BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 16, Issue 2, 2024

Quarter Horse Foal at Rest
Lenore, Manitoba

BRANDON UNIVERSITY

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BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 16, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the thirty-seventh issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Indigenous education. Our authors for volume 16 are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. I thank these educators for sharing their experiences.

- Jordana Etkin's refereed article advocates holistic physical education.
- Stacey Fordyce's refereed article
- Carlee Quiring's refereed article explains
- Simone Miranda's refereed article explores
- Heather McCorrister's professional reflection
- Karen Vaarmeyer's book review critically examines Jonathan Mooney's *Normal Sucks: How to Live, Learn, and Thrive, Outside* the Lines,

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Embracing Holistic Physical Education: A Pedagogical Shift From Traditional Approaches

Jordana Etkin

Abstract

This article advocates for a transformative shift in physical education (PE) from Eurocentric paradigms towards a holistic approach. Drawing on Canadian perspectives prioritizing academic physical, mental, and social development, it underscores the necessity of embracing holistic PE to foster inclusivity, cultural relevance, and lifelong wellness. Through a comprehensive review of literature and research, the article explores the integration of holistic methods for PE by promoting student-centred practices and diverse activities, cultivating physical literacy while embracing self-esteem, resilience, and ecological awareness. This pedagogical approach aims to create a more inclusive and impactful learning environment, nurturing lifelong wellbeing for all students.

Physical education (PE) classes promote physical fitness, skill development, and lifelong wellness; yet conventional approaches to PE have often been criticized for their narrow focus on Eurocentric sports and performance-oriented curricula potentially sidelining diverse student populations. Robinson et al. (2019) stressed the Canadian rationale for PE, prioritizing physical, mental, and social development, advocating for an approach encompassing physical fitness, competence, and confidence. In response, educators are exploring holistic PE as an innovative practice that champions inclusivity, cultural relevance, and holistic wellness to support lifelong physical activity (PA) and contemporary pedagogies (Kilborn et al., 2016).

As a physical education teacher, I became increasingly frustrated with the narrow focus of current physical education outcomes and expectations. After an aha moment teaching a high school PE class, I questioned the broader purpose outlined in curriculum documents, wondering how they contribute to lifelong health and wellness, particularly for those not engaged in sports. That teaching experience is my north star, guiding me while I strive to better integrate health and wellness into my teaching practice through a variety of domains. Along this journey, I dove into academic journals and texts to explore holistic education and its relevance to physical education.

Additionally, I turned to Canadian statistics to grasp the specific challenges faced by people in our country. It is important to note that these challenges are experienced globally. By synthesizing information from a variety of sources, my aim was to emphasize the importance of holistic education, and offer practical guidance for enhancing physical education practices. Through this article, I aspire to advocate for a more holistic approach to physical education, reflecting cultural diversity while nurturing overall wellbeing and positive lifelong habits.

Holistic education is a well-documented comprehensive approach emphasizing development across physical, mental (Mooses, et al., 2017), emotional, and social domains to boost confidence, cognitive competence, and intrinsic motivation (Griggs & Fleet, 2021). This approach responds to societal shifts towards sedentary lifestyles and mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and adults. Recognizing the importance of education for the whole

child, physical educators encourage the prioritization of student participation in daily PA, while imparting the skills required for lifelong healthy, active living (Dyson, 2014).

This article explores the concept of holistic PE, offering evidence-based insights into the implementation of the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions. Meaningful reform in PE curricula and teacher practice would promote student lifelong wellbeing by fostering inclusivity and effective learning environments in schools.

Literature Review

Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse, with more Indigenous (Shiver et al., 2020) and newcomer students. Amid this change, educators face the challenge of creating inclusive learning environments within a colonial educational system. Nationwide, the overarching goal of PE emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for healthy active living through PA (Kilborn et al., 2016). Pill et al. (2022) advocated for pedagogical shifts that prioritize reflecting students' identities and cultures across subjects to promote overall health. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP, n.d.) recommended those aged 5 to 17 years participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous daily physical activity. Recognizing low physical activity rates, less than 40% of Canadian students in that age range meet the CSEP PA guidelines (Statistics Canada, 2015), Vasquez et al. (2022) highlights the need to incorporate diversity into PE classes to ensure relevance for all. Halas (2006) proposed a model for culturally relevant physical and health education, emphasizing academic and motor development alongside cultural competence and critical consciousness. The objective is to affirm students' cultural identities, perspectives, and values within the curriculum (Ennis, 2017).

Impetus for Change

In the 1990s, new policies for education were written, prioritizing time for mathematics and English language arts, while simultaneously reallocating funds for programs including the arts and PE (DeCorby et al., 2005). Since this time, there has been pushback from educators on the importance of these programs for students. Unfortunately, there are still many hurdles ahead.

