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INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the twenty-fifth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 12, issue 2, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students and university researchers. I thank these educators for producing a collection of articles that reflect topics of concern from their own experiences.

- Raisa Vallis' research report examines the social-emotional effects of noncompetitive basketball embedded with social skills training for grade 4 girls.
- Randeem Cayer's research report clarifies Canadian high school teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs in the general classroom environment.
- Tracey Salamondra's refereed article explains how the needs of rural educators warrant specialized pre-service teacher training and supports at the school division level.
- Agnieszka Desjardins' refereed article recommends sheltered content instruction as a protocol for working with English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Hannah Beghin's refereed article offers suggestions for combatting cyberbullying among school children and adolescents.
- Kyle Berg's refereed article reimagines school social workers as school leaders who cultivate strong partnerships with educational stakeholders.
- Brittany Lasko's refereed article focuses on positive teacher-student relationships as a prerequisite to serving classroom students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Patricia Mashinter's refereed article assesses group therapy as a counselling method in school.
- Breanna Delaquis' refereed article articulates the physical, cognitive, and developmental challenges posed by Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome (RTS).
- Ashley Dyson's refereed article examines statistics related to teacher diversity, and the role that principals and policies play in diversifying school workforces.

Also in this issue is our first "Focus on Faculty Research" report, which celebrates a study by two of Brandon University's Faculty of Education professors: Dr. Candy Skyhar and Dr. Michael Nantais.

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RESEARCH REPORTS

Building Social-Emotional Competence of Elementary Students Through Noncompetitive Basketball Embedded with Social Skills Training

Raisa Vallis

Approximately 30% of children and adolescents experience emotional and behavioural problems, with girls exceeding boys in all age categories (Pathak et al., 2011); and there has been a rise in the prevalence of mental illness and maladaptive behaviours in adolescence. To address these growing concerns, this study approached the task of enhancing the social-emotional competencies of children through noncompetitive basketball embedded with social skills training. Twelve female students in grade 4 participated in a 5-week program consisting of 10 sessions of noncompetitive basketball embedded with social skills training. Commercially produced surveys were completed before and after the intervention to measure student change in social-emotional competence and to evaluate the program's effectiveness. A Basketball Interest Inventory was collected to measure the change in student interest as a result of participation in the program, and a Social Validity Questionnaire assessed the social acceptability of the program. Analyses of the data revealed positive changes to students' social-emotional competence scores, indicating that the intervention program was effective as a means for social skill remediation. A slight increase in the average level of basketball interest was observed across all participants. Furthermore, the program was evaluated positively by teachers enhancing its social acceptability and validity. Positive results from this study may be used in future educational practices to proactively identify and provide preventative support to children and adolescents who experience emotional and behavioural problems and provides current educators and clinicians with an alternative social skill instruction method to the programs currently available.

Implications for Practice

Most children learn social skills and develop their social competencies informally through interactions with their peers and with significant adults in their lives. Socially competent students are shown to experience positive academic and psychosocial outcomes (Gresham & Elliott, 2014). They often have numerous friends; they get along well with peers and adults; they are more confident in themselves; are good problem solvers, and can adapt well to different environments. However, there seems to be an increasing number of students, that for many reasons, have difficulty with (a) picking up social skills informally or (b) distinguishing which social skills to use when, where, and with whom (Meadows, 2013). Students who demonstrate social skill deficiencies are more likely to experience interpersonal difficulties (Dodge & Crick, 1990; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1991; Weiss & Hechtman, 1993) such as peer-rejection, fewer friends and difficulty maintaining long-term relationships; and to achieve less success academically.

Increased Accessibility to Social Skills Training Through Sports

As a result of the insurmountable research supporting social competence for children and youth, child professionals are continuously developing and promoting various service-delivery and instructional approaches aimed at remediating deficits in social competence functioning. One of the most popular of these approaches is social skills training (SST). Unfortunately, in light of their proven effectiveness in remediating social skills, SST programs are not always accessible or available in every community due to a variety of circumstances including cost

incurred by the program itself, or cost of training; there may not be personnel available for training, or training available within a reasonable distance. The current study, which embedded SST into noncompetitive basketball, offers an attractive alternative to traditional SST approaches which are not always easily accessible, adds to the current literature supporting SST in sport, and encourages a shift in current practice beyond discrete delivery of social skill curricula in segregated classrooms or clinical settings and instead contextualizes social skills to be practiced in more generalized social contexts.

Previous researchers have provided several reasons for programming social skills in sports (Cartledge & Loe, 2001; Orlick & McCaffrey, 1991; Walker et al., 2004). For one, organized sports are readily available to children in practically every community, throughout every country. In contrast, social skills programs are not always accessible or available in every community. Another reason for programming social skills in a sport is that many skills learned in sport can be transferred to other life domains such as goal setting, problem-solving, working with a team and within a system, handling both success and failure, and receiving and implementing corrective feedback. Based on the research, social skills training should typically occur in a small or large group setting providing a social learning environment in which skills can be taught and practised. Sports teams, such as the team of participants in the study, offer a social group setting in which children are provided with prompts and models of appropriate social skills, imitate, model and practise or rehearse the skills learned while receiving corrective feedback and support. An added benefit of a social skills program delivered through sport, such as the noncompetitive basketball program, is that the children are not only exposed to models of the behaviour from the coach/instructor but by nature of the sports team they receive models of behaviour from age-related peers.

Increased Generalization of Social Skills in Natural Environments

One of the greatest criticisms of social skills training today is the limited research on generalization to the natural environment (Tierney et al., 2016). Social skills interventions often occur in un-natural environments (i.e., segregated classroom or clinical setting) which lack generalizability, without the involvement of an appropriate peer group in which to socialize and develop skills with (i.e., small group, pull-out program). New approaches to social skills training move beyond discrete delivery of social skill curricula in segregated classrooms or clinical settings, and instead contextualize social skills to be practised in classrooms, lunchrooms, hallways, on playgrounds and buses. The intervention described in the current study addressed criticisms of traditional programs as it was designed to readily allow participation for all children, and increased opportunities for students with social skill deficits to be exposed to age-appropriate role models. The program that was delivered in the school gymnasium also has the potential to be adapted to other naturalistic settings such as the playground, community recreational facilities, or even the local recreational park. It requires very minimal equipment and therefore any school facility, wherever it may be, should be capable of implementing the program as long as a gymnasium or playground is available. Adaptations to the sport specific skills could also be made to implement the intervention program through another variety of sport (i.e. soccer, football, baseball) based on the availability of equipment, and/or the specific interests of the teachers and students at each particular school. The program used in the study is also available at no cost, unlike many social skills programs currently available; does not require any specific training; and can be carried out by a classroom, physical education or resource teacher, or any other professional in a school or recreational setting.

Early Identification and Intervention

The majority of research to date has focused on students who have or are at risk of developing social-emotional difficulties. In other words, intervention is focused on a skills deficit

model (Bierman, 1990). The deficit model of current social skills programs negatively presents identification and intervention. Children who are pulled-out for these special education programs are viewed as problems, and furthermore rejected by their peers due to their social skill deficiencies (Kauffman & Landrum, 2013). If we shift the focus to creating preventative and proactive programs, social competence may be viewed from a different perspective, thus ultimately maximizing children's potential rather than emphasizing the deficits. One such way in which to shift the focus may be to deliver social skill training through sport, which is a very common practice or activity for many children today. Such a shift in practice may lead to a reduction in such negative attitudes toward these students, and social skill programs. By integrating social skills training in sports opportunities, students will continue to receive the social skills intervention they require to develop their social-emotional competencies, without the current negativity and rejection associated with current social skills training practices.

Another way to shift away from the deficit model of current social skills programs is to proactively measure students' social and emotional skills to identify skill deficits and provide intervention before a student demonstrates frequent or increasing behavioural concerns, such as in the current "wait to fail" model. It appears that there are many tools currently available for measuring social and emotional skills, however, a problem with many of these tools is that they are very resource intensive and are not designed to be administered repeatedly to assess change over time. To address this issue, the researcher of the present study implemented the Child Trends Teacher and Student Surveys (Child Trends, 2014) to determine its effectiveness at measuring social-emotional competence and identifying social-emotional deficits early in childhood/adolescence. One of the many benefits of these surveys is that they are available online, at no cost, unlike many traditional social-emotional measurement tools. They are easily administered and require participation solely from teachers and students, removing the possible burden and responsibility placed on the parent to complete surveys, found in many other tools available today. Furthermore, the Child Trends Surveys have the potential to be used to identify proficiency levels of all students in kindergarten through Grade 5, to gauge student competencies in social skill areas that matter for students' success, in school and beyond. The surveys can be completed relatively early, within one to two weeks of the start of a school year or program to establish a baseline. Identification then allows a school to provide interventions to students in their quest to improve children's social and emotional skills and can be used on an ongoing basis in a school/program setting to measure student development and change in skill level over time.

Summary

More and more, schools are seeking ways to integrate social and emotional learning in their classrooms and programs as the mounting evidence suggests social and emotional skills play a central role in shaping student achievement, workplace readiness, and adult well-being (Chien et al., 2012; Delale-O'Connor et al., 2012); whereas the absence of social and emotional skills has been shown to have tremendously negative consequences such as academic failure, violence, ostracism, substance abuse, and even possible incarceration (Tierney et al., 2016). This study approached the task of enhancing social-emotional competencies of children in elementary schools through an activity (i.e. basketball) both developmentally appropriate for children of this age, and thought to be socially valued by children this age, embedded with social skills training. The practical implications of the sample group provided students with the opportunity to participate in a social skills training program that promoted success for all participants. The program gave children opportunities to develop their social skills with peers in a naturalistic setting such as schools, with less artificiality than has been true of other social skills training programs, and it removed the negative stigma associated with many "pull out" intervention programs specifically designed for students that exhibit skill deficits.

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About the Researcher

Raisa Vallis recently completed her Master of Education degree in special education through Brandon University. When she is not enjoying time at the farm with her family, she happily fulfills the role of Learning Assistance Teacher at St. Mary's Elementary School in Lloydminster, Alberta, programming for students with diverse needs.

High School Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion: A Canadian Perspective

Randeen M. Cayer

This study investigated Canadian high school teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special education needs in the general classroom environment. Teachers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes toward inclusion were examined. Data were collected by using a 7-point Likert scale survey called the Inclusion Scale for High School Teachers created by Dr. Catherine Ernst (2006).¹ The survey, which included a demographic questionnaire as well as cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitude statements regarding inclusive practices, was conducted with a population of 150 high school teachers from a single urban school division in a large city in central Canada.

Participants' demographic information was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The Somers' Delta (*Somers' D*) statistic was used to determine the strength and relatedness of the independent variables of teacher demographics and school environmental variables to the dependent variable of teacher attitude. Findings showed that high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were more positive than negative. The teachers' behavioural attitudes toward inclusion were most positive, while their affective attitudes toward inclusion were least positive.

The demographic variables with the greatest influence on teacher attitudes toward inclusion were (a) experience as lead teacher in an inclusive setting, (b) access to human resources and supports, and (c) professional development and training related to inclusion. This study is of particular importance because it is the first study to focus specifically on Canadian high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Actions at the Provincial Government Level

- Increase funding to support school divisions' equitable access to specialized clinicians province wide.
- Establish measurable standards that school divisions must meet to support professional development in the area of inclusion.
 - example: School divisions must provide 5 hours of professional development on the topic of inclusion each school year.
- Establish measurable standards that teachers must meet to further their training.
 - example: Teachers must attend 75 hours of professional development for each 5 years of teaching (equates to 3 teaching days per school year).
- Implement a data base to track teachers' professional development.

Actions at the School Division Level

- Have specialized clinical supports available to all staff.
- Provide 5 hours of professional development on the topic of inclusion each year.
- Permit two days of paid leave per year for teachers to attend external professional development sessions on the topic of inclusion.
- Permit one day of paid leave per month for teachers who are pursuing university degrees or specialized certifications in the field of education.

¹ Ernst, C. (2006). *High school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs* (Doctorial dissertation). University of Rhode Island, USA.

Actions at the School Administrative Level

- Ensure that all staff gain experience as lead teachers in inclusive classrooms .
- Ensure that staff are aware of human resources that are available and how to enlist support.
- Develop a systematic approach to support teacher collaboration, such as mentorship programs or co-teaching models.
- Provide school-based professional development related to inclusion each year.

Actions at the Teacher Level.

- Be open and willing to be lead teachers in an inclusive classroom.
- Seek out human resources and supports available within the school to support inclusion.
- Be active participants in peer mentorship or co-teaching models.
- Attend 5 hours of professional development related to inclusion each year.
- Pursue professional development goals to maintain standards of excellence in teaching.

Actions at the Manitoba Teachers' Society Level

- Address professional development on a contractual level.
- Negotiate professional development requirements for all teachers.
- Negotiate the school division's role in supporting professional development of teachers.

