaches, with preventative components, to a positive mental health approach (Joint Consortium of School Health [JCSH], 2010). Because this change in perspective is relatively new, students' displays of resilience often continue to be misunderstood or overlooked by school staff. Schools need to take careful stock of concepts such as resilience, and related evidence-based programming and interventions. It is the school's responsibility to embrace best practices for the promotion of mental wellness in their students. When resilience in students is fostered, positive mental health is achieved.

Resilience and Mental Wellness

Resilience can be defined as an individual's ability to grow and to be successful regardless of life's stressors or adversities (Ungar, 2006). Individuals could not be characterized as resilient, however, if no adversity or risk to their development were present. The risk factors for students are diverse: challenging temperaments, low socioeconomic status, limited reliable housing, failed educational experiences, limited community resources, transience, maltreatment, violence, chemical dependency, etc. (Hunter, 2012; Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2006). These factors are also dynamic, unpredictable, and often distressing. The ordinary processes of human adaptive systems, including brain development, relationships, emotional regulation, and a desire to learn, are significant contributors to an individual's resilience (Masten, 2001). Other influences that contribute to resilience include external assets such as school, family, and community (Bryan, 2005). Resilience definitions also encompass students' capacity to steer their way to, and negotiate for, resources that will sustain their sense of well-being by meeting their needs (Ungar, 2013). When educators understand resilience, and when supports and interventions that develop resilience are available, the students will adjust their behaviours as needed, increasing their likelihood of experiencing mental wellness.

A Case Study

The following case study is an example of student resilience. People were drawn to Curtis (a pseudonym) from the moment they met him. He was charming and friendly, and he appeared ready to learn. He was also 11 years old, and was transferring into a new "city" school from a small community several hundred kilometers away. He had recently been placed in the care of an agency after being removed from an abusive setting. The school environment appeared to stimulate Curtis significantly. The larger the space that he was in, the louder, more aggressive,

and more mobile he would become. Within days after his arrival, staff labelled his behaviour as problematic. They inquired about previous interventions, and they asked about a mental health diagnosis. It is noted that resilience in students is not always understood by adults because how these children are actually surviving does not always match with what the adults think is right behaviour (Ungar, 2006). This was the case with Curtis. Over a year later, Curtis would be characterized as resilient because his growth and success became increasingly apparent in spite of his past experiences, and as the result of both internal and external factors in his life.

Mental Health Programming in Schools

In an effort to teach, assist, and manage students successfully, educators frequently seek information about a student's history, including the state of the student's mental health, and by learning how to recognize and address mental health issues educators can play a significant role in a student's mental wellbeing (Meldrum, Venn, & Kutcher, n.d.). Mental health has been defined as the ability that individuals have to think and act in ways that enable them to enjoy their lives, even as they deal with challenges; mental illness is seen as changes in mood, thinking, and behaviour that impairs daily functioning and can be considered distressing (PHAC, 2006). In the past, mental health programming and services in schools have focused on identifying risk factors that affect children's health, and on understanding the signs and symptoms of potential mental illnesses – in an attempt to ensure that a student's mental health needs would be met through referral to appropriate health care providers. In Manitoba, more recent attention has been given to positive mental health promotion within the educational sector, with the intent to create environments that heighten protective factors and reduce risk factors for students (Government of Manitoba, 2014). Statistics reveal that 21% of Canadians will suffer from a mental disorder within their lifetime, the most common being depression and anxiety disorders (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA], 2014, p. 1). One out of five of these will be children or youth, yet only 20% will receive the required treatment (CMHA, 2014, p.2). The data raises concern about the number of children and youth in the educational system who suffer daily from mental disorders, including those who have yet to be identified.

Resilience Practices as Effective Model for Mental Wellness Promotion

It is unrealistic to suggest that there is an accurate and manageable way to assess the mental health of all children and youth in the school system. The question arises about whether these numbers exist as a result of continuing to rely on prevention and treatment models to address mental health despite having insufficient resources. Education claims to embrace the theory of mental health promotion in schools (|Government of Manitoba, n.d. p.1; JCSH, 2010, p.16; Manitoba Association of School Superintendents [MASS], 2014, pp.1-2). However, effective interventions that foster mental wellness in children and youth do not occur consistently. Questions also arise regarding the remaining 80% of children who have not been diagnosed with a mental illness (CMHA, 2014, p.1). These students may be characterized as mentally healthy, yet many have profiles that provide information about adverse factors in their lives, and they display periods of dysfunctional and disruptive behaviour. Schools need to focus on the varying components of positive mental health, such as resilience, in order to develop a greater understanding of what is truly needed to assist students.

Case Study Continued

It was a greater understanding that was required in order to teach and assist Curtis. His days soon teemed with verbal outbursts in the classroom, moving between unpredictable attempts at positive interactions and incidents of aggression towards peers and authority figures. Curtis demonstrated patterns of self-doubt, and when encouraged to take risks with new

activities, he exhibited self-sabotaging behaviours. Staff queried a mental illness. However, there was no former diagnosis of one and no other formal psycho-educational assessment data to explain his behavioural concerns. He displayed high academic achievement with occasional periods of focus, engagement, and exemplary work ethics. Curtis could be labelled as mentally healthy, yet finding effective interventions for his increasingly disruptive behaviour continued to be a challenge for the school. He was not a candidate for mental health support because there was no evidence of mental illness, and prevention programming that had been delivered to the students as a whole did not appear to have an effect on his behaviour. Other interventions were needed, but they could be provided only after attempting to understand Curtis' motives for his behaviour and inferring that his behaviours were characteristic of an attempt to survive in spite of his past.