PA behaviours are shaped by a range of social and economic factors including, but not limited to, income, socioeconomic status, education, employment, gender, and culture (Statistics Canada, 2015). There are many marginalized students in Canada, including those living in poverty, experiencing trauma, neglect or abuse, and those with additional needs. Although sedentary behaviours are increasing globally, it is particularly within these demographics that PA rates have declined, resulting in poorer overall health and wellness than those in other demographic areas or with other societal challenges (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Institutional factors, including but not limited to the amount of allotted time in the school day, other curricular subject teaching priorities, staff available to provide quality instruction, timetabling, physical space available for the increase of classes, and the availability of equipment (Morgan & Hansen, 2008) are additional challenges. The curriculum, and pressure on teachers to teach many subjects, are often the greatest institutional challenge (Morgan & Hansen, 2008). DeCorby et al. (2005) argued that the requirement to share the space with the onset of additional PE classes might prove difficult, explaining that there must be a coordinated effort to work together in delivering quality programming, with organized classes in a manner in which there is optimal time for activity. As school divisions received cuts to funding, the barriers for PE increased (Morgan & Hansen, 2008), and that lack of funding was detrimental to the purchasing of equipment for PE programs. Old equipment could not be replaced, and it was increasingly more challenging to maintain the equipment students use for play.

In Manitoba specifically, the allotted PE class time faces backlash from physical educators because Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2007) includes recess and intramurals in the assigned moderate to vigorous physical activity minutes. At four 30-minute classes a cycle,

or six 30-minute classes a cycle, schools are falling short of providing enough moderate to vigorous activity time for students. The prevalence of obesity has risen, and is expected to increase steadily unless there is a change in the nutrition and activity levels of Canada's young people (Roblin, 2007). PE teachers must become lobbyists for change, working to understand the challenges presented and advocate against them by developing goals and strategies, and by targeting those with decision making power on the benefits and long-term implications for a more physically active lifestyle (Roblin, 2007).

The Holistic Approach

Holistic education, which emerged in the 1980s, seeks to address students' emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs within an integrated learning environment. This approach prioritizes positive school environments and offers comprehensive support to students, addressing both academic and nonacademic needs. Holistic development encompasses physical, emotional, moral, psychological, and spiritual attributes (hooks, 1994), attesting to the importance of community support and a compassionate understanding of the world. Additionally, educators, alongside students' families and friends, play a key role in helping students discover their identities and connect meaningfully with their community and the world through holistic teaching methods. Regardless of age, students "want knowledge that is meaningful … connection between what they are learning and their overall life experiences" (hooks, 1994, p. 19). A holistic approach provides opportunities tailored to students, creating a safe and supportive environment wherein students' strengths shine.

Holistic Physical Education

PE classes are pivotal in motivating students to engage in PA, yet many curricula traditionally emphasize team sports (Lara-Sanchez et al., 2010). Challenges in traditional, sport-centric approaches contribute to decreases in youth engagement (Ennis, 2017). While recognizing the significance of a sport-based curriculum, it is essential to address the limitations regarding inclusivity and cultural relevance, advocating for the inclusion of diverse activities (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Esports may be an alternative way for students to engage in "team" sports that have individual elements, as well, while learning about the importance of physical fitness, digital literacy, and academics (Steinkuehler et al., 2023). As educators, our responsibility lies in equipping students with the tools to advocate for lifelong health (Tucker, 2019). Given that PE may serve as students' primary source of activity, offering diverse activities in PE classes not only fosters physical fitness, but also enhances self-esteem, dignity, and self-discipline (Nelson, 2020).

A holistic approach to PA integrates physical fitness with mental, emotional, and social wellbeing through engaging activities, games, and creative movement (Ennis, 2006). Activities that promote sustainability and mental wellbeing are crucial for inclusive practices and individual identities (Dyson, 2014). Despite challenges such as sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary habits, substance abuse, and mental health issues, the main objective of PE in Canada is to strengthen knowledge, skills, and attitudes conducive to lifelong living through PA (Kilborn et al., 2016).

Discussion

PE classes are essential for the development of fundamental psychomotor (locomotor, manipulative, etc.) skills, strategies, and creative movement, vital for lifelong physical activity and wellness (Dyson, 2014). These skills improve cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength, and emotional regulation, reducing the risk of obesity and diabetes (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.). On the other hand, sedentary behaviors among youth pose health risks, emphasizing the importance of regular participation in PE classes to enhance activity levels and academic

performance (Mayorga-Vega et al., 2018). Increased engagement in preferred PA is associated with improved physical and psychological health and reduced disease and mortality rates (Whitehead & Blaxton, 2017).

PE is an essential component of students' holistic education, offering ample opportunities for creating and promoting healthy habits. Unfortunately, when adults are asked about their memories of PE class, they frequently report negative recollections (Griggs & Fleet, 2021; Sullivan, 2021). Instances of being picked last for team sports, enduring ridicule during participation, and facing teasing/taunting are common remembrances. Robinson et al. (2019) eloquently stated, "When movement is experienced as joy, it adorns our lives, makes our days go better, and gives us something to look forward to … when movement is joyful and meaningful it may even inspire us to do things we never thought possible" (p. 240). Effective, quality PE programs focus on holistic education, fostering physical literacy by building confidence and competence through knowledge, skills, and attitudes for lifelong engagement in PA (Kilborn et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2019).