Direction for Future Studies

This study has revealed important demographic information and findings regarding Canadian high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. However, the study also raised many questions that future researchers should endeavour to explore. More studies are required to determine high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion for other provinces in Canada (or a broader Canada-wide study to compare high school teachers' attitudes from province to province). Future studies should also strive to investigate teacher attitudes from geographically rural areas of Canada, where access to resources and supports may be more challenging. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to take a closer look at teacher professional development in Canada. Questions have been posed as to (a) what level of ongoing professional development should be required to maintain professional integrity, (b) how professional development is supported by schools, school divisions, and provincial governments, and (c) how can information and communication technology (ICT) be used to support teacher education and professional development. More information in these areas is crucial in identifying best practices for supporting high school teachers who are responsible for carrying out inclusive practices in our Canadian classrooms.

About the Researcher

Randeen Cayer is a former special education teacher who now spends her time escaping terrible weather by sharing her time between Winnipeg, Arizona, and the Virgin Islands. She looks forward to sharing her research findings in hopes of increasing inclusive opportunities for all students.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Defending Rural Schools

Tracey Salamondra

Abstract

The benefits and deficits of rural education are under-researched. Clarity, in regards to the quality of education and student experience, is essential to guide future policies at all levels of power. Educators require a deeper understanding of educational research to guide their practice and dispel community misconceptions. Increasing student achievement should be the primary focus for teachers, principals, and upper administrators. Universities need to adapt their practice to prepare teacher candidates for rural teaching positions, and school divisions must increase support to teaching staff for the challenges they face.

The talk of school division amalgamation was front and centre during the last Manitoba provincial election. Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen feels that our education system is lagging, and he wants to examine educational reform in other areas (von Stackelberg, 2019). Universal education demands that similar educational experiences be offered to all students, regardless of their socio-economic situation or location within the province (Harrison & Rouse, 2014). Rural educators and school boards are increasingly being called upon to defend the cost of rural schools. Policymakers often fail to draw on data when formulating future actions, and they are unwilling to accept data that contradicts their current policy (Lopes et al., 2014). “Rural” means being small in physical size, sparsely settled, limited choice for inhabitants, agriculture-based, and located a distance from a larger centre (Monk, 2007). Defending the cost of rural education involves confronting the myths associated with small schools, combatting the issue of quality staffing, and providing recommendations for increased student achievement.

Dispelling the Myths of Rural Education

Improving the quality of rural education requires first acknowledging and analyzing the challenges faced by small rural schools. When school division administrators have the mindset that bigger is better, the positive characteristics of small schools are diminished (Jimerson, 2006). Three myths commonly confronted by rural schools are that homogeneous single-grade classes are superior, there are improved extra-curricular activities in larger schools, and students are more content in larger schools.

Many parents and teachers believe that the single-grade, homogeneous classes offered in larger schools produce better student achievement. When comparing Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores among developed nations, there were no urban/rural differences “for almost half of the developed countries” (Sullivan et al., 2018, p. 1), and other researchers have not found large schools to be superior to small ones (Giambona & Porcu, 2018). The research factor most often associated with poor student performance has been low socio-economic status (Harrison & Rouse, 2014). High socio-economic status and the pressure for student achievement by parents with elevated educational backgrounds are more commonly associated with students in urban settings (Bæck, 2015). Research shows that heterogenous student grouping combined with an advanced curriculum produces academic achievement for all students, including all levels of socio-economic status (Jimerson, 2006). This style of early learning was concluded to be beneficial because the students created a culture of high achievement, and these results carried forth into middle and high school years.

A second area often disputed is the availability of extra-curricular opportunities in rural schools compared to their urban counterparts. Parents and staff who coordinate these activities carry an increased level of responsibility, compared to larger schools where the workload can be distributed to a larger population (Adsit, 2011). Due in part to the larger volunteer pool, larger schools offer a wider variety of opportunities, but this does not translate into more student participation (Duyar & Collins, 2008). With a smaller pool of students for the activity, small schools have a higher percentage of their school population participating in the activity. Extra-curricular activities are associated with positive views on learning and increased self-esteem in students (Jimerson, 2006). Often, rural centres are economically depressed and the school supports the economy of the town (Adsit, 2011). Moving sports to larger centres hurts the town's economy, and it also limits parental and community involvement with the addition of time and distance to the event (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Regional teams benefit a small number of highly skilled students, but rural teams benefit a larger percentage of the school stakeholders.

Rural students may believe that they would be happier in a larger, urban school. There is a general perception that the highest achieving students need to leave their communities in order to be successful (Forner et al., 2012). This view may be reinforced by the schools when curriculum and values are created in urban settings by people who live an urban existence (Bæck, 2015). The reality, however, is that many students from small, interconnected schools experience a sense of isolation and loneliness when they enter larger schools (Lopes et al., 2014). Students need to feel a connection to their schools and teachers in order to combat this isolation (Jimerson, 2006). As a rural teacher, I do not purport to have a solution to student isolation, but in my small setting, that student's discontent would be noticed. A contributing factor to student angst would be the number of school transitions that occur with larger schools. With regional schools, K-12 schools would be broken down into narrower grade groups and increase the number of school transitions for students. Each transition means increased anxiety for the student, and there is achievement loss associated with each move (Jimerson, 2006). Schools can be institutions that teach students how to thrive within their communities through the use of community-connected curriculum (Bæck, 2015). High-performing schools and thriving students dispel the myth that rural education is inferior to urban schools.

Creating and Maintaining Great Teachers

Staffing any school is a complex task; staffing a rural school has added difficulties. Teachers who spend their careers in rural schools make that choice due to community connections or because they cannot find employment elsewhere (Monk, 2007). While there are advantages to working in rural schools, there are often additional responsibilities and pressure from the community (Glover et al., 2016). In an effort to improve rural education, the issues of teacher preparation, teacher retention, and ongoing education for teachers require examination.

The reality of rural education does not match the expectation and training that many new teachers receive. New teachers are expected to teach multiple grades and subjects outside their specialization, and to take on multiple committees and roles within the school (Glover et al., 2016). Multi-grade teachers in rural schools do not feel that their university training adequately prepared them for this challenge (Raggl, 2015, p. 131). Teachers who thrive in multi-grade classes need training, good organization skills, and a variety of resources. Rural teachers may experience similar student needs, but they will not have the same level of specialist support found in larger schools (Monk, 2007). To combat this deficit, teachers need to develop their own professional networks and learning opportunities (Raggl, 2015), and principals need to implement mentorship for new teachers (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). When completing teacher practicums, school divisions should match teacher candidates with master teachers in their rural schools. This partnership would better prepare those candidates for the reality of a career in a rural setting. Teacher candidates need to realize the value of understanding the community and connecting students' reality to their literacy and numeracy programs (Clarke & Wildy, 2011).

Starting a career in a small school is very overwhelming (Raggl, 2015), and teachers will be more successful if they embrace the community outside the school.

Teacher retention in rural schools is a worldwide concern (Sullivan et al., 2018). Despite teachers reporting job satisfaction and increased autonomy, rural schools experience difficulty attracting and retaining specialist teachers (Monk, 2007). Results include teachers working outside their areas of training and those with the highest levels of training leaving small schools. Schools may hire candidates with ties to the community over more qualified teachers (Monk, 2007). A better option is to be more cognizant of the needs of high-performing teachers and remove underlying difficulties. As previously mentioned, matching new teachers, or those new to a subject area, with a master teacher, encourages teacher growth (Monk, 2007). School divisions could also offer incentives for teachers to expand their knowledge in new subject areas by covering the cost associated with upgrading their training. The United States has offered increased salaries to teachers who work in schools that are difficult to staff (Monk, 2007). Alaska has created statewide initiatives to help place teachers in rural schools. Programs similar to the Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT) at Brandon University could be used to upgrade educational assistants to teachers or to attract candidates to positions within their own rural communities. There are many logical solutions to teacher retention problems.

Quality professional development is essential to increase the skillset of existing teachers and to maintain successful rural schools (Hunt-Barron et al., 2015). Rural teachers receive fewer hours of professional development related to a specific content area or literacy/numeracy outcomes than urban teachers (Glover et al., 2016). Teachers in schools with fewer than 150 students are less likely to take part in peer collaboration, mentoring, and upgrading their qualifications at a university (Glover et al., 2016). Lack of opportunity can be connected to geographic isolation, lack of release time due to substitute teacher shortage, and lack of available mentors on staff. One method of overcoming isolation is for rural teachers to take advantage of online professional development opportunities. Many universities and organizations offer webinars, and these may be particularly helpful for rural high school teachers who may not have subject-area colleagues in their building. The most successful professional development is ongoing, linked to the curriculum, and collaborative (Hunt-Barron et al., 2015). A hybrid delivery model integrates a face-to-face learning session with an online community and resource bank for support. The Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium (mRLC) is an example of this principle in practice. The mRLC creates learning networks of educators across the province and assists schools by assigning a mentor to help guide school-based literacy and numeracy projects (*Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium*, n.d.). Technology and commitment to rural education has improved the professional development opportunities of rural educators.

Improving Student Achievement

Schools are increasingly asked to justify their expenses in relation to student achievement. For example, comparing the Southwest Horizon School Division to a number of urban school divisions, a trend of higher rural mathematics performance and higher urban English Language Arts performance on the grade 12 provincial exams emerged over a nine-year period (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017). It is important when examining these results to acknowledge and prepare for the changing needs of our rural communities. Increases of students with limited English language skills and poor socio-economic conditions in rural areas are associated with agriculture and meat-packing industries (Monk, 2007). There has also been an increase in transient, low socio-economic families leaving the urban areas for cheaper housing in rural communities. These trends have occurred in my home community of Hartney, Manitoba. As rural Manitoba school divisions respond to these changing conditions, both teachers and administrators need to put improving student achievement first when making decisions.

Rural teachers possess advantages to improve student achievement, and drawbacks can be overcome with institutional change and support from administrators. Small schools are more

agile and can implement change more efficiently (Raggl, 2015). There is an increased level of collective responsibility for student success and happiness in small schools (Jimerson, 2006). It has already been stated that small school and class sizes benefit students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those who require additional support (Adsit, 2011). Literacy, numeracy, and English as an additional language supports could be realized through teacher networking or shared specialists provided to a cluster of schools (Clarke & Wildy, 2011). Teachers can be supported by student service experts in the hybrid model of face-to-face visits and interactive television support to cut costs (Monk, 2007). Student achievement data needs to be routinely collected, analyzed for areas of concern, and interventions put in place (Forner et al., 2012). Once an area of weakness is identified, there needs to be a constructive confrontation on how that particular skill or area can be improved. Rural school personnel often shy away from confrontation due to the interconnectedness of the school, but the focus on academic improvement trumps the risk of temporarily hurting someone's feelings (Forner et al., 2012). Low-performing students are paired with appropriate supports and low-performing teachers are paired with mentors or peer coaches. Rural schools possess the expertise to improve student performance; it needs to become the guiding principle in our decision making.

Principals and upper administrators need to put student achievement at the forefront when making budget, staffing, and structural decisions. The best rural principals focus on teacher performance, meeting the needs of stakeholders, and high student performance (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Principals often have to balance these goals with establishing relationships, the demands of maintaining the school, and developing their own practice and coping strategies. Larger schools have the advantage of additional staff to lighten the task load for principals. Rural principals have to rise above the tasks that need to be completed, but do not directly impact student achievement (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Delegation of tasks can facilitate the primary goal of ensuring quality programming and meeting the needs of underachieving students. Upper administrators have to make the tough decisions and withstand the temporary discontent when changes are to be made (Forner et al., 2012). Financial commitments must support divisional goals. If student achievement is the focus, then resources must be placed where the greatest need presents. Change is never easy, but support is built when the goal of student achievement is ever-present and administrators have direct conversations with the staff whom the change affects most (Forner et al., 2012). All levels of the school, and support by upper administrators, must maintain the same primary focus to augment student achievement.

Conclusion

Economic efficiency continues to be an issue for rural schools. There is little political will to close schools, because they sustain a rural community (Harrison & Rouse, 2014). Rural schools provide small, multi-age classrooms where all students can flourish. More students take part in extra-curricular activities in rural schools and this, in turn, benefits the economy of small towns. Students in rural schools are better connected to staff, which benefits vulnerable populations. Staffing issues in rural schools can be improved through better training of teacher candidates, better use of mentor teachers, and a commitment to continuous quality professional development. Rural schools do not consistently lag behind urban divisions according to the data, but they must be ready to adapt to their changing demographics in order to ensure maximal student achievement within the context of their other advantages over urban schools.

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Effective Sheltered Content Instruction for English Language Learners

Agnieszka Desjardins

Abstract

With the continued influx of youth newcomers in public schools, teachers need more supports to meet the diverse academic and linguistic needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). This article focuses on a sheltered content basis for instruction, whereby content area curriculum and language learning are taught simultaneously. Effectiveness and challenges of sheltered content instruction is discussed, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is suggested as a framework for high quality teaching. With the support of a strong administrative team, trained teachers of SIOP, and collaboration among a school team, SIOP can serve as an effective tool for teaching ELLs.