The Role of Protective Factors and Resilience Assessment

Positive mental health promotion has become an expectation within Manitoba schools. It is embedded in the strategic directions of school divisions that include commitments to ensure safe and caring learning environments and the implementation of strategies that will foster student engagement (Government of Manitoba, n.d., p.4; Government of Manitoba, 2012, p. 24-25). Because schools are positioned to have a positive influence on the health of children, they are held responsible for implementing research-based practices that promote children's wellness (MASS, 2014). A number of reasons explain why resilience needs to be a core component of mental health promotion in schools. The number of students with risk factors continues to rise (Hunter, 2012; PHAC, 2006). As well, students' ability to handle adversity and life stressors carries over into positive mental wellness in adulthood (Government of Manitoba, 2014). Reducing students' risk factors while simultaneously increasing protective factors needs to take precedence in this programming. Protective factors, defined as the internal and external mechanisms that protect an individual against risk, are directly linked to mental wellness (Cox, 2008; Hunter, 2012). The list of these protective factors is extensive, ranging from students' social competence and above-average intelligence to supportive parents, economic security, and access to support services (see Table 1-1 of PHAC, 2006, p. 19, for complete data). A careful examination of the students' present protective factors is necessary if schools want to implement effective interventions that foster student mental health.

A means to identify, assess, and measure resilience is also required. Researchers are currently exploring ways to diagnosis resilience, with the goal of creating an assessment that would support a model that views mental health as both the absence of a mental illness and the existence of mental wellness (Ungar, 2015). A school's decision to use a resilience assessment tool would lead to earlier and more effective interventions that would increase the chances of improving mental wellness for children.

Return to the Case Study

In the case of Curtis, the collection of his presenting behaviours could be regarded as bullying, hyper, belligerent, and disrespectful. Curtis would, without thought, curse at or shove other students and, when confronted by adults, would deny his behaviour, becoming argumentative or running away. As staff grew to know Curtis, other patterns of behaviour became apparent. Curtis would challenge staff's integrity, displaying mistrust. He would also work to sabotage opportunities for accomplishment, revealing his fear of success. The staff were being challenged to see his "choice of dangerous, delinquent, deviant, and disordered behaviors as coping strategies in under-resourced environments" (Ungar, 2006). There was evidence that the school would need to look beyond the preventative programming in order to find ways to address the severity of Curtis' behaviour.

The Need for Research-Based Practices

If educators are going to do more than just talk about fostering resilience as a way of promoting mental health, then commitment, attention, and resources must be channeled into effective research-based practices that do just that. In Manitoba, guidelines have been provided to ensure that mental health services in schools have a predominantly preventive focus and monitor for early onset of mental disorders (Government of Manitoba, 2012, pp. 8, 33, 35). Partnerships with community services that provide treatment options are suggested when severe problems arise (Government of Manitoba, 2012). However, as was the case with Curtis, mental health interventions comprised of programs, informational packages, and treatment options alone are not adequate to cultivate healthy children. Interventions that foster resilience need to address both the internal and external factors that can affect mental health. There is evidence that individual characteristics such as genetic predispositions, personality and temperament, and external factors such as family, school and community can predict positive development in children, and that school environments need to cushion stress and grow strengths in children, especially when their mental health is at risk (Ungar, 2015). Therefore, a careful review of best practices for intervention is in order.

Considerations for Intervention

Seven components of resilience require attention when developing interventions that will assist young people in building resilience: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control (“Building resilience,” 2014). Strategies need to identify missing components and subsequently find opportunities for students to develop these. A study of high school students who were expelled revealed several points of entry for school intervention that have the potential to increase resilience (Coleman, 2014). These were derived from the students’ discovery of the underlying needs and motivation behind their own behaviours that resulted in their expulsion. For example, the students discovered that a sense of competence and confidence was gained when peers approved of their behaviour. They also shared that there needed to be a significant incident that interfered with their current dysfunctional behaviour before they would decide to change their actions (Coleman, 2014). Programming that focuses on these components of resilience will help students to develop coping skills and give them control over their programming.

School interventions that teach students to pay attention to their thinking and provide strategies for changing counterproductive thoughts are also required. Individuals’ thought patterns have a direct effect on their emotional responses, which in turn influence the individuals’ state of psychological wellness or mental fitness, and consequently their resilience and mental health (JCSH, 2010). Students’ mindsets influence their view of adverse academic and social situations; when students can be taught to see their intelligence and personality as having the potential to change, resilience is increased (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Additionally, a combination of practices and strategies from varying fields of study, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, solution and strength-based counselling, and attachment and trauma theory, is necessary when developing resilience interventions (Hunter, 2012). These practices can be used to assist students in adjusting their mindsets so that they make more positive behavioural choices. This capability, in turn, becomes an additional protective factor in the students’ repertoire of resilience skills.

Although interventions that focus on strengthening internal factors of resilience are important, interventions that address the external factors of family and community are also needed. School, family, and community partnerships play a role as significant sources of protective factors, because they provide opportunities for students and families to have meaningful involvement in the community, contributing to the students’ sense of self-worth and purpose (Bryan, 2005). External supports act as a stepping stone, building students’ capacity to

negotiate for these resources on their own, and in turn giving them a sense of competence and control (Ungar, 2006). Effective interventions require time, human resources, and a desire for partnership. The intent to intervene is not enough. For effective intervention to occur, the people who will provide the intervention, and the time to intervene successfully, must also be in place. Health, social services, and the educational system need to find solutions that will provide efficient use of the services that each offers while maintaining the integrity of each system's policies and mandates.