Holistic PE seeks to address the shortcomings of traditional PE classes by embracing a student-centred approach. At its core, holistic PE is guided by the journey for lifelong PA and wellness, through the mind-body-spirit connection, inclusivity and accessibility, and ecological awareness.

Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

Holistic PE acknowledges the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit, motivating the intentional tuning into one's needs (Tucker, 2019). Through mindfulness practices, reflective exercises, and holistic movements, students reduce distractions while fully engaging in self-awareness, emotional resilience, and a deeper connection to the present (Tucker, 2019). As research of holistic practices becomes more widely available, physical educators are inclined to provide students with a movement culture, mimicking their futures (Mattson & Larsson, 2021).

Emphasis on the mind-body-spirit connection is most prevalent through practices such as expressive movements and yoga, building self-confidence and self-esteem by focusing on individual expression rather than competition (Ballard & Chase, 2004). Dance and yoga, when integrated into PE classes, serve as tools promoting flexibility, stress management, and mood regulation while facilitating physical literacy, movement understanding, and self-expression – all the while nurturing a mind-body connection (Cox et al., 2017; Levenberg et al., 2020). By integrating yoga and dance into PE, educators foster holistic development, instilling lifelong habits of self-awareness, PA, and emotional balance (Szekeres et al., 2022). These practices not only enhance physical fitness but also promote positive attitudes, laying the groundwork for healthy, active lifestyles (Levenberg et al., 2020).

Ecological Awareness

Outdoor education as a component of holistic PE fosters ecological awareness and environmental stewardship among students (Bascope & Reiss, 2021). Extending beyond individual wellbeing, immersing students in natural settings provides opportunities for direct, hands-on experiences with the environment, strengthening a deeper connection to nature (McInerney et al., 2011). Through activities such as orienteering, hiking, rock climbing, kayaking, and nature observation, students develop an appreciation (Sutherland & Legge, 2016) and first-hand knowledge of ecological systems.

Addressing inequalities stemming from colonization, culturally relevant physical education (CRPE) is rich in meaningful and relevant activities that affirm the cultural identities of students (Halas, 2011). These experiences encourage the development of skills and understanding of the environment (Sutherland & Legge, 2016), as students learn about the importance of preserving natural habitats and minimizing human impact. Through a three-step process –

familiarizing oneself with the community, strengthening cultural awareness, and developing an understanding of bridging cultural gaps in educational experiences (Shiver et al., 2020; Vasquez et al., 2022) – educators are provided with strategies to implement CRPE. By incorporating outdoor education into PE classes, physical educators empower students to become responsible and environmentally conscious citizens who positively contribute to the preservation of our planet.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

Inclusivity and accessibility are foundational to holistic PE, ensuring that all students, regardless of background or ability, have equitable opportunities (Petrie et al., 2018) for participation and success. The goal of inclusivity and accessibility is to champion an environment wherein each student feels valued, respected, and embraced, nurturing a sense of belonging through teamwork, collaboration, and positive peer relationships (Syaukani et al., 2023). To achieve this outcome for all students, physical educators must consider the diverse needs and interests of their students, adapting activities and instructions accordingly. Modifying or adapting equipment, tasks, time, student groups (Petrie et al., 2018), or adult support helps to accommodate varying skill levels, in order to ensure engagement in PE class.

As previously noted, holistic PE promotes inclusivity by embracing diverse cultural perspectives and experiences, recognizing the importance of inclusive representation (Petrie et al., 2018) and cultural relevance in the curriculum. Honing in on cultural relevance, this involves incorporating a variety of activities and games from different cultures and backgrounds, enabling students to see themselves reflected in the learning process. Petrie et al. (2018) identified a wide range of activities that reflect on cultural experiences (e.g., hunting, fishing, trapping), leisure activities (e.g., skateboarding, bike riding, scooters), and quality time (e.g., hide and seek, frisbee, climbing trees). Thus, physical educators need to challenge the curriculum's status quo to consider the myriad of ways students are active outside the school walls.

Although some of these activities are challenging to reproduce within PE classes, physical educators must fight to move forward to include activities of relevance and interest within these areas. By celebrating students' diversity, culture, and ability, holistic PE fosters a sense of unity and acceptance among students, and the desire to smash barriers to participation. By prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility, holistic PE creates an environment wherein all students can thrive, laying the foundation for lifelong participation in PA.

Benefits of Holistic Physical Education

Early PE experiences are pivotal for developing fundamental movement skills and establishing lifelong PA habits that influence future motivation (Savina et al., 2016). Engagement in PA during childhood supports the development of self-regulation skills and strengthens motor inhibition, movement, and social competence, contributing to greater cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength, and emotional regulation (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.; Whitehead & Blaxton, 2017). Students who value PE classes are more likely to remain physically active after graduation, benefiting both physical and academic performance (Mayora-Vega et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2019).