In 2018-2019, Canada welcomed 313, 580 immigrants, one of its highest numbers in history (Statistics Canada, 2019). By the year 2020, Canada's high projection for newcomers including immigrants, federal nominees, family reunification, and refugees is 360,000 (Government of Canada, 2019). With the continued influx of newcomers, schools are faced with challenges for appropriate programming for English language learners (ELLs). In an attempt to address the diverse needs of ELLs, public schools are advocating sheltered content instruction (Figueroa-Murphy et al., 2016). Sheltered content programming can be an appropriate method of instruction; however, if poorly designed and implemented, it can result in wide achievement gaps and academically ill prepared students (Calderon et al., 2011). In order for sheltered content instruction to be effective, teachers and administrators need to understand its purpose, possess knowledge of language acquisition methodologies, and receive appropriate training and professional development. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is the only empirically validated approach to sheltered instruction and learning intervention (Short, 2013). With rigorous teacher professional development, SIOP can support ELLs who are developing their academic language and knowledge of core subject curriculum (Echevarria & Short, 2011). When implemented to a high degree, SIOP can serve as an effective school-wide intervention.

Teachers and administrators must have clear understanding of sheltered instruction implementation. In sheltered content classes, core academic subjects such as science, mathematics, history, and English language arts are taught to ELLs through the integration of language development. The purpose is to make content comprehensible for students while developing academic English proficiency through access to the core curriculum (Echevarria et al., 2017). Sheltered content area instruction can be an effective program for students, but teachers must understand that it is not watered down curriculum and target outcomes must be at appropriate grade level (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). In addition, instruction must promote the development of academic language, be cognitively challenging, and provide access to academic content (Cummins, 1999). Students must also receive daily opportunities to engage in grade-level curriculum that supports the development of academic language and meets curricular outcomes simultaneously. In many sheltered content classrooms, instruction is solely language focused. When this occurs, teachers limit instructional rigor and academic expectations (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016) and the result is academically ill prepared students in areas of academic reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Short, 2013). In addition to sheltered content instruction knowledge, teachers and administrators need to possess an understanding of second language acquisition methodologies.

Language acquisition plays a significant role in considering programming needs for ELLs. Many educators have not received proper training or professional development in understanding the processes of second language learning. As a result, they are ill equipped to address the

diverse needs of ELLs in sheltered content classrooms (Cummins et al., 2012). Many sheltered content classrooms focus primarily on the development of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, or BICS, which takes approximately 1-2 years to develop. This type of language is known as survival language that is context embedded, meaningful, and not cognitively demanding (Mozayan, 2015). Examples include simple grammar, writing for personal needs, high frequency vocabulary, common vocabulary, initial reading skills, and the language needed to carry out basic, day-to-day tasks (Roessingh, 2006). ELLs will develop BICS quickly because it is not cognitively demanding and because survival language is used on a daily basis. The second type of language development is CALP, or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, the type of language needed for effective engagement in academic study (Mozayan, 2015). The development of academic language takes approximately 5-7 years. In a well-implemented ESL program, CALP is addressed through an infusion of curriculum-related content. Lessons are designed to reflect a shift from learning to read to reading to learn, abstract thought is incorporated, and there is extensive use of reading, writing, and development of academic vocabulary (Roessingh, 2006). When instruction focuses solely on the development of BICS, students are less academically prepared. This highlights the importance of appropriately trained teachers.

Teachers must have an understanding of second language methodologies and core curriculum in order to support ELLs. They must also be familiar with appropriate instructional strategies and techniques to provide appropriate instruction. This requires additional training and professional development, which are not provided in most teacher training programs. Ultimately, this lies as the responsibility of individual school divisions (Short, 2013) and, if not addressed, teachers are not prepared to teach in ways that facilitate language acquisition and content development (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). In sheltered programming where language acquisition is the primary target, trained language teachers struggle because they are expected to integrate content area outcomes, but are not curriculum experts. Conversely, content area teachers who are not trained language teachers possess excellent knowledge of their curriculum, but are not trained in language acquisition and strategies to promote language development. As a result, in many mainstream classes, students are expected to reach high academic standards without receiving appropriate accommodations as second language learners. In each scenario, there is a lack of support and appropriate integration of both language and content outcomes. However, if language and content area teachers work in collaboration with an appropriate teaching framework, they will be able to support the unique linguistic and educational needs of ELLs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). This requires the influence of a strong administrative team.

Programming decisions are made by administrators who often do not possess an understanding of the diverse needs of ELLs and the type of programs they require. It is critical for school leaders to be actively involved in offering appropriate programming for ELLs, continuing to monitor their effectiveness, and ensuring that students are developing academic skills (Chen, 2019). An effective approach to ESL program delivery, which supports teachers and fosters academic language learning, is the SIOP model. With SIOP, content area and language teachers have the opportunity to work collaboratively to meet the needs of newcomer students. SIOP was developed during a seven-year research study funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored by the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). During the first stages of the study, researchers worked with teams of teachers to determine the most effective teaching practices. The information gathered was used to create an observation tool with a purpose of measuring the degree of implementation of sheltered instruction, and the effects and variations of the model were studied over four years (Short et al., 2011). The final result was SIOP, a lesson planning and delivery approach that provides high quality instruction, cooperative learning, and reading comprehension strategies to integrate language and content objectives (Short et al.,

2011). Although teachers are required to follow a specific framework of instruction, SIOP still allows teachers to maintain their unique teaching styles.

With SIOP, teachers still have flexibility in teaching styles and lesson delivery, and may accomplish language and content objectives in different ways (Short et al., 2011). SIOP has 30 features grouped into eight parts: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment (Echevarria et al., 2017). The 30 features are detailed and provide comprehensive steps for teachers (Koc, 2016). Teachers are observed by colleagues or administrators and are given feedback as means of reflection and improving teaching. For this purpose, an observation tool with a five-point scale is used to gather quantitative data to determine the degree of implementation of the strategies (Echevarria et al., 2017). In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data in the comments section of the observation tools provides opportunities for meaningful discussion. Although SIOP provides teachers with a framework for instruction and support, teachers and administrators must receive appropriate training in order for it to be effectively implemented.

Before SIOP can be used as a school-wide intervention, teachers and administrators must be properly trained and committed to at least 1-2 years of rigorous training (Short et al., 2011). This training is available through conferences, online professional development, and individual books targeted for administrators and specific content area teachers, including math, science, social studies, and English language arts (Echevarria et al., 2017). In addition to rigorous training, teachers must receive ongoing supports, including coaching, collaborative lesson planning and continued professional development (Short et al., 2017). Participating schools must therefore give teachers time to develop the skills, design a supportive program, provide lots of support, involve administration, and facilitate opportunities to observe and measure teacher implementation (Short et al., 2011). When considering a change in programming to SIOP, it is critical to select teachers who are not already overcommitted, because the time commitment required to implement SIOP is significant (Koc, 2016). Additionally, high quality of collaboration between language and content area teachers is critical (Baecher & Bell, 2017). Because SIOP is designed to improve academic language proficiency and is rigorous, the same rigor in relation to professional development should be provided for teachers.

As immigration continues to rise in Canada, educators are struggling meeting the diverse needs of newcomer students. As a result, ELLs demonstrate weaker academic proficiency in relation to native-English speaking peers (Echevarria & Short, 2011). Although schools are implementing language programs, many lack consistency and emphasis on a combination of language and appropriate grade-level learning. In order for language learners to be successful, they must develop their academic skills and have access to core curriculum (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). Teachers and administrators must also have a better understanding of sheltered instruction and language acquisition, in order to implement appropriate programming for ELLs. In addition, they must receive training and professional development that is extensive and supported on an ongoing basis. Research shows that many ELL programs do not prepare students academically because the primary focus is language acquisition rather than content area development (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). When teachers work collaboratively, students can learn and achieve at high levels. Content area and language development teachers each bring unique expertise in teaching ELLs. Working collaboratively by using a research-based approach such as SIOP will help to close the achievement gap of ELLs and native speakers of English. Through the integration of academic language development and core subject curriculum, ELLs will be academically better prepared for success in today's society.

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The Effects of Cyberbullying on Students and Schools

Hannah Beghin

Abstract

Cyberbullying is a problem that affects students and schools. As more children and adolescents have contact with devices, the likelihood of cyberbullying has become more prevalent. Cyberbullying affects the learning of children within class, as the students become self-conscious or distracted. Schools should have clear directives for taking cyberbullying action, and should support professional development for teachers so they can learn what they can do to when dealing with cyberbullying in their classrooms. To reduce cyberbullying, classrooms should celebrate and support student diversities, and students should be taught about how to be caring when interacting with others online.

The Effects of Cyberbullying on Students and Schools

Cyberbullying is a serious problem that must be addressed in schools. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that has become more prevalent as technology advances, and it is difficult to escape from. Cyberbullying is similar to bullying in that it is repeated harm, but it comes in the form of emails, texts, direct messages, public messages, or sending photos. A problematic part of cyberbullying is that information can be distributed to anyone who has access to technology, and can be viewed as many times as the recipient wishes. Due to the accessibility of technology, many youth are choosing to bully online and it has become a form of bullying that is always present because adolescents are always in contact with their electronic devices. While cyberbullying can be difficult to deal with, for both student and teacher, cyberbullying can be managed when knowledge is shared with school staff, and school staff work as a unit.

How Cyberbullying Affects Children in School Settings

School personnel know the importance of bringing awareness to cyberbullying and the effects on those involved. Schools always attempt to make the school setting safe from cyberbullying, which can lower self-esteem, compromise mental health, interrupt sleep patterns, and cause weight gain. Schools are often seen as safe places where bullying is less abundant because of the constant presence of adults, and because of school-proposed network blockages (Kowalski et al., 2012). However, network blockages do not always protect students from receiving demeaning text messages. This is problematic, because adolescents have a dependency on technology for communication with their peers (Mishna et al., 2010). When they have access to their devices, students can easily use a quarter of their time in class checking their phones (Kim et al., 2019). If students were receiving upsetting text messages during class time, they would be unable to escape from the cyberbullying because students feel the need to check their phone every three to four minutes (Kim et al., 2019). With this kind of negative bombardment, students would not have a proper mindset to learn within class. Cyberbullying distracts students and has negative effects on student learning and grades (Kates et al., 2018). Now that most students have devices, cyberbullying has become problematic within schools.

Cyberbullying often has negative impacts on a child's self-esteem. Cyberbullying often occurs during a developmental time when adolescents are experimenting with who they want to be as people, and "when social status and popularity are increasingly important" (Holfeld & Mishna, 2019, p. 567). Adolescents who struggle to keep friends and positive peers are often the targets for cyberbullying (Holfeld & Mishna, 2019), which then lowers personal self-esteem. Students who come to school with low self-esteem due to cyberbullying will be distracted, and not mentally prepared to learn within class. Being involved with cyberbullying affects the self-

esteem of not only the victim, but bystanders and the perpetrator also demonstrate lower amounts of self-esteem than those who are not involved with cyberbullying in any way (Aliyev & Gengec, 2019). Self-esteem, of all parties involved, is affected by cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is similar to traditional bullying, because victims of cyberbullying often report mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, feelings of alienation, reduced concentration, and suicidal thoughts (Kowalski et al., 2012). Children who are victims of cyberbullying can also develop substance abuse, skip school, become aggressive, and commit crimes (Diaz & Fite, 2019; Mishna et al., 2010). These attitudes and actions are not helpful within classroom settings, and often cause students to fall behind in class, or drop out of school. Mental health is important for children who are going through their formative years, yet adolescents who are being cyberbullied have a decreased sense of mental health and emotional well-being.

The physical effects of cyberbullying include disrupted sleep patterns and weight gain. Sleeping poorly affects children within school settings because they struggle to concentrate in class and to act positively with their peers. The resultant negative attitude can cause the children to become targets of more cyberbullying (Waasdorp et al., 2018). Children who are cyberbullied may also respond to their emotions by over-eating. This creates a pattern of increased bullying as a result of gaining weight, because children who weigh more tend to experience more bullying than children who are less obese (Waasdorp et al., 2018). Furthermore, children who are larger tend to spend more time online, which negatively affects sport participation and proper eating – and makes them even more vulnerable to cyberbullying (Waasdorp et al., 2018). Thus, physiological consequences such as sleeping poorly and gaining weight exacerbate the psychological effects of cyberbullying.

