

*BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

Volume 11, Issue 1, 2019



Polar Bear Cub, Churchill, Manitoba



**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**



# *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

**Volume 11, Issue 1, 2019**

(also available online from [www.brandonu.ca](http://www.brandonu.ca))

## **Editor**

Dr. Marion Terry  
Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University

## **Editorial Committee**

Ms. JulieAnn Kniskern  
Assistant Professor (Retired), Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Arnold Novak  
Associate Professor (Retired), Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Candy Skyhar  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Cathryn Smith  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University

## **Reviewers**

Ms. JulieAnn Kniskern  
Assistant Professor (Retired), Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Amjad Malik  
Associate Professor, University College of the North  
Dr. Arnold Novak  
Associate Professor (Retired), Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Candy Skyhar  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Cathryn Smith  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Lynn Whidden  
Professor Emerita, Faculty of Education, Brandon University  
Dr. Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Brandon University

## **Cover Photograph**

Jennifer Bowers  
Graduate Student of Psychology  
Port Jefferson, New York

## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

**Marion Terry, Ph.D.**

Welcome to the twenty-second issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 11, issue 1, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. I thank these educators for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles that reflect topics of concern from their own experiences.

- Pamela Pahl's research report examines the experiences of non-commissioned female-identified members in male-dominated, non-combat CAF occupations.
- Breanna Carels' refereed article discusses the role of teachers in addressing nomophobia (fear of not being able to use one's phone) in the classroom.
- Alex Murray's refereed article explores the negative and positive sides of using competition as a teaching strategy.
- Shandel Chartrand's refereed article offers suggestions for responding to funding issues in special education services.
- Alexandra Paiva's refereed article explains how trauma-informed schools can minimize the adverse effects of childhood maltreatment.
- Gina Bradshaw's refereed article outlines means for schools to make gender and/or sexual diverse students feel welcome.
- Yunge Pang's refereed article recommends incorporating multicultural education in order to promote ethnic equity in Chinese schools.
- Suzanne Calder's refereed article reinforces the importance of teacher-student and school-community partnerships in helping students who live in poverty.
- Ellana Armstrong's refereed article proffers solutions to Indigenous students' personal barriers, such as celebrating their strengths with compassion and love.
- Jenn Stewart's refereed article emphasizes understanding introverted students and their unique learning needs in order to integrate them in the classroom.
- Tyler Sloan's refereed article advocates literacy education as a means to mitigate the effects of poverty on students' academic success and job prospects.
- Miranda Bowman's opinion paper supports mentoring as a means to improve teacher performance.

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with theses in 2018.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
<b>Research Report</b>	
Women and Job Satisfaction in Today's Canadian Armed Forces' Climate Pamela S. Pahl	4
<b>Refereed Articles</b>	
Changing our Mindset in Regards to Cellphones in the Classroom Breanna Carels	9
Competition as a Teaching Strategy Alex Murray	13
Funding Issues and Proactive Responses in Special Education Shandel Chartrand	17
The Importance of Trauma-Informed Schools for Maltreated Children Alexandra Paiva	22
Inclusion in Schools: Gender and Sexual Diversity Gina Bradshaw	29
Formal Education in China: A Call for Genuine Multiculturalism Yunge Pang	33
The Relationship Between Students Living in Poverty and Those Who Teach Them Suzanne Calder	37
Solutions to Indigenous Personal Barriers From the Author's Perspective Ellana Armstrong	42
Supporting Introverted Students Jenn Stewart	47
Supporting Students Living in Poverty Tyler Sloan	51
<b>Opinion Paper</b>	
If You Think You Don't Need it, You Probably Do Miranda Bowman	56
<b>Celebration of Scholarship</b>	57

## **RESEARCH REPORT**

### **Women and Job Satisfaction In Today's Canadian Armed Forces' Climate**

**Pamela S. Pahl**

Women continue to struggle in order to integrate successfully into the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). This study examined the cultural experiences of ten non-commissioned female-identified members serving in the ranks of Corporal to Sergeant in male-dominated, non-combat arms occupations. The volunteers were asked 28 questions in a confidential one-on-one setting, including 5 questions regarding the CAF's Operation HONOUR initiative.

Four main themes emerged from the data: motivation, elemental differences, navigating gender, and the impressions of Operation HONOUR. Congruency of interests, skills, and experience strongly influenced job satisfaction. Five participants indicated that they would have selected a different occupation when enrolling in the organization. Despite instances of tokenism and harassing language and behaviours directed at the servicewomen throughout their careers, poor leadership in general and difficulties with overly competitive serving members had been the primary reasons for two members to consider exiting the CAF. Job satisfaction was linked primarily to the perception of being provided challenging, interesting, and fulfilling work. Direct or indirect support from superiors and peers also related to job satisfaction.

Postings and their associated environments of Army, Navy, or Air Force strongly influenced the women's personal and professional experiences, with the Navy and Army being associated more closely with overall more misogynist treatment of women. The women navigated their gender in numerous ways, with most problems stemming from pregnancy and child care, and managing heavily physically demanding tasks. Male-to-male interactions were described as more physical and easygoing, cross-sex interactions were complex and varied but most often related to discrimination against females because of pregnancy and child care, and female-to-female interactions were described as extremes of either camaraderie to counteract male peer interactions or highly competitive and counter-productive. Female superiors in particular were mostly described in a highly negative manner, compared to male superiors.

All of the servicewomen were very familiar with the Operation HONOUR initiative. Nine interviewees believed that Operation HONOUR has made a positive difference, although five believed that it has been implemented in too extreme a manner, and in some ways their daily functioning has been more difficult because of servicemen's retaliation to the initiative.

#### **Recommendations for Practice**

The final results of the study, combined with prior research, revealed limitations and produced recommendations for practice and future CAF research, in order to improve functioning and the experiences of Canada's servicewomen in particular.

#### **Adaptation to the Military**

Transitioning from regular Canadian society to military life can be particularly challenging for younger and more easily influenced members. Eight participants had entered the Forces either immediately following high school, or shortly thereafter. At the time of the study interviews, all of the participants were trained in their occupations, five had served in more than one environment, three had served in more than one occupation, two had served in the Primary Reserve, and two were employed in specialty roles. Nine appeared to have mostly adapted to

the military and, for those members who had changed their occupations, their decisions were not as a result of their environments but instead matched their interests and skillsets to occupations that inspired and motivated them.

Many of the participants had undergone a transition throughout their careers in which they described themselves as “naïve” when they had considered joining the Forces. Because recruiting centres have decreased in number, and the Internet is now the primary method of gathering information about life in the Forces, the accuracy and breadth of the Forces’ recruiting site is designed to entice members to join, but it should also portray realistic life in the Forces. Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs) comprise the majority of the CAF’s female serving members and therefore should be reflected more often on the website than officers who are facing challenges while serving. Males, single parents, and divorced members who cope with these types of demands could also be included in recruiting testimonials. All stages of a military member’s career, from initial research using the recruiting website, to training and employment needs, should reflect gender equality. Two participants self-identified as members of the LGBTQ community who were in relationships and had no children, two self-identified as single parents, one had supported extended family members for a time following her enrolment, and two self-identified as married with children.

Canada’s military has progressed from reflecting a dominant military culture to a male/female culture that also includes visible minorities. Ironically, the absence of LGBTQ membership, single parents, and other lesser visible minority populations on the Forces’ website is not congruent with the Forces’ diverse membership and its message of acknowledgement and acceptance of this diversity. Comparable subtitles and associated information and photos that match men, women, and LGBTQ members would mitigate the problem of addressing women on the site as the gender that needs to be attended to separately, particularly regarding managing child care.

Tokenism was evident in some cases, when participants were singled out because of their gender and were encouraged or expected to act in gender-stereotypical ways – notably during their initial training or employment. It could be argued that the words and photos on the CAF’s recruiting website could create and instill concepts of tokenism that extend to the initial military training setting and into the subsequent military workplace.

**Recommendations.** Avoid stereotypes on the CAF’s recruiting websites. For example, portray both male and female members fulfilling the role of a single parent and same-sex dual-parent families. Also provide a demographic spectrum of serving members that is comprised of NCM and officer ranks, both genders, and members who comprise the minority populations such as LGBTQ members who thrive, compensate, persevere, and even fail within the organization. Provide a more realistic and balanced view of both genders and more fully orient potential applicants to military life and what they may realistically face, particularly if they simultaneously strive to achieve a family and a military career.

## **Gender-Related Issues**

No pattern was observed between sexual harassment and the elements. Patterns of behaviours that were attributed to the Army, Navy, or Air Force elements mostly related to the participants’ quality of relationships within the workplace, which strongly associated with job satisfaction. The field environment was usually associated with the Army’s more outward demonstrations of men’s physical prowess, verbal downgrading of women’s physical capabilities, and stronger adherence to military rank structure. The participants also referred to their physical difficulties within the field environments of the Navy and Army. Despite these difficulties in the field settings, most of the servicewomen had been cognizant of which trades they desired, had pursued them, and had fully embraced and enjoyed their occupational tasks. However, there was some regret expressed for not having liaised with more females prior to

joining the CAF. Moreover, some had no, very limited, or delayed support when they experienced harassment.

**Recommendation.** Offer diverse types of military orientation programs regarding enrolment in both the Regular Force and the Primary Reserve that are tailored specifically to women, but that are more flexible than requiring a lengthy on-site program. Perhaps this type of recruiting could be demonstrated online, such as in a virtual reality program, but also accurately portray the advantages and disadvantages of serving in the CAF and in each occupation.

### **Occupational Depictions**

None of the current study's respondents expressed a desire to exit the organization because of a disinterest in the type of work that they associated with their occupations, two had changed their occupations following their entry or transfer into the CAF, and five indicated that they would not have accepted the same occupation that they did when they entered (or in two cases transferred to) the Regular Force. The participants reported having viewed accurate occupational descriptions on the Forces' recruiting website in some cases, but not in others. One woman noted that she would probably not have enrolled in her assigned occupation if the video depicting the occupation had demonstrated its strong field component. In her case, she observed that her occupation was actually depicted as another CAF occupation.

**Recommendations.** Balance recruiting goals with recruiting promotional materials or methods that depict all of the occupations and elements from a highly realistic viewpoint. For example, reflect the strong field, office, or heavy manual labour requirements of occupations where they exist. Regularly update descriptions and videos to accurately reflect changes within the occupations' training and employment.

### **Support Within the CAF**

The interviewees were initially motivated to join because of external factors (financial and other benefits, funds to finish paying off their education, fun, and excitement), and a few of them joined because of a strong interest in a particular occupation or set of similar occupations. As time passed, their motivation to remain in either their occupations or the Forces focused primarily on their assigned occupations and the relationships that they developed throughout their careers. Their motivation to continue to serve was associated with support from superiors and colleagues. However, they applied various coping mechanisms in order to fit into the CAF, with very little to no mentorship, despite possessing relevant skills and experience related to the tasks required of them following their initial occupational training. Once the women were recruited and trained, they were mostly left alone to expend unnecessary energy navigating their gender in male-dominated occupations, with minimal same and cross-sex relationships.

The women who expressed an interest in leading were motivated by their desire to assist other servicewomen. Those respondents who noted that they had considered releasing at some point during their careers cited abuse of authority and poor leadership as the reasons for potential exit. Fair treatment, even if it was poor treatment, was consistently considered in a positive manner by the current study's respondents.

**Recommendations.** Provide mandatory mentorship training for all members in order to improve leadership and retention. Create more diverse training classes and encourage women and other minority populations to integrate with peers in order to develop healthier versus competitive relationships. Augment this training with classes that heighten awareness and counteract gender stereotypes. Also tailor the CAF's leadership and mentorship training according to gender (the results from the current study support the idea of different methods of leadership and different career motivators according to gender).

## Harassment and Early Intervention

The respondents were highly self-sufficient and able to cope, partly by learning to suppress their emotions. Any problems encountered usually related to harassment or sexual harassment. However, none of the respondents who mentioned these barriers expressed a desire to leave their occupations or the CAF as a result. All but one incident was managed either by the participants themselves or their chains of command. However, the participants' morale was noticeably stronger when they spoke of gaining the support that they felt that they had earned, through their chains of command, and when harassment was dealt with swiftly and effectively. The CAF's latest efforts to manage low-level harassment garnered criticism by the members in the current study. Their reactions may be partially explained by their experiences prior to the implementation of Operation HONOUR; some participants felt that the discipline related to inappropriate sexual behaviours was too severe.

Supervisory support was evidently a strong factor related to job satisfaction when the current study's respondents expressed their desire to "give back" to the Forces. This support was also associated with the participants' feelings of well-being and career satisfaction. A distinct difference was noticeable regarding the styles and effectiveness of leadership and gender. The current study was replete with descriptions of female leaders as autocratic, biased, and more career oriented than male leaders. It appears that the competitive nature of the military and instances of abuse of the rank system can contribute to placing women in an even further disadvantaged position of being greatly outnumbered within the organization. However, all of the respondents reported having been able to manage, (or, in one case tolerate) the effects of poor leadership. The women's reports of some extremely dysfunctional leadership practices reflect that the distinction between the values and demands of Canada's military members and those of its civilian population is occasionally blurred by serving members.

**Recommendations.** All CAF members will quickly and effectively manage lower and higher levels of unacceptable conduct. Provide consistent training throughout members' careers in order to embrace ethics and professionalism, and to override contrary codes imbedded in the CAF's culture. Also communicate and reinforce this type of "buy-in" for the leadership ranks.

## The Retention of Women in the CAF

Previous research has emphasized the requirement to retain women during peak periods of their careers and that demonstrating care and respect for its members and recognizing their contributions will enhance the members' emotional attachment to the military and job satisfaction and reduce their level of strain. It was evident from all of the participants' interviews that they required challenging and rewarding tasks that would eventually lead to progression in rank/higher-level challenges in their careers.

Three members had seriously considered leaving the CAF because of inadequate leadership in general. They also referenced a number of factors external to their occupational work, such as needing to volunteer and self-advocate in order to be promoted in rank. The respondents also cited barriers to career progression, such as not being "liked" and being held to a higher standard due to gender. Some of the servicewomen tended to underrate their own contributions and attested to occasionally demonstrating lower levels of confidence than their male peers when undertaking tasks. Confounding these issues, numerous examples of hostility or differential treatment directed at the respondents often involved their perceived (and at times actual and self-acknowledged) lesser physical strength, and their ability to bear children (and therefore experience absences and experience from their workplaces).

**Recommendations.** Train supervisors to recognize and implement a non-biased approach to leading and assessing, particularly regarding assigning tasks. Revamp the yearly personnel assessment procedure to reflect supervisory fairness and professionalism. Ensure that positions are backfilled when members take time off work for pregnancy or child care. CAF members

quickly assume military lingo and attach meaning to lingo that relates to the care of children. Labelling the type of leave to care for children should be based on parenting versus biological functions (i.e., eliminating the term “maternity leave” to encompass “parental leave,” or changing the term altogether), thereby creating a more balanced perspective on child care. Also scrutinize any changes to the CAF’s fitness testing in order to ensure that there is a perception of equality between the genders regarding the standards to pass, fail, or achieve a particular level.

## **Pregnancy and Child Care**

The women in this study, whether single parents or in dual-parent families, had experienced numerous difficulties with securing childcare after hours and during deployments. Childrearing made it difficult for them to volunteer for opportunities to advance within their careers.

**Recommendation.** Provide appropriate and professional after-hours and long-term child care for CAF members who are parents, in order to alleviate many of the difficulties associated with the stress of balancing child care and soldiering. This may mean providing additional funds for extended family members to travel for assistance with child care, particularly for single parents and those located in isolated or semi-isolated postings.

## **Feedback Regarding Operation HONOUR**

Considering the issues that women, such as the ones in the current study, manage that are mostly unique to them because of their gender, it is not surprising that women navigate their gender in a variety of ways that reflect self-preservation when they witness or experience harassment or sexual harassment. One interviewee noted that no one wants to be “that girl” when they are faced with potentially reporting an instance of harassment.

**Recommendations.** Instead of singling any male or female members out in a crowd of either peers or superiors, solicit members’ feedback regarding Operation HONOUR on a one-on-one or anonymous basis. Ensure that all military members are aware of, have read, and understand policies regarding Operation HONOUR.

## **Improvements to Leadership**

During recruit training, the socialization process is critical for imprinting the impressions of how members are treated within the military. The Forces has recently identified problems of inconsistent leadership and a requirement to update the leadership doctrine within the Forces. Unfortunately, very limited academic and military research targets how leadership and culture affect gender diversity and harassment. Research is currently underway to explore how leadership and culture influence sexual harassment and misconduct, and will investigate the influences of cultural and social factors on early entry into the Forces, and during environmental and occupational training, unit employment, and operational deployments. There is also very limited research that explores female-to-female interactions within the Canada’s military.

**Recommendations.** Instruct ethical and decisive leadership not only throughout initial leadership training, but also throughout members’ careers. Conduct research that examines the differences between the genders’ styles of leadership and their effectiveness.

## **About the Researcher**

*Born and raised in Manitoba, Captain (Retired) Pamela Pahl is a military veteran who completed her post-secondary schooling at Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College. She has been intrigued by gendered experiences in the military and is an advocate for serving or retired servicewomen.*

## REFEREED ARTICLES

### Changing our Mindset in Regards to Cellphones in the Classroom

Breanna Carels

#### **Abstract**

*Cell phone use is on the rise with teenagers, and is causing some educational issues that are concerning. Students are suffering from nomophobia, which leads to attention issues and stress and anxiety, as well as poor decision making in regards to cellphones. Educators must recognize the problems that cell phones are causing and work to find ways to solve these problems. Educators need learning opportunities that will change their mindset on cell phones. Eventually, educators will understand the educational benefits of incorporating cell phones into the classroom. Updating school policies and classroom expectations will ensure appropriate use of cell phones.*

As students prepare for a school day, they pack their books, lunches, and most importantly their cellphones for the day ahead (Schreiner, 2018). On average, adolescents spend approximately eight hours a day on devices with access to media (Tang & Patrick, 2018, p. 34). I have noticed in my own classroom that students have become increasingly dependent on their phones, which is causing the students to be distracted during class lectures. It appears that students are dealing with a modern phenomenon called nomophobia. Nomophobia is the fear of not being able to use one's phone or the many apps that these devices now offer (Tams, Legoux, & Léger, 2018). Nomophobia leads to other issues, including the inability to focus, stress and anxiety, and the inappropriate use of cellular devices. The adults who work with these students need to change their mindset on cellphones, and look at ways to incorporate these phones in class, rather than banning them. Schools should consider updating their policies on cellphone use, and teachers should set their classroom expectations very early in the school year (Harriman, 2017). Teachers must become familiar with cell phone technology and find ways to incorporate phones as academic tools (Christenson & Knezek, 2018).

#### **Problems That Arise From Nomophobia**

Cell phone dependency and use are facing students with a variety of problems, including inability to focus, stress and anxiety, and the inappropriate use of cellular devices. One major concern for classroom teachers is that cell phones may threaten classroom learning because of the effects they are having on students' ability to focus (Mendoza, Pody, Lee, Kim, & McDonough, 2018). In order to have optimal attention, students need to focus on one task at a time. However, the younger generation has become more accustomed to multitasking in their daily lives and in the classroom setting. Although multitasking appears as completing multiple actions at once, realistically it is better described as task switching (Hayashi & Blessington, 2018), which has tremendous cognitive costs (Mendoza et al, 2018). When students are distracted by their cellphones, they begin multitasking between classroom activities and addressing the phone. Poorer academic performance and lower cognitive control are two ways in which students who are distracted by cellphones are being affected (Hayashi & Blessington, 2018). In studies that tested the proximity of a cellphone and its effects, the results showed that the closer the cellphone was to the students, the poorer cognitive functioning was (Watson, 2017). Hearing a phone ring or a notification signal, regardless to whom the phone belonged, was also found to distract students in the classroom (Mendoza et al., 2018). In summary, if the

presence of phones or a notification signal can so easily distract our students, then there will be real harm to their academic success (Watson, 2017).