Participation in PA not only enhances cognitive skills such as attention, concentration, and memory, but also releases chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin, contributing to improved cognition, positive classroom behaviours, and attitudes towards learning (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.; Syaukani et al., 2023). Holistic PE classes provide opportunities for independent and team-based activities that support cognitive skills including cooperation, strategic and critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving, with structural changes in the brain supporting academic achievement and overall brain development (Mandolesi et al., 2018; Rasmussen & Laumann, 2012; Tomporowski et al., 2008).

Additionally, holistic PE classes offer psychological benefits, boosting energy levels, confidence, self-esteem, and mood while reducing stress and anxiety levels through preferred activities (CSEP, n.d.; Salmon, 2001). Participation in PA supports emotional regulation and resilience in managing emotions and coping with stress, ultimately contributing to psychological wellbeing (Salmon, 2001).

PE is imperative for promoting positive development in marginalized students and those with needs, significantly contributing to gross motor skill development, social success, self-esteem, and peer participation (Morley et al., 2005). For at-risk students, holistic PE cultivates healthy lifestyles, fundamental skills, and healthy behaviours, addressing the lack of "typical" childhood activities while contributing to increased self-esteem, attendance, academic achievement, and reduced mental health issues (Collingwood, 1997; Halas, 2011).

Recommendations for Stakeholders

Developing and implementing a collaborative PE curriculum requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Engaging with physical educators to understand their needs and preferences is essential. Raising awareness about the benefits of holistic PE helps build support for these initiatives, while advocacy for policies and practices that support the implementation of holistic PE in schools is crucial. Additionally, establishing mechanisms for regular feedback ensures that the curriculum remains responsive and adaptable. This continuous loop facilitates ongoing improvements and adjustments, ensuring that the PE curriculum meets the evolving needs of all students.

Curriculum Development and the Ministry of Education

Absent of a national PE curriculum, how physical educators interpret their local curricula varies among provinces, divisions or districts, and schools. Within the dynamic landscape of Canadian schools, PE curriculum policies play a crucial role in establishing a foundation that supports a lifetime of physical activity, health, and wellbeing. Throughout the revision process, curricular re-development should focus on the current PE curriculum, general and specific learning outcomes, strands, skills, and knowledge (Manitoba Education and Training, 2000). Specifically, it is the duty of curricular developers to question the intended outcomes and how they contribute to a holistic approach towards lifelong physical and mental health (Penney & Jess, 2004). "Typically, specific sports or activities… rather than young people's lives, needs, and interests – have almost immediately come to the fore in commentaries, debates, recommendations, and requirements" (Penney & Jess, 2004, p. 276). Effecting change in PE practices requires the revision of provincial (potentially national) standards that emphasize the incorporation of mental, emotional, and social health alongside physical fitness.

Curriculum development tends to run on an eight–to-ten year cycle, and is led by the Ministry of Education within each province. Ideally, each Ministry collaborates with experts in the field, acquiring input from physical educators in a range of positions and locations: rural and urban, elementary, junior, and high schools, and those working with diverse individuals. When developing PE curricula, designers must advocate for policies that mandate regular reviews and updates to reflect holistic and inclusive practices. Futures-driven policy and curriculum development requires all parties involved to consider how they can provide and design activities appropriate for individuals with diverse needs, abilities, and interests in their ever-changing lives (Penney & Jess, 2004).

Resource and funding allocations are key to supporting a holistic PE curriculum. Funding plays a significant role in curricular transformation for professional development, resources, and facilities that support holistic PE. Providing grants for schools to pilot innovative PE programs that move away from Eurocentric models can complement more inclusive practices. Professional development for PE teachers is vital. Organizing and funding opportunities focused

on holistic practices and cultural competence can enhance teaching quality. Encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing among schools within each division or district can lead to more consistent and effective implementation of holistic PE practices.

School Personnel

In supporting curricular change in PE, school division superintendents and school administrators play crucial roles. Superintendents are pivotal in promoting professional development by organizing and funding opportunities for PE teachers that focus on holistic practices and cultural competence. By encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing among schools and teachers within the division, they build a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Additionally, superintendents are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of PE programs in promoting overall wellbeing. Implementing systems to regularly assess these programs and using feedback to make decisions ensures that the curriculum remains effective and responsive to student needs. Resource allocation is another critical aspect, because superintendents must ensure that schools have the necessary equipment and facilities to support a holistic PE curriculum. Promoting partnerships with local organizations and communities further enhances PE instruction and implementation, providing students with diverse and enriching experiences.