How Schools Can Respond to Cyberbullying

Teachers are important when it comes to managing cyberbullying, because students need to know that an adult will support them (ConnectSafely, 2018) by teaching them appropriate behaviours and by addressing inappropriate bullying behaviours as they occur in school. Teachers are often the first adults that students approach when they are being bullied (Wachs et al., 2019). Teachers who demonstrate and promote positive, healthy relationships, and create positive classroom climates, are in an important position when it comes to putting an end to cyberbullying. Teaching etiquette for digital conversations should accompany teaching appropriate behaviour for classroom conversations. Students need to learn on the proper way to interact online, and how language can affect the feelings of others (Cassidy et al., 2012). Students need to have support from teachers and other school staff, and should be directly taught behaviours for use online.

When educators teach students what behaviours are deemed as appropriate and resilient, they can prevent students from participating in cyberbullying. Students who have more internal assets, defined as having “social competencies and positive identity” (Fredkove et al., 2019, p. 883), than other students will be better equipped to refrain from becoming cyberbullying targets or participants. Tapping into internal strengths empowers students in becoming more resilient in relation to bullies, and this will increase individual self-esteem, which will decrease the bullying behaviours against them (Aliyev & Gengec, 2019). If students feel strong, powerful, and positive, are successful in school, and feel socially accepted, then they will feel better about themselves, which will deter cyberbullying activities (Aliyev & Gengec, 2019). Schools and teachers should ensure that they are supporting students so they can learn not to participate in cyberbullying.

Students need to learn how to accept differences within others, because cyberbullying often comes from a “lack of understanding or insecurity” (Dove, 2016, Daring to be Different section, para. 2) in relation to diversity. Because students in middle school are struggling to find their place within society, they tend to connect with peers who are similar to them. This means that if bullies perceive someone as different, they will begin to target that person (Dove, 2016).

Classrooms and schools therefore need to become rooms that accept all types of students and opinions. Student diversities should be integrated within classrooms so that students learn how to maintain “healthy and diverse peer relationships” (Holfeld & Mishna, 2019, p. 577). When students are more understanding and secure with diversity, cyberbullying becomes less likely (Dove, 2016). Celebrating differences within schools and classrooms can reduce cyberbullying.

School administrators should ensure that there are clear cyberbullying directives for teachers to follow, because teachers say that current directives are vague and they are unsure of how to handle cyberbullying claims (Cassidy et al., 2012). When teachers feel that they are unable to assist in a bullying situation, then they are likely to ignore the situation instead of intervening (Wachs et al., 2019). If teachers feel uncomfortable intervening when there is a cyberbullying situation at school, then students will begin to see their teachers as an unhelpful source, which then creates a school environment that is not nurturing or safe for children. Administrators need therefore to provide teachers with “theoretical knowledge and practical skills” (Wachs et al., 2019, p. 663) for addressing cyberbullying. This professional development should include opportunities to learn about behaviours that are associated with bullying (Ong, 2017), so that staff are trained in how to assist in scenarios where there is cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is not considered a criminal offence in many places, so teachers and schools need to come up with their own ways to address cyberbullying concerns (Ong, 2017). Schools that enforce the supportive-cooperative intervention strategy are most successful in intervening in cyberbullying situations in schools (Wachs et al., 2019). With this strategy, the teacher does whole-class instruction about the effects of cyberbullying. The teacher also includes conversations with parents and other outside professionals, and establishes actions with the class that should be taken when there are cyberbullying situations (Wachs et al., 2019). Following the large-group instruction, open communication between victim and perpetrator, their families, teachers, and other professionals, is a successful way to tackle cyberbullying in schools (Wachs et al., 2019). Students having a say, and an active role in how to prevent further cases of cyberbullying (Ong, 2017), can put the power of change into the hands of students, and they may have less desire to participate in cyberbullying. Schools and teachers need to create ways to address concerns related to cyberbullying, in addition to reinforcing directives that are already in place.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying significantly affects school children. Cyberbullied children can struggle in school, because they are distracted or self-conscious. Children who are being targeted online are unable to escape the tormenting because youth have an attachment to their electronic devices, which causes the negative comments to always be present. To combat cyberbullying, schools need to support teachers’ actions, and provide some guidance of what actions can be taken to address the cyberbullying concern. Professional development sessions on how to address cyberbullying should be a priority for school staff. Overall, schools and classrooms need to have accepting and supporting environments. If students are encouraged to build upon their strengths and to celebrate everyone’s differences, they may have less desire to participate in cyberbullying. All children should be part of an inclusive and supportive classroom, where kindness, caring, and proper communication skills are taught. If children are taught from a young age that all people need to be treated with kindness, then maybe they will be less inclined to cyberbully in their future. Once school staff become united on how to manage cyberbullying, and provide safe and diverse environments for their students, then cyberbullying may impact fewer students.

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From Outsiders to Partners: Reimagining School Social Workers as School Leaders

Kyle Berg

Abstract

School social workers possess a unique perspective and skill set for school leadership. However, common conceptualizations of the role have unnecessarily limited this capacity, and as a result, school social workers have struggled to carve out an identity in education. By reframing the role of school social workers as school leaders, schools will have an opportunity to leverage their best qualities. Social workers who are willing to work closely with school administrators, build strong partnerships with schools, and advocate for themselves as school leaders stand to gain a great deal from added legitimacy to their role.

School social workers (SSWs) show a unique capacity for school leadership. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, social workers have been marginalized from the larger operations of the school system, and have struggled to assert themselves as stakeholders (Callahan Sherman, 2016). Common conceptions of school social work typically fall on the spectrum between direct and systemic practice, or social work *in* or *for* schools (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). This limited view of SSWs, coupled with general misunderstanding of their role, can lead schools to underappreciate and underinvest in social work service (Bye et al., 2009). Reframing the role of SSWs as school leaders in partnership with schools makes it possible for schools to leverage the assets unique to school social work. Schools can share leadership with social workers in order to develop policy, supervise intervention programs, and ensure that the social emotional needs of all students are addressed through broad, ecologically informed programming. School systems, and SSWs, will be best served by partnering with each other, and redefining SSWs as school leaders.

The Marginalization of School Social Workers

School divisions stand to gain a great deal from the inclusion of social workers on their student support teams. Officially, SSWs in Manitoba exist to facilitate learning for students who struggle to access the curriculum, collaborate with schools and outside agencies to further student success, and stress prevention and early intervention to support the social-emotional needs of all students (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017). In nearly all contexts, the role of an SSW involves wearing many hats: often playing the role of truancy officer, case manager, student and parent advocates, mediator, and counsellor, all in a single day (Dworak-Peck, 2019). Historically, social workers in schools have struggled to navigate value differences with other school staff and the resulting marginalization of their roles (Sugrue, 2017). More recently, Altshuler and Webb (2009) found that role confusion, coupled with broad misunderstanding of social work expertise, makes it difficult for SSWs to legitimize their presence on school and division support teams. While generally seen as valuable, SSWs suffer from poorly defined roles and misunderstood expectations within the school system, leaving the future efficacy and sustainability of the position open to criticism.

Misunderstanding the Role of School Social Workers

Role clarity among SSWs suffers from broad misunderstanding, making social workers responsible for outlining their role, and putting them at risk of being seen as redundant. Gherardi and Whittlesey-Jerome (2018) identified two common conceptualizations of school social work

practice: (1) social work *for* schools, and (2) social work *in* schools. Understanding SSWs as working in schools presents them as guests, or outsiders, hosted by schools to provide services to specific students. Within this understanding, SSWs are often accessed to provide clinical services. As clinicians, SSWs are expected to provide frontline mental health services to students, craft behaviour intervention plans, and provide family support and liaison services. For many school administrators, as well as SSWs, this approach to school social work is seen as the most effective, efficient use of school social work resources (Bye et al., 2009). However, while these clinical services are valued and well within the realm of social work practice, it limits social work involvement in system-level change. Social work knowledge and lens could be used at the system level by involving SSWs in the development of policies, presentation of mental health data, and enhanced consultation to inform school and division decision making (Berzin et al., 2011). When SSWs are seen primarily as clinicians, their clinical skills bring great value to the individual students and families they serve, but their ecological, big picture lens remains underused (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). In doing so, schools and school divisions miss out on the unique expertise and ecological perspective that social workers bring to system level problems. This perspective is unique to social workers and, if capitalized on, could help social workers to ensure that their role remains valuable in the school system.

Another common conceptualization of school social work is to use social workers in their “for schools” role, as employees of the school, purely to address non-academic concerns that contribute to school and divisional mandates. This model is complicated when SSWs are supervised by individuals with educational and philosophical perspectives that differ significantly (Callahan Sherman, 2016). When conceptualized as working “for schools,” SSWs often take primary responsibility for attendance issues, discipline planning, and special education coordination (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). This conceptualization is less popular in Canada, but fairly common in other countries, such as the United Kingdom where social workers may exist primarily to enforce school attendance (Allen-Meares, Montgomery, & Kim, 2013). Under this model, an SSW’s primary role would be to support the tier one social-emotional interventions delivered by the classroom teacher, effectively meeting the needs of 85% of the student population (Allen-Meares et al., 2013). In reality, this does not always happen. Many SSWs already have extremely limited engagement with teachers (O’Brien et al., 2011), because many SSWs are mandated not to only consult at the classroom level, but to provide services individually, in small groups, and to families (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013). Naturally, this dual-expectation spreads the efforts of social workers thin, creating tension as school they try to meet the social-emotional needs of students and families directly, leaving little time to work toward the other mandates of the schools they work for. Perceived differences between the mandates of schools and the assumed goals of SSWs can lead schools to underinvest in social work services (Bye et al., 2009). Overall, role ambiguity and competing demands placed on SSWs ultimately delegitimize the position, and make SSWs vulnerable to being underappreciated.

Being conscious of the misunderstanding surrounding their role, SSWs would benefit from collective reframing of their role and increased visibility within the school system. In reviewing current research, Gherardi and Whittlesey-Jerome (2008) found that the role of the SSW remains unclear to other school-based professionals, leading to questions of their efficacy. However, the task of creating a collective identity is hindered by the reality that many SSWs work alone in one or multiple schools, with few opportunities for collaboration (Sugrue, 2017). Efforts at identity formation could be bolstered through the implementation of consistent certification requirements, and clear organizational mandates that account for the wide range of expertise that social workers possess (Altshuler & Webb, 2009). If viewed as working in schools, largely as clinicians, social workers may be able to maintain their value in the eyes of other school professionals, but schools and divisions will not benefit from their system level expertise. When the SSW is seen as working for the school, the position runs the risk of being delegitimized when mandates are not reached. If SSWs are to maintain their legitimacy in the

school system, they should look for opportunities for leadership and partnership with schools. If school social work is to remain a valuable part of school support teams in the future, differences in expectations must be rectified, and SSWs must consider how to evaluate their work effectively (Bye et al., 2009). In doing so, they will identify a clear path forward for the profession, and limit the risk of role redundancy on student support teams.

Redefining School Social Workers as Educational Leaders

In contrast to the common conceptions of social work as *in* or *for*, reimagining SSWs as educational leaders, partnering *with* schools to meet the needs of all students, leverages the best qualities SSWs can offer. Social workers possess policy and practice expertise that most other school professionals do not. For this reason, along with social workers' ecological lens of practice, efforts to redefine the role of the SSW should attend to enhancing social work's role in school and division leadership (Callahan Sherman, 2016). SSWs are situated to assume leadership roles in resource coordination projects, such as high-fidelity wraparound, which is intended to meet the needs of children in Manitoba with profound emotional and behavioural disorders (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2013). With the current push to establish evidence-based social-emotional and mental health promotion programs in schools, social workers should play a supervisory role in ensuring intervention fidelity (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). In order to legitimize their role as leaders and partners with schools, social workers need to engage in self-promotion, cultivate relationships with school and divisional leadership, and seek out additional training and specialization. These actions are the next step in redefining the role of SSWs as educational leaders in partnership with schools.

Opportunities for School Leadership

For SSWs to work effectively with schools, a change in perception and practice perspective is needed. Historically, SSWs have been recruited to work with the outliers in the school system, and their capacity for leadership is a recent realization (Callahan Sherman, 2016). With schools looking to build stronger community, teacher, and family linkages, the ecological perspective of SSWs is a valuable contribution (Berzin et al., 2011). Ecological theory considers the nature of a person in the context of social, physical, and cultural environment, in order to create a multi-level understanding of the factors influencing that person, which will inform a multi-system intervention plan (Teater, 2014). Ecological practice guides social work intervention in schools at the environmental level, while keeping the individual at the center of the focus. While prevalent models of school social work tend to focus on direct, clinical service to students and families in need, current research seems to indicate that broader engagement on the environmental level is more effective (O'Brien et al., 2011). For SSWs to be effective at multi-level intervention from an ecological perspective, they will need to have a presence at the administrative level in the school system, which will require a shift to viewing SSWs as school leaders.