Another area of concern is the stress and anxiety of students who experience nomophobia. This phobia leads students to believe that they are losing access to information, connectedness, or communication (Tams et al., 2018). They therefore experience anxiety or distress when they are without their phones for long periods of time. The reason these strong emotions occur is that students have become socially dependent on having their phones (Mendoza et al., 2018). They are uncertain when they will get to look at their phone again or they feel as though they have lost control, which causes them great stress (Tams et al., 2018). It takes approximately 10 minutes for students to begin to feel anxiety in these situations, which is about the capacity of their attention span (Mendoza et al., 2018, p. 53). The dependency they have on their phones is explained as FOMO: “fear of missing out” (Mendoza et al., 2018, p. 53). Overall, the stress and anxiety these students are having in regards to their phones will cause negative consequences, including reduced mental well-being and diminished productivity (Tams et al., 2018).

Interestingly, students are aware that texting or being on their phones during class may have negative consequences because it is inappropriate, unprofessional, rude, and distracting (Hayashi & Blessington, 2018). The reason they choose to be on the phone, despite knowing the consequences, is that there is an instant gratification to it. This gratification is what they focus on, rather than looking ahead into the future and thinking about the good grades they might earn on an exam if they focus in this moment on classroom materials (Hayashi & Blessington, 2018). To these young students, the cellphone is their key to friendship, social status, or self-image (Ong, 2010, p. 69). Society has led them to believe that immediacy in response is critical to their social standing, dependent upon their being reachable no matter the time or place (Ong, 2010). Feeling the need to respond immediately has detrimental effects within the classroom setting (Tatum, Olson, & Frey, 2018). First, students are not developing relationships with students within the classroom because they are so focused on connecting with the outside world. Second, they are choosing not to engage fully in a classroom lecture, which hinders their learning process. Students ultimately believe that their phones are not interfering with their classroom experience, but in reality the interference is happening (Watson, 2017). Students will continue to choose texting at inappropriate times rather than listening to a lecture because of the instant gratification it provides (Schreiner, 2018). Lack of focus, extreme stress and anxiety, and inappropriate use of devices are all problems resulting from student dependency on cell phones.

### **Changing Our Mindset To Prevent Nomophobia**

Recognizing that there is a present phenomenon called nomophobia, teachers need to change their mindset and incorporating phones in class, update policies and classroom expectations, and find ways to use phones as academic tools, in order to reduce the negative effects caused by it. Older teachers, especially, need to adjust their mindset to focus on the fact that cellphones offer flexible learning and collaboration, and work to incorporate these phones into the everyday classroom (Christensen & Knezek, 2018), because having cell phones for personal use does not mean that teachers know how to use cell phones effectively in the classroom. If proper training is offered to teachers, they will become comfortable with the phones, and will be more likely to change their classroom instruction to include cell phones (O’Bannon & Thomas, 2015). If teachers move away from the lecture style of teaching, and instead roam around and constantly engage with students, these students are more likely to engage in academically related cell phone use (Harriman, 2017). Given time and training, teachers may see the benefit of incorporating cell phones, and have a changed mindset.

If cell phones are to be included as an instructional tool, it is important to update school policies and lay out clear classroom expectations for students. Although most schools have policies in place that ban cellphones, teachers find them are ineffective because most students

use their phones throughout the school day regardless of the policy (Gao, Yan, Zhao, Pan, & Mo, 2014). Therefore, it is in the best interest of schools, teachers, and students to lift the bans and reassess the policies (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2015). When making changes to a school cell phone policy, it would be in the best interest of school staff to include students in the discussion (Ormiston, n.d.). Including students in the planning process will alleviate stress because they feel more in control, which will help prevent nomophobia (Tams et al., 2018). Once a new policy is developed, a contract should be created for students to sign. This contract should include the consequences students will face if they break the new cell phone policy (Harriman, 2017). As this new policy is implemented, students should be reminded daily what appropriate cellphone use looks like and the consequences of rules being broken (Ormiston, n.d.). Students are more likely to respond positively to policies if they perceive that teachers are on board with the school policies and classroom expectations being enforced (Tatum et al., 2018).

With a changed mindset and improved policies, teachers can begin to plan how they will incorporate cell phones as academic tools. Teachers will now have the ability to differentiate and personalize learning opportunities (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2015) with cell phones whose features are already familiar to the students (Ormiston, n.d.). These personal devices can assist in student organization, overall participation, and the flexibility to connect to information in any setting (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2014). Teachers should encourage students to use their phones to record important dates so that they remember their homework, assignment, test, and project deadlines (Harriman, 2017). There are several organizational tools on phones, including calendars, clock/alarms, and downloaded homework apps (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2015). Student engagement can be improved by allowing students to use their phones to respond to questions, polls, or website quizzes (Harriman, 2017). Audio/video recording lessons, using the camera, accessing the internet, or downloading educational apps are also ways to engage students (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2014). These phones also offer flexibility because teachers can connect with students both inside and outside the classroom setting (Christensen & Knezek, 2018). In my own classroom, all students are on Google Classroom, where I upload assignments, rubrics, and test dates. If they download this app on their phones, they will receive notifications when I update classroom, or they can turn in their assignments from wherever they are. These academic tools are a quick snapshot of the many beneficial uses of cell phones in the classroom. With a changed mindset about incorporating phones, updated policies and classroom expectations, and an understanding of the many academic tools that phones offer, it is likely that teachers can alleviate the problems resulting from nomophobia.

## **Conclusion**

Unfortunately, inappropriate cell phone use in the classroom obstructs the focus of students, which leads to poorer academic outcomes (Hayashi & Blessington, 2018). If cell phone use is limited or monitored, students feel that their freedom is being threatened (Tatum et al., 2018). Limitation, in turn, leads to high stress and anxiety because students feel the need to respond immediately so that they do not ruin their social status or connections with friends (Ong, 2010). Students also fail to recognize the consequences of their actions and will continue to use devices inappropriately (Schreiner, 2018). The impact that negative cell phone use is having on students is a major concern. It is crucial that educators consider solutions to these problems while being aware of nomophobia and the strong emotions it causes for students. Teachers are the ones who control technology integration in the classroom, and they need opportunities to become more familiar with the features of a phone. Familiarity and comfort with technology may change their mindset and encourage them to create lessons that incorporate cellphones (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2014). If teachers are planning to include cell phones in their daily practice, schools need to develop effective policies that regulate negative behaviours and maximize the positive impacts of phones (Gao et al., 2014). Several features on phones can be used as academic tools in the classroom if they are used properly. With careful planning and

integration of phones as a learning tool, schools and teachers have the ability to prevent the modern day phenomenon, nomophobia, from affecting their students.

## References

- Christensen, R., & Knezek, G. (2018). Reprint of readiness for integrating mobile learning in the classroom: Challenges, preference and possibilities. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 78, 379-388. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.07.046
- Gao, Q., Yan, Z., Zhao, C., Pan, Y., & Mo, L. (2014). To ban or not to ban: Differences in mobile phone policies at elementary, middle, and high schools. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 37, 25-32. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2014.05.011
- Harriman, D. (2017, February 16). Advantages of using cell phones in the classroom. *SchoolMoney.org*. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <http://www.schoolmoney.org/advantages-using-cell-phones-classroom/>
- Hayashi, Y., & Blessington, G. P. (2018). A behavioral economic analysis of media multitasking: Delay discounting as an underlying process of texting in the classroom. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 245-255. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2018.04.049
- Mendoza, J. S., Pody, B. C., Lee, S., Kim, M., & McDonough, I. M. (2018). The effect of cellphones on attention and learning: The influences of time, distraction, and nomophobia. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 52-60. doi:10.1016/J.chb.2018.04.027
- O'Bannon, B. W., & Thomas, K. M. (2014). Teacher perceptions of using mobile phones in the classroom: Age matters! *Computers & Education*, 74, 15-25. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2014.01.006
- O'Bannon, B. W., & Thomas, K. M. (2015). Mobile phones in the classroom: Preservice teachers answer the call. *Computers & Education*, 85, 110-122. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2015.02.010
- Ong, R. Y. C. (2010). *Mobile communication and the protection of children* (SIKS Dissertation Series). Leiden, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ormiston, M. (n.d.). How to use cell phones as learning tools. *TeachHUB.com*. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <http://www.teachhub.com/how-use-cell-phones-learning-tools>
- Tams, S., Legoux, R., & Léger, P. (2018). Smartphone withdrawal creates stress: A moderated mediation model of nomophobia, social threat, and phone withdrawal context. *Computers of Human Behavior*, 81, 1-9. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.11.026
- Tang, S., & Patrick, M. E. (2018). Technology and interactive social media use among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the U.S. and associations with homework and school grades. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 34-44. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.025
- Tatum, N. T., Olson, M. K., & Frey, T. K. (2018). Noncompliance and dissent with cell phone policies: A psychological reactance theoretical perspective. *Communication Education*, 67(2), 226-244. doi:10.1080/03634523.2017.1417615
- Schreiner, E. (2018, April 25). Effects of mobile phones on students. *Sciencing*. Retrieved October 27, 2018, from <https://sciencing.com/effects-mobile-phones-students-5977357.html>
- Watson, A. (2017, August 9). Cell phones in the classroom: Expected (and unexpected) effects [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.learningandthebrain.com/blog/cell-phones-in-the-classroom-expected-and-unexpected-effects/>

## About the Author

*Breanna Carels is in the special education M.Ed. degree at Brandon University. She is a general educator at St. Claude School Complex and teaches many levels. She lives with her husband and son in Notre Dame, Manitoba.*

# Competition as a Teaching Strategy

Alex Murray

## Abstract

*In this article, both the negative and positive roles of competition as a teaching strategy are explored. By using the lenses of culture, gender, second language learners and different levels of education, the strategy of competition is considered in terms of its component pieces in order to find how best to use it. By adjusting the use of competition to include collaboration and being mindful of competition's effects, teachers can bring it back into the classroom for the benefit of our students.*

Competition played a central role in my own education, shaping my expectations of teaching and learning. While competition was a motivating factor for me, this was not necessarily true for others. For a handful of high-achieving students, competition stands as an engagement tool, but for the rest of the students in the class, it can have the opposite effect. In other cultures, this is reflected in the poisonous over-competition that cripples students in Asia. Taken to extremes here in Canada, some teachers will engineer competition between genders to help students; however, the opposite effect is more often true. The use of competition with bilingual students and tutors shows how flawed the use of this teaching strategy is and how it is linked to decreased learning of the curriculum. There are solutions to these problems, the first of which involves purely eliminating competition as a teaching strategy from our repertoire. Another way to strip the ineffectiveness of competition in the classroom is to modify the strategy and create an element of collaboration in the games or competitions. We can also use the strategy of class-versus-teacher, class-versus-class, or even school-versus-school to incorporate the students who otherwise would have been left behind. There are ways to use competition in the classroom, provided we are careful in our use of these strategies and keep the needs of our students paramount when planning.

## Negative Results of Competition in the Classroom

Competition motivates only high-achieving students in the class, but it is demotivating in other cultures or when used with gender, and it decreases bilingual students' learning potential. The ability to engage the high-achieving students through competition in the classroom is mitigated by the students in the classroom who see this strategy as a showcase of their lack of ability. Elliot, Jury, and Murayama (2018) described the lower achieving students in the class who avoid demonstrations of their ability because they think that they cannot compete at a higher level, nullifying any positive effect in the class. By dropping the competition from the classroom, Cohan and Honigsfeld (2010) found that the alternative is far better. They had no issues with the students if they worked in a setting that was relaxed, without contrived competitive situations. When competition for grades is considered by students, many will look to see whether their grades will be on a curve or not and, if so, the students may decide to disengage from collaboratively learning because they are worried their standing will be reduced (Burleigh & Meegan, 2018). Finally, Raupp in 2018 pinpointed how competition can bring out behaviours that we want to avoid in the classroom, such as students becoming upset and unmotivated instead of creating a lesson or classroom that is engaging. The students who find the class easy or competition engaging thrive, but the class members without that intrinsic drive mitigate the success of their peers because it is the competition that gives a platform for their lack of ability.

When taken to extremes in other cultures, the competition that we have traditionally thought of as a motivating influence is even more detrimental to students' success. In China, the drive to

succeed, combined with parental pressure, leaves students in a position to succeed or academically die. This death-ground competition idea illustrates that students at the middle school level in these Asian cultures are under immense familial, peer, and parental pressure to be the best in the class because of how competitive it is to be accepted by a prestigious high school (Liu & Dervin, 2017). The numerous after-school programs and extra tutoring for these students demonstrate how extreme this culture takes its education. This mentality can cause issues with self-esteem and continuation of studies after high school. Those who do not win the race to be first in this extremely competitive cultural environment find that it is detrimental to their success.

The use of competition with bilingual students and tutors shows again how flawed the use of this teaching strategy is and how it is linked to decreased learning of the curriculum. Hispanic students were shown to be much more likely to be put in remedial classes than their non-Hispanic peers (Madrid, Canas, & Ortega-Medina, 2007). The language divide in these students was posited to be one of the reasons why they were not doing as well as their peers. When put into randomized groups that used cooperative peer tutoring in contrast to a competitive environment, the students who were in a cooperative group learned more authentically than those in the competitive group. Again, we see that competition as a teaching strategy is linked to decreased learning of the curriculum.

The gender divide provides an additional method for competition to damage students' success when it is used in mixed classrooms and creates gendered methods and norms. In our culture, the girls in our classes are more apt than our male students to avoid competition while learning (John, 2017). Because most of our classes are mixed in terms of gender, this finding that females are left behind when teachers use competition as a teaching strategy means that fully half of our student body is not helped by this process at all. However, it is more than half, because not all boys are motivated by this strategy, either. Classic girls-versus-boys scenarios in physical education classes and other subjects preclude girls from trying their best and should be dropped from teaching methods immediately. The damage that inter-gender and mixed classroom competition causes to students' success creates more gendered methods and social norms. We can see through these data that competition motivates only the stronger students in the class, but it demotivates when used across gender divides, in different cultures, and with bilingual students.

### **Modifying Competition With Collaboration**

There are numerous solutions to these problems, such as eliminating competition, using competition in high-level learning groups, or using it in concert with collaboration. The first method of modification involves purely eliminating competition from our repertoire of teaching strategies. Researchers in Taiwan discovered that when students are given the opportunity to learn in a context without competition, they absorb far more information as compared to their peers in a separate group doing the same learning but competing against each other (Chen, Liu, & Shou, 2018). Chen et al. (2018) used the same assessment of the knowledge gained during the activity in a digital STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) learning environment. The group that did the most authentic learning and performed better on the assessment was the group that did not compete or rank against each other. This strategy is doubly effective if the content the students are learning is engaging or presented in an engaging way that activates their curiosity. It has been my experience that students learning for learning's sake is a far longer lasting method to imbue them with knowledge, and one way it can happen is if we eliminate competition from our repertoire of teaching strategies.

The only time that student competition seems to have a positive effect in a learning environment is either in medical school where students are already academically inclined and have been successful, or in a debate context for the same reasons. Competition for acceptance to a medical program is implicitly part of the process. By adding another element of competition

as a teaching strategy in medical school, a teacher can engage the students better and motivate them to keep their morale up (Corell, Regueras, Verdú, Verdú, & de Castro, 2018). In another study, Mosley-Jensen (2011) illustrated the necessary aspects of using competition in the classroom as a teaching strategy by looking at debate as a subject. The preparation and procedural aspects of the debate structure raised the level of knowledge and education in the high-achieving students who flourish in this situation (Mosley-Jensen, 2011). Medical students and students of debate, who are naturally inclined toward academics, thrive in a competitive environment; these students become more successful when competition is explicitly used in the classroom.

Another way to strip ineffectiveness from competition is to modify the strategy by adding collaboration to class games. Instead of taking competition out of the classroom, a high school mathematics teacher joined the competition aspects of games with collaboration (DiNapoli, 2018). The students competed against each other in mixed groups and had the same chance to excel and win because the students were motivated to work as a team. In my own teaching practice, this collaboration by students occurs when I challenge the students to a class-versus-teacher game, or a class-versus-class game or competition. When they can work as a team, the students who feel that they cannot rise to the level of the superstars are willing to demonstrate their skills. In a much larger context, school to school, it works even better when the students of a school compete, as detailed in a study out of the Netherlands (Cabus & Cornelisz, 2017). The collaborative competition then makes it much easier to assess students who otherwise might never have been able to participate. By adding an element of collaboration to the competition, teachers can bring back the students who would have fallen through the cracks and thereby ensure significantly more learning for our students. Eliminating competition, using competition in high-level learning groups, or using it in concert with collaboration are ways that we can use competition as an effective teaching strategy.

## Conclusion

Despite competition being used in classrooms during my early and middle years' education, it leaves a lot to be desired as a learning and teaching strategy. There are teaching methods that can use competition effectively if care is taken, but not in the traditional sense. High levels of student-versus-student competition are detrimental to student success, especially in cultures wherein egregious pressure is put on the students. The students who thrive when competition is used in class are the high-achievers who would have done well anyway. The use of competition with bilingual students and tutors shows again how flawed the use of this teaching strategy is. When used to reinforce gender lines, competition can also damage the learning of boys and girls in different contexts. However, students learning for learning's sake obtain a more permanent grasp of the material, and doubly so if the content is adapted to be engaging. By adding an element of collaboration to competition, teachers can ensure that every student has a chance to participate and achieve the same level of learning as the high-achieving students. However, collaboration will not work if the students are graded on a curve and are looking out for their self-interests. Modifying competition and keeping the needs of our students in mind are recommended methods to use competition as a teaching strategy.

## References

- Burleigh, T. J., & Meegan, D. V. (2018). Risky prospects and risk aversion tendencies: Does competition in the classroom depend on grading practices and knowledge of peer-status? *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 21(2), 323-335. doi:10.1007/s11218-017-9414-x

- Chen, C.-H., Liu, J.-H., & Shou, W.-C. (2018). How competition in a game-based science learning environment influences students' learning achievement, flow experience, and learning behavioral patterns. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 21(2), 164-176.
- Cohan, A., & Honigsfeld, A. (2010). *Breaking the mold of education* [Google Books version]. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Corell, A., Regueras, L. M., Verdú, E., Verdú, M. J., & de Castro, J. P. (2018). Effects of competitive learning tools on medical students: A case study. *PLoS ONE*, 13(3), 1-12. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0194096
- DiNapoli, J. (2018). Leveraging collaborative competition in mathematics classrooms. *Australian Mathematics Teacher*, 74(2), 10-17.
- Elliot, A. J., Jury, M., & Murayama, K. (2018). Trait and perceived environmental competitiveness in achievement situations. *Journal of Personality*, 86(3), 353-367. doi:10.1111/jopy.12320
- John, J. P. (2017). Gender differences and the effect of facing harder competition. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 143, 201-222. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2017.08.012.2017.08.012
- Liu, H., & Dervin, F. (2017). "Education is a life marathon rather than a hundred-meter race": Chinese "folk" comparative discourses on Finnish education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(4), 529-544. doi:10.1080/03057925.2016.1257351
- Madrid, L. D., Canas, M., & Ortega-Medina, M. (2007). Effects of team competition versus team cooperation in classwide peer tutoring. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100(3), 155-160. doi:10.3200/JOER.100.3.155-160
- Mosley-Jensen, W. E. (2011). Competition as education: Bringing the tournament to the classroom. *Contemporary Argumentation & Debate*, 32, 73-78.
- Raupp, A. B. (2018, January 2). Competition versus collaboration in STEM education. *Siliconrepublic*. Retrieved October 11, 2018, from <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/careers/collaboration-stem-education>

### **About the Author**

*After completing his bachelor's degree, Alex Murray spent two years teaching ESL in China. It was this experience that led him to pursue an after-degree in Education. He is a first-year Master of Education student at Brandon University and a teacher in the Brandon School Division.*

# Funding Issues and Proactive Responses in Special Education

Shandel Chartrand

## Abstract

*This article looks at some of the issues and possible responses for funding in special education, with a focus on the author's experiences as a special education teacher in Manitoba. Issues include making necessary changes to align funding with changes in policy, the problems associated with several different funding models, and the practicality of providing tiered levels of funding in diverse, inclusive classrooms. Programming alternatives include using tiered levels of funding to redistribute resources, training educators to implement inclusive strategies effectively, and keeping in mind the reason for a need to alter funding formulas to respect the rights of our students.*

Funding is complex. My new role as a resource teacher in Manitoba requires understanding the changes in funding for special educational needs, using a decentralization approach, what types of funding models are available and problems with those models, and the feasibility of providing equitable and effective funding to all students with special educational needs by using tiered funding. The changes in funding over the past 30 years have forced schools to face the "enormous cost of re-engineering existing schools, structures and practices" (Graham & Sweller, 2011, p. 942). Several funding models are used across the world, with no agreement among educational leaders on which model is the best. The cost of delivering effective and equitable funding needs contemplation because 12-20% of the education budget in most countries is dedicated to special education (Banks, Frawley, & McCoy, 2015, p. 927). The feasibility of providing adequate tiered funding resources to special education, when the demand seems to be increasing and budgets seem to be decreasing, is a concern. Alternative programming and redistributing funds in special education by placing students in tiered levels using the Response to Intervention (RtI) ideology, training teachers about inclusion and how to differentiate instruction for students with special needs, possibly by using universal design for learning (UDL), could be a necessary proactive response. I feel the most important consideration for funding in special education is basic human rights and recognizing that all students have the right to education.