Principals and vice-principals complement these efforts by directly supporting teacher training. They facilitate ongoing training for PE teachers in holistic education practices and culturally responsive teaching methods, encouraging attendance at workshops, conferences, and other professional development events. By cultivating a supportive environment, school administrators foster a school culture that values and prioritizes health and wellness. They also promote collaboration among teachers to integrate PE with other subjects, enhancing the overall educational experience. Engaging the community (Thomson & Robertson, 2014) is another key responsibility, as principals and vice-principals build relationships with local cultural groups, health professionals, and fitness organizations to enrich the PE program. Organizing community events and activities that promote holistic health and wellness further strengthens the connection between the school and the community, maintaining a supportive environment for students' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Physical Education Teachers

Quality daily PE programs in schools capitalize on important, relevant lessons about active, healthy living. Positive experiences in these school programs are a catalyst for healthy behaviors and students remaining active through adolescence (Mayora-Vega et al., 2018) into adulthood. By restructuring their thinking and practice away from traditional Eurocentric PE classes, and by incorporating a variety of PAs that reflect and promote holistic health (such as yoga), physical educators will contribute to the lifelong health of Canadian students (Metzler, 2016; Sport for Life Society, 2019). Essential instruction consists of lessons that include a wide variety of age-appropriate activities establishing a focus on skill development, teaching games for understanding, and physical literacy, with an emphasis on fun, personal health, joy, and individual achievement. The combination of these components assists students in developing appropriate habits needed to live physically active lives.

Engaging in continuous learning through professional learning communities (PLCs) and regular professional development regarding holistic PE and holistic health is imperative for physical educators. With constant changes in best practices, staying informed ensures implementation of the most effective and inclusive strategies. This commitment to ongoing training encourages adaptations to the methods used to meet the evolving needs of students, incorporating the latest research on physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. By remaining current with changes in holistic health and inclusive education, physical educators can establish

more engaging, diverse, and supportive learning environments that promote lifelong wellness for all students.

Designing a program that balances physical fitness with mental and emotional wellbeing enables physical educators to develop an environment where all students feel included and respected. These culturally responsive teaching practices promote equity and wellness, teaching students about their overall health and wellness. There are ample examples and the research is plentiful, acknowledging the long overdue need for change within PE curricula. By expressing the need for a credible alternative vision for PE, physical educators can proactively shape their role and succeed in creating a dynamic, inclusive, holistic PE curriculum.

Conclusion

Adopting a holistic PE pedagogy represents a shift from traditional approaches to an inclusive, culturally relevant, and ecologically aware learning environment. Embracing lifelong wellness through the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit nurtures self-confidence, empowering students to thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally (Petrie et al., 2018). Prioritizing holistic wellness and lifelong participation in PA enhances physical fitness and academic performance while promoting psychological wellbeing, making it a vital component of a comprehensive education. Quality PE should encourage and facilitate all students to engage in PA, promoting lifelong participation while maintaining health, fitness, and overall wellbeing (Griggs & Fleet, 2021). As our understanding of health and wellness evolves, holistic PE classes emerge as agents of positive change, championing equity, diversity, and sustainability in pursuit of a healthier future for all. Holistic education instills a lifelong passion for learning and resilience in embracing new experiences.

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Improving Student Engagement Through Self-Regulated Learning: A Literature Review

Stacey Fordyce

Abstract

This literature review explores the effectiveness of self-regulated learning (SRL) practices in public school classrooms as a means of improving student engagement, motivation, and academic success. Data was gathered from a collection of peer-reviewed articles on varying topics as they relate to self-regulated learning and student engagement, specifically the concepts of student choice, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and authentic learning. Overall findings indicate that classrooms focused on supporting students' self-regulated learning processes enhance students' levels of engagement.

Imagine a classroom where every student shows up each day ready to learn. A classroom where all students come prepared with the tools necessary to understand and complete tasks with confidence and competency. A classroom where the class size is always small, behaviours are always in check, and all students learn ways that are meaningful to them. Imagine how easy it would be to teach students and reach academic goals if this were a reality. This classroom, however, exists only in an educator's dreams. The reality is that class sizes are getting larger, students are increasingly distracted, behaviour concerns are on the rise, and keeping students engaged has become more difficult for teachers than ever before.

There are students who easily grasp important concepts and are naturally highly motivated to study and succeed, while others are disinterested and struggle to understand and retain information (Zimmerman, 2002). In a time when the most fundamental qualities for lifelong learning are absent in many students, supporting students' self-regulated learning (SRL) processes is especially important. This literature review explores SRL as a structure and process to address these concerns and increase student engagement in classrooms today.