Case Study Outcome

In Curtis' case, both internal and external aspects that contribute to resilience were either already established or were eventually identified as necessary by the school and the family, and were addressed. No mental disorders were identified for Curtis. However, his protective factors were significant. His regard for his caregiver was deep, and he showed consistent attachment to his family when possible. He demonstrated enough social competence to form loyal friendships and was resourceful in the way that he used the supports provided to him. Curtis' caregiver was supportive, consistent, and firm with him. She advocated relentlessly for Curtis, and she supported the school's attempts to discipline him and to develop leadership and responsibility in him. In addition, the family used the support of community resources, and maintained a connection to its culture and their former community. The community partners involved ensured that Curtis maintained a relationship with his biological parent and that the parent had some input in his educational experience. Effective intervention planning for Curtis' success included practices that sheltered, supported, and added to these protective factors, effectively reducing risk and significantly influencing Curtis' positive mental health. Curtis manifested characteristics typical of resilience.

Conclusion

It would be impossible to address the array of experiences, both positive and challenging, that students bring with them to the school environment each day, yet many prove capable and successful as they move through their tasks of learning and building relationships with others. These displays of resilience are often misinterpreted and disregarded by educators. With the task of fostering positive mental health in students more recently becoming the responsibility of education, schools must review and improve their current mental health practices. All members of the school system will be required to use efficient interventions and research-based strategies as individual students' needs increase and the access to specialized resources decreases. Developing components of resilience promotes mental wellness in students. Therefore, educators require a heightened awareness and a clear understanding of what is required to foster student resilience as a prerequisite to mental health promotion in schools.

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About the Author

Shelley Tucker has worked in Dauphin and surrounding communities in her role as a guidance counsellor and a resource teacher for 27 years. Topics of interest to Shelley in the graduate program include current research in resilience, positive mental health, and counselling clients toward worth and purpose.

The Role of Restorative Discipline in the School System

Kelly Otto

Abstract

Classroom discipline plays an integral role in the daily activities of educators. Educators can choose traditional discipline methods with short-term results or modern practices such as restorative discipline that promise holistic healing with lasting results. Research has shown that the use of restorative discipline builds community, promotes healthy decision making, and heals all involved parties. No single discipline strategy can work for all situations. A balance between traditional and innovative practices is necessary for the effective management of the school and to meet the needs of individual students.

Faced with choosing discipline strategies on a daily basis, 21st century educators are using innovative discipline methods. Veering from traditional methods that do not offer lasting results for perpetrators, current discipline trends have yielded restorative practices. Restorative discipline involves doing good by giving back (Hostetler Mullet, 2014). Rather than a traditional punitive measure of disciplining a student through suspension or expulsion, restorative discipline seeks to repair the well-being of the students involved. A holistic approach is taken to offer reconciliation for all stakeholders involved in the school community. A student who has committed a wrong is given the opportunity to right the wrong through a method determined and facilitated by the victims, administration, or a combination of both. Due to the lasting results of practicing restorative discipline, the chances of a repeated offence are lessened (Payne & Welch, 2015). In the school system, restorative discipline builds a cohesive community, promotes healthy decision making, and heals the parties involved. Together, these factors increase the potential for long-term results for students and the school community, making restorative discipline an appealing choice of discipline method in the school system.

Community Building

Restorative discipline builds a cohesive community. Educators value the positive relationships required to establish safe learning environments. Restorative discipline acknowledges the importance of relationship building to build community (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Students must feel a part of a greater whole to have a successful school experience. Similarly to society, the students who commit an offense will often become repeat offenders (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Rather than the use of suspensions and expulsions to discipline students, restorative discipline seeks to break the cycle of repeat offenders being removed from the school. Restorative discipline sends these students a message of being welcome in the school community (Felt, 2014, para. 8). Students must feel belonging to have a positive school experience. Restorative discipline uses the power of positive relationships to strengthen the cohesiveness of school community by creating a safe and welcoming environment.

I experienced the effects of restorative justice and how it builds stronger relationships and community during the 2014-15 school year. A high school student, Bailey (a pseudonym), created a social media account to publish insults about her peers. After several months of vocal negativity and the drama that accompanied it, it became known that Bailey was the face behind the anonymous social media account. Upon meeting with administrators, Bailey admitted that she was the perpetrator and was willing to take measures to correct her behaviour. Fortunately, Bailey was willing to participate in the restorative discipline process. Had Bailey not been willing, school administrators would have been forced to resort to traditional disciplinary measures such as suspension or expulsion. In this situation, the student council and administration met to

determine a restorative measure for Bailey's actions. Because restorative justice promotes collaborative approaches for being a part of a community (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005, p. 15), the team decided that Bailey needed to apologize. Bailey met with each classroom in the school to explain her situation and to apologize for what she had done. Further to the recommendation of student council and administration, Bailey created another social media account wherein she posted positive messages about the school community. The students of the school who felt betrayed began to understand and communicate with Bailey about why she acted in a negative manner (de Souza & McLean, 2012). Communication provided victims with the opportunity to contextualize the situation (McMurtrie, 2015). In return, this communication brought the students together to build stronger relationships and community.

Beyond Bailey as an individual, other unforeseen beneficial outcomes helped to create a more positive school climate (Payne & Welch, 2013). The concept of "pay it forward" independently spread throughout the building. One of the deeds included students transferring the experience by reaching out to other students who, like Bailey, lacked a sense of belonging. Students identified peers with whom they typically did not associate, and they worked on building and strengthening relationships. Athletes began eating their lunches with the debate students; the media students taught the cheerleaders how to create a promotional video for seeking sponsorship. All around, a stronger, healthier community was established. Further to Bailey's second social media account, other students of the school contributed their own positive comments to the account. The entire school community was on board. Students were empowered to become involved (Gillard, 2014). In this instance, restorative discipline led to unforeseen positive outcomes that complemented the intended outcomes.