School leaders would benefit from social work perspective in the development of practices and policies that guide the work of staff and shape the learning experience of students. Despite having significant experience working with policy, schools have not capitalized on SSWs' capacity as policymakers (Callahan Sherman, 2016). SSWs operate in a system that is, and will remain, primarily concerned with academics. However, policy makers are increasingly aware of the social-emotional factors that contribute to academic success. Administrators and other school professionals meet students every day who are dealing with issues such as poverty, mental illness, and rising parental pressure, and they are beginning to understand how these challenges impact academic performance. Social workers are primed to analyze these complex issues, engage stakeholders, and bridge the gap between well-being and academic success (Callahan Sherman, 2016). Social workers are also capable of informing policy development in

an educational context. Integrating social work knowledge and values in policies and practices will help schools to meet the needs of all students as schools strive for academic success (Gherardi & Whittlesey Jerome, 2018). SSWs and school leaders should work together to create policies and practices that meet the social-emotional needs of all students, and further academic achievement.

As efforts toward establishing evidence-based behaviour interventions have grown, SSWs have increasingly been identified as an important part of intervention plans. SSWs have historically been largely involved in supporting student behaviour at school, and playing the role of resource coordinator for families and students (Sugrue, 2017). With their specific education and expertise in behavioural assessment, SSWs could serve schools as consultants to ensure the fidelity of behaviour interventions (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). As schools have become aware of the multiple systemic factors contributing to student behaviour, they have found it necessary to use a strengths-based approach to cultivate strong family-school relationships. Born out of a recognition that individuals are more likely to change when their strengths are supported (Helton & Smith, 2014), strengths-based approaches provide a framework for schools to appreciate and leverage the strengths and resources that students and families hold (Leyba, 2010). SSWs have extensive experience with strengths-based practice, and are equipped to provide oversight to strengths-based programs in schools. Programs such as High-Fidelity Wraparound have become best practice models for schools trying to support students with significantly high emotional and behavioural needs (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2013), and SSWs already play a large role in coordinating these efforts. Operating in this model requires that SSWs be seen as school leaders, coordinating student support resources and ensuring that behaviour interventions will support the social-emotional needs of students.

Next Steps for School Social Workers

While SSWs possess skills and knowledge that make them capable of educational leadership, the process of redefining the role requires work and flexibility on all sides. SSWs must become comfortable with marketing themselves as school leaders, and determine appropriate ways to communicate their capacities. They also need to pursue additional training and certification relevant to school leadership. Schools and division leaders should work closer with SSWs to meet common goals. Taking these steps will help to shift the understanding of SSWs away from guests or employees of a school, toward being school leaders.

Social work education programs do not commonly encourage their students to promote their skills and abilities beyond the degree to which it is necessary for their clients. If SSWs want to establish themselves as school leaders and legitimize their role, they will need to be more comfortable with advocating for themselves in the school system (Callahan Sherman, 2016). However, SSWs need to be careful to articulate their role in terms that other school professionals will understand (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). They will need to learn about the unique challenges of other school professionals, and recognize their role in helping to resolve these challenges. As trained listeners, SSWs will likely find it challenging to self-promote, but it is the necessary first step in establishing themselves as school leaders.

SSWs who wish to become school leaders will need to establish strong working relationships with school and divisional administrators. SSWs are accustomed to working with student support staff and teachers, but school administrators have demonstrated better understanding of school social work (Tower, 2000), and this relationship should be reinforced. Ideally, SSWs could work in tandem with school administrators on a common vision (Callahan Sherman, 2016), in recognition that social-emotional outcomes must be considered along with academic outcomes. Forging this partnership can be facilitated through combined meetings to address common goals and concerns, joint involvement in larger divisional policy development, and combined professional development opportunities.

Social workers are typically trained to be general practitioners, and should consider pursuing additional training and specialization in an effort to establish themselves as school leaders. For SSWs to be taken serious as school leaders, it is evident that they must complete enhanced certification (Callahan Sherman, 2016). Consistent certification and specialized education would enhance the image of SSWs as leaders, and better equip them for the complicated nature of social work in schools (Althuler & Webb, 2009). While commonly the case, enhanced education does not necessarily imply mandating that SSWs have graduate degrees. Establishing SSWs as educational leaders will require them to gain education-orientated training, focused on educational issues and policy (Gherardi & Whittlesey Jerome, 2018). A simple alternative for SSWs to gain the skills and knowledge needed to be considered school leaders is for them to gain access to post-baccalaureate courses in education. These courses would provide social workers with the basic understanding of school organizational, leadership, and student services approaches and policies to make them competent as school leaders.

Conclusion

SSWs possess the skills, knowledge, and perspective necessary to be effective school leaders. Social workers hold down a multi-dimensional role, with the ability to intervene across a variety of domains and on many issues facing students and schools. However, the multi-dimensional nature of their work makes it difficult for other school professionals, and sometimes social workers, to evaluate and understand their role (Callahan Sherman, 2016, p. 4). Role ambiguity and misunderstanding of social workers' capacities present a risk to the future legitimacy of school social work. Common conceptions of school social have struggled with the tension between clinical and systemic service delivery (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018), with social workers operating as guests *in*, or employees *for*, the school system. These common conceptions do not make good use of the skills and knowledge unique to SSWs, and unnecessarily limit their scope.

As an alternative to seeing SSWs as either guests or employees, reframing their role as school leaders, in partnership with schools, provides an opportunity for schools to leverage the best qualities of social workers, and offers a promising future for school social work. SSWs' capacity to contribute to the administrative functioning of schools has, until recently, largely been unrecognized (Callahan Sherman, 2016). As experts in ecological perspective, policy and practice development, and behaviour intervention, SSWs already have several natural entry points into school leadership. Recognizing these entry points and partnering with SSWs to take on leadership roles in these areas will make the best use of social workers' role in the school system, and prompt them to become active advocates for educational practices and policies that were previously outside their scope (Gherardi & Whittlesey-Jerome, 2018). SSWs who are interested in redefining themselves as leaders will need to be comfortable advocating for their role, cultivate strong relationships with school administrators, and seek further education relevant to school leadership. In doing so, social workers will succeed in both legitimizing their role in the school system and redefining themselves in a way that will best fit the needs of social workers, and the needs of the schools they have partnered with.

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About the Author

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The Importance of Relationship Building with ADHD Students

Brittany Lasko

Abstract

ADHD's becoming more prevalent in classrooms speaks to how schools must train and support their teachers to stop and work with their "non-stop" students to build a strong relationship with them. This concept becomes challenging when behaviours get in the way of learning, and teachers lack confidence to teach and support students with ADHD. There are many techniques teachers can use to help these students be successful. In order for these strategies to work, a teacher must understand that none of these techniques will be successful without building a positive relationship with a student who has ADHD.

All students have the potential to exhibit some form of inattentive, impulsive behaviours, but when symptoms are severe, impairing and persistent, they form part of the diagnostic criteria for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Gray et al., 2017). Students with ADHD are just as intelligent as the rest of the students in the class, but they struggle to meet teachers' expectations based on their intelligence level (Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada, 2017a). When ADHD-related behaviours get in the way of learning, teachers may lack confidence in knowing how to teach and support these students, and they may focus on the negative behaviours displayed each day, thus forming a negative opinion of those students. A strained relationship leads teachers to view students with ADHD less favourably than other students, putting the students with ADHD at risk for a persistent pattern of negative interactions with their teachers, adversely affecting their learning experience (Rogers et al., 2015). With a rise in numbers of students with ADHD in classrooms, teachers must look at these students through a new lens to build relationships with these "non-stop" students, in order to achieve a positive school experience.

Relationship Concerns with ADHD Students

ADHD affects the academic and social aspects of a student's school experience. Teachers witness students with ADHD displaying significantly more off-task behaviour and shorter attentive states during classroom teaching. These students appear less engaged in the learning environment and show avoidance for working collaboratively with their peers (Rogers et al., 2015). Furthermore, students with ADHD often exude less effort and are less motivated to achieve when compared to typically developing students. Having ADHD behaviours in the classroom raises the questions of how teachers are to teach these students, how they can motivate them to participate, and whether they will receive additional support to ensure that students with ADHD can be set up for success in both academic and social aspects of school.

Due to class size and limited amounts of teaching time, teachers find it difficult to keep up with their non-stop students with ADHD and to make sure they feel successful and included in the classroom. When behaviours begin to be constant interruptions, teachers begin to feel less of an emotional connection with these students and find them more effortful and stressful to teach (Rogers et al., 2015). Moreover, teachers begin to feel increased anger toward these children when they think the children are responsible for their disruptive behaviour. Teachers begin to observe behavioural problems associated with ADHD and attribute them to voluntary, deliberate action (Low, 2019). I have found myself guilty of viewing my students with ADHD, and their behavioural tendencies, as a "deficit," creating frustrated and negative feelings toward them, and wondering why they could not just follow instructions and listen when I requested them to listen. Frustrations and negative thoughts lead teachers to try to "fix" the behaviours by

applying punitive strategies as an attempt to lessen the behaviours present in the classroom (Mikami, Smit, & Johnston, 2019). Consistently being punished begins a break-down of the student-teacher relationship, until the student does not feel a sense of belonging, success, and safety in the classroom.

Latest Canadian ADHD prevalence rates tell us that every classroom will include at least 1 to 3 students with ADHD (Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada, 2017b). These students will instantly be at a higher risk for lower levels of academic achievement and higher rates of disciplinary referrals. They will also be 2.7 times more likely than students without ADHD to drop out of school before graduation (Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada, 2017b). The rise of student prevalence with ADHD furthers the already ongoing issue of negative student-teacher relationships. Now, teachers must learn how to support more students with ADHD in their classroom while continuing to teach the rest of the class. Although it may seem impossible to a teacher, and to the students with ADHD who are ultimately facing all odds even before they enter the classroom, strategies can ensure that these students can be set up for success and will form positive relationships with their teacher and classmates. Once the relationships are built, the children can be better prepared to learn and work toward academic success. It is crucial that teachers learn these strategies, in order to ensure that there can be a decline in their negative outlook toward having students with ADHD achieve success in school.

Teachers are a vital part of their students' lives, and it is very important that a strong and positive working collaboration is fostered, especially when a student is struggling. Teachers must take all necessary steps to show students with ADHD that they matter, and that the teachers are there to help them. Teachers are the most influential role models in a child's life. When a teacher develops strategies to show students with ADHD that they are capable and worthwhile, the children believe it and results follow (Dendy, 2019). No matter how non-stop and tiring these students can be, a new vision of relationship building must be realized in the classroom, in order to break the persistent pattern of negative interactions between teachers and their students with ADHD.

Building Positive Relationships

Teaching is a non-stop job, which makes it hard to stop and work with non-stop students who have ADHD. In order to work toward creating a relationship with these students, teachers must first step out of their ego and step out of power (Katz, 2013). Teachers must move out of the "authoritarian" role and come down to the students' level, setting aside time to understand ADHD and how this "invisible disability" (Low, 2019 "An Invisible Disability," para.1) affects their students' lives. Hyperactivity and inattention may be obvious, but other issues may be hidden beneath the surface (Low, 2019), such as chronic anxiety, worrisome or painful issues at home, or being bullied on the playground (Miller, 2019). Therefore, factors for teachers to consider include whether the students had a good sleep, whether they ate breakfast before coming to school and, if needed, whether medication was taken. Looking back to past years in my teaching career, there are times I wish when I witnessed non-stop behaviour, I would have taken the time to find out what was preventing the child from engaging in the class in that moment. Instead, I would get frustrated with the behaviour and call the students out for their behaviour in front of their peers, because I was the teacher and they needed to listen to me. Taking two minutes to focus on the students' circumstance would have created 28 minutes of success in my physical education classes for these students.

Teachers should learn their students' boundaries in stressful moments and how far they should challenge their students with ADHD. Katz (2012) found that ADHD is a disorder that prevents students from managing impulsivity and multiple demands at once. Asking students with ADHD to sit still, stay focused, organize their materials, and interact positively spirals them into stress instantly if they feel they have to deal with multiple challenges. While it is hard to take a step back during instruction time, teachers must remember to have these students focus on

one thing at a time, while giving them support when needed. This makes achieving academic goals more attainable in the children's eyes and shows them that the teachers understand what they need and will be available when they may need help.

Maximizing Academic Success

When a teacher understands how students with ADHD are able to work, and the students can achieve goals in smaller tasks, their strengths are brought to light. Medoff (2016) reported that the number one strategy that worked in her classroom was showing students with ADHD that she liked them and saw their strengths. For these students, finding this connection and changing the way they think teachers see them is incredibly important. Instead of clamping down on off-task behaviours that arise during instruction and work time, teachers should stop and use this time as an opportunity to get to know the students better (Medoff). Teachers may choose to include off-task behaviours in what the class is doing if it is an appropriate time, or let the students know that once they have completed their goal, then they will have a chance to meet and share what they are trying to share. Teaching physical education, I have witnessed students with ADHD having a hard time focusing in a large and noisy environment, resulting in numerous off-task behaviours. On many occasions, I have taken these students' behaviours and included them in the activities for the rest of the class. If we were working on our warm-up, and my student with ADHD was doing spins on the floor in a corner of the gym, I incorporated spinning on the floor as part of the warm-up. Doing this included that student with the rest of the class and thinking it was funny. The class loved the opportunity to spin on the floor, and in return I did not call out the off-task behaviour. I then continued to get the student to give me different moves to add to our warm-up. Encouraging myself to see that student's strengths with movement enhanced not only our class warm-up but our relationship, too.