Self-Regulated Learning

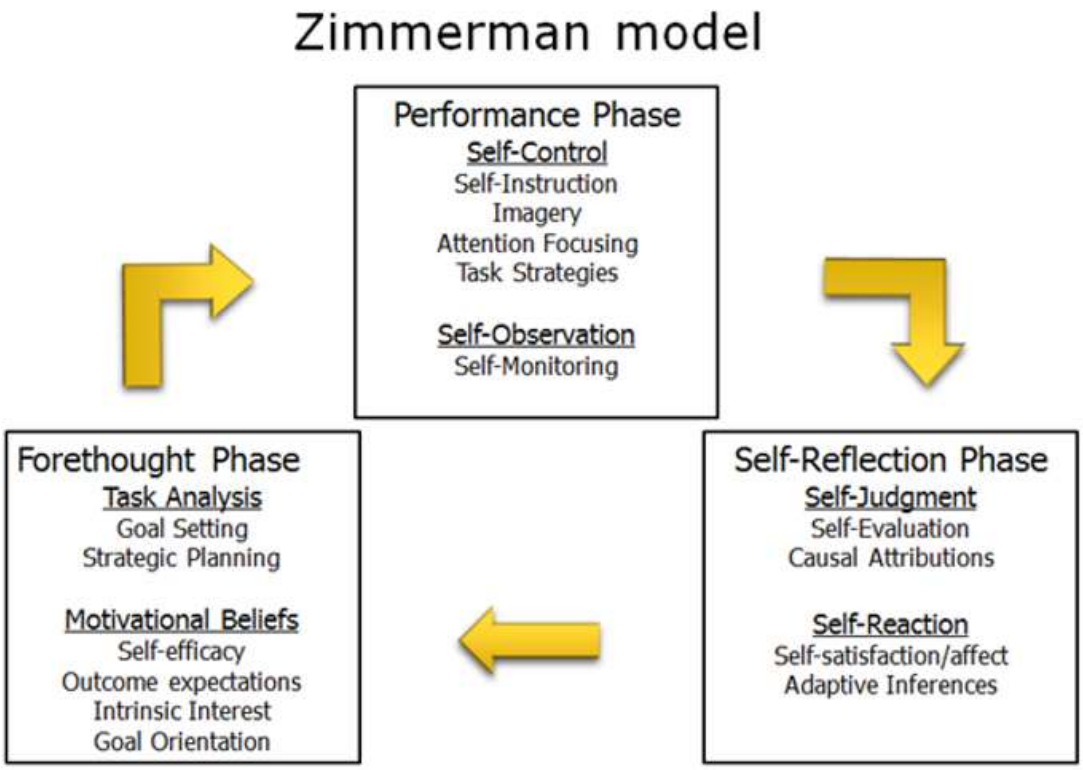
Self-regulated learning has been at the forefront of contemporary education for well over three decades as "a self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). SRL is not an ability or a skill, but rather an active process that researchers agree must be taught and instilled in learners starting at a young age (Dent & Koenka, 2016). SRL involves students in taking control over their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions towards navigating environmental challenges to achieve a set goal (Clark & Zimmerman, 2014). In addition, SRL predicts student engagement, motivation, and achievement (Botella et al. 2017).

According to Dent and Koenka (2016), academic performance for students in both elementary and secondary school is strongly linked to both the cognitive strategies and metacognitive processes associated with SRL. A critical component of education is the teaching of lifelong skills (Zimmerman, 2002). SRL is just that – the acquisition of lifelong skills that include goal-setting, self-reflection, and problem solving. Many students come to school already feeling disempowered and lacking a sense of control over their educational journey (Brown et al., 2017). Brown et al. (2017) identified many of the same structures as SRL for student success, including shared power and decision making, classroom environment and community, quality activities, and goal achievement. SRL therefore has the potential to increase student engagement and give students the sense of control over their own learning.

Phases of Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning is an iterative cyclical process that consists of three important phases: a planning phase, a monitoring of performance phase, and a reflection phase. As the students go through the phases, they then repeat them using the assessment and reflections they made to adjust and plan for the next cycle. Planning encourages students to identify what they want to accomplish, while self-monitoring through self-control helps them to fulfill their plan (Dent & Koenka, 2016). Most models that follow the SRL cycle include a preparatory phase, a performance phase, and an appraisal phase, with each containing different sub-processes (Panadero, 2017). Zimmerman's (2002) cyclical model (Figure 1) refers to these phases as the forethought phase, performance phase, and self-reflection phase, and is one of the most well-known models cited in literature around SRL.

Figure 1
Zimmerman's Phases of Self-Regulated Learning



Forethought Phase

The forethought phase includes two main sub-processes: task analysis and self-motivation (Zimmerman, 2002). Task analysis involves strategic planning and the setting of attainable goals. Goal-setting is viewed as a fundamental part of SRL, because it encourages students to self-assess and take ownership over their decisions (Forster & Souvignier, 2014). Evidence shows an increase in academic success by learners who set goals for a specific task, such as those who plan and learn strategies for a new concept and by learners who memorize the new concept to pass a test (Clark & Zimmerman, 2014). Self-motivation is the second component of

the forethought phase and links directly to the students' personal beliefs about their ability to learn. This includes the students' self-efficacy for learning, which reflects confidence and belief in one's ability to maintain control over their behaviour and motivation to complete specific tasks. For example, students setting home reading goals for themselves will need to consider the impeding variables that may affect their success in reaching the goal they set. If they look ahead at the calendar and know they have a busy month coming up, they will need to think realistically about how many nights they can read at home and plan their goals accordingly. Students who plan for their goals effectively and fully understand what they need to do to achieve them are much more motivated and confident in their abilities to meet them.