Healthy Decision Making

Along with community building, restorative discipline promotes healthy decision making. Students who have been harmed by misbehaviour are given a voice, increasing the chance that future offenders will make healthier choices because bringing attention to the suffering felt by others deters a re-offense (Hostetler Mullet, 2014). Upon meeting with each classroom, Bailey became aware of how strongly she hurt her peers, causing her to not want to harm them again. As research completed in the Oakland School District shows (DeNisco, 2015), restorative discipline has proven benefits. Oakland School District implemented restorative discipline over three years and saw an 87% drop in suspension rates (DeNisco, 2015, p. 22). Oakland School District also saw "graduation rates increased 60 percent at high schools with the programs compared to 7 percent at those without them" and "chronic absenteeism dropped 24 percent at middle schools with the programs, compared to a 62 percent increase at schools that did not have them" (DeNisco, 2015, p. 22). Demonstrated by Oakland School District, students who attend restorative discipline schools show an increase in choosing to make healthier decisions.

In addition to the offender, victims must collaboratively make healthy choices. From being schooled through the public school system, students learn "that the teacher's word is taken as truth, and their perspective won't matter" (Gardner, 2014, p. 11). Restorative discipline removes the connotation that the student voice is silent. In restorative discipline, students as a team must decide on a fair approach to righting the wrong. Problem solving is used to determine how to restore the emotional harm that has occurred (Gillard, 2014). The team must decide on a restorative measure to right the wrong that has been done. Collectively, a healthy decision for restoration of emotion is made.

In Bailey's case, the decision was reached that she visit each classroom in the school to apologize for her actions. Bailey's peers were provided with an opportunity to converse with her and question why she chose to act the way that she did. When the victims' voices were heard, the offender understood the effects of his/her behaviour, making him/her desire to make better choices in the future (McMurtrie, 2015). Upon speaking with peers, Bailey felt remorse and independently desired to rectify the situation beyond the recommendation of student council and

administration by moving forward in creating a social media account that boasted positive messages of the school community. Bailey transformed her thinking from initially performing a negative act, to making a healthy decision by visiting each classroom to apologize and by creating a positive social media account.

Not only does the offender learn healthy decision making through restorative discipline, the victims do as well. When victims have a voice in determining a rectified action, they must reach consensus in an appropriate deed for the perpetrator to complete. The victims develop empathy for the offender (de Souza & McLean, 2012), and work as a team to reach an agreement. In the case of Bailey, the student council met with the administrators to reach a healthy decision. Students who were not involved in the situation observed how the situation was dealt with, and were encouraged to make healthy decisions through example. As seen in the scenario involving Bailey, implementing restorative justice and healthy decision making developed critical thinking, fairness, and teamwork skills in students. The restorative justice team discussed and decided upon the restorative action. When a restorative disciplinary action is used, there is a decrease in the likelihood of a repeated offense (Gillard, 2014). Restorative discipline promotes healthy decision making among both offenders and victims.

Healing

Finally, restorative discipline promotes healing in victims and offenders. Through restorative discipline, rather than trying to get even, a shift in thinking is to get well (Hostetler Mullet, 2014). In order for restorative justice to be effective, it is imperative to heal those who are hurt. Hurt people will continue to hurt other people in order to distract from their own pain. Without healing, victims will feel the need “to get even” with the offender, causing the hurt to continue. In restorative discipline, time and action are key components to heal hurt. Students undergo a facilitated process to make amends and restore damaged relationships (Hostetler Mullet, 2014). When the process is completed with willing students, healing begins to take place for victims and offenders.

In looking at Bailey’s case, with increased communication, healing took place over the course of the school year. Emotionally harmed students accepted Bailey’s apology, and understood her rationale for behaving in such a manner. Bailey’s apology did not produce instantaneous results in healing. Healing occurred in the school community with a combination of the acceptance of Bailey’s apology and with the passing of time. Eventually, by focusing on the harms and needs of those involved, restorative discipline encompassed all healing (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Bailey, as the offender, healed by being given voice to express her story on her terms. The team directed Bailey to apologize, but she had the freedom to choose the delivery method. On her own, Bailey chose to visit each classroom in the school. In addition to the classroom visits, Bailey chose to create the second social media account. Victims healed by having the opportunity to converse with Bailey. For victims, there was vindication found in communicating with the offender (McMurtrie, 2015). Instead of fighting, students respectfully talked through their differences (Davis, 2014). The students had the opportunity to question Bailey, in order to see her perspective and hear her reasoning. When students understand the needs of others, positive behaviours develop (Wenos, Trick, & Williams, 2014). Communication broke down barriers and enabled all parties to move forward in healing.

Without healing, the cycle of hurt continues. In Bailey’s case, had restorative discipline not been practised, the victims may have tried to retaliate. In response, Bailey potentially could have again attacked the victims, causing the cycle to continue. Restorative discipline promotes healing and builds community (DeNisco, 2015). The method of delivery for restorative discipline does not offer a set procedure for reaching healing, but is unique to each case. Restorative discipline offers a safe, facilitated environment for healing to take place and break the cycle of hurt.