Students with ADHD not only contribute to class with their strengths, but they can also help a teacher plan for their success by letting the teacher know exactly what they require to be successful. Instead of reprimanding misbehaviour, the teacher should turn it into a question of whether the students are making a good or bad choice in that moment (Dendy, 2019). Not reacting negatively, but instead having them recognize their actions, gives the students ownership over turning their behaviour around and shows them that the teacher is there to help them to do so. This leads students with ADHD to being their own person and making their own choices about what adaptations they prefer, and what would help them to achieve success and meet their goals, ultimately setting the stage for a trusting relationship (Medoff, 2016). Furthermore, children with ADHD who are given choices for completing an activity produce more work and are more compliant, resulting in less negative behaviours (Dendy, 2019). Medoff (2016) suggested an example of asking students to decide whether they would like to sit in the back of the classroom, where they are free to stand up and move around if needed, instead of placing these students at the front of the classroom (which most strategies suggest). Students with ADHD know what they need best, so they are the best support in helping a teacher to create a successful classroom environment.

Conclusion

There are many strategies that teachers can use to help students with ADHD be successful. However, none of these techniques will be successful without building positive relationships with these students (Knowles, 2009). School may not work for many students who have ADHD, and that is why it is very important for teachers to listen and assure these students that they will help them to acquire skills and knowledge while letting them know that they are valued and cared for (Knowles, 2009). ADHD is a label, but if teachers listen, they will truly get to know the child behind the label, and that is where success begins. ADHD becoming more

prevalent in classrooms speaks to how schools must train and support their teachers to stop and work with these non-stop students, in order to build a strong relationship with them.

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Is Group Therapy Effective?

Patricia Mashinter

Abstract

The efficacy of group therapy as a counselling method is examined. Factors that reinforce the effectiveness of group therapy include the necessity of communication amongst the human species, the longevity of the practice of group work in the field of therapy, and the empirical research suggesting the success of the method. Barriers to the success of group therapy are considered, such as public misconceptions, ethical challenges and problems with maintaining confidentiality. A balanced appraisal of both the pros and cons are deliberated. Group therapy is determined to be a valuable method of counselling.

Group therapy is an effective method of counselling, its success explained by the biological necessity of human beings to communicate with one another. Group therapy is not new: its history began in the infancy of counselling therapy. Controversial claims regarding the legitimacy of group counselling are grounded in misconception rather than fact, because empirical research demonstrates its success. Group therapy is appropriate for clients with adjustment disorders, and counsellors aligned with certain philosophical orientations are better suited to this work. Group therapy presents organizational challenges and potential ethical dilemmas, but those challenges are outweighed by the possible benefits. Group therapy, while often regarded as a second-tier approach to therapy, is an effective method of counselling.

Group therapy capitalizes on the social nature of the human species (Narvaez & Witherington, 2018). From our earliest ancestors to modern-day humans, we have collaborated with each other to guarantee our own survival. Social relationships have not only been beneficial, but often a necessity (de Waal, 2014). Our young are helpless without the assistance of parents who provide comfort and communication as well as essential physiological supports. Children who are not effectively communicated with incur devastating negative impacts (Kenneally et al., 1998). Communication is not a luxury for us; it is necessary for survival. The critical nature of human communication makes the success of group therapy logical.

Group therapy is not a modern counselling concept. Public interest in the process has increased lately, but the practice has been around for many years (Paterson, 1973). Unofficially, given the necessity of human communication, one can assume that groups of people have collaborated to lessen conflict since the beginning of our species. Officially, in Western civilization, group therapy began in the nineteen thirties, making the practice more than 80 years old (Roller, 1986).

The modern interest in group therapy can be attributed to media depictions of the process. Over-dramatization of the emotional nature of counselling in a group setting delivers exciting stories that have engendered many myths about group work. The melodramatic portrayals ramp up the possible conflict and downplay the healing, leading to much misinformation about group work. Cinematic feature films *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *28 Days*, and *Girl Interrupted*, for example, capitalize on the emotional nature of group therapy to forward exaggerated plots. Popular sitcoms, such as *Anger Management*, portray a damaging interpretation of the therapeutic relationship. Group therapy has evolved and changed, like every other area of psychology, but despite the current interest in the methodology, it is not innovative.

Group work myths include the ideas that clients are forced into participation, and receive a weak version of individual therapy that is financially and qualitatively cheap (Marmarosh et al., 2006). The difficulty in debunking these myths is that there is a fraction of truth in each of them. Group therapy is more time and cost-effective than individual therapy. Participation may be mandated by an outside source, not unlike individual therapy. Whether one views these

characteristics as positive or negative relies on perspective. Regardless of the misinformation that exists about group work, it boasts impressive success rates (Marmarosh et al., 2006).

Group therapy has been researched for clients dealing with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, social phobias, post-traumatic-stress-disorders, and schizophrenia (Walker & McLeod, 1982). Empirical research supports the effectiveness of this method of treatment in each of these cases (Novotney, 2019). These psychological ailments are partially rooted in the social context of human nature. A group setting can exacerbate maladaptation, so it makes sense that this type of setting would provide an effective treatment method. Creating a supportive environment in a group setting, complete with a variety of personality types, may provide feelings of safety in a group of individuals that does not typically feel safe in social situations (Droždek & Bolwerk, 2010). A group work setting resembles real-world interpersonal dynamics. Therefore, learning transfers to a client's real life.

Many empirical studies suggest that group therapy is effective for a variety of patients. It is particularly effective for anxiety and social-phobic illness (Jensen, Hougaard, & Fishman, 2013; Marker, Salvaris, Thompson, Tolliday, & Norton, 2019; Sunthararajah, 2019). In a lengthy case study involving a client with severe social-phobia, group therapy impacted her more profoundly than many other methods of counselling (Jensen et al., 2013). Compelling this client to take part in group work forced her to face her social phobia directly. Her anxiety was linked to social settings. Healing properties applied directly to her life by working through this anxiety within an interpersonal context. Social settings enhance stress in many types of anxiety disorders. These psychological issues lend themselves well to group work because of this factor.

While group work seems to be an obvious advantage for certain psychological ailments, it presents a challenge with others. For example, it can be problematic for tackling eating disorders or addictions, because group members may enable each other, and support maladaptive behaviours. However, under proper supervision, and with an effective facilitator, group work can be invaluable for these clients. Dor et al. (2019) discussed the effectiveness of movement therapy with adolescent girls struggling with eating disorders, and stated that the girls were empowered through the physical actions. The physical act alone is empowering for a client dealing with body image challenges, but being visible to others while engaging in those actions has additional healing properties. The group was not only a cost-effective method of treating many patients simultaneously; it was a necessary facet to facilitate the healing process.

Many clients benefit from their therapeutic healing taking place in a social setting. Group therapy is one of the most effective treatments for seasonal-affective-disorder (Rohan, 2009). The power of group therapy is in the recognition that the sufferer is not alone. An admission that other people have similar thoughts is one of the first steps to feeling healthy again. Depression is isolating, and often the therapy is isolating. Clients share experiences that remind them that the way in which they experience the world is significantly different from that of others. Sharing that reality with a counsellor in a one-to-one setting may serve to further isolate the individual. While group work is difficult with depressed patients who possess limited ability to engage with others, normalizing their circumstances with the other group members is therapeutic.

Normalising feelings is not only useful with anxiety disorders and depression. It can serve a purpose with clients in difficult life circumstances. For example, group work leads to positive outcomes for clients dealing with divorce (Moreland et al., 1982). Relationships between the divorcees, as co-parents, are more successful after participating in group therapy. The relationships between parents and their children were also more positive. Many divorced adults suffer in silence, believing that they are alone in their despair. Divorce can be isolating for many reasons. Group work provides meaningful connections with other adults in similar situations, so clients can support each other through what is an incredibly large transition. Groups for grief are powerful in their ability to unite people in moments of transition, and group therapy can be a great way to maintain a healthy family unit. The experiences of grief and loss are not necessary for families to participate in, and benefit from, group therapy.

Group therapy is an effective way to counsel a family, because the dynamics of a family are incredibly complicated and nearly impossible to define for another person. Tackling family issues in individual therapy is difficult, because one person's perception gives a very limited understanding of the problem. In group counselling, the family can work through their issues as a unit. There may also be benefits to multiple families participating in one group therapy session because families may notice similar issues in others, and speak to them if they are not ready to tackle their own problems (Thorngren & Kleist, 2002). It is less threatening to speak about another family's challenges than to highlight one's own difficulties. Objective opinions may serve useful, as well. There is a high chance of this type of setting becoming emotionally charged. The facilitator of this method of group counselling needs to monitor the direction of the conversation.

Monitoring the direction of a conversation is a necessary skill for a group work therapist, because the nuances of conversation offer opportunities to instil moments of insight and provide education regarding mental health. For example, carefully guided group conversations are useful for learning and practising psychoeducation (Droždek & Bolwerk, 2010), cognitive behavioural therapy (Jensen et al., 2013), and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) (Pots et al, 2016; Sunthararajah, 2019). The group activities must be well organized, grounded in research, and aligned with the facilitator's theoretical orientation to counselling. The degree to which the therapist questions the strength of group work, or believes in the myths regarding group therapy, can undermine the potential of the group (Marmarosh et al., 2006). The therapist needs to have confidence in the power of group therapy for the group to be successful.

Group therapy is not easy to facilitate, even when a counsellor trusts the process. The counsellor must carefully administer informed consent at the beginning of the session. Clients must be screened to determine readiness for group therapy, and an understanding of the limitations of confidentiality in a group setting must be considered (Corey et al., 2018). A counsellor can work hard to create a supportive environment, but the willingness of all participants to engage in the process is integral to the success of a group. Careful screening will help to determine whether a client will gain from participation in a group. Human beings are changing consistently. A client who was ready for group therapy could regress, prior to the group, and affect group success. The abundance of variables that are out of the counsellor's control in a group setting makes this form of counselling a challenge.

Despite the multitude of challenges that group work presents, it has powerful healing properties, because the interpersonal nature of humanity enables healing in a social setting. It has passed the test of time and endured for decades, likely centuries. It is not a second-rate form of counselling that arises out of a need to counsel multiple clients in a shorter time frame. A stigma may be attached to group therapy because of the misconceptions that exist. The stigma will lift as the evidence continues to accumulate in favour of group therapy as an effective means of treatment for many clients. Group work is valuable for clients with a variety of adjustment disorders. It is not the AA groups, or anger management classes, depicted by modern media. It is not for one client or one therapist. It is empirically supported. It boasts success rates for a variety of clients, across the globe. It is a field that continues to grow. It presents challenges in management, execution, and ethical barriers, all of which must be carefully considered. Group therapy is a valuable methodology in the field of counselling.

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Supporting Individuals with Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome in Education

Breanna Delaquis

Abstract

Educators will be tasked with planning for children with many different needs. The aim of this article is to provide specific information about Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome (RTS) to those who may be interested. This syndrome is rare and has not been well researched. This article contains information about the physical, cognitive, and developmental differences of a child with RTS. There are also recommendations for working with children who have RTS.

Over one billion people in the world are living with some form of a disability that impacts their quality of life (Cooc, 2019). Addressing and supporting physical, mental, intellectual, and sensory impairments can be a challenging task. Rubinstein-Taybi syndrome (RTS) is a rare syndrome that is not well known. Individuals with RTS have well-defined physical features, motor development delays, common behavioural traits, and varying degrees of intellectual disability (López et al., 2018). Gaining a better understanding of this syndrome will improve educators' self-efficacy and allow them to provide support to individuals with RTS.

RTS is not well researched, and many individuals are unfamiliar with it. The lack of knowledge would make it very difficult for educators to support a child with RTS; therefore, it is important to gain a better understanding of the syndrome. There are specific physical characteristics, motor abilities, behavioural characteristics, and cognitive abilities that educators should be aware of. RTS occurs with one in every 100 000 to 125 000 children (Milani et al., 2015). There is less than a 1% chance that families will have a second child with RTS (Stevens, 1997). Two possible gene mutations are known to cause RTS (Cazalets et al., 2017). Over half of the RTS cases are caused by a mutation on the CREBBP gene ("Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome," 2019). The other gene mutation known to cause RTS is the EP300 gene, which accounts for approximately 8% of cases ("Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome," 2019). The remainder of RTS cases are caused by unknown factors ("Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome," 2019). This syndrome can be diagnosed after birth with genetic testing, but the majority of cases are confirmed by the physical features of individuals with RTS (Milani et al., 2015).