## Funding Issues in Special Education

In recent years, there has been a movement toward the decentralization of special education in Canada and elsewhere in the world; several funding models have been used in the past, including placing students into tiered levels. Over the past few decades, special services have been provided in the regular classroom, discontinuing pullout environments (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2009). How to provide for students' special educational needs in conventional schools is challenging when there is no international agreement how to do so. Reorganization is happening to support inclusive education in a profitable way, but a lack of consensus among principals and other educational leaders on the definition of inclusion has resulted in an "implementation gap" (Banks et al., 2015, p. 938). There are variations between the goals of the policy and real-life practices in schools (Fletcher-Campbell, 2008). In Finland and the United States, there is a belief that changing to tiered intervention will not only stimulate inclusive education but will also lower cost by decreasing the number of special education students (Jahnukainen & Itkonen, 2016). There are similar trends in different countries, and I feel that educators have been left with an unsolved problem and unanswered questions. The only

definite answer is that change is inevitable in the decentralization of funding formulas for special educational needs, given the change in policy and expectations worldwide.

Several funding models have been used in the past, including input funding, which directly shares out resources to students or parents, through-put funding, which uses block grants based on a range of specifications, and input based, demand-driven or categorical funding, which is based on assigning funding to certain students with the amount based on the degree of need (Banks et al., 2015). Most previous versions of funding models attached resources to individual students and had high numbers of children working in isolated settings (Banks et al., 2015). Parents were able to select where they desired to have their children educated, and there was assurance that students would receive the resources they were allocated. The issue with that type of funding model is that it obstructs inclusion because it isolates special education students and places the emphasis on deficits and categorizing. Until recently, funding models have disregarded the student outcomes that funding was meant to acquire (Banks et al., 2015). Funding models can unite special education and accountability if inputs and outputs are connected and attention is placed on essential outcomes. The school or local authorities should be responsible for the budget because they know the child best (Gray & Jackson, 2002). Several countries are turning to a combination approach to funding models. Sweden uses a "through-put model with elements of input-based support" (Banks et al., 2015, p. 929). New Zealand assimilates a combination of through-put and input funding. I think that a combination approach would be the most effective way to fund special educational needs, but my next concern is the feasibility of providing enough resources to meet diverse needs in mainstream classrooms.

Greater numbers of students with special educational needs are attending conventional schools because of inclusion policies. Some schools are not equipped to meet the diverse needs of special education students, such as our school in Forrest, which underwent extensive renovations to accommodate a student with special needs. The criteria for funding used to be more difficult to meet but, with the tiered approach to funding, students not previously funded can now receive interventions (Jahnukainen & Itkonen, 2016). That means providing more interventions with the same amount of resources. For a long time now, Finland has been delivering resources to students who do not have diagnosed disabilities but have some other kind of "learning or behavioral difficulty" (Jahnukainen & Itkonen, 2016, p. 147). In Alberta, the key areas of support are "supports for positive behavior, differentiation of learning, and access to technologies and digital media," with importance placed on comprehensive supports (Howery, McCellan, & Pedersen-Bayys, 2013, p. 278). Meeting the needs of all students, no matter where they are on the pyramid of tiered intervention, seems daunting to me and I am not the only one. A school superintendent from a large school district in the United States said that his budget is increasing because parents are more informed and people are advocating for their educational rights (Dunn & West, 2010). With an increase in the number of students with special educational needs, along with an increase in the awareness and advocacy for students with special needs, it is reasonable to expect an increase in the budget. That does not seem to be the case in my experience, with budgets being tightened and resources being cut back. Feasibility of funding special educational needs through tiered funding is a problem that is not easily solved. Decentralization of special education funding, selecting a funding model appropriate for the changes in policy, and placing students into tiered levels are all issues that need to be considered moving forward.

### **Proactive Responses in Special Education**

Placing students into tiered levels, training teachers to differentiate instruction, and considering the educational rights of our special needs students are all programming alternatives worth investigating in order to respond to the funding issues in special education. Creating student profiles, class profiles, and school profiles, as a basis for distribution of

resources and intervention, is the direction that our school division has taken. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process that ensures every student receives timely interventions before falling behind (Buffam, Mattos, & Malone, 2018). Students in different tiers are grouped by need, rather than label, with Tier 1 students requiring the least interventions, Tier 2 students requiring more interventions, and Tier 3 students requiring the most intense interventions (Buffam et al., 2018). Interventions are anything schools do, in addition to lessons students already receive, to help developing learners succeed academically, behaviourally, and socially (Buffam et al., 2018). When Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions are not helping students achieve the outcome desired, more intensive interventions must be delivered (Smith, Poling, & Worth, 2018). Instead of increasing the Tier 2 strategies, strengthening interventions by providing “explicit instruction” is recommended (Smith et al., 2018). The school profile created from student and class profiles should identify the staffing needs and supports required to provide interventions (Murray & Lawrie, 2016). RtI promotes early intervention strategies, so that school divisions can use resources to assist students who were not previously funded (Buffam et al., 2018). Implementing RtI successfully requires a considerable amount of support, and strategies must be provided with consistency (Arden, Gandhi, Edmonds, & Danielson, 2017).

Training teachers to differentiate instruction effectively, assess students accurately, and provide appropriate interventions is important. There was once a belief that students who required an individualized education plan also required individual support from an educational assistant (Katz, 2013). This belief resulted in many educators giving the responsibility of educating our struggling learners to our least trained staff. Teachers can use inclusive instructional practices, such as differentiated instruction, to provide accessibility to diverse learners, without handing over the responsibility. The chances of successfully providing effective classroom practices greatly improve if teachers are trained, coached, and supported throughout the implementation stage (Arden et al., 2017). Resource teachers can help support classroom teachers by collaborating, setting goals together, and having a “push-in” instead of a “pull-out” philosophy (Katz, 2013, p. 25). Universal design for learning (UDL) is an approach based on exploring student strengths and building on them (Katz, 2012). The goal is not to “fix” the student, but to provide supports for the student to be successful (Katz, 2013, p. 7). Educators are often expected to implement policies and practices after receiving only one session of training (Arden et al., 2017). Therefore, properly training teachers how to implement UDL, and how to differentiate instruction, is crucial. School teams often have the data and can identify students who require intervention, but struggle with what to do next (Arden et al., 2017). The key to implementing any program or policy is in training, guiding, and supporting the educators who are expected to do the implementation. Leaders also need to reinforce the reason for the change in policy or program, most notably in funding for special education: the rights of our students.

Recognizing the importance of human rights, and why funding has changed to respect human rights, is key to understanding the new approach to funding. Appropriate education acknowledges that all students are different, have individual abilities, want to belong, want to be respected, and learn in different places and at different rates (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007). Reasonable accommodation for special needs is a human right, but there needs to be a balance between the “rights of an organization and the rights of the individual” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007, p. 29). The evolution of our inclusive policies has required a change in practice (Task Force on Special Needs Funding, 2015). Creating a provincial funding model is complex, and four funding models were considered by a provincial task force. It all comes down to human rights and having equal access to education by removing barriers (Manitoba Education & Training, 2017a). The philosophy of inclusion means that students have the right to a respectful and safe learning community (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017b). Any funding model needs to consider what is best for the individual child, while respecting the right to education and being free from discrimination. Placing students in tiered levels, and training teachers how to differentiate instruction and provide inclusive learning

environments, all contribute to strengthening the equality and rights of students while reinforcing the need for a change in funding in special education.

## Conclusion

The changes that have occurred in most countries, regarding the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general classroom, have forced educators and policy-makers to examine funding models and make necessary changes, through decentralization and tiered intervention, to meet the needs of diverse learners. There are several models for funding, and most countries are now using a combination of funding formulas to meet the needs of students placed in different tiers or levels with different interventions or adaptations. There is no consensus around the world of what the best approach is for funding special educational needs. For new policies to be successful, it is crucial that schools and families join forces to meet student needs (Gray & Jackson, 2002). Placing students in tiered levels is a proactive response our school division is currently exploring. Training, coaching, and supporting teachers to implement RtI, differentiated instruction or UDL, and providing interventions with fidelity, will be crucial in the evolution of funding in special education. The most important consideration in funding for special education is the rights of the child, and any alterations in funding, must consider human rights and dignity as the inspiration for change.

## References

- Anastasiou, D., & Kauffman, J. M. (2009). When special education goes to the marketplace: The case of vouchers. *Exceptionality, 17*(4), 205-222. doi:10.1080/09362830903232109
- Arden, S.V., Gruner Gandhi, A., Zumeta Edmonds, R., & Danielson, L. (2017). Toward more effective tiered systems: Lessons from national implementation efforts. *Exceptional Children, 83*(3), 269-280. doi:10.1177/0014402917693565
- Banks, J., Frawley, D., & McCoy, S. (2015). Achieving inclusion? Effective resourcing of students with special educational needs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19*(9), 926-943. doi:10.1080/13603116.2015.1018344
- Buffam, A., Mattos, M., & Malone, J. (2018). *Taking action: A handbook for RTI at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Dunn, J. M., & West, M. R. (2010). *From schoolhouse to courthouse: The Judiciary's role in American education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Fletcher-Campbell, F. (2008). The financing of special education: Lessons from Europe. *Support for Learning, 17*(1), 19-22. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.00227
- Graham, L. J., & Sweller, N. (2011). The inclusion lottery: Who's in and who's out? Tracking inclusion and exclusion in New South Wales government schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 15*(9), 941-953. doi:10.1080/13603110903470046
- Gray, B., & Jackson, R. (2002). *Advocacy and learning disability*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley.
- Howery, K., McCellan, T., & Pedersen-Bayys, K. (2013). "Reaching every student" with a pyramid of intervention approach: One district's journey. *Canadian Journal of Education, 36*(1), 271-304.
- Jahnukainen, M., & Itkonen, T. (2016). Tiered intervention: History and trends in Finland and the United States. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 31*(1), 140-150. doi:10.1080/08856257.2015.1108042 Retrieved from Taylor & Francis Online database.
- Katz, J. (2012). *Teaching to diversity: The three-block model of universal design for learning*. Winnipeg, MB: Portage & Main Press.
- Katz, J. (2013). *Resource teachers: A changing role in the three-block model of universal design for learning*. Winnipeg, MB: Portage & Main Press.

- Manitoba Education and Training. (2017a). *Human rights and appropriate educational programming*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/human\\_rights.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/human_rights.html)
- Manitoba Education and Training. (2017b). *Safe and caring schools: A whole-school approach to planning for safety and belonging*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe\\_schools/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/index.html)
- Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2007). *Appropriate educational programming: A handbook for student services*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.
- Murray, M., & Lawrie, S. (2016, June). *Special needs initiative. Tracking our success: Executive summary*. Winnipeg, MB: Louis Riel School Division.
- Smith, S. W., Poling, D. V., & Worth, M. R. (2018). Intensive intervention for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 33*(3), 168-175. doi:10.1111/ldrp.12174
- Task Force on Special Needs Funding. (2015). *Report for the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.

### **About the Author**

*Shandel Chartrand is currently enrolled in the Master of Education program at Brandon University, specializing in special education. She was a classroom teacher for 17 years before she recently became a resource teacher at Forrest Elementary School in Forrest, Manitoba. Shandel has an amazing seven-year-old daughter and a husband with whom she enjoys spending time outside of school.*

# The Importance of Trauma-Informed Schools for Maltreated Children

Alexandra Paiva

## Abstract

*Exposure to childhood maltreatment is detrimental to the academic success and educational outcomes of students. It leads to a myriad of deficits related to neurodevelopment and neuroprocessing, which causes disruptions in academic performance, emotional and behavioural regulation, and school attendance. By becoming trauma-informed, schools can mitigate these adverse experiences and promote positive experiences within the learning environment. Through professional development and the implementation of social-emotional learning and trauma-sensitive policies, educators can combat the negative role of maltreatment on the academic success of maltreated students.*

Communities, families, and children experience the impacts of child maltreatment everyday. Experiencing direct or indirect harm at the hands of someone a child trusts can make that child vulnerable to a number of short- and long-term consequences (Child Trends, 2018; Government of Canada, 2012). Five types of maltreatment are identified in the literature: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional harm, and exposure to family violence. The 2008 *Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* reported 85,440 substantiated child maltreatment-related investigations (Trocmé et al., 2010, p. 3). Children spend a third of their days within the formal school setting; thus, it is important to acknowledge the effects upon academic achievement and educational outcomes related to child maltreatment. Embracing a school-wide trauma-informed perspective requires adopting a trauma-sensitive lens, implementing professional development, adding social-emotional learning to the curriculum, and shifting policy to reflect trauma-informed approaches (Flatow, Blake, & Huang, 2015; Phifer & Hull, 2016). Trauma-informed schools are a way to mitigate the negative effects of maltreatment and promote the success of all students.

## Maltreatment's Impact on Children

Childhood maltreatment has serious implications for the neurodevelopment of children, which can lead to impairments in the areas of neuro-processing, functioning, and learning (Romano, Babchishin, Marquis, & Frechette, 2015). When children are deprived of healthy, prosocial interactions and experiences in their homes, and are exposed to harm and chaos, they become vulnerable to a myriad of deficits in relation to key developmental processes. Maltreatment can negatively impact children's ability to perform academically, respond emotionally and behaviourally to their environment, and attend school. Exposure to maltreatment is detrimental to the healthy development of children and leads to significant challenges as children venture through their educational journeys.

## Neurological Impact

To understand the impact of maltreatment on academic achievement, one must first understand its role in the neurological development of children. When exposed to different forms of harm, such as physical abuse or neglect, the brain may experience instances of "insufficient sensory exposure" (omission of nurture) and/or "atypical activation of neurons" (subjection to harm) (Romano et al., 2015, pp. 420, 431). Early-age stressors and the absence of healthy parental-child relationships can be influential during sensitive periods of growth and brain development, and may lead to significant changes to its anatomy (Ortiz-Ospina, 2017; Romano et al., 2015). The disruption of healthy anatomical brain development interrupts normal

processes in the brain and can ultimately lead to educational difficulties because of impairments in an array of neuro-processing functions (Romano et al., 2015). Memory, language, concentration, regulation, behaviour, perception, and cognition deficits can occur as a result of the neurodevelopmental impairments that accrue from child maltreatment – all of which are vital to learning (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014). Acknowledging the negative role that child maltreatment has on brain development, and the interruption of neuroprocessing functions, enables us to understand the many challenges associated with academic functioning.

## **Developmental Processes**

Attachment, emotional regulation, and sense of agency are integral in fostering a sense of mastery and confidence in relation to the world children live in (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014; Romano et al., 2015). Child maltreatment often occurs in environments that are characterized by instability, chaos, and high stress. This environment, accompanied by inconsistent and unhealthy parent-child interactions, creates a sense of unpredictability and insecurity, and disrupts the children's ability to develop attachment bonds with their caregivers (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014). Secure attachments are critical in how children see themselves in relation to the world around them and how they learn to navigate through various personal and interpersonal challenges. When caregivers expose their children to abuse, neglect, or negative affects such as fear and worry, insecure and/or disorganized attachments result. A caregiver's inability to meet the needs of a child can lead to disruptions in that child's learning to interact with others in a healthy prosocial manner. The attachment between a child and his/her caregiver sets a template for how the child understands and interacts with the world in later years, which can be negatively influenced by maltreatment.

Children learn emotional regulation by initially depending on their caregivers to respond and assist them through difficult emotional states, and by later observing and modelling how they respond to situations (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014). When the caregivers themselves are either causing the distress or experiencing it themselves, the children are unable to learn the skills and strategies required to overcome their negative emotional states (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014). A level of dysfunction is assumed within the homes of those who experience childhood maltreatment, and they are therefore more vulnerable to high-stress situations (Romano et al., 2015). The absence of this early learning of emotional regulation and parental support can result in the use of maladaptive methods to respond to negative emotional states. Many maltreated children learn to live in silence and secrecy in order to protect their families and themselves from future harm, and they may internalize their issues, resulting in increased anxiety and depression (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2014; McGuire & Jackson, 2018). Others express their maltreatment experiences through externalizing behaviours such as aggression and acting out, behaviours they may have seen used in the home by their abusers. These emotional and behavioural responses can be extremely problematic within a school setting, with difficulties arising in classroom focus, task completion, peer engagement, and learning strategies, all of which are dependent on children being able to regulate their emotions (McGuire & Jackson, 2018). Emotional regulation is learned early in a child's life through modelling and co-regulation, but maltreatment causes disruptions in the learning of these strategies, which leads to challenges later in childhood.

A sense of agency is vital in children being able to master their sense of self, ability, and control over their environment, all of which can be undermined by exposure to maltreatment (Romano et al., 2015). In order for a sense of agency to develop, children must feel safe and supported enough in their early years to explore their environments and their capabilities

(Gowrie South Australia, 2015). When experiencing maltreatment by a caregiver, children feel a lack of safety and control over the situation, and as though they cannot change their circumstances (Romano et al., 2015). They may also lack guidance and encouragement from their caregivers in the pursuit of their independence, and may be more likely to feel a sense of helplessness and insecurity in relation to the world around them. Self-efficacy is critical in children being able to master their learning environments and academic milestones, but maltreatment can undermine their belief that they can have accomplishments and control in their lives. Maltreatment influences how children develop and form relationships, how they manage their emotional and behavioural responses to difficult situations, and how they see themselves, their abilities, and their control over their environment. The detrimental effects of maltreatment on attachment, emotional regulation, and sense of agency limit children from confidently navigating through the educational system in many ways.