Conclusion

Educators are faced with situations requiring disciplinary measures daily. No one method of discipline can serve as a blanket cure for all scenarios. In balance with modern discipline practices, traditional methods of discipline will continue to be needed as well. However, restorative discipline methods provide an innovative outlook on discipline in the school system. The philosophy of restorative discipline is solution based, whereby a misbehaviour has occurred that needs to be solved (Stutzman Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Restorative discipline is a proactive measure to prevent the re-offense of wrong-doers. When used appropriately, restorative discipline models humane and effective disciplinary measures to build character and establish a safe school environment. Restorative discipline is a modern approach that should be practised regularly in schools to build cohesive communities, promote healthy decision making, and heal the parties involved.

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About the Author

Kelly Otto, a Brandon University master's degree student in educational administration, is a resource teacher at Ecole Edward Schreyer School in Beausejour, Manitoba. Kelly's interest in restorative discipline developed through her experiences working with students who have emotional and behavioural disorders. Kelly believes in the success of all students as diverse learners.

OPINION PAPER

Building Trust – But Safety First

Barbara McNish

In counselling there are rules or guidelines to follow that are set out in the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) Code of Ethics. Then there are our own values and morals that colour the counselling sessions which put Virtue Ethics into play. The counselling theorists would say to put the client first and do no harm in the relationship. This process of building the trust will invite the client to change or be able to make an informed choice by providing the client with all the information and knowledge that is required to make that choice. There is a continuous need for awareness and knowledge of all the ethical and legal issues that the counsellor is obligated to follow. Then there is the safety of the players in the relationship between the client and the counsellor that needs to be considered. When this process includes an ethical or legal response and a safety issue, how do I continue to build the trust relationship when I am now obligated to breach the client's confidentiality? There are countless clients with multiple and unique combinations of issues, so categorizing and prioritizing the issues within the parameters of the ethics and legal systems creates a continual process of the potential of being at odds with oneself in the counselling field. There is not a "one size fits all." How will I balance building trust with the client and then possibly have to report a safety issue with potential to damage that trust? This is what I hope to discuss in this paper.

One of the factors that the CCPA has in place is the exceptions to the rules when the counsellor must breach confidentiality in place of safety. The most important instrument is informed consent. This provides the client with clear information on the course of action in the counselling sessions with regards to confidentiality and exceptions to that confidentiality rule.

The release of information, along with consent, is very important so that all clients feel respected and supported in difficult situations. In the counselling setting where I work, we support women in their goals and find mutual grounds in their decisions to providing safety for their children. Applauding and encouraging this safety plan as a parenting strength, and appreciating the great love they have for their children by looking beyond themselves in making these difficult decisions, is crucial when creating trust with the women. It is difficult to maintain the fine line between children's safety, the CFS worker being blamed for apprehension, and the anger and fear that is often present in the situations. The trust that is to be built in counselling with the women is often damaged because they think that if they share with me, then I am going to "tell on them" to CSF. I have often brought the CFS worker to the table of discussion in order to work toward common goals, so the women can see the collaborative teamwork that is available for the common goal of their children's safety and best interests.

The case planning, although somewhat limited because of the mandate of what CFS needs, and this collaborative meeting empower the woman to make some choices for their own children. I sit with the women, regardless of outcome, to help them achieve their goals and support them when the goals are not achieved – in which case we find another common ground for working toward co-parenting with CFS. The safety of children is paramount in the law, and we are required to support this. This does not give anyone the right to judge the parents by making them feel like they are "bad" parents.

The dilemma in which I find myself is in knowing what is right in the law and knowing how women are hurting or have other issues. This limits their parenting, but no one is deliberately causing harm to their children except sometimes out of omission. Although I am not always in agreement with the manner in which the discussion and expectation are given, I agree with the

child being safe and in need of protection. However, the trust is then gone from CFS and or the counsellor.

This is the ability to see beyond the situation even in the midst of a woman having her children apprehended, and to support her regardless of the disagreement with her behaviours. This capacity to engage her, respect her, and listen is often done simply by sitting with her in spite of personal views. This takes a supportive and healing role for change and safety. In this situation there is an alliance, but not necessarily an agreement. I have often been in this position, and even though I know the children are in the best place I struggle with what I know to be best for them because of their safety, but still feel the pain as a mother for the client's losses. I am in constant battle with my conscience because some of the workers look only at the black and white while I see other options that make me fight for the clients without going against the agency's mandate or disrespecting a colleague.

That place of building trust and gathering information regarding possible safety issues with children can cause a report, an investigation, and possible apprehension. I am very clear about the Child Welfare Act and my or anyone else's obligation by law to report. I usually have the mom call the agency with me to ask for support and help in parenting if there is ever that concern before an incident may happen. I align myself with the mom in the meetings, leaving the CFS worker to set out the case plan or expectations, and I work with the mom after in order to debrief feelings and look at how to meet these expectations – as well as talk about the safety of the children, again encouraging her and honouring her love as a mother.

My own personal values play an important part in my counselling setting when I am asked to help and know that I can not do the best job to support the mothers. The dilemma that I have is when I am called to court to testify about the women and their domestic violence and relationships counselling. I often just answer the questions and give no further detail. The women think that I am going to help them get the judge to rule in their favour, but often it is the opposite. I always try to prepare these women for the truth and explain the law. This does not always work out, but when it does there is no greater joy or reward. Building trust with women is critically important so we provide confidentiality, but our "safety first" mandate requires us not only to be good counsellors but to uphold lawful standards. I am constantly reminding myself that the importance of helping a woman is to support her in her most difficult times, even when I must report a potential dangerous situation because it is in her best interest as well as that of her children.

About the Author

Barbara McNish is a trauma informed counsellor who incorporates expressive art into her work. She plans to graduate with a Master of Education in counselling in 2017. Barbara has ten grandchildren and loves to travel. She has a passion for learning and history. She plans to use her training to mentor others.