Performance Phase

The two processes that define the performance phase are self-control and self-observation (Zimmerman, 2002). This is the phase where the action takes place, including the application of the specific strategies and methods that were decided upon in the forethought phase. Research around methods for self-control have identified these as task strategies: attention focusing, the use of imagery, and self-instruction. An example of this phase, shared in one study that was summarized by Zimmerman (2002), revealed ways for an English-speaking person to learn the Spanish word for bread (pan). They did so by creating an image of a bread pan or using the self-instruct method to use the phrase "bread pan" as a means of remembering. Both of these examples demonstrate how the task, learning the word for bread in Spanish, was done by selecting a method for self-control and committing to the task at hand. Self-observation refers to self-recording and monitoring events to determine their cause. An example could involve recording and observing the amount of time it takes to complete an assignment when working alone versus the amount of time it takes when working with a friend. Through self-observation, a student may realize they can complete the same assignment in less time when working alone.

Self-Reflection Phase

Much like the previous two phases, the self-reflection process consists of self-judgment and self-reaction (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-assessment is one form of self-judgment, which is essentially feedback with the purpose to inform students of adjustments that can be made to deepen their learning and enhance their outcome (Andrade, 2019). A second form of self-judgment attributes a cause to the errors made or successes shown. Attribution theory assesses behaviours with regard to "why" such behaviour took place (Graham, 2020). It is important to point out that Zimmerman (2002) revealed that attributing poor results to one's personal ability can be motivationally damaging, as it suggests that there are no means to improve in the future. Our initial reaction when self-assessing personal success is often outcome-dependent emotions, such as happiness or sadness. It is after this first reaction that the cause is considered and individuals will begin to look for reasons a specific outcome occurred (Graham, 2020). Zimmerman (2002) noted that attributing the same poor results to processes we have control over, such as simply using the wrong strategy, will maintain motivation to succeed because it denotes that another method may work for that task. Self-reaction involves the feelings associated with one's performance and can take the form of adaptive or defensive responses. Like the name suggests, adaptive reactions refer to modifications made to improve the effectiveness of learning, whereas defensive reactions are efforts made to protect one's self-image by withdrawing from the task or avoiding learning opportunities.

In addition, the self-reflection phase is a crucial part of SRL that not only encourages learners to evaluate their own efforts and processes, but also promotes greater student involvement. In a recent study by Anyichie et al. (2023), students were extremely engaged in their learning when offered opportunities to reflect and assess their learning in relation to their

cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. This evidence indicates that students can independently make the connection between the learning they are doing in class and how it authentically impacts their life. Reflecting on this learning after it has taken place gives students a clear insight into their next steps of goal setting and planning. Such information helps them in making choices of what to focus on as they begin another cycle in their learning process.

Student Choice

Student choice is an essential component of self-regulated learning. Researchers such as Perry (2013) have shown the impact of providing students with opportunities for choice and individual control of challenge over complex tasks in relation to promoting their regulation of learning. Sung et al. (2016) suggested that it is important to note that providing choice does not mean giving students the freedom to do whatever they want, but rather is an intentional teaching strategy by which students are given relevant and productive support as they navigate through guided instructional tasks. Students gain a deeper sense of empowerment and feel much more appreciated and cared for when given some control over their own thinking and learning processes.

Sung et al. (2016) interviewed grades 4-8 students regarding their feelings about their own choices that had been incorporated into their classrooms and learning. The students shared only positive feelings that included phrases of “liking” choices and feeling “happy” when given choice. In addition, students respond to implicit messages within choice, such as respect for individuality, rather than the type of choice itself. Choice provision not only supports student engagement (Anyichie, 2018), but also gives students the feeling of pride and a clear message that their teacher respects them as individuals and cares about their needs and preferences to show their individuality through their classwork. The students in Sung et al.’s research shared reasons they felt choice was important to them, such as the way it helped them to feel positive emotions at school and feel “more relaxed” in their classroom. This explains why providing choice enables students to self-regulate their learning through the promotion of collaboration to complete tasks, permission to ask questions, and support to persist even during more complex tasks.