### **Academic Achievement and Educational Outcomes**

Child maltreatment negatively affects children's academic achievement and educational outcomes as seen through academic performance, emotional and behavioural responses in school, and attendance (Romano et al., 2015). Maltreatment influences and disrupts many of the development processes that promote learning and functioning in children, such as executive functioning, knowledge retention, comprehension, and analysis, all of which play a role in academic performance (Hong, Rhee, & Piescher, 2018). Executive functioning influences a child's ability to manage behaviourally and emotionally within structured educational environments, and to process, understand, and retain learned information (Hong et al., 2018). For those who have experienced maltreatment, cognitive functioning can be impaired in the domains of knowledge, comprehension, and analysis. Because of the disruption of these core cognitive functions, children experiencing maltreatment are more at risk for compromised academic outcomes, higher grade repeats, cognitive delays, poorer performance on standardized measures, lower grade point averages, speech and language impairments, lower IQ scores and lower reading scores that measure cognitive complexity, special education interventions, and lower grades compared to those who have not experienced maltreatment (Kiesel, Piescher, & Edleson, 2016; McGuire & Jackson, 2018; Romano et al., 2015). The disruption of key cognitive functions responsible for academic success and educational outcomes derail a child's ability to learn effectively and perform academically.

The challenges associated with developing healthy, adaptive emotional and behavioural responses to situations for children who have experienced maltreatment play a role in their ability to perform at school. The internalization of maltreatment experiences may lead to the development of mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression, which have been connected to difficulties with reading performance (Romano et al., 2015). Children who tend to externalize their issues may behaviourally express themselves through inattention, hyperactivity, and other behavioural challenges such as learned aggression and violence (McGuire & Jackson, 2018). They may struggle to sit still during a lesson plan, possibly act out or be caught goofing off with their classmates, or even get into frequent fights with their peers. These students are more likely to experience academic delays, behavioural issues when faced with unattainable expectations, stress, and limited self-regulation capabilities (Romano et al., 2015). These children may also struggle to see the world, and hence school, as a safe and trusting place, making academic performance and focus difficult. Behavioural and emotional challenges are also associated with lower performances on reading, math, and writing, which continue to weaken over continued exposure, leading to more and more struggles academically (Romano et al., 2015). The role that different forms of abuse and neglect have on children's foundational neuro-processing components gives understanding to why maltreated children struggle to implement effective emotional and behavioural regulatory strategies in their schools and other learning environments.

Maltreated children struggle with school attendance rates, one of the fundamental components of academic success. When children do not attend school, they can quickly fall behind on course work, miss important lesson plans aimed at developing their skills, and lack the opportunity to adapt to the structure of their classrooms. Maltreated children's daily lives are characterized by many inconsistencies and instabilities that can influence the structure of their days. They demonstrate significantly lower rates of attendance and higher rates of school-to-school transfers (Kiesel et al., 2016). These inconsistencies of attendance may be a result of lack of parental assistance to ensure school attendance, staying up late into the night because of maltreatment, feeling embarrassed to attend class for fear of being ousted, and/or feeling the need to stay home from school to protect the more vulnerable parent from abuse (Kiesel et al., 2016). Regular absences, even excused, can increase a child's likelihood of facing academic challenges and learning difficulties; thus it is important that educators recognize maltreatment's influence on attendance. Maltreated children experience an array of challenges that influence their academic achievement and educational outcomes, observed through decreased academic performance, difficult emotional and behavioural responses, and poor attendance rates (McGuire & Jackson, 2018). Acknowledging the influence of maltreatment on children's development provides a roadmap for understanding the hurdles in their academic experiences.

### **Trauma-Informed Schools**

By becoming trauma informed, schools can address the influence of childhood maltreatment on academic success and educational outcomes. Being aware of the effects of trauma, and how they present themselves through emotional and behavioural responses in schools, gives educators the opportunity to respond in a trauma-sensitive way as a means of supporting healing and limiting re-traumatization in students (Flatow et al., 2015; Phifer & Hull, 2016; Stewart & Martin, 2018). There are a variety of trauma-informed approaches and strategies, but underlying all of those are the ideas of trust, collaboration, empowerment, peer support, safety, choice and culture and gender awareness (Steward & Martin, 2018). By providing safety, structure, and compassion, schools can mitigate the negative role of maltreatment on children's academic success and, consequently, foster resiliency and growth (Berardi & Morton, 2017). Embracing a school-wide trauma-informed perspective requires adopting a trauma-sensitive lens, implementing professional development for staff, administration, and support staff, adding social-emotional learning to the curriculum, and shifting policy to reflect trauma-informed ideals. Trauma-informed schools promote the growth and success of all students, but in particular those who have been exposed to maltreatment.

### **Trauma-Sensitive Lens**

A trauma-sensitive lens within the school setting requires that school personnel challenge their labelling tendencies toward children who demonstrate trauma response behaviours in the classroom (Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, 2015). Children affected by maltreatment often present with many behavioural and emotional challenges, which translate to difficulties with learning. Children whose neurological systems are programmed to operate in survival and defence mode are viewed as impulsive, defiant, or non-compliant when under perceived threat (Berardi & Morton, 2017). By mislabelling, school personnel attribute the behaviours to choice and conscious acts of defiance by the children, when in reality the behaviours are a result of the children experiencing a sense of overwhelming distress (Anderson et al., 2015). This ill-informed approach to viewing children with problem behaviours is in line with the lens of asking "What is wrong with you?" (Dorado, Martinez, McArthur, & Leibovitz, 2016, p. 164). Alternatively, a trauma-sensitive lens asks the question "What has happened to you?" which changes how school personnel interpret the behavioural responses of children and ultimately how they understand and respond to the behaviours. By understanding the root of the

behaviours, school personnel can respond with supportive, compassionate interventions as a way to engage children and promote safety and security (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Viewing challenging behaviours of maltreated children through a trauma-sensitive lens challenges preconceived notions of intentional misbehaving and labelling, and enables school personnel to respond to children through a lens of understanding and support.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development supports staff, administration, and support staff to adopt attitudes, beliefs, and approaches underpinning trauma-informed schools (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Professional development opportunities should be focused on preparing school personnel to recognize signs and symptoms of maltreatment, and understanding the role of maltreatment on brain development, its effects on learning and the unique needs of students (Dorado et al., 2016; Stewart & Martin, 2018). Shared knowledge leads to the implementation of a common language among school personnel and ultimately builds a consensus among school attitudes. Professional development is an opportunity for school personnel to develop strategies and skills to use within classrooms in order to target the identified symptoms of maltreatment that impede learning (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). These educational opportunities have been executed, not only among staff and educators, but students alike, as a means of shifting a school understanding of the role of trauma and maltreatment on students and in their learning (Phifer & Hull, 2016). Professional development is a critical component in creating a trauma-informed school, where understanding maltreatment's influence on learning and behaviour is a shared perspective and common language is applied in trauma-informed intervention strategies.

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

Social-emotional learning in classrooms promotes emotional and behavioural management among children, which is particularly important for those whose self-regulation abilities have been affected by maltreatment (Walkey & Cox, 2013). The safety and security of classrooms make them optimal spaces for children to learn to process their feelings and develop strategies geared toward their future experiences and self-regulation capabilities (Anderson et al., 2015). Social-emotional practices that have been implemented in classrooms include behavioural intervention programs, self-regulation interventions, feelings exploration curriculum, mindfulness strategies, conflict resolution programs, and other interventions that promote child resiliency and emotional and behavioural management (Dorado et al., 2016). Teaching students about the role of maltreatment and trauma on the brain and its interruption on learning gives them the opportunity to recognize their own symptoms of distress. Additionally, teaching children practical tools to cope with stress and the associated physiological responses builds confidence in their own abilities to manage stressful situations (Phifer & Hull, 2016). The implementation of social-emotional learning and practices in school curriculum also supports staff personnel in managing vicarious stress and trauma, therefore making classrooms a more positive, supportive space for learning (Anderson et al., 2015). Social-emotional learning in classrooms has been correlated with fewer classroom disruptions, less punitive office visits, a decrease in incidents of physical aggression, and fewer instances of suspensions (Dorado et al., 2016). By implementing social-emotional curriculum, schools can support children who have been exposed to maltreatment and consequently lack the ability to manage themselves emotionally and behaviourally through self-regulation.

### **Policy**

True trauma-informed schools adopt a shift in system policies that support and advocate for children affected by maltreatment. Zero tolerance and blanket policies take away from the

unique experiences that children bring with them, and generalize through intervention approaches (Anderson et al., 2015). These approaches and policies, often punitive and disciplinary, have been found to be ineffective in their attempt to manage behaviours and encourage compliance. Rewriting policies and interventions through a trauma-informed and culturally safe lens limits children from becoming socially isolated, feeling labelled, and experiencing re-traumatization by potentially penalizing disciplinary policies (Phifer & Hull, 2016; Stewart & Martin, 2018). Schools have incorporated specialized clinicians to provide a trauma-informed lens to staff development efforts, and to implement policy revisions and behavioural support plans for students (Dorado et al., 2016). Through this collaboration traditional policies of evaluating student success that are dependent solely on academic performance can be challenged to shift to more holistic approaches of accounting for student successes (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Schools can support maltreated students by promoting an environment of trust, safety, empowerment, collaboration, choice and support by means of trauma-informed policies (Phifer & Hull, 2016; Stewart & Martin, 2018). Implementing a trauma-sensitive lens, professional development for staff, adding social-emotional learning to the curriculum, and shifting policy to reflect trauma-informed approaches enables a culture of trauma-informed perspective in school settings.

### Conclusion

Child maltreatment is an adverse experience to which many Canadian students fall victim. Exposure to maltreatment can have significant implications on neurodevelopment and the developmental processes of attachment, self-regulation, and sense of agency (Romano et al., 2015). These are all underlying functions of the healthy cognitive and intellectual development that are required for children to succeed within a learning environment. Maltreatment negatively influences academic achievement and educational outcomes through compromised academic performance, emotional and behavioural responses, and attendance (McGuire & Jackson, 2018). By becoming trauma informed, schools can mitigate the effects of maltreatment on children's academic success and educational outcomes. Adopting a school-wide trauma-informed lens enables teachers, administration, and support staff to recognize the negative impact of maltreatment on behavioural and emotional responses. Through professional development, the implementation of social-emotional learning in the classroom, and trauma-sensitive policies, schools can become a place of safety and healing for maltreated children (Flatow et al., 2015; Phifer & Hull, 2016). As front-line service providers to children, educators must adopt an approach of compassion and understanding in order to combat the negative effects of maltreatment on academic success and educational outcomes.

### References

- Anderson, E. M., Blitz, L. V., & Saastamoinen, M. (2015). Exploring a school-university model for professional development with classroom staff: Teaching trauma-informed approaches. *School Community Journal, 25*(2), 113-134.
- Berardi, A., & Morton, B. M. (2017). Maximizing academic success for foster care students: A trauma-informed approach. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 20*(1), 10-16.
- Child Trends. (2018, October 25). *Child maltreatment*. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/child-maltreatment>
- Dorado, J. S., Martinez, M., McArthur, L. E., & Leibovitz, T. (2016). Healthy environments and response to trauma in schools (HEARTS): A whole-school, multi-level, prevention and intervention program for creating trauma-informed, safe and supportive schools. *School Mental Health, 8*(1), 163-176. doi:10.1007/s12310-016-9177-0

- Flatow, R. B., Blake, M., & Huang, L. N. (2015). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach in youth settings. *Focal Point: Youth, Young Adults, and Mental Health*, 29, 32-35.
- Government of Canada. (2012, July 26). *Child maltreatment in Canada*. Retrieved October 2, 2018, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/prevention-resource-centre/children/child-maltreatment-canada.html#Chi>
- Gowrie South Australia. (2015). *Sense of agency* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved October 29, 2018 from <https://www.gowriesa.org.au/sites/default/files/rs-sense-agency.pdf>
- Hong, S., Rhee, T. G., & Piescher, K. N. (2018). Longitudinal association of child maltreatment and cognitive functioning: Implications for child development. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 84, 64-73. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.07.026
- Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies. (2014). *Consequences of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. doi:10.17226/18331
- Kiesel, L. R., Piescher, K. N., & Edleson, J. L. (2016). The relationship between child maltreatment, intimate partner violence exposure, and academic performance. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 10(4), 434-456. doi:10.1080/15548732.2016.1209150
- McGuire, A., & Jackson, Y. (2018). A multilevel meta-analysis on academic achievement among maltreated youth. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1-16. doi:10.1007/s10567-018-0265-6
- Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2017, December 17). Child maltreatment and educational outcomes [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/child-maltreatment-and-educational-outcomes>
- Overstreet, S., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2016). Trauma-informed schools: Introduction to the special issue. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 1-6. doi:10.1007/s12310-016-9184-1
- Phifer, L. W., & Hull, R. (2016). Helping students heal: Observations of trauma-informed practices in the schools. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 201-205. doi:10.1007/s12310-016-9183-2
- Romano, E., Babchishin, L., Marquis, R., & Frechette, S. (2015). Childhood maltreatment and educational outcomes. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 16(4), 418-437. doi:10.1177/1524838014537908
- Stewart, J., & Martin, L. (2018). *Bridging two worlds: Supporting newcomer and refugee youth*. Toronto, ON: CERIC
- Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Black, T., Fast, E., . . . Holroyd, J. (2010). *Canadian incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect-2008: Major findings*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada. Retrieved from <http://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/CIS-2008-rprt-eng.pdf>
- Walkley, M., & Cox, T. L. (2013). Building trauma-informed schools and communities. *Children & Schools*, 35(2), 123-126. doi:10.1093/cs/cdt007

### **About the Author**

*Alexandra Paiva is originally from Thompson, Manitoba. Alexandra began her M.Ed. in guidance and counselling in September 2018. She currently works as a children's therapist in Brandon, Manitoba, and is passionate about trauma-informed practice and social justice advocacy.*

# **Inclusion in Schools: Gender and Sexual Diversity**

**Gina Bradshaw**

## **Abstract**

*Gender and sexual diversity (GSD) needs to be identifiable, included in curriculum, and accepted in schools. School leaders need to advocate for policies to include a queer-inclusive curriculum. A gay-straight alliance is an extra-curricular group that promotes diversity and supports gender and/or sexually diverse students. Schools need to support GSD in the curriculum and resources. GSD needs to be a priority for schools to include for gender and/or sexually diverse students to feel welcome.*

It is crucial for gender and sexual diversity (GSD) to be seen, taught, and accepted within schools. School divisions need to understand why GSD needs to be acknowledged in schools. School leaders play an important role in changing school policies so that a queer-inclusive curriculum is taught (Steck & Perry, 2017). A gay-straight alliance is a positive extra-curricular group that can help students who are gender and/or sexually diverse feel supported. Educators can take many steps to make certain their classrooms and schools promote diversity. GSD is often not visibly identifiable within schools, and teachers need to be consciously aware of how to represent them appropriately. GSD needs to be viewed as a priority for schools to include within all aspects of the school.

## **Acknowledgement of Gender and/or Sexual Diversity**

Research affirms that GSD must be acknowledged in schools. Gender and/or sexually diverse students face many challenges (Arora, Kelly, & Goldstein, 2016). Every student needs to feel “included, protected and respected” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 1). School leaders in divisions need to advocate for changes related to how GSD is represented in schools. They play a large role in whether a division supports GSD in the curriculum. Schools have a responsibility to accept that GSD needs to be addressed.

Schools need to recognize the challenges that gender and/or sexually diverse students may face, and understand why GSD should be embraced in schools. The challenges can include “frequent harassment, victimization, and discrimination” (Arora et al., 2016, p. 722). These students are at a higher risk of being bullied by their peers, and then “engaging in dysfunctional behavioural patterns as a means of coping with peer abuse” (Crothers et al., 2017, Introduction section, para. 4). Human rights laws “prohibit discrimination based on an individual’s gender identity, sexual preference and/or orientation” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 4). Students who do not feel accepted or safe struggle to learn and feel good about themselves (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Creating an environment that is comfortable discussing, accepting, and acknowledging GSD can create “levels of empathy and compassion” among students (Steck & Perry, 2017, “Benefits,” para. 4). GSD needs to be incorporated to address the challenges that gender and/or sexually diverse students encounter.

School leaders play a vital role in how school policies inhibit GSD (Steck & Perry, 2017). Gender and/or sexually diverse students often “walk through space and curriculum unnoticed” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 269). School leaders are tasked with providing gender and/or sexually diverse students with a “safe and inclusive school environment” (Steck & Perry, 2018, Introduction section, para. 1). Teachers may want to include queer content into their teaching, but they need a school division that will support them. Leaders also play a large role in “disrupting school policies” to include queer-content in the curriculum and course materials (Steck & Perry, 2017, Abstract). Many schools have accepted GSD at an extra-curricular level

(Schmidt, 2015). Anti-bullying assemblies, bullying policies, and gay-straight alliances are fairly common in schools (Schmidt, 2015). However, it is the “curriculum, pedagogy, learning, teaching” aspect of school that needs reform (Schmidt, 2015, p. 254). It is up to the leaders of school divisions to advocate for change regarding the inclusion of queer-content in schools.

A queer-inclusive curriculum is needed in schools to represent a group of people who were oppressed for many years. A curriculum shows students the “dominant interests, values, and acceptable ways of behaving” (Steck & Perry, 2017, Introduction section, para. 1). When there is an absence of queer-content, it reinforces heterosexuality as normal, and homosexuality as the opposite (Schmidt, 2015). Gender and/or sexually diverse students need a curriculum that “represents them and speaks to them” (Demissie, Raspberry, Steiner, Brener, & McManus, 2018, Discussion section, para. 6). It provides the opportunity for heterosexual students to view and understand their experiences (Steck & Perry, 2017). It will hopefully “reduce fear and discomfort” that some students may have regarding GSD (Steck & Perry, “Benefits,” para. 4). Teachers need to be provided with a queer-inclusive curriculum in order to successfully ensure that all students are represented.

The gender and/or sexually diverse community must be well represented in schools. Schools need to understand the challenges and lack of privilege that they have. For many students, school might be their safe place, so schools need to create a community that respects and accepts all students. School leaders need to change policies and encourage a curriculum that includes GSD, in order to “create and sustain supportive and safe learning environments” (Abreu, McEachern, & Kenny, 2017, Conclusion section, para. 1). GSD needs to be easily recognized in schools.

### **The Importance of Gay-Straight Alliances**

Gay-straight alliances are important in schools. Gay-straight alliances are clubs within schools that are led by students to help anyone within the queer community feel safe and supported (Arora et al., 2016, p. 724). The safe environment that a gay-straight alliance provides has been proven to benefit all students, heterosexual or gender and/or sexually diverse (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Schools need to ensure that all students feel represented and safe at school. A gay-straight alliance can help students feel welcome and included at school.

Gay-straight alliances, which support gender and/or sexually diverse students, are led by students, and promote diversity and inclusion (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). They provide a place for students to meet and talk about topics related to GSD (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). They also educate the student body on GSD issues, and support students who identify as part of the GSD community, along with their allies (Arora et al., 2016). Students within the alliance are not required to reveal their gender identity or sexual orientation (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). These alliances should follow the same protocols for other school clubs, groups, or teams (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Even governments have been showing support for these alliances within the schools. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education requires all schools to have a positive response for a request to establish an alliance (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Student-led gay-straight alliances do not just support gender and/or sexually diverse students; they promote a more positive, accepting, and inclusive school community.

Increasingly more studies have shown that gay-straight alliances help students who are gender and/or sexually diverse feel welcome at school. Gay-straight alliances are “important in educational institutions for even the youngest school children” (Coles, 2018, Introduction section, para. 2). Students have reported “feeling safer and less harassed because of their involvement with GSAs” (GSA Network, 2009; Wells, 2005, as cited in Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 70), and sometimes it is the only space that students feel comfortable being themselves (Sadowski, 2017). Schools with alliances have also seen an improvement in

“student achievement and educational experience” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 29). Misinformation and stereotypes often surround people who are gender and/or sexually diverse. Alliances can help to educate the student body about gender and/or sexually diverse students (Arora et al., 2016). They can also lessen homophobic comments made by students (GLSEN, 2007, as cited in Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Research shows that gay-straight alliances help students feel safe and welcomed at school, and increase students’ knowledge about GSD.