SPOTLIGHT ON UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

Healing Relations through the Land

Diane Brown

**Prologue:
Gap of Understanding**

Almost a year ago, I was pondering the task of bridging the rift of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. The media is rife with many negative stereotypes of Indigenous people that seem not only to permeate Canadian culture but also to seep into the conscious and unconscious minds of young people. Sometimes these derogatory ideas are reinforced by family members or other important adults in their lives. In the hallways at the school where I worked as an educational assistant I would overhear comments such as “Most Indians have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome” or “Indians have lots of kids so they can collect more welfare money.” One student even tried to convince me that the bid of Peguis First Nation to buy the abandoned Kapyong Barracks for an urban reserve was merely a land grab. He truly believed that an urban reserve would ruin Winnipeg by providing an opening for all manner of immoral and criminal behaviour. If he had done a little research, he would have understood that the claim by Peguis First Nation is legal under the treaty land entitlement process and that urban reserves bring increased economic health to a city, not more crime (“Meeting,” 2015). But what shocked me the most is that he did not feel compelled to back up his opinions; he just assumed he was correct. His stereotypical view of Indigenous people was influencing not only his identity but also that of the Indigenous individuals around him.

This distressing conversation made me realize how wide the chasm of misunderstanding can be between the two people groups, in addition to the absolute need to find a way to break down the continuing effects of colonialism on Indigenous youth. I strive to find a means by which to close the national, and personal, relationship divide. I realize that a factor of commonality could be found in the natural world. As a young girl, I would lie for hours in the tall grass outside my home, listening to the wind as it blew the stalks around me like ocean waves. I would watch the ants busily hauling food back to the hill or thrill to discover a nest of squirming, bald, baby field mice. If I, as a non-Indigenous person, have these wonderful interactions with nature, maybe everyone else has them at some point too. The idea is also timely because growing environmental issues are concerning people of all cultures. If Indigenous beliefs about nature and the Earth could be understood by non-Indigenous people, perhaps some healing can begin.

Indigenous culture has an enduring relationship with the land and everything above, below, and on it. This is why living in a certain place is so important. Indigenous belief systems include the concept of relationality, not only with other humans but with non-human entities as well. These beings include animals, plants, rocks, water, and spirits. There is no hierarchy of power within these relationships. Humans are not the “top of the food chain” who can utilize the Earth’s resources at will. As with any relationship, there are rights and responsibilities involved. It is necessary to show respect for all entities. This explains why Indigenous leaders did not understand the concept of possessing land when the settlers came. They could no more imagine owning a piece of the Earth than owning another human being. Over-fishing or hunting to extinction would have been extremely disrespectful and thus not done. Author and botanist Kimmerer (2013) explained this concept simply and beautifully by relating the example of a bowl, a spoon, and some berries to represent the generosity of the Earth in providing sustenance for humans and other living things. The bowl is not bottomless – there is a finite amount. Kimmerer explained that the “gifts multiply by our care for them and dwindle from our

neglect. We are bound in a covenant of reciprocity, a pact of mutual responsibility to sustain those who sustain us” (p. 382). This is a concept that until very recently had not been embraced by the majority of non-Indigenous scientists or businesspeople. However, the respectful, conservationist theories are now commonly viewed as being valid.

Indelible Connection

Indigenous knowledge is inseparable from the land where Indigenous peoples live. As a Dine (Navajo) woman, Alice Benally expressed the Indigenous connection to the land during a lawsuit to try to prevent the forcible relocation of her people (Whitt, 2009). She said that at a different location, they would not know the significance of the mountains, the life forms, or the sacred places and that the land would not know them – their way of life could not continue. Many Indigenous languages do not even include a term for relocation because the concept is unthinkable. The people would cease to exist if moved elsewhere (Whitt, 2009). Forced relocation creates damage far beyond what a non-Indigenous person can imagine. Because of the numerous relationships affected, the damage to individuals and their communities is multifaceted. They experience trauma in the physical, spiritual, and psychological realm. In traditional justice, banishment was the severest form of punishment that could be meted out. It was rarely imposed and was considered worse than a death sentence because of the broad scope of its effect (Whitt, 2009). This truth could explain some of the difficulties faced by Canadian Indigenous people today who are attempting to heal from the effects of colonization through the land claim process. Reclaiming particular spaces facilitates holistic healing practices that require sacred spaces and particular herbal medicines to promote health and wellness.

The plants that can be used for medicine are found in certain areas. Therefore, access to these places is vital to the health of the Indigenous community. The cedar tree is used for medicine by the people of the coastal Pacific Northwest (Kimmerer, 2013). From the roots to the foliage, every part of the cedar is used for a particular type of healing. The effects of over-forestation would be devastating. James Lamouche, a research officer with the National Aboriginal Health Organization, found that “Indigenous access and control over land is central to Indigenous knowledge and the protection and use of Indigenous healing methodologies” (as cited in Robbins & Dewar, 2011, p. 12). Lamouche postulated that the break with the land is the most significant factor in health problems among Indigenous people. It is contradictory to expect a nation to heal itself while simultaneously being separated from its source of medicine.

Where an Indigenous community lives is important for many other reasons as well as healing. Climate and weather are interpreted and compared to intergenerational stories, in order to document important changes. Hunting and trapping routes are established by following the animals as they migrate. Landmarks are used by mentors to illustrate invaluable moral lessons to their students. The Lakota have a story about how a grandfather taught his grandson about the difference between knowledge and wisdom by use of a gully near the end of winter. The grandfather had known that the boy would attempt to cross the gully instead of going around it, even though the snow was too soft to support him. He knew this because as a young child, he had attempted to make the same crossing and failed (Marshall, 2001). This particular gully was known by many generations of the family and served as a teaching tool because of the accumulated knowledge of weather, snow, water . . . and the impatience of little boys. Thus, the morals and values of the culture are kept strong by stories that involve contact with the land.