Individuals diagnosed with RTS have very distinct physical features. A couple of distinctive features are their broad angulated thumbs and enlarged toes (López et al., 2018). Broad nasal bridge, slanted eyes, and high arched eyebrows are some other prominent physical characteristics (Waite et al., 2015). Based on these physical differences, individuals are often diagnosed at birth or in their early stages of life (López et al., 2018). Height, weight, and head circumference are often normal in the prenatal stages, but are in a very low percentile during infancy and the early stages of life (Sescliefer & Stevens, 2018). Those with RTS will face a large range of medical issues, and individuals will have their own sets of obstacles to overcome. Most individuals will have some form of feeding difficulty, including reflux and vomiting (Roome & Ade, 2013). RTS is not something that is curable, but having an understanding of the syndrome will help those involved with these individuals to be supportive. Beyond obvious physical characteristics, children with RTS have delayed motor development.

Motor development delays are common for most individuals with RTS, due to low muscle tone (Char et al., 2019). For instance, an average time for those with RTS to begin walking is two and a half years of age (Edens Hurst, 2017). These individuals are often considered clumsy and they deal with poor coordination throughout their lives (Cazalets et al., 2017). Interestingly, motor difficulties are closely intertwined with cognitive development (Cazalets et al., 2017). Motor problems were considered to be related to postural or gait deficiencies, but they actually have more to do with poor attention span and visuomotor impairment (Cazalets et al., 2017). Taking this into consideration, it is helpful for these individuals to have access to early

intervention services and play-based therapies (Char et al., 2019). In addition to motor development delays, individuals with RTS have common behavioural characteristics.

There are similarities in the behaviours of RTS individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (Char et al., 2019). There are repetitive behaviour tendencies, including repetitive questioning (Waite et al., 2015). This repetitive questioning could be to gain caregiver attention, or to help with memory, because it has nothing to do with social-communication issues. Some of the behaviour issues that occur could be in relation to a major life event (Char et al., 2019, p. 15). Examples include surgeries, schedule changes, lack of routine, or a new respite worker. Large crowds or new situations can cause over stimulation and lead to impulsiveness or moodiness (Sescleifer & Stevens, 2018). Although there are similarities to other disorders, RTS is a unique syndrome and should be treated accordingly. More commonly, people with RTS are described as friendly, loving, and very happy by those around them (Milani et al., 2015). They certainly know how to connect with others through physical touch and eye contact. Social and emotional development is actually considered advanced in some respects with these RTS individuals (Char et al., 2019). Although social and emotional development is positive, there are some cognitive struggles faced by those with RTS.

The cognitive abilities of those with RTS range greatly, but moderate intellectual disability is most common (Waite et al., 2015). Approximately 90% have speech problems, including speech delay and articulation issues (Stevens, 1997). Sign language is used by nearly half of the RTS population, and another 6% use it as their only form of communication. Reasoning, learning, and problem solving are a challenge for some individuals (Char et al., 2019). The majority of those with RTS have very short attention spans, which affects overall skills development (Stevens, 1997). The young brain is very adaptable; therefore, early intervention is encouraged (Char et al., 2019). These individuals are very capable of learning new skills throughout life (Stevens, 1997), and therefore need to be adequately supported by those involved with them.

Determining the individual needs of a child with RTS is important because it is a rare syndrome that has unique characteristics (Char et al., 2019). Teachers and school therapists need to make a connection with parents. Early intervention is recommended, but can be very overwhelming for both the child and the parents (E. Mangin, parent of a child with RTS, personal communication, June 12, 2019). With this connection, challenges can be approached as a unified team. Every child with RTS will need some sort of special needs support and would benefit greatly from an Individual Education Plan. As a team, plans can be made to support the motor, behavioural, and cognitive needs of the child (Char et al., 2019). Physical therapy, speech therapy, and social skills training will all benefit a child with RTS. In terms of language development, technology and communication devices could be a huge asset. Teachers should also work to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment. Educators can start by becoming familiar with the child's specific needs. A useful way to become more familiar with a rare syndrome is to join an online support community (E. Mangin, personal communication, June 12, 2019). These communities may be able to answer specific questions, and suggest tools that may help support the child. With a better understanding of the syndrome, educators can create a learning environment to help the children meet their full potential. Unfortunately, there is very little research-based information on RTS in education. Taking the initiative to join in professional development, and gaining the confidence to apply new information in an inclusive classroom setting, will make all the difference in supporting a child with RTS.

Conclusion

A large percentage of our population is faced with some form of a disability. With such a wide range of disabilities, it is important that teachers seek out specific information about the students in each new class. RTS is one of many rare syndromes, and many are unfamiliar with the characteristics and needs of a child with RTS. Individuals with RTS have unique physical characteristics and motor development delays. They also have some intellectual setbacks and

behavioural differences. It is very important to be open minded, and work to find new ways to support these children and the needs of all students during any given year.

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Teacher Diversity and the Role of the Principal

Ashley Robert Dyson

Abstract

The population of Manitoba has become significantly more diverse in recent years. However, this diversity is not reflected in the teacher workforce. What factors contribute to this incomplete representation of our society? This article examines the most current Canadian data available for the school and teacher populations. The established benefits to students of a diverse teacher population are reviewed. There is also an analysis of the research on the role of policy and the principal in critical hiring decisions.

The population of Canada is becoming increasingly diverse. For example, the proportion in the population of foreign-born and visible minority Canadians has increased considerably over the last ten years (Statistics Canada, 2017). At the same time, the proportion of people of Aboriginal ancestry has also grown (Statistics Canada, 2016). It should be noted that the Canadian Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as non-Aboriginal, non-Caucasian in race or non-White in colour (Agocs, 2007). Despite the inherently flawed biological assumptions made about race and ethnicity within this definition, (Gould, 1996), we are forced to employ it for the purpose of analysis. From the 2016 Census, 227,465 Manitobans from a total of 1,240,700 (18.33%), identified as immigrants, with 111,630 arriving between 2006 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). This is fairly typical of Canada as a whole, where 21.10% of the population are immigrants. Within the City of Brandon in 2016, the recorded population was 56,420 with 7930 or 14.06% of the population as immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2017). A further 6495 people identified themselves as Aboriginal with 3680 First Nations (6.52%), 2695 Métis (4.78%), and 25 Inuk (0.04%). These increases have not been accompanied by a similar change in the proportion of both immigrant and Aboriginal workers in the professions, and in particular in the teaching profession (Ryan et al., 2009). A similar situation exists in other countries with high immigrant populations. Picower (2009) observed that 90% of the U.S. teachers in K-12 schools were White, while almost half of all U.S. schools did not have a single teacher of colour on staff. One starting point to counter the marginalization of groups within society is to have individuals from these groups occupy positions of influence. While all students may learn from these role models, Solomon (1997) found that teachers of colour were particularly well-positioned to build relationships with students of colour. Students viewed them to have more relevant pedagogy and to prepare students for the challenges of the world beyond school. While teacher diversity by itself is no guarantee of effective teaching, students should at least see society-at-large and themselves represented in the teacher workforce.

Despite laudable policies and good intentions, patterns of inequality persist in access to jobs, career advancement, and compensation in Canada (Agocs, 2007). The practices and procedures, unintended or otherwise, that contribute to this disparity are rarely discussed in current literature. In this article, the findings of research in this area are organized under the categories of the external (societal) culture and the school culture under the leadership of the principal. Then, I examine the implications for school leaders in their policy and practice.

Societal Culture

One of the most critical tasks of a school division and principal is to provide students with the best possible teachers. A diverse teacher workforce is valuable in reaching our increasingly diverse student population. Teacher recruitment is therefore of critical importance to the success of the school (Hatt et al., 2015). For example, in Brandon School Division each job posting is accompanied by the statement "Brandon School Division will give consideration to

gender equity, visible minorities, aboriginal ancestry, and persons with disabilities” (Brandon School Division, 2018). It is common in the business community to view a diverse workforce as the best means of attracting and retaining the most capable people for the job in a competitive, global marketplace. In the face of growing competition, there is no lack of ambition amongst our students. Immigrant students – an estimated 80% of whom are racialized (Ryan et al., 2009) – aspire to attend university in greater numbers than Canadian born students (Taylor & Krahn, 2005). Brandon School Division has made it a priority to close the learning gap it has observed amongst both Aboriginal and English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners and other students. One of the greatest obstacles to newly-qualified teachers of all backgrounds is the considerable oversupply of recent graduates (Hatt et al., 2015). With such a tight labour market, students must use every possible advantage to secure employment (Galt, 2017). For out-of-province or foreign-trained graduates, there are significant barriers to breaking into what is essentially a “closed shop.” Without a teacher certification process based upon demonstrating competency, competition for jobs systematically favours a homogenous group of candidates (Anisef et al., 2003). Foreign graduates can be regarded by potential employers as inferior – regardless of the candidate’s level of professional experience (Ryan et al., 2009).

School Culture

The principal operates within the rules established by divisional policy. Hiring the best person for the job is often viewed as the primary task, while considering staff diversity is viewed as secondary, even occasionally as competing with the primary goal (Jack & Ryan, 2015). In determining the best candidate, we must examine and address our own unconscious bias and stereotypes of the abilities of candidates (Cranston, 2015). When the candidates are known to the staff or community, there may also be the issue of resistance, favoritism, or even open hostility to outsiders (Jack & Ryan, 2015). In schools with a toxic culture, hostile staff relations accompany a willingness to blame students for a lack of progress (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

Implications for School Leaders

A policy’s egalitarian goals are not enough if hiring practices undermine their effectiveness (Agocs, 2007). Hiring decisions are often made at the end of the school year with a rushed process based upon incomplete information (Cranston, 2015). This is particularly the case when the time-pressured principal does not have a clear picture of staff intentions prior to a resignation deadline. Given the long careers and limited mobility of most teachers, a rushed choice here may impact student learning for many years ahead. At some point, every ineffective teacher must have impressed a hiring panel. Few teacher interviews go beyond questioning to require candidates to demonstrate their teaching skills (Cranston, 2015). It therefore seems unlikely that the traditional interview process could ascertain how a teacher would establish a rapport with diverse groups of children. Some studies have identified a mismatch between interview and classroom performance (Cranston, 2015). In my personal experience, it is common practice to advertise a position for legal reasons when the likely hire is already known internally. It is also common to seek unadvertised skills in a candidate, such as extracurricular team coaching. These factors may corrupt the good intentions of policy, allowing community members, influential parents, teachers and other staff to exert undue influence upon the hiring decision by maneuvering and priming favoured inside candidates to “feather their own nest.” This can be particularly acute when confidentiality is not maintained, or gossip is fed from the administrative office. The outside candidates have little prospect of competing with the groomed and polished insider, regardless of their education or ability. While common practice, this is clearly not a fair and transparent process, nor is it an appropriate way to recruit staff paid from public funds. Well-qualified outside candidates feel mistreated by the process, but they are reluctant to jeopardize future opportunities by speaking out. This would typically result in the

natural consequence of quality candidates avoiding a school or division were it not for the intense competition for jobs. From a personal standpoint, it is this hiring practice more than any other single factor that results in the striking lack of diversity in the teaching profession.

On the continuum of cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2013), many teachers and administrators do not surpass the level of cultural blindness. A failure to acknowledge and deal with bias (as with any error), allows it to persist. While well-intentioned, staff frequently ignore or dismiss difference and erase the experience of others. Picower (2009) observed that many pre-service teachers carried racial stereotypes into their classroom, although it should be noted that the study was based in the U.S. and had only a small sample size. Even those who arrive in the profession with rich cultural experience operate from a level of pre-competence in some areas. With a growing population of parents who are English learners, many feel culturally out of sync with school staff and struggle to communicate (Sanders et al., 2002). A tremendous tool for administrators is the ability to reach out systematically and extend the mission and vision of the school into homes. Staff members who share the same language and culture, or have similar life experiences, are an asset in this effort (Taylor & Pearson, 2004).

Conclusion

The school principal must attempt to align actual practice to the worthy goals of policies. The most successful schools deliberately plan to hire teachers and administrators who are skilled in frequently and systematically reaching out to parents and the community (Taylor & Pearson, 2004). Even though larger employers must report the data they collect on the diversity of their workforce, they are not obliged to make it publicly available. As of 2009, there was no comprehensive and up-to-date picture of Canada's educator workforce (Ryan et al., 2009). Unfortunately, this is still the case in 2019, so it is possible to extract only limited information from Statistics Canada data sets. The principal must develop a pipeline of high-quality potential hires from a wide area, carefully noting strong substitute teachers and promising teacher candidates. Inclusion must be based more on performance observations and evidence of student learning than on "good gossip" from the community. A more systematic approach to interviews including questions from subject matter experts on staff and broad input from community members would help to ensure that the best candidate is selected. Staff intentions should be collected as early as possible, so as to start recruiting long before the rush. The best candidates also tend to be focused on their job search and are snapped up early in the year. It is entirely unsatisfactory that people do not get to practise the profession for which they are qualified. It is deplorable to set a glass ceiling based upon race – however unintended. Some teachable subjects – such as math, physics, chemistry and French – are in high demand, giving applicants a degree of confidence of securing employment. Other positions have a vast supply of teachers pursuing few jobs. This must be addressed in universities. Finally, the principal must cultivate and value a genuine interest in cultural awareness throughout their school. While the celebrations of "feast days and holidays" are a valid entry point for students and staff, this is only the beginning of truly stepping beyond the notion of a single culture to challenge stereotypes and fully represent the society we serve.