Gay-straight alliances are important for gender and/or sexually diverse students and their allies. The goals of alliances “are about valuing all people regardless of their gender and/or sexual diversity” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 30). Research has been done to prove that they have the ability to make schools “a better, safe and more accepting place” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 71). All students need to be represented and feel safe at school. Gay-straight alliances are a way to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

### **What Can Educators Do?**

Schools must be proactive in establishing change that accepts GSD within their walls. Teachers may struggle with where to begin when integrating GSD in their classroom. They must take the time to expand their knowledge and language, and learn how to advocate for youth (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). A crucial step for all teachers is to make sure that gender and/or sexually diverse persons are identifiable in visuals, resources, topics, and instruction (Steck & Perry, 2017). Schools need to make GSD visible through curricular and extra-curricular capacities

Teachers need to put in the time and effort to understand how they can successfully implement GSD into their classrooms. They need to “develop knowledge and awareness” to provide meaningful discussions and effectively support students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 80). Language is very powerful within the GSD community. Teachers must be conscious of the language they use around students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Unknowingly, teachers may be using heterosexist language such as “mom and dad,” or “boys against girls.” Youth who are gender and/or sexually diverse need someone to advocate for them. Teachers need to learn how to advocate for the youth and support them (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). For many teachers, understanding how to integrate GSD within their classrooms may be a challenge, but it is something that needs to be done.

Unfortunately, gender and/or sexually diverse persons are all too often not identifiable throughout schools (Schmidt, 2015). Teachers need to look closely at their classrooms (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Textbooks, materials, novels, homework, instruction, and visual images can reinforce heterosexual values (Steck & Perry, 2017). Classrooms and libraries need to have a diverse selection of books. Resources used during instruction time need to include more than just heterosexual people and families. Something as simple as a pride flag should be hung in the classroom to let students know that everyone is welcome. There is a lack of acknowledgement of the GSD community, and schools need to make it a priority.

Changes must be made to include GSD in schools. It will take schools and teachers many hours to learn how to integrate GSD organically in the classroom. Teachers need to develop awareness individually, and learn how to be allies (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015). Gender and/or sexually diverse persons need to be seen in materials, resources, and lessons in schools (Steck & Perry, 2017). Schools need to make integrating GSD a priority.

## Conclusion

The inclusion of GSD in schools is imperative. Educators and school divisions need first to understand why it is important to acknowledge GSD. The curriculum needs to include GSD, and school leaders need to advocate for those changes to be made. Gay-straight alliances are an opportunity for students to educate their peers on diversity, and how their extra-curricular group can help gender and/or sexually diverse students. The resources, lessons, materials, and discussions that teachers bring to their classrooms need to be inclusive to the GSD community. Governments, school divisions, schools, and educators all need to come together and recognize that the inclusion of GSD in schools will benefit all students.

## References

- Abreu, R. L., McEachern, A. G., & Kenny, M. C. (2017). Myths and misconceptions about LGBTQ youth: School counselors' role in advocacy. *Journal of School Counseling, 15*(8), 1-44.
- Arora, P. G., Kelly, J., & Goldstein, T. R. (2016). Current and future school psychologists' preparedness to work with LGBT students: Role of education and gay-straight alliances. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(7), 722-735. doi:10.1002/pits.21942
- Coles, T. (2018, May 29). Queer inclusivity in schools should start when students are young, says Alberta professor. *HuffPost*. Retrieved from [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/05/29/queer-inclusivity-schools\\_a\\_23446016/](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/05/29/queer-inclusivity-schools_a_23446016/)
- Crothers, L. M., Kolbert, J. B., Berbary, C., Chatlos, S., Lattanzio, L., Tiberi, A., . . . Meidl, C. (2017). Teachers', LGBTQ students', and student allies' perceptions of bullying of sexually-diverse youth. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 26*(9), 972-988. doi:10.1080/10926771.2017.1344344
- Demissie, Z., Raspberry, C. N., Steiner, R. J., Brener, N., & McManus, T. (2018). Trends in secondary school's practices to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students, 2008-2014. *American Journal of Public Health, 108*(4), 557-564. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2017.304296
- Sadowski, M. (2017). More than a safe space: How schools can enable LGBTQ students to thrive. *American Educator, 40*(4), 4-9.
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2015). *Deepening the discussion: Gender and sexual diversity*. Regina, SK: Publications Saskatchewan. Retrieved from <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=75989>
- Schmidt, S. J. (2015). A queer arrangement of school: Using spatiality to understand inequity. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47*(2), 253-273. doi:10.1080/00220272.2014.986764
- Steck, A., & Perry, D. (2017). Secondary school leader perceptions about the inclusion of queer materials in the school course curricula. *Curriculum Journal, 28*(3), 327-348. doi:10.1080/09585176.2017.1292180
- Steck, A., & Perry, D. (2018). Challenging heteronormativity: Creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ students. *Journal of School Violence, 27*(2), 227-243. doi:10.1080/15388220.2017.1308255

## About the Author

*Gina Bradshaw is a graduate student at Brandon University, specializing in the area of curriculum and pedagogy. She lives in Regina, Saskatchewan. She has been an educator for eight years, and is currently teaching in Prairie Valley School Division.*

# Formal Education in China: A Call for Genuine Multiculturalism

Yunge Pang

## Abstract

*Formal education in China serves as a means to reinforce national integration, and schools exhibit limited tolerance for cultural diversity, which significantly disadvantages students of ethnic minorities. On the one hand, minority cultures are to a large extent excluded in the curricula; and on the other hand, an assimilative approach is applied with a view to eliminating cultural differences. Since one of the major goals of multicultural education is to promote equity by celebrating minority cultural heritage, I suggest that the exclusive approaches should be terminated, and school education should embrace multiculturalism.*

Comprised of 56 officially recognized ethnic groups, China is considered a multicultural country. However, school education often neglects differences in ethnicity, and exhibits limited tolerance for cultural diversity (Leibold & Chen, 2014; Yi, 2008). China's formal education not only equips students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but also undertakes a "political task" (Yang, 2014, p. 16), which is to reinforce unity and cohesion of the nation. Thus, education becomes the major avenue through which the goal of integrating people of all ethnic groups into the state can be achieved (Hansen, 1999; Yang, 2014; Yang & Nima, 2015).

With a view to cultivating a strong attachment to the shared identity, school curricula address the common history of people who inhabit the state's territory (Hansen, 1999; Leibold & Chen, 2014). However, problems brought about by the political propaganda are salient in the state-supported educational system. On the one hand, minority cultures that contradict the dominant group's values and beliefs are largely excluded from schooling; and on the other hand, an assimilative approach, which can best be illustrated by the bilingual policy adopted in formal education, has been promoted in schools (Hansen, 1999). Since the exclusion and assimilation of minority cultures significantly disadvantage students of ethnic minorities, I suggest that a multicultural approach should be adopted in formal education.

## Multiculturalism in Education

The "melting pot" theory, which aims at eliminating cultural differences by assimilating minor groups into the dominant culture, was the major goal of school education in the United States during the 1960s (Banks, 2006). Multiculturalism, which allows students to maintain cultural ties to their communities, rejects the melting pot approach by honouring cultural heritages of different ethnic and cultural groups. The concept of multiculturalism in education originated from the Black Civil Right Movement in North America during the 1960s and 1970s, when the Western countries were highly diverse in race and ethnicity (Banks, 2009). This movement brought about the appeal of marginalized groups seeking recognition and equal rights in societies, where the cultures of the dominant groups were privileged.

Even though China has been historically multi-ethnic, the notion of multiculturalism is not familiar to many Chinese scholars since it is not a part of the Chinese tradition (Leibold & Chen, 2014). Understanding the features and challenges of China's education calls for an examination of how minority cultures are represented in formal school settings. I suggest that since the marginalization of Chinese minority cultures seriously disadvantage ethnic minority students, it is urgent to terminate the exclusive and assimilative approaches, and embrace multiculturalism in formal school education.

## **Education for Ethnic Minorities: Features and Challenges**

Education for China's ethnic minority students exhibits two major features: ideologically, much emphasis has been put on maintaining unity of the nation; in practice, minority education is separated from the mainstream educational system. While strengthening national unity contributes to the marginalization of minority cultures, separated school education enables the practice of an assimilative approach. The termination of ongoing cultural exclusion and assimilation has been the major challenge of China's formal education.

In China, education for ethnic minorities is out of the need to avoid division of the Chinese nation, since geographically, more than half of the ethnic minority communities reside in the west and areas close to the broader within the Chinese territory (Yi, 2008). Even though the Minister of Education supported the celebration of cultural diversity ostensibly, the adoption of genuine multiculturalism, which may lead to political discrepancies by addressing ethnic identity, is deemed as getting in the way of a harmonious society (Cissé, 2018; Hansen, 1999). However, a highly oppressive environment against cultural diversity can serve to alienate ethnic minorities from the Chinese nation. As a result of the negotiation between genuine multiculturalism and "monoculturalism," China's formal education exhibits features of both unity and diversity—even though diversity can be tolerated to a limited level, unity remains the utmost priority for the government (Leibold & Chen, 2014, p. 6).

Another feature of education for ethnic minorities is the separation of minority education from the mainstream educational system (Yang & Nima, 2015; Yi, 2008). In theory, dividing "standardized education" from "ethnic education" aims to eliminate inequity among different ethnic groups by implementing different educational policies that cater to the needs of students (Leibold & Chen, 2014, p. 6). In reality, nevertheless, this segregation only gave rise to the formation of a double standard between minority and majority students in academic criteria and employment market: since the education for ethnic minorities is regarded as backward and inferior to mainstream education, even though students of ethnic minorities manage to receive the same level of education as the students of the dominant group, they are deemed as less competitive in the labor market (Yi, 2008). While maintaining unity justifies cultural exclusion, and the separate educational system for ethnic minorities perpetuates inequity.

### **Cultural Exclusion in Formal Education**

The exclusion of minority cultures in formal school education is reflected in two major facets: the limited space for instruction, and the tokenized and politicized representation of minority cultures in the curricula. Cultural exclusion not only significantly decreases the mainstream students' opportunities for learning ethnic cultures, and distorts their perceptions about ethnic minority people, but also greatly disadvantages students of ethnic minorities.

In China, formal school education in China is often criticized for offering only "skin-deep knowledge" about ethnic minorities (Postiglione, 2014, p. 30; Shen & Qian, 2010, p. 48; Yi, 2008, p. 53), such that minority cultures are regarded as ornaments of mainstream cultural life (Yi, 2008). Additionally, minority cultures that contradict the dominant group's values and beliefs are not allowed to be transmitted in schools (Hansen, 1999), and the representation of ethnic minorities in formal school education is largely based on the mainstream group's perspective, which is not open to discussion. As a result, students of the dominant group have limited knowledge about China's 120 million ethnic minority people, due to the lack of opportunities to learn about their cultures (Postiglione, 2014).

School education also gives little play of minority cultures and history, unless the topic of how the endeavors of all ethnic groups contributed to the establishment of the single united Chinese nation is discussed (Yi, 2008). Besides, school teaching content associated with minority cultures is adopted as a tool for the dissemination of the political propaganda, and is always subject to changes in governmental policies. With a view to addressing national unity by

highlighting harmonious relationships among different ethnic groups, minority cultures are represented in a stagnant and distorted manner. In school teaching materials, ethnic minority people are often portrayed as colourful, exotic, religious, and always happy (Yi, 2008). In this respect, there is no room for the transmission and appreciation of their authentic cultural heritages. Minority cultures are reduced to a limited number of symbols, which leads to distorted perceptions and ethnic stereotypes. The limited space for the transmission of minority cultures, coupled with the tokenized and politicized representation in the curriculum, cultivated among students false images about the ethnic minority people.

Furthermore, cultural exclusion causes difficulties of cultural adaption and poor academic performance by ethnic minority students. For these students, receiving formal education means breaking cultural ties with their home communities, since school education provides students with only abstract knowledge, void of teaching content and pedagogies pertaining to their backgrounds (Shen & Qian, 2010). While school culture conflicts with the students' community cultures, difficulties with adaption put students of ethnic minorities into a dilemma. The exclusion of minority cultures not only limits the mainstream students' opportunities to encounter new cultures, but also fosters distorted images about the ethnic minority people among them. The huge gap between the students' home cultures and the school environment contributes to difficulties with adaptations by minority students.

### **Assimilative Approach in Education for Ethnic Minority Students**

The bilingual policy, which features the adoption of both Mandarin and minority languages for instruction, can best illustrate the government's assimilative ideology in education. In theory, the bilingual policy aims at facilitates the learning in schools for students of ethnic minorities. However, in practice, the bilingual policy puts minority students into difficulties caused by language barriers, and leads to the elimination of cultural difference.

With a view to "modernizing" the alleged backward ethnic minority communities (Postiglione, 2014), the bilingual policy was created to enhance academic achievement of ethnic minorities by providing students with opportunities of using their own languages in formal school settings (Yi, 2008). However, in practice, minority languages are largely excluded from schooling, and Mandarin was adopted as the major language from instruction (Hansen, 1999). The implementation of the bilingual policy is often undermined by the lack of financial support and trained teachers (Hansen, 1999; Postiglione, 2014). Some schools located in the areas where minority communities live refused to adopt a bilingual approach for instruction, due to the absence of qualified teachers and financial support. As Mandarin became the mandatory language for instruction in these schools, students whose first languages were different were seriously disadvantaged owing to language barriers (Cissé, 2018).

While schools adopted Mandarin as the main vehicle for delivering knowledge, minority languages became inferior, and were considered worthless (Hansen, 1999; Zhao, 2010). Even though minority languages are encouraged by policy, the opportunities for using these languages in society has decreased significantly (Yi, 2008; Zhao, 2010). Meanwhile, the bilingual policy facilitated the popularization of Mandarin, and accelerated the pace of assimilating ethnic minorities into the culture of the dominant group (Leibold & Chen, 2014; Yi, 2008). Therefore, on the one hand, Mandarin is popularized; on the other hand, due to the lack of qualified teachers and financial support, the absence of minority language for instruction seriously disadvantages students of ethnic minorities. Since Mandarin becomes the only language adopted for instruction, its status as the dominant language is reinforced.

### **Conclusion**

Education in China serves as a means of integrating people of all ethnic groups into the state. However, mainstream education excludes cultures of ethnic minorities with a view to

maintaining unity of the nation, and an assimilative approach is reflected in the bilingual policy, which privileges Mandarin. Cultural exclusion and assimilation seriously disadvantage students of ethnic minorities, and limit opportunities to learn about minority cultures for the mainstream students. Since one of the major goals of multicultural education is to empower students of diverse ethnic groups by promoting recognition and equity, I suggest that the exclusive and assimilative ideology should give way to multiculturalism in education.

## References

- Banks, J. A. (2006). Imperatives in ethnic minority education. In J. A. Banks, *Race, culture, and education: The selected works of James A. Banks* (pp. 109-114). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Banks, J. A. (2009). Multicultural education: Dimensions and paradigms. In J. A. Banks (ed.), *The Routledge international companion to multicultural education* (pp. 9-32). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hansen, M. H. (1999). *Lessons in being Chinese: Minority education and ethnic identity in Southwest China*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.
- Leibold, J., & Chen, Y. (2014). Introduction: State schooling and ethnicity in China. In J. Leibold & Y. Chen (Eds.), *Minority education in China: Balancing unity and diversity in an era of critical pluralism* (pp. 1-24). Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University.
- Postiglione, G. (2014). Education and cultural diversity in multiethnic China. In J. Leibold & Y. Chen (Eds.), *Minority education in China: Balancing unity and diversity in an era of critical pluralism* (pp. 27-43). Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University.
- Shen, H., & Qian, M. (2010). The other in education. *Chinese Education & Society*, 43(5), 47-61. doi:10.2753/CED1061-1932430503 Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.
- Cissé, D. (2018, October 19). China's complex "multiculturalism" with ethnic and religious tensions. *Asia Dialogue*. Retrieved October 31, 2018, from <http://theasiadialogue.com/2018/10/19/chinas-complex-multiculturalism-with-ethnic-and-religious-tensions/>
- Yang, M., & Nima, D. (2015). Assimilation or ethnicization: An exploration of inland Tibet class education policy and practice. *Chinese Education & Society*, 48(5), 341-352. doi:10.1080/10611932.2015.1159828
- Yang, P. (2014). Empire at the margins: Compulsory mobility, hierarchical imaginary, and education in China's ethnic borderland. *London Review of Education*, 12(1), 5-19.
- Yi, L. (2008). *Cultural exclusion in China: State education, social mobility and cultural difference*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Zhang, W. (2017). Multicultural ethnic music education in Communist China. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(3), 65-84.
- Zhao, Z. (2010). Trilingual education for ethnic minorities: Toward empowerment? *Chinese Education and Society*, 43(1), 70-81. doi:10.2753/CED1061-1932430106

## About the Author

Yunge Pang is an international student of Brandon University School of Music. She completed her master's degree in Music Performance at Nanjing Normal University, before she was enrolled as a graduate student in BU's Music Education program. Her research focuses on social justice and music education in China.

# The Relationship Between Students Living in Poverty and Those Who Teach Them

Suzanne Calder

## Abstract

*There is a correlation between students living in poverty and low academic achievements. Students who live in poverty often come to school with less knowledge and experiences than their peers. Communities these students live in, and the schools they attend, do not always have the resources to attain higher educational accomplishments. Educators must recognize poverty as an issue and build relationships with these students while in their classrooms and schools. Educators should also partner with members of the communities to create projects where students can have pride in their academic accomplishments, and also within the communities in which they live.*

Students living in poverty attain lower levels of education (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2017), so educators need to support these students for them to become more successful (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2017). Poverty affects students across our nation (Khanna & Meisner, 2018), including several families in my community, Portage la Prairie (Citizens for Public Justice, 2017). As an educator in my community, I have worked with many students who live below the poverty line. Children who live in poverty do not get much of an opportunity to escape it, because they come from homes where the parents are struggling (Bryce, Iglesias, Pullman, & Rogova, 2016). These children live in communities that have high levels of poverty (Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2018), and they go to schools that do not have the resources for them to obtain a high level of academic success (Neuman et al., 2018). With these obstacles that our students face, “poverty remains the biggest obstacle to education” (Birdsong, 2016, Conclusion section, para. 1). As teachers, we need to learn how to help our students through these barriers. Teachers are an important influence in students’ lives, but we should also look to our schools to lead changes that will provide an encouraging environment for students (Turner & Juntune, 2018). Partnerships between schools and community groups can have a promising effect on those students living in poverty (Thompson, n.d.). The school culture must learn to recognize and understand the signs of students living with poverty, and provide them a safe and reassuring setting to develop into effective citizens for our society.

## Poverty Affects Academic Achievement

Many homes are filled with love, but for those living in poverty, love does not always overcome the deficiencies that poverty can create in a home, community, or school, or the implications it can have on academic success (Jensen, 2009). Living in a home that is under a lot of stress can result in children’s needs not being met, which in turn can affect children’s academic performance. Children living in poverty may lack access to adequate medical care, which can affect their brain development, causing a ripple effect on their academic success (Spies, Morgan, & Matsuura, 2014). These children do not always receive the nutrition they require to grow developmentally, and they may not be healthy enough to stay consistently in school. Absenteeism affects children’s ability to advance their learning and to make relationships with teachers necessary for them to understand their learning style (Spies et al., 2014). Many of these stressors can also influence students’ behaviour at school, consequently affecting their social lives (Jensen, 2009). When children lack friends at school, it is more difficult for them to want to remain there to learn. It is unfortunate that children are born into home situations that they do not have control over, but if we, as educators, understand that they

did not choose this path, then we need to support them when they come to school (TeAchnology, n.d.).