Western Disconnect

Another complication is how Westerners view Indigenous knowledge. It is rarely written down and must be transmitted, or handed over, orally only when the student is ready. If it is given too early or too late, the person does not benefit in the same way and may even use the knowledge in an unethical manner. Thus, the knowledge is held and passed on verbally at the

discretion of the teacher and in consideration of the individual student's maturity (Whitt, 2009). Because Indigenous knowledge was not documented, Western scientists did not consider it valid. They dismissed the stories as myths and fairy tales instead of useful facts. The difference can be explained by how the two cultures approach nature and science. The Western way is empirical and representational, while the Indigenous way is experiential and presentational (Whitt, 2009). Oral history is valued in Indigenous knowledge but rejected in Western science as unsophisticated and undefined. Western science perceives time as uniform, flowing in a linear direction from past to present to future, but Indigenous ways of knowing do not. In Indigenous knowledge, everything is not made up of particles that obey unchanging, universal laws, but science has strict particle theory (Simpson, 2002). Philosophical differences aside, the oral culture made sense to transitory peoples who would have had difficulty carrying books around with them as they moved. The format of the stories as legends also makes sense, because this is one of the most easily remembered forms. There is a parallel to Shakespeare's rhyming iambic pentameter, which made memorization easier for the actors who had no script copies. Regardless of the fact that skilled communicators are valued in almost any culture, the Western dismissal of oral ways of knowing has bred a detrimental attitude toward Indigenous people.

Western practices have contributed to a sick planet. Pollution, ecosystem destruction, ozone depletion, and species extinction are all results of man's intervention into nature's ways. Science is starting to turn to Indigenous ways of knowing to solve the problems and to provide alternative ways to interact with the planet. Inuit journalist and past president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, John Amagoalik (1992), eloquently described the Inuit understanding of life on Earth as their understanding "that to waste now means to want later. We know that there must be a balance between take and return" (p. 65). Amagoalik also revealed that Westerners are beginning to understand and appreciate Indigenous knowledge. Amagoalik claimed that respecting the environment, sustainable development, and conservation are ideals that mainstream culture has borrowed from the Inuit people. This reciprocal relationship runs counterintuitive to the Western concept of using up natural resources on the whim of humanity. Shopping for locally produced goods, organic products, and the recycling craze are just a few examples of steps in the right direction when it comes to the environment. There is also a relatively recent acknowledgement of the value of Indigenous knowing in the health industry. A large percentage of pharmaceuticals are based on traditional medicinal plants (Whitt, 2009). Herbal remedies are more popular than ever and meditation practices are increasing. The medical system is beginning to expose all cultures to Indigenous knowledge of the land.

Hopeful Future in the Public Education System

Public education is also starting to redefine our approaches to teaching and learning to be similar to Indigenous models. Individualized learning is becoming valued over the "one size fits all" factory model. Discovery, or inquiry learning, is being recognized as producing creative and critical thinkers. Teachers are acting more as guides and less as all-knowing authoritarians in the classroom. Indigenous content is being added to curriculum. For example, the Brandon University library is in the process of adding the Aboriginal Curriculum Initiatives Collection of books, games, and other items into circulation in its main collection. These items are cross-curricular and are intended for use in courses such as English language arts and social studies, not just Aboriginal studies electives. Classroom exposure to Indigenous beliefs and ways of interacting with the land tends to lend credence to the information for non-Indigenous youth.

One of the effects of these changes is an increased positive identity for Indigenous young people. If they can see evidence that their culture is no longer denigrated but valued, school and education will become more meaningful. Simpson (2002) recommended that more Indigenous teachers be hired to provide positive role models for Indigenous youth. She also encouraged science curriculums to acknowledge both Western and Indigenous methods of experimentation, with engineering, technologies, and mathematics as viable options. These changes offer hope

for the future and the real possibility of healing the community. Increased confidence growing in Indigenous youth will enable them to respond to negative comments in a more productive way. Non-Indigenous students will be exposed to all of the positive information about Indigenous culture at the same time as Indigenous youth, and that exposure is bound to bring about more respect for alternative ways of knowing and for the individuals who hold those beliefs.

Conclusion: The Possibility of Positive Intersections

The question remains, will any of these suggestions really provide a means of healing for individual identities and of caring for Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships in today's youth? Colonial attitudes may be too ingrained in some people for their opinions to change. However, those who farm with their parents may be open to a better understanding. Family farms are passed down from generation to generation, and they have an undeniable appreciation and connection to the land. To be a successful farmer, one must have intimate knowledge of the weather patterns, soil mineral content, water table, and so much more. Budding scientists, environmental activists, and story tellers may also find value in traditional teachings. Perhaps a chord of recognition will be struck once the Indigenous ways of knowing are more thoroughly understood. Some Indigenous youth have turned away from their heritage. Others are so angry and filled with pain because of the inter-generational effects of colonization that they are not yet ready to mend fences with the non-Indigenous community. Nevertheless, individuals on both sides of the chasm are bound to reconsider their positions . . . and they will affect a few more. I believe that any chance is better than no chance and that the only true failure is not to try.