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FOCUS ON FACULTY RESEARCH

Promoting Numeracy Through a Family Math Night

Candy Skyhar and Michael Nantais

Over the past decade, the international (PISA) and national (CMEC Pan-Canadian Assessment), standardized testing results have shown that students in Manitoba have relatively low results in the area of mathematics when compared to the rest of Canada. While the results of these tests must be understood in terms of the complexity of learning and societal factors, they nevertheless have resulted in concern from various stakeholders in the province. Regardless of how much weight we should afford such results, there is always a desire to improve education, especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

There are significant connections between numeracy skills and an individual's success in school, career, and everyday life. Therefore, the question that arises is how to better support mathematics education to help students acquire the numeracy skills they need. This acquisition requires understanding and valuing mathematics, but anxiety and fear often accompany the study of mathematics. As a result, finding ways to demystify mathematics, foster appreciation for its value, and change negative attitudes about learning mathematics to positive ones are critical goals for educational improvement.

What Are Family Math Nights?

Family Math Nights, first introduced by Stenmark et al. (1986), “are school-sponsored events in which parents, teachers, and students interact around a mathematics curriculum” (Lopez & Donovan, 2009, p. 220). Although the content and structure of these events often varies, their purpose is typically the same: to have parents, students, and siblings engage in learning about mathematics (and strategies for strengthening mathematics skills at home) in a non-threatening, supportive environment. Family Math Nights share some common characteristics: a carnival-like atmosphere, math games and activities, an invitation to entire families to participate, food and refreshments, school-based venues, and take-home resources for parents to continue using math activities at home (Jacobbe et al., 2012). They provide authentic opportunities for teacher candidates to work with parents, recognize diversity and the need for varied instruction, and better appreciate the important role that parents and informal contexts for learning play in education (Lachance, 2007). Additionally, Family Math Nights can attend to teachers' misconceptions “about the commitment of poor and minority parents to their children's education” and build cooperative teacher-parent relationships based on trust (Jacobbe et al., 2012, p. 1175). As a result, they have tremendous benefit for students, families, school communities, and university communities alike.

A Local Family Math Night Project

This project, funded by a small university/community “Outreach” grant, was devised as a means of reaching out to a school community in order to support numeracy development. Funding allowed us to employ four teacher candidates in the B.Ed. program as assistants in the project. The project team consisted of the university researchers (i.e., the authors), teacher candidates, school division numeracy specialist, and the principal, numeracy coach, and some of the staff at a local school.

The original idea was to create an event with activities conducted by the student assistants; however, a professional mathematics education author and speaker was available, and it was

decided to take advantage of this opportunity. Select students were invited by the school staff and included several immigrant/newcomer families. Criteria for selection of students was determined by the school staff: grades 4-6 students who were experiencing some difficulties in numeracy. In all, about 20 students and their families were invited, with about 80 people in attendance. To help with language issues, Spanish and Mandarin translators were on hand. The evening started with a meal of chili, buns, and dessert provided by the Education Students Society (the Faculty of Education student council). Sharing a meal fostered conversation and a fun, family atmosphere. A childcare service was also made available for younger children so that parents could spend quality time with their older children playing numeracy games.

For the remainder of the evening, the speaker led families through a variety of game-based strategies for learning and practising numeracy skills. The games targeted skills involving logical thinking, basic arithmetic, place value, and comparing and ordering numbers. Typically, the speaker described the rationale for playing games, what skills they developed, the rules for playing each game, and a visual demonstration of game play. Families were encouraged to play the games together, while the teacher candidates, teachers, and faculty researchers in attendance joined in the games and/or circulated to assist with questions. To add to the fun, prizes were given out as each game was debriefed.

At the end of the evening, each family was given a grab bag of pencils, notepads, playing cards, and dice so that some of the games could be played at home. The school also purchased one of the games (available from the presenter's website) for each family to take home and play. At the conclusion of the project, remaining funds from the grant were used to purchase math games and materials for use in the school.

A survey to assess the success of the event was administered to parent attendees at the end of the evening. The survey was provided in three languages – English, Spanish, and Mandarin. In addition, a meeting was held about one week after the event, and research team members shared their observations. A follow up survey, also available in three languages, was administered about two months after the event. At this time, both parents and teachers were surveyed. This survey was meant to find out whether the math evening had any longer term effects or had simply “faded away.” Surveys included both Likert style questions and open-ended questions. The information from the surveys and team observations was collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics and by looking for themes in the qualitative data.

Results and Discussion

The survey that was administered to parents/families at the end of the Family Math Night and had 24 respondents, with just over half being completed in Spanish. The first question, which asked participants about their overall satisfaction, provided favourable feedback: 18 respondents (75%) indicated they were very satisfied with the event (see Figure 1).

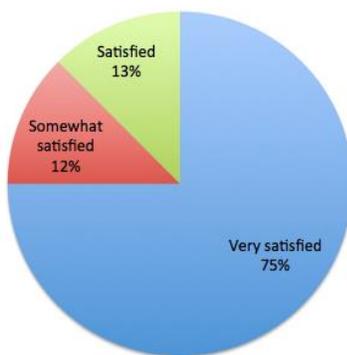


Figure 1. Survey responses to overall satisfaction with the numeracy event.

On the 5-point Likert scale, none of the respondents indicated a score lower than 3 (or satisfied). Similarly, on the remaining 6 questions on the survey, all of which required written responses, nearly all of the comments were positive in nature. Figure 2 provides examples of the comments on the initial survey (administered at the end of the Family Math Night).

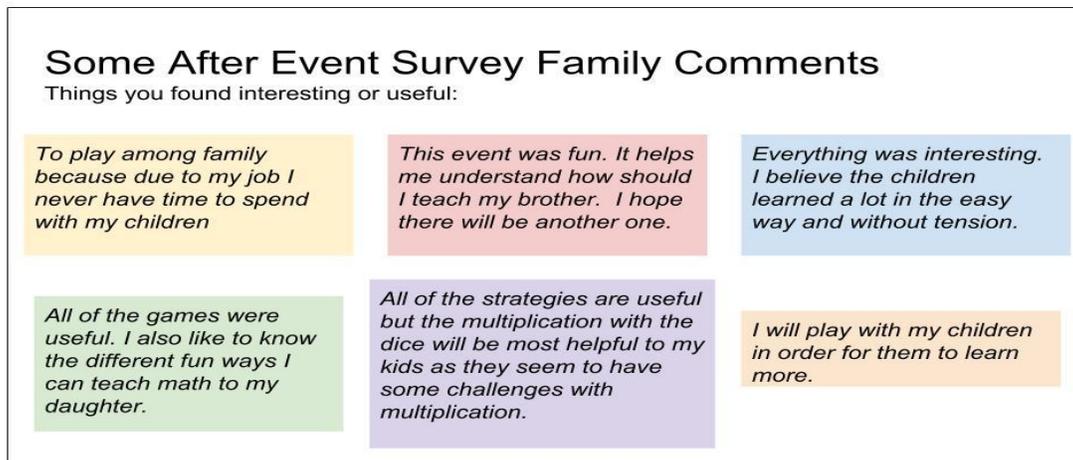


Figure 2. Selected parent comments from the post event survey.

Evident in the families' comments are themes previously described in relation to Family Math Nights. Positive connections with school and mathematics were built in a supportive and fun setting, and parents learned strategies for strengthening mathematics skills at home.

A week or so after the event, the research team gathered to debrief. Reflections about the event were positive, with teachers and teacher candidates noting relationship building, small interactions within families, laughter and engagement. The prizes, supper, childcare, and participation of many staff members were also positive points. The take-home grab bag and games were valuable to encourage continued play at home. A few logistical issues were noted for improvement, such as everyone being clear on what their job was and timing of the event.

About two months after the Math Night, a follow-up survey was distributed to parents/families who had attended the math night; there were ten respondents. In addition to the parent survey, it was decided to survey the teachers who had students involved in the event; there were five respondents. Again, the results were translated as needed and collated.

Figures 3 and 4 are selections of comments from the survey. All respondents, both parent and teacher, found the event a positive one with many wishing to see it occur again. All but one parent reported using the strategies at home with their children. When asked for suggestions for future events, most had none; however, one interesting idea was to find a way to encourage more interaction between families. It was interesting to note that many of the teachers' comments were about the social aspect – the smiles, laughter, and relationship building – which indicates that the benefits of the event extended far beyond the building of numeracy skills.

Comments from parents and teachers on the follow-up survey indicated, again, that connections with families were made in a positive, fun atmosphere. Moreover, both teachers and parents indicated that strategies were potentially being used at home. While teachers' prior perceptions about parental involvement at home were not surveyed, the teachers' comments seemed to indicate that the event had a positive effect on their attitudes and perceptions. This point suggests that Family Math Nights have the potential to foster reciprocal learning, because not only did students and parents learn about the school and mathematics strategies for use at home, but the teachers also learned about family dynamics through an authentic experience that brought families and teachers together.

The Follow Up Survey - some parent responses ...

[The family math night] was a good experience. An evening full of fun, we met more people and we learned new way to practice math.

Yes I would like to attend to another event because helps our children to learn for the future.

It was a good experience for me and my kid. I now know some more new methods to play and have fun with him using math.

Yes, we have used the strategies so our daughter learns more math. Her success has been in the time tables. Also [this] is an opportunity to talk and play with her. A lot of success!

Yes we have been using the strategies frequently to be able to learn how to add subtract, multiply and division.

I would like to see this kind of event offered more often.

Figure 3. Selected parent responses from the follow-up survey.

The Follow Up Survey - some teacher responses ...

Great evening - loved having Jane to "run" the games portion of the night - fun, positive evening for families - connections between home & school .. great!

Some students have said they are playing the games at home - I have played some games with students who were at math night and they remember those games.

I think it was very worthwhile, Even if they don't continue to play these math games at home, they might provide quality family time.

Supper was a good way to get families here - games were great - highlight was definitely seeing the interactions between family members during the games - a positive, fun evening!

It was awesome! Great activities that families got to play and take home forever! Loved seeing families laughing and learning.

Very worthwhile ... I'd love to do it again - I wouldn't change anything!

Figure 4. Selected teacher comments from the follow-up survey.

Following the Family Math Night, some students at the school who did not attend the event expressed that they felt left out after hearing several positive comments about the event. The team decided to organize a math afternoon that would include all grades in the school, from kindergarten to grade 8. Another math education professor from the university (not a part of the research team), was instrumental in getting this follow-up event off the ground. About 30 teacher candidates volunteered to help out. Each group prepared a numeracy game suitable for the grade range they had chosen to work with. Entire classes rotated through three different games throughout the afternoon. As the researchers circulated around the school, we observed students at all levels engaged in math learning and having fun. Since this event did not fall under the scope of the original project, feedback was not gathered; however, from the researchers' perspective, it was evident that it was a successful way to engage the school community and provide a unique experience for many of our pre-service teachers.

The work that teacher candidates did with students, as both members of the research team and as facilitators in the follow-up math afternoon, provided them with authentic opportunities to work with students, parents, and teachers; and a way for them to think about the need for varied instruction and the role of parents within the school and at home. While the teacher candidates were not surveyed about their experiences because the follow-up math afternoon was not part of the original study design, comments from teacher candidates involved with the research team indicated that the experience did impact the perceptions of teacher candidates about diversity, school-parent relationships, and parental involvement in positive ways.

Conclusion

The local Family Math Night hosted as part of this research project fostered positive relationships between school, university, and community; engaged parents and students in curriculum-based mathematics activities in a supportive, non-threatening, and fun atmosphere; and potentially had a positive effect on teacher perceptions of parental involvement and school-parent partnerships. The emergent school-wide follow-up event provided teacher candidates with opportunities to plan for and engage with students in an authentic way, and opened up dialogue between university and school/division faculty and students in a productive and collaborative manner. The surveys conducted two months after the FMN revealed a lasting effect in terms of families continuing to play the games at home, and a palpable sense of appreciation for connections made between home and school. Family Math Nights have the potential to foster stronger school, university and community partnerships, as well as a greater appreciation for the value of mathematics and numeracy skills at the local level.

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