Research shows that living in a community of low-income families has a correlation with attaining low academic achievement in school (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). Teachers need to understand that living in an impoverished community is an important factor in predicting a child's success. Families living in poverty generally have less access to the resources that make their community a positive place to live. Many impoverished communities do not have access to a library or preschool development programs. With the lack of these resources, many parents become stressed and feel the effects of this lack of support (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). A community can play an important role in influencing and determining the success or failure of children (Neuman et al., 2018). When students come from a high-poverty community, educators need to be responsible for creating a sense of a positive community within the school, which may provide the students a higher potential of success.

Children who attend schools in high-poverty communities are more likely to receive a negative educational experience. These schools are less likely to have high quality teachers. Within the schools, the teachers are not exposing students to the same degree of literacy education that many students in low poverty schools obtain (Neuman et al., 2018). Children living in poverty often begin their education lagging behind in their developmental domains, compared to children living in low-poverty communities (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). Once the children are in school, the education they receive may not be as high level as that for their well-to-do peers (Neuman et al., 2018). When children do not receive a good quality delivery of curriculum, it can have additional negative effects on their love of learning. This lack of quality teaching will affect students as they continue through their educational experience, increasing the academic gap (Morrissey & Vinoplay, 2018). Once the children realize that there is a difference between themselves and their peers, they often start to withdraw and "disengage from school at the age of 9 or ten years old" (Horgan, 2009, p. 370). Children living in poverty also have a hard time staying in school because of health issues or social anxiety, knowing that they do not fit in with some of the low-poverty students (Horgan, 2009). Health issues, including anxiety, begin the cycle of school absences and incomplete assignments, which also leads to an increase in the academic gap (Jensen, 2009). School is often the one stable place for many children living in poverty with whom I have worked. It is educators' job to make school a safe and positive learning environment, which may encourage students to want to further their education, be positive role models in their community, and end the cycle of poverty within their homes (Spies et al., 2014).

### **Teachers Can Support Students Living in Poverty**

While in schools, teachers have the ability to build relationships with their students, create a culture of understanding within their school, and reach out to community members to support their teaching within their classrooms. It is important for teachers to understand the degree of influence we have in our students' lives (Dell'Angelo, 2016). For teachers to gain a better understanding of these experiences and their students, they should participate in the simulation activity, *Living on the Edge* (United Way Winnipeg, 2018). It gives teachers and educational professionals an understanding of the difficulties that those living in poverty face on a daily basis. Professional development in the effects of poverty may help teachers to teach from a different perspective and change their relationship with students living in poverty (Parker, 2015). I have heard teachers complain numerous times about the excuses students use for not completing assignments or being absent, but I believe they are unaware of what students living in poverty are going through. If they understood students' situations, they could be more effective teachers and have better relationships with their students (Johnson, n.d.). When students gain a trusting relationship with their teachers, it supports those teachers' efforts in having high expectations (Spies et al., 2014). Teachers should always expect nothing but the

best from their students because that encourages all students to reach their highest potential (Whipple, Genero, & Evans, 2016). Teachers may have to differentiate or adapt their teaching style to help students become successful, because not all students learn the same way (Johnson, n.d.). Having teachers who understand their students, build positive relationships with them, and have high expectations will generate a school of successful students.

Creating a school that, as a whole, understands the culture of poverty (TeAchnology, n.d.) needs to begin with the administration (Dell'Angelo, 2016). Administrators can encourage their school to have a positive teaching culture, programs that can be of support to students and families living in poverty, and more school involvement by the students living in poverty. Listening to the teachers and their ideas creates a team approach to teaching among administrators and their staff (Dell'Angelo, 2016). The administration could look at flexible scheduling for students who need to start late or leave early, which may cause less student-teacher friction within the classroom (Birdsong, 2018). Parents living in poverty would likely appreciate the flexible scheduling, because it can assist them, and create a positive partnership between themselves and the school (Parker, 2015). Schools can build positive relationships between themselves and families through information nights when families learn about the different programs offered to their children, including a teen clinic, social services, career counselling, or after-schooling activities (Dike, 2017). If educators examine what students are interested in and are capable of, we can serve the students better (Parker, 2015). Encouraging students who are living in poverty to be members of any of the extra-curricular activities that the school has to offer, whether it be sports, arts, or student council, may create a feeling of control over their lives, even if it is only at school (Horgan, 2009). Schools and their stakeholders can be both supportive of the students living in poverty and provide them with the knowledge and experiences to become important citizens of society.

Schools can also look beyond the classrooms to support students living in poverty. Partnering with community supports, programs, and services may improve the overall experiences that students living in poverty have as they complete their education (Zyngier, 2017). School-community partnerships that occur when the community programs (such as Boys & Girls Clubs) come into the school or when the students go out into the community (*Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada*, 2018), help students to feel "empowered" (Zyngier, 2017, p. 23). Community programs can come into the school during the day or after school. If members from the community come into the school and share their experience and knowledge, it creates a hands-on aspect whereby students can "learn new skills" and build relationships with members of the community (Zyngier, 2017, p. 22). There have been programs wherein the students have gone into their community and worked on project-based assignments that improved the communities they live in, giving them more pride in their work and showing that they can make a difference (Luter, Mitchell, & Taylor, 2017). When schools and teachers work with community programs, it provides positive experiences for students living in poverty. It motivates teachers to teach in a way that is both successful and meaningful to the students and themselves, and it gives an overall feeling of community between the school and the city it is happening in (Luter et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

We live in a society where poverty has an influence on our students in many ways, including an effect on their ability to achieve high academic standards. The constant reminder of living in poverty does not escape children; as a result, these children are more focused on daily life than on gaining a higher education (Horgan, 2009). Children may initially use school as an escape when they are younger, but then begin to believe they will not prosper as much as their peers, and as a result do not want to continue with school, thus continuing the poverty cycle (Gullo, 2018). We as teachers need to hold the highest standards, and if we can get students to believe in themselves as worthwhile citizens, then they might have a better chance of breaking

the poverty cycle (Neuman et al., 2018). As teachers, we have the opportunity to be with the students daily, for the better part of the year, so we need to want to make a difference. Understanding our students through education and building relationships gives us more knowledge of what we can do for our students (Dike, 2017). In order to break the cycle of poverty in our country, we need to start with the families in our communities. We can reach these families through our schools. By providing a positive, hands-on educational experience to our students living in poverty, they can become the change that makes them proud of the community and school in which they live in and attend.

## References

- Birdsong, K. (2016, January 26). Ten facts about how poverty impacts education. *Fast forward*. Retrieved October 11, 2018, from <https://www.scilearn.com/blog/ten-facts-about-how-poverty-impacts-education>
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada. (2018). Retrieved December 27, 2018, from <https://www.bgccan.com/en/>
- Bryce, R., Iglesias, B., Pullman, A., & Rogova, A. (2016, January 19). Inequality explained: The hidden gaps in Canada's education system. *Opencanada.org*. Retrieved October 11, 2018, from <https://www.opencanada.org/features/inequality-explained-hidden-gaps-canadas-education-system/>
- Citizens for Public Justice. (2017, October). *Poverty trends 2017*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <https://www.cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/PovertyTrendsReport2017.pdf>
- Dell'Angelo, T. (2016). The power of perception: Mediating the impact of poverty on student achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 48*(3), 245-261. doi:10.1177/0013124514531042
- Dike, V. E. (2017). Poverty and brain development in children: Implications for learning. *Asian Journal of Education and Training, 3*(1), 64-68. doi:10.20448/journal.522.2017.31.64.68
- Gullo, D. (2018). A structural model of early indicators of school readiness among children of poverty. *Journal of Children and Poverty, 24*(1), 3-24.
- Horgan, G. (2009). "That child is smart because he's rich": The impact of poverty on young children's experiences of school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13*(4), 359-376. doi:10.1080/13603110802707779
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Johnson, C. (n. d.). Six effective practices can help teachers help students from poverty succeed. *Leading learning for children from poverty*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <http://amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/351/Leading-Learning-for-Children-From-Poverty.aspx>
- Khanna, A., & Meisner, A. (2018, June 18). Riding by riding analysis shows child poverty in Canada knows no boundaries. *Campaign2000.ca*. Retrieved October 26, 2018, from <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Campaign-2000-Riding-by-Riding-Child-Poverty-Report.pdf>
- Luter, D. G., Mitchell, A. M., & Taylor, H. L., Jr., (2017). Critical consciousness and schooling: The impact of the community as a classroom program on academic indicators. *Education Sciences, 7*(25), 1-23.
- Morrissey, T. W., & Vinopal, K. M. (2018). Neighborhood poverty and children's academic skills and behavior in early elementary school. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 80*(1), 182-197.
- Neuman, S. B., Kaefer, T., & Pinkham, A. M. (2018). A double dose of disadvantaged: Language experiences for low-income children in home and school. *Journal of Education Psychology, 110*(1), 102-118.

- Palomar-Lever, J., & Victoria-Estrada, A. (2017). Academic success of adolescents in poverty. *Social Psychology of Education* 20(3), 669-691.
- Parker, D. C. (2015, February). Poverty and schooling: Where mindset meets practice. *What works? Research into practice*. Retrieved November 2, 2018, from [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/ww\\_mindsetpractice.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/ww_mindsetpractice.pdf)
- Spies, T. G., Morgan, J. J., & Matsuura, M. (2014). The faces of hunger: The educational impact of hunger of students with disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 50(1), 5-14. doi:10.1177/1053451214532349
- TeAchnology. (n.d.). *More on the effects of poverty on teaching and learning*. Retrieved October 11, 2018, from <http://www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/poverty/1/>
- Thompson, J. G. (n.d.). How one school is fighting poverty. *Teaching community: Where teachers meet and learn*. Retrieved November 2, 2018, from <http://teaching.monster.com/benefits/articles/3049-how-one-school-is-fighting-poverty>
- Turner, S. T., & Juntune, J. (2018). Perceptions of the home environments of graduate students raised in poverty. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 29(2), 91-115. doi:10.1177/1932202X18758259
- United Way Winnipeg. (2018). *Living on the edge: Taking a look at poverty*. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <https://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/lote/>
- Whipple, S. S., Genero, C. K., & Evans, G. W. (2016). Task persistence: A potential mediator of the income-achievement gap. *Journal of Applied Research on Children*, 7(1), 1-30. doi:10.1007/s11218-017-9389-7
- Zyngier, D. (2017). How experiential learning in an informal setting promotes class equity and social and economic justice for children from “communities at promise”: An Australian perspective. *International Review of Education*, 63(1), 9-28. doi:10.1007/s11159-017-9621-x

### **About the Author**

Suzanne Calder is a high school teacher enrolled in her first year of the Master of Education program, administration stream. She currently specializes in family studies and is working on implementing child care as a vocational opportunity at her school. She is a mother of three teenage hockey players.

## **Solutions to Indigenous Personal Barriers From the Author's Perspective**

**Ellana Armstrong**

### **Abstract**

*Providing pathways to Indigenous student success in Canada has proven difficult for educators over the past decade. Many Indigenous voices have been heard since the Truth and Reconciliation has become headline news, but most Western educators do not yet have the knowledge and understanding to properly teach culturally accurate and appropriate lessons, including the current and historical implications of residential schools. On a daily basis, Indigenous students face barriers such as mental illness, disengagement from the educational system, and a loss of culture. As such, providing school staff with cultural sensitivity training, focusing on the strengths of our Indigenous students with compassion and love, and inviting Elders and Indigenous resource workers to collaborate in lesson planning are all viable solutions to increase the success of our Indigenous students.*

The work of teaching Indigenous students in Canada is a work of history reborn. How to accommodate the success of Indigenous students in Canada has been a debated topic for educators, parents, and community groups for the past decade (Dion, 2016). To add to this dilemma, school policy, legislation, and media further convolute our preconceived notions of how Indigenous students look, speak, behave, and learn (Gebhard, 2018). We are at a societal crossroads: a path of oppression crossing a path of transparency. Our action (or inaction) can increase or inhibit the success of our Indigenous students. Educators, administrators, and people of power have the means to investigate colonial oppression and the inherent racism on which our country was built, and thrives (Dion, 2016). It is imperative that teachers address the following problem areas for Indigenous students: mental illness, disengagement from the educational system, and loss of culture by way of the Indian Act, perpetuated by current teaching practices (Mancuso, 2018). These problems influence educators' ability to help these students reach their full potential. Fortunately, there are several solutions to these educational problems, not limited to sensitivity training for school staff, providing compassion and love for Indigenous students, and inviting Elders and Indigenous resource workers to take part in school-based program-planning and teaching opportunities on a continuous basis.

### **Mental Health**

Mental illness is a barrier to the success of contemporary Indigenous students. Industrial and residential schools have created terrifying and long-lasting physical and mental-health implications for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Although the students in my 3rd grade class have a diluted understanding of the implications of Truth and Reconciliation, some have been brought up by parents who witnessed the pain and suffering of their own mothers and fathers. The historical effects of colonial oppression are linked to higher rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, PTSD, and suicidality in Indigenous families (Mancuso, 2018). When children experience family trauma and illness, their ability to perform academically is diminished (Mancuso, 2018). I can speak to this first hand through the lived experiences of my own family and upbringing. The cycle of pain has lasted four generations and, although I pray it ends with me, I know that my children will hear the stories of their great-grandmother and grandfather, question our familial illness, and fear its emergence in themselves and in their own children of mixed Indigenous and European heritages. Mental illness as a result of cultural genocide goes beyond an educational problem; it is an educational epidemic.

A solution to the problem of poor mental-health in Indigenous students is sensitivity training for administrators, counsellors, resource teachers, and teachers. It would invite school staff to recognize issues that our students present and how to remedy them. Indigenous sensitivity training covers topics such as treaty land, historical policies surrounding Indigenous Peoples, current trends in Indigenous education, and community outreach members (Farrell, 2004). I attended a sensitivity training session in 2017 here in Brandon. Educators were given the opportunity to attend, but unfortunately I was the only staff member from my school who attended. It was a truly eye-opening experience. Attendees spent the day listening to the Brandon Indigenous Peoples Council and taking part in activities, role-plays, and polls on topics relevant to relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. By and large, the greatest benefit from attending this session was how to address Indigenous families in school. As explained by an Elder, schools are not a happy place for Indigenous families. The legacy of residential schools is very much alive in our school-aged children, and some parents feel guarded when coming into the school. By beginning school assemblies, pep-rallies, and PTA meetings with an acknowledgement to being on Treaty 2 land, or having an Elder present to give a blessing, we are validating that our schools are built on lands that have been borrowed from Indigenous Peoples (Tupper, 2014) whose children attend our schools. Validating and connecting our students and families creates avenues for school staff to recognize and remedy mental-health issues that may arise. Sensitivity training for school staff would do much to increase successful Indigenous student education.

### **Disengagement**

Disengagement from the educational system is a barrier to the success of Indigenous students, and a problem that will in turn influence the likelihood of seeing Indigenous educators in the classroom. Indigenous students in Canada are lagging behind the success rates of other cultural populations (Olsen Harper & Thompson, 2017). It is grossly unacceptable that less than half of Indigenous high-school students in Manitoba graduate, while nearly all of their non-Indigenous peers do (Office of the Auditor General, Manitoba, as cited in Olsen Harper & Thompson, 2017, pp. 42-43). If schools do not have an Indigenous Education Counsellor, Indigenous students may not see a single adult working in their school who represents their own cultural background. Although I am an Indigenous educator, my Mi'kmaq background is very different from those of the students in my building. In this regard, I do not represent the vast majority of my Indigenous students. I do not practise the same beliefs, our Creation stories differ, we do not share a common Treaty land, and I cannot speak to the experiences of their ancestors. Indigenous students are leaving school before graduating due to "boredom" and "pregnancy" (Statistics Canada, as cited in Charleyboy, 2017, para. 8), and little can be done to provide an avenue for Indigenous students to see their own backgrounds and beliefs represented in their schools. This is a cyclical problem; school divisions cannot hire Indigenous educators when so few Indigenous students are completing secondary education, let alone post-secondary school.

The cheapest, most readily available solutions to Indigenous student disengagement are compassion and love. I can speak to one of my most precious 3rd grade students whom I will call Alicia. The transition notes that came to me in June of 2018 listed all of Alicia's deficits. Her suspected FASD had neatly placed her in a box of negatives: poor attendance, failing in math and literacy, poor speech, chronic inattention, and the inability to build appropriate friendships. To be sure, Alicia is the most vulnerable student in my 2018-19 class of 25. Alicia comes to me (almost) every morning incapable of following our class rules and routines. Her mother works at night and subsequently sleeps during the day, so Alicia is not always properly dressed for the weather, or fed before coming to school. She lacks the executive functioning skills to make sure she is prepared for the day.

By simply treating Alicia with love and compassion first and foremost, I am able to celebrate her when she comes to school, which is happening more often. She may not remember to put her indoor shoes on, but she comes into the classroom (after giving me a big hug), grabs a book, and sinks into the safe and caring place our classroom provides her. It has taken a while, but Alicia is making great strides in her learning. I have made a conscious effort to focus on the positives, and when Alicia is present I love her and thank her for coming to school. She is becoming more engaged and willing to take risks with her learning, and she is seeing the power she holds within. If educators can flip from a deficit-based view of their students to a strength-based perspective, we can begin to celebrate the small pebbles of learning that will eventually stack as high as a mountain (Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010). Compassion and love are a solution to Indigenous student disengagement.

### **Loss of Culture**

A final educational barrier to Indigenous student success is a loss of culture. The Indian Act did much to alter the lives of Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Residential schools and the 60s Scoop were actions obviously designed to eradicate a culture (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2018). Celebrating events such as Orange Shirt Day, National Aboriginal Day and Louis Riel Day, and developing Indigenous resource sections in our school libraries, are insufficient gestures. Simply teaching students about the Seven Grandfather Teachings or Turtle Island will not remediate the barriers our Indigenous students face (Gebhard, 2018). White privilege lives through our inability to teach anti-Indigenous racism, because many educators do not explicitly address the colonial racism (Tupper, 2014) that Indigenous Peoples continue to endure. Simply talking about residential schools stigmatizes Indigenous students by the perception that their ancestors were in the wrong place at the wrong time, not victims of genocide. A racist narrative is propagated through continued whitewashing of Indigenous cultural teachings, giving cause to issues facing Indigenous students (Gebhard, 2018). As both an educator and a student viewing the world through a European and Indigenous perspective, I have witnessed that historical oppression is reinforced in our classrooms, and a loss of culture is a barrier to the success of Indigenous students.

Inviting Elders and Indigenous resource workers into schools on a continuous basis to assist in program-planning is a solution to the inaccuracy of current pedagogical practices surrounding Indigenous teaching. Riverheights School has a BSSAP (Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents) worker every other day. She is a valued and trusted member of our learning community. On the days she is at Riverheights, she is our go-to when it comes to liaising with Indigenous families and students. She meets with students in her caseload and goes out of her way to provide them with a safe place in the school. We also have Elders, such as Amie Martin, and Frank and Kevin Tacan, who come to our school to make connections, share culturally appropriate lessons with the students, and inspire our Indigenous students to carry on the tradition of cultural learning (Manitoba Education, 2007). Martin has provided our school with a plethora of text-sets, kits, videos, and activities that address Truth and Reconciliation from an accurate and Indigenous-centered approach, and Frank and Kevin Tacan make frequent visits at teachers' request (Tupper, 2014). Through the mentoring and leadership of these wonderful people, educators in our building can safely and accurately teach our students culturally appropriate lessons about the historical past of Indigenous Peoples. It would be most beneficial to provide our students constant contact with these integral figures in all schools. Directly involving Indigenous resource workers and Elders in school-based program-planning is a solution to the problem of whitewashing our teaching of Canadian history.