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About the Author

Diane Brown is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Education After Degree program, senior years stream, with English and Native Studies as teachable subject areas. Diane pursues inquiry learning as a lifestyle and is enthusiastically committed to guiding others on their journeys of educational discovery in the future.

CELEBRATION OF GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses in 2015.

Ingrid Gross

April 9, 2015

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Marion Terry

A Comparative Case Study of the Professional Development School (PDS) and Traditional Pre-Service Teacher Education Models

Pre-service teacher education programs have undergone strong criticism with regards to their effectiveness in preparing pre-service teacher candidates for the teaching profession. This qualitative case study explored the influence that two different pre-service teacher education programs had on pre-service teacher candidates' perceptions of readiness for the teaching profession. The professional development school (PDS) model provided an integrated learning experience for pre-service teacher candidates that was stretched over a five-month period. The traditional model was structured in a block system whereby pre-service teacher candidates first studied theoretical aspects of teaching and learning, and then were placed in a practicum.

The research question that guided this case study was as follows: How do the experiences of first year Bachelor of Education students who have participated in a professional development school model differ from first year Bachelor of Education students who have participated in a traditional Faculty of Education model with regards to their perceptions of readiness? In this study, pre-service teacher candidate data were collected at a university campus located in Western Canada. Co-operating teachers' data were collected at public school sites: a grades 9-12 suburban secondary school, and two K-8 middle-years schools located in a city situated in Western Canada.

The 23 participants were 15 pre-service teacher candidates and 8 co-operating teachers. The pre-service teacher candidates volunteered after a public presentation by the researcher, and the co-operating teachers were randomly chosen from PDS and traditional lists. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews using opened questions involving 15 pre-service teacher candidates, and 8 co-operating teachers. Emergent and a priori themes were developed for textual data. Using the voices of traditional and PDS pre-service teacher candidates and co-operating teachers, this study attempted to identify the instrumental factors that facilitated strong self-efficacy in pre-service teacher candidates.

David Schroeder

July 23, 2015

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Jacqueline Kirk

The Challenges of Being a Novice Principal in a Decentralized School District in Northern Canada

This qualitative comparative case study answered the main research question of what challenges four novice principals experienced, within the context of a decentralized school district, in a northern Canadian community. Additionally, the study answered subsequent research questions about the strategies novice principals utilized to begin their year, and the policies and procedures the school district employed to support their novice principals. Data

collection included (1) interviews with the novice principals and with the district administrator, (2) participants' journal reflections, and 3) a focus group discussion.

The findings confirmed the complexity of the principalship due to the demands of the job, and the amount of resiliency required. Two challenges experienced by the participants were budget management, within a decentralized district, and managing the building. One strategy the participants identified for beginning the year successfully was to spend time building relationships with staff members and seeking their input. Additionally, the participants felt that a significant part of their successful preparation included an apprenticeship as a vice principal. Furthermore, they described how their former principals mentored them through the challenges they encountered during their first year in the principalship.

Ayodeji Osiname

December 11, 2015

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Helen Armstrong

The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge

Teachers, support staff, and students who do not identify with the majority group or who express divergent ideas are often isolated and marginalized by school cultures that do not embrace diversity, but instead promote "group think." As a result, many find that their professional and educational experiences make them feel less connected, more isolated, and silenced.

This qualitative case study examined the leadership styles that five selected school principals in southwestern Manitoba, Canada, utilize to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture. These principals found ways to successfully embrace difficult issues and challenging people, while sustaining a positive culture and building a school community that supported diversity and embraced change. The framework that undergirded this study – the critical, inclusive praxis – reinforced that the school principal was charged with the responsibility of transforming the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action.

The researcher engaged in an interaction (i.e., interview) with these principals to learn about their lived experiences, particularly the patterns of behaviour related to their leadership approaches within a critical inclusive praxis. The study's conclusions confirmed that through collaboration and dialogue, by building positive relationships in safe and caring environments where there is concern for others and a supportive approach, all the while still adopting a growth mindset, these school principals built positive cultures where stakeholders felt valued, safe, respected, and included. This research deepens our collective understanding of how principals negotiate the political dynamics within their schools and vary leadership styles to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture.

Wayne Jacobsen

December 17, 2015

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Karen Rempel

An Examination of Instructional Practices of Contemporary Police Officer Training Programs in Canada

Canadian communities are asking their police officers to perform duties that are becoming broader in scope, and this has placed increased demands on those officers. These changes

also bring about questions about the methods used to train tomorrow's police officer and how this training aligns itself with how adults learn.

The purpose of the research was to examine the instructional practices of contemporary police officer training programs with respect to Malcolm Knowles' six major principles of adult learning. The study used a mixed method design comprised of an instructor survey and interviews with key informants from police training academies. Forty-eight instructors completed the survey, and nine administrators participated in individual interviews.

The analysis of the survey data revealed that although respondents utilized activities that aligned with some of Knowles' six principles, there were other activities that did not align. The analysis of the interview data revealed that participants understood and supported the use of most of Knowles' six principles within their training programs. Further analysis of the interview data identified four emerging themes as having a significant impact on the delivery of police officer training: social context, model of training delivery, contributing institutional factors, and instructor qualifications.

Based on the findings from this research, police officer training academies should –

1. Promote a new model of training delivery that focuses on the learner and their ability to problem solve, think critically, and effectively work with others.
2. Adopt a pre-employment model of training.
3. Establish stronger partnerships with post-secondary institutions.
4. Work with all levels of government in order to facilitate change.

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Send your manuscript electronically to Dr. Marion Terry, Editor (terry@brandonu.ca), as an email attachment in Microsoft Word. All manuscripts that adhere to the content and style requirements will be reviewed.

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