## A Personal Perspective

Having grown up as a student facing these barriers, I appreciate the solutions for increasing Indigenous student success. My grandmother denied her heritage until she was in her senior years, our family experienced poor mental health, disengagement with the school system, and misrepresentation of who our people are. Having left the banks of the Miramichi for Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, my grandmother and her family experienced a life much different from back home. My great-grandmother, having spent her life as an orphan, a spinster, and a servant, finally married a white man and had 13 children. Her sons were able to attend school in Qu'Appelle; her daughters were not. In addition, "mixed breed" females were often sexually mistreated by European men in the area. Having denied her heritage until her elder years, my grandmother spoke out about the sexual abuse that she and her sisters faced in Saskatchewan, and how the men in her family became increasingly plagued by alcohol and what she would now call depression. She was also able to admit that her mother had no idea how to parent and, in turn, she felt a deep sadness in her inability to raise her own children, including my father. Like my father before me, I have personally battled with addiction and poor mental health, failed academically, and dropped out of high school. My own turning point came when I finally hit "rock bottom" and perceived that I had two choices: to fulfil everyone's abysmal expectations of me or to prove them wrong. I now recognize how lucky I am to have defeated those tremendous odds, statistically speaking.

## Conclusion

Successfully teaching our Indigenous students is a problem for educators, with no signs of slowing down. The school-aged population of Indigenous Peoples is booming (Paquette & Fallon, 2010), yet our pedagogical practices are not keeping up. Decreased mental health, lack of school connections, and the loss of culture and language are barriers that inhibit Indigenous students from reaching their fullest potential in Canadian schools. Solutions to these barriers to Indigenous student success, including cultural sensitivity training for school-staff, treating Indigenous students with compassion and love, and inviting Elders and Indigenous resource workers into our schools to assist in program-planning, will build a school culture of validation and respect, which is what our Indigenous students deserve.

## References

- Barnes, R., & Josefowitz, N. (2018, July 5). Indian residential schools in Canada: Persistent impacts on Aboriginal students' psychological development and functioning. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 1-12. doi:10.1037/cap0000154
- Charleyboy, L. (2017, October 5). The problem with Aboriginal education in Canada and what you can do about it. *Jobpostings*. Retrieved October 18, 2018, from [www.jobpostings.ca/career-guides/aboriginal/problem-aboriginal-education-canada-and-what-you-can-do-about-it](http://www.jobpostings.ca/career-guides/aboriginal/problem-aboriginal-education-canada-and-what-you-can-do-about-it)
- Crooks, C. V., Chiodo, D., Thomas, D., & Hughes, R. (2010). Strengths-based programming for First Nations youth in schools: Building engagement through healthy relationships and leadership skills. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 8(2), 160-173. doi:10.1007/s11469-009-9242-0
- Dion, S. D. (2016). Mediating the space between: Voices of Indigenous youth and voices of educators in service of reconciliation. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53(4), 468-473. doi:10.1111/cars.12128
- Farrell, J. (2004). Companies study Aboriginal relations. *Raven's Eye*, 8(6), 8.

- Gebhard, A. (2018). "Let's make a little drum": Limitations and contradictory effects of cultural approaches in Indigenous education. *Race, Ethnicity & Education*, 21(6), 757-772. doi:10.1080/13613324.2017.1377172
- Mancuso, T. (2018). Native Indian youth with substance-abusing parents: Implications of history. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 18(2), 222-229. doi:10.1080/1533256X.2018.1445381
- Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2007). *Kindergarten to grade 12 Aboriginal languages and cultures: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.
- Olsen Harper, A., & Thompson, S. (2017). Structural oppressions facing Indigenous students in Canadian education. *Fourth World Journal*, 15(2), 41-66.
- Paquette, J. E., & Fallon, G. (2010). *First Nations education policy in Canada: Progress or gridlock?* Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Tupper, J. A. (2014). The possibilities for reconciliation through difficult dialogues: Treaty education as peacebuilding. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 44(4), 469-488. doi:10.1111/curi.12060

### **About the Author**

*Ellana Armstrong is a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher in Brandon, and an M.Ed. student at Brandon University. Her work focuses on special education, specifically meeting the needs of Indigenous students. Her Metis background has ignited her passion to study the fusion of Indigenous and European cultures in Canadian schools.*

# Supporting Introverted Students

Jenn Stewart

## Abstract

*Understanding introverted students in the classroom is a necessary component of supporting students' unique learning needs. Educators need to be mindful of how introverted students learn in the classroom setting, and determine how best to integrate this peaceful personality in positive ways. Acknowledging introverted students for who they are, celebrating their unique differences, and guiding them on their learning path will inspire them to take risks, appreciate their value, and find their place in the world.*

An ever-increasing role for educators is to familiarize themselves with the learning styles of their students. For student growth and social-emotional learning, it is vital for educators to support the different personality types of their students. Understanding introverted students in the classroom is a necessary component of supporting students' unique learning needs. Nurturing the quiet, reserved introverted student requires understanding the personality of the outgoing, expressive extroverted student. Educators need to be mindful of how introverted students learn in the classroom setting, and determine how best to integrate this peaceful personality in positive ways. Because their quiet disposition can hide feelings of anxiety, the mental health of an introverted student is frequently overlooked within this reserved personality. Teaching the introverted student in the classroom setting requires careful thought and planning. Educators need to evaluate their own biases and beliefs, because many educational institutions favour certain learning styles and personality types. Advocating for introverted students is paramount in supporting the future of this quiet personality. For these various reasons, it is vital for educators to support introverted students to reach their full potential.

An important component of supporting students' unique learning needs is having an understanding of introverted students. The terms "introvert" and "extrovert" have been helpful to describe different personality types and to explain basic differences in human temperament (Cain, 2016, p. 7; Monohan, 2013, para. 2). Introverted students navigate their world in a quiet, thoughtful, introspective manner (Cain, 2016; Kuzeljevich, 2017). They prefer to listen more than they talk, think before they speak, and observe more than they are the center of attention (Cain, 2012, 2016). Spending their days enjoying quiet time for introspection, introverts apply a calming approach to the structure of their lives (Beukeboom, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2012). Introverted students prefer alone time, dislike conflict, and enjoy deep, thoughtful discussions (Cain, 2012). Too much exposure to people and conversation may cause introverts to feel overstimulated and anxious (Kuzeljevich, 2017; Martin, 2014). Often, highly sensitive introverts need to retreat from the world and spend time alone to recharge (Cain, 2012). Although understanding introverted students is helpful, it is also necessary for educators to recognize the uniqueness of extroverted students.

It is imperative to understand the personality of the outgoing, expressive extroverted student in order to support and nurture the quiet, reserved introverted student. Western culture applauds the quick decision-making, outspoken, and confident traits of the extroverted personality (Higgin, 2017; Kuzeljevich, 2017). Many extroverts prefer talking to listening, and have a sociable, gregarious easy-going way about them (Beukeboom et al., 2012; Caine, 2012). Extroverted students make fast decisions, enjoy risk taking, and tend to dive right into assignments. Classrooms may have extroverted students who are excitement-seekers, enjoy thinking aloud, are comfortable with conflict, and are often assertive in their interactions. Because extroverts speak faster and louder, and have an extensive range, many prefer to communicate openly and not in small groups (Alshamsi, Pianesi, Lepri, Pentland, & Rahwan, 2016; Beukeboom et al., 2012). Educators need to be cognizant of learning characteristics of

introverted and extroverted personalities, and knowledgeable of how introverted students learn in a classroom environment.

Integrating this peaceful personality in positive ways requires educators who know how introverted students learn in the classroom setting. For an introverted personality, emotional security precedes learning because participating in the classroom setting can be difficult (Heick, 2017; Higgin, 2017). The classroom environment is a major source of emotions for the introverted student, and while educators are the focal point of many social exchanges for introverts, the emotional comfort of an introverted student is necessary for positive connections and future learning (Heick, 2017; Mainhard, Oudman, Hornstra, Bosker, & Goetz, 2018). Although introverted students are reserved and thoughtful, educators need to look beyond the “quiet” learner for increased student participation (Dack & Tomlinson, 2015; Higgin, 2017). Developing the self-esteem of introverted students requires educators who create emotionally supportive environments and encourage students’ varied pathways for learning (Cain, 2012; Dack & Tomlinson, 2015). Because introverted students prefer to work alone and explore their understanding in silence, teachers need to reduce outside stimulation to benefit the introverted learner in the classroom (Cain, 2012; Monohan, 2013). Although understanding how to integrate introverted students in the classroom setting is important, there is the tendency to ignore the mental health of introverted students.

This reserved, introverted personality has a quiet disposition. The growing emphasis in classrooms on group projects may cause anxiety for introverted students in this interactive arrangement (Cain, 2012; Godsey, 2015). To help introverts better control their anxiety, educators need to check the physical environment of the classroom, teacher behaviour and expectancy, and peer group behaviour and expectancy (Effiong, 2016; Shukla, 2017). Introverted students experience increased performance when they withdraw from highly stimulating environments and work independently in calm settings (Cain, 2012; Godsey, 2015). Because socializing may cause introverted students feelings of anxiety, they have a need to reflect and be alone. Introverted students often hear the social message that there is something wrong with their reflective need, thus causing them deep psychic pain (Cain, 2012). Introverted students need support in their quiet periods of reflective thought. Educators can help remove the stigma of “quiet” students, manage anxiety-provoking stressors, and guide introverted students in their comfort zone.

Careful consideration and planning are required to support the introverted student in the classroom. To create a classroom climate that supports introverted students in their learning, educators need to offer both group and individual seating, and varying levels of social interaction (Greene, 2017; Monohan, 2013). Teachers must organize the classroom environment to support introverted students with well-balanced social and quiet areas (Mainhard et al., 2018; Greene, 2017). Quiet areas can include individual desks for work, and well-designed small group learning experiences to strengthen skills and encourage introverted learners (Monohan, 2013; Greene, 2017). Teacher sensitivity and careful planning can connect students with one another and aid in the success of introverted students (Dack & Tomlinson, 2015; Hughes & Coplan, 2017). A positive classroom climate is consistent with support, whereby educators see introverted students as unique individuals, and plan lessons accordingly (Dack & Tomlinson, 2015; Hughes & Coplan, 2017). Although introverted students need a supportive classroom environment that nurtures their unique personality and learning style, educational institutions need to monitor the support of student learning needs.

Because many educational institutions favour certain learning styles and personality types, educators need to analyse their own biases and beliefs. Educational institutions neglect the needs of introverted students when “collaborative learning,” “project-based learning,” and “flipped classrooms” are encouraged (Godsey, 2015, para. 2). These instructional methods burden the introverted learning style and do not take into account the need for teachers’ increased awareness of learners’ individual differences (Sharma, 2015). When supporting introverted students, educators need to consider their own perceptions – which may be

misperceptions – of their students’ characteristics and abilities (Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011). The word “introvert” is often stigmatized (Cain, 2012, p. 5), and “shy/quiet” children are often thought of as lacking intelligence (Coplan et al., 2011). The “self-fulfilling prophecy” phenomenon occurs when students meet their teachers’ expectations instead of fulfilling their own levels of potential (Coplan et al., 2011, p. 940-941). Thus, it is imperative that educators put aside their own biases and beliefs in order to support the growth of introverted students.

Educators are at the forefront of advocating for the learning style of introverted students. Teaching introverted students in a way that honours their personality type and advocates for their learning needs is critical for their future success. Although many classroom environments promote extroverted behaviour through lively learning activities, teachers may be neglecting the inward-thinking needs of the introverted student (Dack & Tomlinson, 2015; Godsey, 2015). Because companies often revere the outward qualities of the extroverted personality, many educational settings follow suit (Godsey, 2015; Kuzeljevich, 2017). However, teachers have a responsibility to optimize their students’ classroom experiences, regardless of where they fit into the introverted-extroverted continuum. They need to plan their teaching in order to encourage introverted students in their own learning process (Dack & Tomlinson, 2015; Sharma, 2015). When the vocal, active student is the forefront in the collaborative process in the classroom setting, advocating for the introverted “silent” (Reda, 2009, p. 4) student remains imperative (Reda, 2009; Sharma, 2015). “Listening to learn and learning to listen” is a phrase this author values and incorporates into daily lessons. Educators need to advocate for the value in listening, because there is a risk that students will spend less time learning to listen and therefore less time listening to learn (Remedios, Clarke, & Hawthorn, 2012).

In conclusion, educators should plan lessons to accommodate the needs and learning styles of introverted students. Educators have the potential to influence students’ lives and attend to their unique personalities and learning differences. It is essential for teachers to support both introverted and extroverted students, because their learning styles can contribute to a positive culture within classrooms and other educational settings. Students’ mental health should be a steady consideration for all educators, especially the mental health of the quiet, introverted students. A supportive environment encourages introverted students to participate and take risks beyond their comfort zone. Therefore, acknowledging introverted students for who they are, celebrating their unique differences, and guiding them on their learning path will inspire them to take risks, appreciate their value, and find their place in the world.

## References

- Alshamsi, A., Pianesi, F., Lepri, B., Pentland, A., & Rahwan, I. (2016). Network diversity and affect dynamics: The role of personality traits. *PLOS ONE*, *11*(4), 1-16.  
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0152358
- Beukeboom, C., Tanis, M., & Vermeulen, I. (2012). The language of extraversion: Extraverted people talk more abstractly, introverts are more concrete. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *32*(2), 191-201. doi:10.1177/0261927X12460844
- Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Cain, S. (2016). *Quiet power: The secret strengths of introverted kids*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.
- Coplan, R., Hughes, K., Bosacki, S., & Rose-Krasnor, L. (2011). Is silence golden? Elementary school teachers’ strategies and beliefs regarding hypothetical shy/quiet and exuberant/talkative children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *103*(4), 939-951.  
doi:10.1037/a0024551
- Dack, H., & Tomlinson, C. (2015). Inviting all students to learn. *Educational Leadership*, *72*(6), 10-15.

- Effiong, O. (2016, Spring). Getting them speaking: Classroom social factors and foreign language anxiety. *TESOL Journal*, 7(1), 132-161. doi:10.1002/tesj.194
- Godsey, M. (2015, September 28). When schools overlook introverts. Retrieved June 3, 2018, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/introverts-at-school-overlook/407467>
- Greene, L. (2017, August 22). This is exactly how teachers can make introverts more comfortable in the classroom. *Introvert, dear for introverts and highly sensitive people*. Retrieved June 2, 2018, from <https://introvertdear.com/news/classroom-introverts-teachers-comfortable/>
- Heick, T. (2017, December 10). Teaching introverts is different. *Teach thought we grow teachers*. Retrieved June 4, 2018, from <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/teaching-introverts-is-different/>
- Higgin, T. (2017, January 4). Five classroom strategies that help introverts and extroverts do their best work. *Common sense education*. Retrieved June 4, 2018 from <https://www.commonsense.org/education/blog/5-classroom-strategies-that-help-introverts-and-extroverts-do-their-best-work>
- Hughes, K., & Coplan, R. (2017). Why classroom climate matters for children high in anxious solitude: A study of differential susceptibility. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 33(1), 94-102. doi:10.1037/spq0000201
- Kuzeljevich, J. (2017, January/ February). To thine own self be true. Retrieved June 2 2018, from <http://www.canadianshipper.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CS-DE-20170101.pdf>
- Mainhard, T., Oudman, S., Hornstra, L., Bosker, R., & Goetz, T. (2018). Student emotions in class: The relative importance of teachers and their interpersonal relations with students. *Learning and Instruction*, 53, 109-119. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2017.07.011
- Martin, E. (2014). Tips for teaching: The brain game – Teaching strategies for introverted vs. extroverted students. *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 43(3), 39-46. doi:10.558/bsor.v43i39 Retrieved from <https://api.equinoxpub.com/articles/fulltext/22320>
- Monohan, N. (2013). Keeping introverts in mind in your active learning classroom. *Faculty focus*. Retrieved June 10, 2018, from <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-and-learning/keeping-introverts-in-mind-in-your-active-learning-classroom/>
- Reda, M. (2009). *Between speaking and silence: A study of quiet students*. Albany, NY: New York Press.
- Remedios, L., Clarke, D., & Hawthorn, L. (2012). Learning to listen and listening to learn: One student's experience of small group collaborative learning. *The Australian Education Researcher*, 39(3), 333-348. doi:10.1007/s13384-012-0064-x
- Sharma, B. (2015). Interactional concerns in implementing group tasks: Addressing silence, dominance, and off-task talk in an academic writing class. *Innovation in language learning and teaching*, 9(3), 233-250. doi:10.1080/17501229.2014.914522
- Shukla, A. (2017). Experiencing school supportiveness: Assessment of negative mental health in children. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 8(3), 217-221.

### **About the Author**

Jenn Stewart is in the M.Ed. program (guidance & counselling) at Brandon University. She completed her B.A. and B.Ed. at the University of Winnipeg, and Post Bac. at the University of Manitoba. Jenn works for the Pembina Trails School Division as a school counsellor and teacher.

## Supporting Students Living in Poverty

Tyler Sloan

### **Abstract**

*Students living in poverty struggle to achieve academic success and pursue careers that require post-secondary training. Students coming from families with low socio-economic status enter kindergarten with lower literacy levels than their peers. Educators can initiate a change by increasing opportunities for students to build strong literacy skills. As educators, we can assist students to build skills that can help to overcome difficult situations and navigate effectively through times of negative thoughts and feelings.*

The greatest determining factor in students' academic success and pursuit of post-secondary education is poverty or low socio-economic status (SES). There will never be a complete balance between people living with large amounts of wealth and those struggling to keep food on their table. The population that sits in wealth has often looked down on people in poverty, not understanding why they are not taking advantage of gaining an education to better their lives (Raz, 2018). As educators, we can initiate a change by finding ways to better support our learners who are struggling in poverty. As opposed to judging behaviours and actions of students who are struggling, we can find alternative strategies to support the students (Jensen, 2009). Studies have shown students who have deficient reading and literacy skills in early education are at a greater risk of not graduating (Hernandez & Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). With a lack in funding and support from government and schools, little support from family, and children entering school with low literacy levels, students in poverty struggle to find balance between life and the books. The school system is created to reach large portions of the population. When a positive school environment is created, there is an increase in interventions for cognitive growth, and situations to develop positive social behaviours for students living in poverty (Berger, Benatov, Cuadros, VanNattan, & Gelkopf, 2018). Educators can be an effective vehicle for change with regards to the impact that poverty has on academic success.

### **Poverty Holding Back Success**

Students living in poverty will continue to struggle academically because of a lack of funding to low income communities, low support from families, and low literacy levels. The widening gap between the rich and the poor is mirrored in the educational system as well. Parents living in poverty are struggling to provide essential food and housing, and this stress at home is having a negative effect on students' potential graduation. In order to battle this crisis, different levels of government have taken steps to grant additional funding to schools and communities, in order to address the concern of students living in poverty and their struggles in education (Jones, Wilson, Clark, & Dunham, 2018). There have been monetary incentives for some teachers to move to schools that have high rates of poverty and failure among the student population. Although there has not been an immediate increase in students' academic success, it is difficult to measure the positive relationships that are being created between these students and the teachers (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018). Having qualified teachers in these communities is a step in the right direction and shows that educational institutions recognize the effect that poverty has on educational success. If there were an increase in funding toward affordable housing and healthier food options for families, families struggling in poverty could focus more on educational goals (Raz, 2018). The continued lack of funding from governments and schools for initiatives to combat poverty will decrease the opportunities for students living in poverty to close the educational gap.

Increasing government funding for families in poverty would be ideal, although the likelihood of that happening immediately is low. The lack of financial support for families in poverty has a trickle-down effect on how families are able to support their learners. Students who use programs for affordable lunches are the greatest predictor of poverty in schools (Jones et al., 2018). When families are struggling to provide food for children, they are often not able to provide the educational support needed for students to be successful. The ongoing stress of living in a state of poverty creates a toxic home environment, and the students' success at school is hindered (Jensen, 2009). Students in poverty live in an environment that is unpredictable, which makes it difficult for them to make positive connections at school. The students often have no input into when and where they move, and likely the parents are not making these choices voluntarily (Jensen, 2009). With parents struggling to provide food and housing, extra educational opportunities such as trips, camps, or additional educational programs are not available because of financial restraints (Hernandez & Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001). With a break in learning occurring every year, it is difficult for students in poverty to keep up with the class. When students in poverty start school, there is a small gap in achievement with their classmates, but without interventions this gap increases as they enter high school (Kuhfeld, Gershoff, & Paschall, 2018). The financial stress placed on families in poverty inhibits the supports that a family can provide to students.

Families living in poverty seldom create sufficient opportunities for students to build literacy skills. Literacy levels at an early age are an accurate indicator of later academic success. Children's literacy development starts early in life, but students living in poverty will not be introduced to the same vocabulary as their peers who are not living in poverty (Kuhfeld et al., 2018). This is a substantial setback in their development, and one that is difficult for the students to overcome. When students do not come from environments that promote language development, they often lack the basic building blocks that language and literacy are built on (Raz, 2018). Students in poverty are coming into schools with a literacy deficiency, and the gap is difficult to close with no interventions.

If initiatives focused on literacy are not put in place for students in poverty, families and students will continue to struggle to be successful academically. Funding to communities and families in poverty is the key to address academic shortcomings (Jones et al., 2018). With low funding from governments and schools, low levels of support from families, and low levels of literacy entering kindergarten, students in poverty will have limited academic success.

### **Throwing the Book at Poverty**

Educators hold the key to unlock the chains that poverty has on education: by creating positive school environments, providing opportunities for academic growth, and teaching positive social behaviours, educators can help students in poverty find academic success. Developing a positive school environment for students in poverty creates a safe place for students to feel comfortable to take risks and find academic success (Davis & Warner, 2018). In my experience teaching students living in poverty, their home environment is not a place that prioritizes academic growth. While there may be chaos and instability in homes of children living in poverty, a positive school environment has been found to have a lasting positive effect on the academic success and future for students living in poverty (Berman et al., 2018). Having an adult in the school who a student feels is an ally helps to create a safe environment. The positive relationship is built on trust and a belief that the student holds the potential for academic success (Davis & Warner, 2018). When educators show a belief in a student's academic ability, a student begins to believe in his/her own self-worth. Educators need to show a student they care before a student will care to learn. When students feel valued and safe in an educational environment, they will find greater academic success.

Students living in poverty will not have the same academic opportunities as students living with wealth. Opportunities to increase reading and literacy skills, and an introduction to

technology, will increase the probability of academic success. Schools have the resources and facilities available to create opportunities for growth for students coming from families with a low SES. After-school programs are widely used in areas with high poverty rates, and they provide instruction and activities that would not be available to these families regularly (Bayless et al., 2018). Some of the programs used in the school I work at include an after-school math tutoring program and a drop-in basketball shoot around. After-school programs involving literacy interventions are especially important in early years education. Students who participate in programs early in their schooling gain more advanced language skills than their peers who do not take part in these programs (Bayless et al., 2018). The increase in vocabulary and literacy has a direct effect on academic success. A successful strategy to increase literacy is to provide students with books that can be taken home to read (Bayless et al., 2018). My school division addressed this issue by creating several little free libraries around our city. The opportunity for free literature gives anyone, and especially people living in poverty, an opportunity to take a book home at no charge. Providing an opportunity to build literacy skills by participating in after-school programs and with free libraries will increase the academic success of students from low SES.

Reading is a very important skill, and so is the ability to use technology. Technology is expensive. Students living in poverty struggle to access computers and are not confident to use technology or pursue a career involving it (Ball, Huang, Rikard & Cotten, 2017). Introducing students to technology will help to create feelings of comfort using it, and open up career possibilities for students who would not have had that chance. By becoming more familiar with technology such as computers and tablets, students open up opportunities for careers in the science, technology, electronics, and mathematics (STEM) field. This is the fastest growing field for employment after high school, and students will keep more doors open to possible careers, and extended educational opportunities, by increasing their comfort with technology. Creating opportunities for academic growth in after-school programs involving literacy and technology will give students living in poverty an opportunity to find academic success.

Students living in poverty need to build stronger social behaviours to support their academic success. Students can build these skills at school with the help of educators, and at home with guidance from their families. Educators are not available to students struggling in poverty all of the time, and they therefore need to help students develop positive social behaviours that will help them during difficult times. It is important for educators to model the behaviours for students, and to educate themselves and learn effective strategies. Students living in low SES struggle to afford proper mental health care and outside opportunities for skill building. Students will seek guidance and support from their classroom teachers. Schools can work to provide teachers with proper training and professional development opportunities, in order to ensure that teachers can provide students with the supports they require to be successful (Isik-Ecran, Demir-Dagdas, Cakmakci, Cava-Tadik, & Intepe-Tingir, 2017). With adequate training, educators can provide proper examples and opportunities for students in poverty to build positive social behaviours.

Along with positive teacher support, it is important to involve parents to help students build social skills. A positive parental influence will assist in the child's ability to use self-regulation during times of difficulty (Liew, Carlo, Streit, & Ispa, 2018). Building strong social skills such as resiliency should be introduced to children at a young age, in order to help them function independently as they move into adolescence (Berger et al., 2018). Students who develop these skills at a young age are more likely to use them in the future. It is important for students to build resiliency and the ability to overcome feelings of anxiety, and to learn interventions that involve stress reduction, in order to build positive social behaviours (Berger et al., 2018). Increasing opportunities for students, educating teachers, and involving parents are the most effective strategies to help students develop positive behaviours. Educators can diminish the effect that poverty has on academic achievement by building safe school environments, making educational opportunities available, and building a student's resiliency.

## Conclusion

Students raised in low income families are likely to experience times of financial strain and tension in the home, which negatively affects achievement and their ability to interact with classmates (Jensen, 2009). Without proper funding to support families and programs in communities with high levels of poverty, there will continue to be a gap in academic achievement grounded in lowered opportunities for literacy development. Educators can confront the problem by ensuring that learning spaces are inviting for students, increasing the number of after school programs offered, making literature available for students to take at no cost, and helping students to build individual skills that will help them to self-regulate during stressful times (Bayless et al., 2018). Poverty is an obstacle on the path to academic success, but with support and guidance it can be overcome.

## References

- Ball, C., Huang, K.-T., Rikard, R. V., & Cotten, S. R. (2017). The emotional costs of computers: An expectancy-value theory analysis of predominantly low-socioeconomic status minority students' STEM attitudes. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(1), 105-128. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2017.1355403
- Bayless, S. D., Jenson, J. M., Richmond, M. K., Pampel, F. C., Cook, M., & Calhoun, M. (2018). Effects of an afterschool early literacy intervention on the reading skills of children in public housing communities. *Child & Youth Care Forum* 47(4), 537-561. doi:10.1007/s10566-018-9442-5
- Berger, R., Benatov, J., Cuadros, R., VanNattan, J., & Gelkopf, M. (2018). Enhancing resiliency and promoting prosocial behavior among Tanzanian primary-school students: A school-based intervention. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 55(6). 821-845. doi:10.1177/1363461518793749
- Berman, J. D., McCormack, M. C., Koehler, K. A., Connolly, F., Clemons-Erby, D., Davis, M. F., . . . Curriero, F.C. (2018). School environmental conditions and links to academic performance and absenteeism in urban, mid-Atlantic public schools. *International Journal of Hygiene & Environmental Health*, 221(5), 800-808. doi:10.1016/j.ijheh.2018.04.015
- Cowan, J., & Goldhaber, D. (2018). Do bonuses affect teacher staffing and student achievement in high poverty schools? Evidence from an incentive for national board-certified teachers in Washington State. *Economics of Education Review*, 65, 138-152. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.06.010
- Davis, J. R., & Warner, N. (2018). Schools matter: The positive relationship between New York city high schools' student academic progress and school climate. *Urban Education*, 53(8), 959-980. doi:10.1177/0042085915613544
- Hernandez, D. J., & Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2011, April). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. New York, NY: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Isik-Ercan, Z., Demir-Dagdass, T., Cakmakci, H., Cava-Tadik, Y., & Intepe-Tingir, S. (2017). Multidisciplinary perspectives towards the education of young low-income immigrant children. *Early Child Development & Care*, 187(9), 1413-1432. doi:10.1080/03004430.2016.1173037 Retrieved from Taylor & Francis Online database.
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Jones, K., Wilson, R., Clark, L., & Dunham, M. (2018). Poverty and parent marital status influences on student achievement. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 42(1), 62-80.
- Kuhfeld, M., Gershoff, E., & Paschall, K. (2018). The development of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic achievement gaps during the school years. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 57, 62-73. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2018.07.001

- Liew, J., Carlo, G., Streit, C., & Ispa, J. M. (2018). Parenting beliefs and practices in toddlerhood as precursors to self-regulatory, psychosocial, and academic outcomes in early and middle childhood in ethnically diverse low-income families. *Social Development* 27(4), 891-909. doi:10.1111/sode.12306
- Raz, M. (2018, July 2). What we get wrong about the poverty gap in education. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/07/02/what-we-get-wrong-about-the-poverty-gap-in-education/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.a9d10f9cb71b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/07/02/what-we-get-wrong-about-the-poverty-gap-in-education/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a9d10f9cb71b)

### **About the Author**

*Tyler Sloan is enrolled in the Faculty of Education's graduate studies program at Brandon University. He is in his third year of working as a guidance counsellor at Morden Collegiate. He grew up in Morden and now is raising his family there. He enjoys coaching and the outdoors.*

## OPINION PAPER

### If You Think You Don't Need it, You Probably Do

**Miranda Bowman**

If you are an administrator, you have probably considered the idea of implementing a mentoring program for your new staff. It could be one of those projects you have always meant to start on, but something else has always taken priority, and let's face it – your days are already packed full of other responsibilities. Maybe you trust in your hiring practices and do not think it is a necessity for your teachers. You would be wrong. Mentoring programs are essential for your school, and not for the reasons you may think.

The Province of Manitoba has requested that school divisions become more fiscally responsible and decrease their annual spending, an indication that budget cuts are imminent. This is at a time when enrolment is increasing, along with student behaviours and special needs, as well as an influx of refugees and children living in poverty. Teachers are expected to do more with less during these difficult times. This is not new, but it happens to coincide with the appointment of new Minister of Education, Kelvin Goertzen. Goertzen is the former Minister of Health who helped to implement the most recent round of cuts in our health care system.

When you consider that teachers are dealing with more issues and an increasingly demanding workload, it is easy to understand that they need the support and guidance of their colleagues in order to maintain clear classroom objectives and discipline. Mentoring programs provide stability, collegiality, and cohesiveness. They strengthen your school culture and reinforce expectations by way of staff continuity.

Did you know that the educational system in Manitoba is becoming increasingly data driven, and that the Ministry is following this data? Are your teachers teaching their curriculum or are they using workbooks that “cover” it? Are your teachers reporting on curricular outcomes on their report cards, or are they reporting on the marks they get from assignments? Are they reporting in a manner that coincides with provincial assessments and outcomes? Educator Funmilola Adeniyi plainly stated, “The principal is responsible for everything that happens and doesn't happen in their school.” Are you sure you know what is happening in yours?

Mentoring programs provide both mentors and mentees many opportunities to grow and learn from each other, develop strong teaching practices, and foster both leadership and accountability. It provides a sense of belonging in the school and the community. Perhaps most importantly, mentoring can be done with quality education in mind. Teachers can work together to ensure that curricular outcomes and provincial standards are the focus. Teaching with quality education in mind provides the greatest benefits to your students and will also be evident in your data. Goertzen plans to study this data and determine why Manitoban students are doing poorly compared to other parts of the world. Offering a mentoring program for your staff can limit the areas where Goertzen looks for that.

#### ***About the Author***

*Miranda Bowman is a recent M.Ed. (educational administration) graduate from Brandon University. Fall 2019 will start her second year as the principal of École Mclsaac School in Flin Flon, Manitoba, where she initiated a teacher mentorship program in 2008. In her leisure time, she enjoys spending time with her husband Evan and their toddler son Henry.*

## CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses in 2018.

**Erika Serrano**      June 11, 2018      Thesis Adviser: Dr. Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou

*A Case Study of the Experiences and Perspectives of Hispanic Immigrant Parents on Heritage Language Maintenance and Bilingual Education in the Rural Community of Brandon, Manitoba*

This study investigated and described the experiences and perspectives of Hispanic immigrant parents on heritage language maintenance and bilingual education in the City of Brandon, Manitoba. Hispanic immigrant parents were interviewed to explore how they perceived and experienced the maintenance of the home language and bilingual education of their children. The study used a qualitative embedded case study methodology. Data collection methods included five individual semi-structured interviews and three focus group interviews.

Sixteen first-generation Hispanic immigrant parents took part in this study, and they were divided into two subunits of analysis: Colombian, Honduran, and Salvadoran immigrant parents and non-Colombian, Honduran, and Salvadoran immigrant parents. The results of this study reveal that despite the importance that both groups of Hispanic immigrant parents place in their native language as a fundamental core value in their ethnic identity, they perceived a gradual erosion of their children's home language. Colombian, Salvadoran, and Honduran immigrant parents had more challenges and difficulties in preserving their home language in comparison with Hispanic non-Colombian, Honduran, and Salvadoran immigrant parents.

Data suggest that the Colombian, Salvadoran, and Honduran immigrant parents were less aware of the cognitive advantages of bilingualism and heritage language preservation in comparison to the Hispanic non-Colombian, Honduran, and Salvadoran immigrant parents. However, both groups of parents perceived the need to implement heritage and bilingual programs in the school and in the community for supporting their efforts to preserve the home language. Language barriers that parents faced, along with socio-economic conditions, repercussions of intrafamilial conflicts, separation, and family disruption were factors negatively influencing home language maintenance in children. In summary, this research sought to raise awareness of heritage language maintenance issues that affect the Hispanic immigrants in a rural city of Manitoba.

The results confirm that changes in heritage and bilingual policy are needed to support the Hispanic immigrant community in their efforts to maintain the heritage language. Teachers, school personnel, and parents need to develop collaborative power relations, in order to achieve the outcome of empowering Hispanic immigrant children.

*Internationally Educated Teachers: Teaching in Manitoba*

The purpose of the study was to provide an in-depth exploration of the teaching re-certification processes and un/employment experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) in Manitoba. A narrative inquiry approach was used to understand the participants' teaching experiences and educational backgrounds prior to coming to Canada, as well as their experiences with re-certification, teaching related job-search and un/employment as newcomers in Manitoba.

Six IETs with diverse educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds were the participants of this study. The IETs were teachers originally from Asia, East Africa, Central Africa, and West Africa who are now either Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

Data collected in this study included one-on-one interviews with these participants. Member-checking, in addition to improving the accuracy and validity of the study, ensured that each participant's narrative is represented without revealing their identity. Personal documents, interview transcripts, and researcher notes comprised the data used to conduct a detailed case study. The researcher also integrated his own experiences as an internationally educated teacher throughout the study. The findings reveal that IETs in Manitoba face significant challenges in finding employment even after re-certification. Systemic discrimination experienced in the hiring process was identified by the participants as one of the major factors. This finding is consistent with other studies conducted with IETs in Manitoba (Block, 2012; Schmidt, 2010; Schmidt & Block, 2009, 2010). The findings also indicate the importance of raising awareness with respect to excessive costs and delays in credentialing, and the need for transitional support for IETs.

This study has implications for various stakeholders. The research was designed to draw the attention of policy makers, hiring boards of school divisions, and the public to the circumstances of IETs. The study produced significant recommendations for policy and practice. One of the policy recommendations is the urgency of changing existing hiring policies and replacing them with more inclusive and equitable policies that challenge current discriminatory hiring practices related to IETs. Another key recommendation is taking a proactive approach by designing an affirmative action program that would create a quota system through which the IETs will be regularly employed during every hiring cycle. Recommendations for practice include having universities and the teacher certification board make the provision of practicum placements a priority for IETs' re-certification, in order for them to acquire Canadian teaching experience and deeper understanding of the Manitoba curriculum. Finally, recommendations for practice drawn from this study highlight the need for increased awareness of the strengths of IETs in the K-12 classrooms as mentors, role-models, and cultural translators for linguistically and culturally diverse English as an Additional Language students.

**Lynn White**

August 29, 2018

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Tom Skinner

*Peer Support: A Collaborative Approach to Teacher Improvement*

Many teachers today struggle to meet the differentiated needs in their classrooms. Mentorship programs are often available to teachers in the first five years of teaching, but after the initial induction process there is little support for teachers. In the past, when teachers were identified as struggling in the classroom, they were evaluated through the supervisory process by their administrators. With a collaborative mentor to guide and support them, would teachers have the ability to improve and sustain that growth? This study of the Peer Support Program in elementary and high schools in Surrey, British Columbia, had 31 participants: 19 female and 12 male teachers between the ages of 26 and 50, with 1-25 years of teaching experience. The mixed method research incorporated an online survey with all participants and five one-on-one interviews. Of the teachers participating in the study, 85% rated the Peer Support Program as above average for effectiveness, and would recommend the program to colleagues. Teachers reported sustainable improvement to their teaching practice after participating in the Peer Support Program. Providing a collaborative program such as the Peer Support Program is one viable option to support teachers in improving their teaching practice and reducing teacher stress and burnout.

**Korey Asher**

September 14, 2018

Thesis Adviser: Dr. Jacqueline Kirk

*Resurrect Your Pedagogical Darlings: Social Media Use and Student Engagement in Manitoba High Schools*

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to consider three main questions: (1) How do teachers understand social media? (2) What qualifiers are used to determine student engagement? and (3) How is social media used to affect student engagement? This study used a qualitative interpretivist approach. The data was collected through the use of an online survey and subsequent interviews with five teachers who use social media in their classrooms.

The data collection process proved to be frustrating but provided an interesting insight into the use of social media to circulate an online survey. Although many people followed the link to the website where the survey was located and retweeted the link to their followers, only 23 people filled in the short survey.

Students and teachers construct knowledge through experience. This study shows that existing technology should supplement the educational purpose, and that experience in using social media results in productive ventures. I suggest that the use of social media in secondary schools will be another necessary tool to help students engage in their studies. This work could encourage teachers to help current social media users to become future critical thinkers.

*One Student at a Time: An Exploration of Big Picture Learning*

Big Picture Learning (BPL) is an innovative design of education that focuses on personalized, interest-based learning at the secondary school level and learning through relationships and internships. This design puts into practice many of the recommendations made by prominent educational thinkers and leaders today, including focusing on student-centred learning, fostering life-long learning, capitalizing on students' intrinsic motivation, and creating learning environments that are relevant to students, where creativity and critical thinking skills flourish. This study adds to the limited body of research on Canadian BPL schools and BPL schools in general.

The intent of this research was to determine the impact of implementing a BPL school in an existing school division. A qualitative intrinsic multiple case study approach was used to explore the experiences of stakeholders within two BPL schools in the Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This study was informed by ten semi-structured interviews with the Seven Oaks School Division superintendent, along with administrators and advisors from both the Seven Oaks Met School and Maples Met School.

Five themes emerged from the data: the differences between Big Picture Learning and traditional schools, Big Picture Learning systems and structures, internships and leaving to learn opportunities, the role and the experiences of advisors, and the considerations around starting a Big Picture Learning School. Based on the findings, the author concluded that the implementation of a Big Picture Learning School could increase attendance, improve student retention, and improve graduation rates. These successes could be attributed to the focus on individualized education that addresses each student's passions and strengths, and the strong focus on positive relationship building both inside and outside of school.