Intrinsic Motivation

Student desire for deeper learning increases with student engagement which is often driven by increased student choice. Further research indicates that student choice has also been shown to foster intrinsic motivation and deeper learning (Effat & Gillies, 2020). Intrinsic motivation refers to personal feelings of satisfaction in completing a task, simply because it is found to be interesting and desirable to achieve. Self-regulated learners are strategic learners who are intrinsically motivated to pursue personal goals through deep learning (Butler et al., 2017). By teaching students the necessary skills to self-reflect, educators not only instill some of the most fundamental lifelong skills, but also enable students to take ownership of their learning and believe in their ability to be the driving force in their education.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy defines students’ belief in their ability to succeed. It directly impacts student motivation and potential for success in the process (Chen et al., 2021). Self-regulated learners have higher self-efficacy beliefs as demonstrated through their understanding of personal capabilities, eagerness to accept challenging tasks, and ability to see errors as opportunities to learn (Effat & Gillies, 2020). Simply knowing strategies for SRL is not enough to use them effectively. Students must also believe that they can use them effectively (Pajares & Usher, 2008). These qualities of self-regulated learners, combined with the students’ belief in their

ability to succeed, have a huge role in their level of performance and how long they will persist at a given task (Chen et al., 2021). Thus, both student motivation and engagement are directly affected by one's self-efficacy in their ability to learn through the process of SRL.

Further, researchers have identified other important variables that have an influence on students' self-efficacy, engagement, and academic success (Botella et al., 2017). In addition to grade level and amount of support provided, these variables include gender differences between male and female students. Pajares and Usher (2008) confirmed this claim through their findings that female students attending middle-class schools in suburban northeastern and southern United States reported higher levels of self-efficacy in their self-regulatory abilities than males reported. The students were predominantly White, ranging in ages from 8 to 18, and all had experienced decreasing confidence in these capabilities as they progressed through school. In the early years, most tasks and activities are accompanied by a great deal of support and guidance as teachers attempt to instill self-regulatory habits into students with the hope that they will serve them and continue to develop in the years to come. By high school, students are often expected to regulate their learning and work habits on their own, consequently facing new and much more difficult and demanding work, which causes many to lose confidence in their self-regulatory skills. As a result, these students reported lower self-efficacy than middle and elementary school students. Pajares and Usher also pointed out that extremely low self-efficacy may be partially responsible for poor academic habits and behaviours among low-achieving students, rather than simply a lack of ability. Keeping schoolwork meaningful and authentic to students' lives and backgrounds is one way to help maintain the self-efficacy of our growing learners.

In authentic learning, students solve real-world problems by using the same skills and knowledge they will need outside the school setting (Har, 2021). An authentic approach to learning supports SRL while offering an alternative to classrooms where teachers share information and students are expected to learn it. Authentic learning and SRL encourage learning through discovery and taking part in activities and tasks that actively engage the learners (Har, 2021). As our classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, many students are at risk of disengagement due to classroom activities being unrelated to their personally lived experiences and interests (Anyichie, 2018). Making coursework and tasks authentic and personally meaningful to all students is suggested to be more important than just providing choice alone (Sung et al., 2016). Experience plays a key part in the learning process and in providing students with authentic experiential learning in the classroom (Effat and Gillies, 2020), but classroom activities can appeal to learners' interests regardless of their previous learning experiences (Anyichie et al., 2023). Students who are able to learn through meaningful and authentic experiences are exposed to aspects of active learning that considers individual, social, and cultural differences (Effat & Gillies, 2020). When students feel a sense of ownership over their learning, they gain a stronger sense of empowerment and pride in the work they are doing because they feel a deeper, more meaningful connection to it.

Authentic learning directly increases student motivation for success and engagement (Anyichie et al., 2023). A classroom example is a reflection activity called T.W.A.S. that can be done at the end of each week. The students are asked to write a letter home with the opening sentence starting with "This week at school" (T.W.A.S.). Students are guided through brainstorming activities to think of all the events of the week, both in and out of the classroom, and choose those most meaningful to them to share with their family. In my grade 3-4 classroom, T.W.A.S. has become a favourite activity among students and parents, and often leads to an authentic pen-pal situation with parents and students engaging in meaningful conversation through writing around the most impactful parts of their week.

Conclusion

Self-regulated learning is a process that is naturally structured to support student engagement. This literature review highlights the important components of SRL to exemplify how student engagement is fostered. Through instruction and structure, learners go through the cyclical process in which they are actively engaged and involved in decision making and learning at every stage. SRL research recognizes practices that support learners, while promoting student engagement as they work through the process. Researchers such as Fredricks et al (2004) have described engagement as multidimensional, with behavioural, emotional and cognitive components. Students need to be consistently exposed to practices that promote self-regulatory engagement from kindergarten through grade 12. It is through consistency, practice, and application of their skills that students will be able to build upon their confidence and believe in the process. These effective learning approaches take place when students are provided with opportunities for complex and open-ended tasks. Students should also be shown how to use suitable strategies, monitor their personal growth and learn from their mistakes (Effat & Gillies, 2020). Teaching professionals should work together to create schools that not only empower and engage, but also excite the students to learn and the teachers to teach (Brown et al., 2017). Engaging students in the classroom is an imperative part of their academic success.

The cyclical process of SRL is structured in such a way that includes student input and involvement at every stage. It also includes a great deal of decision making on the part of the learner and many choices they make based on what they feel is best for them. In addition, students who are given choices and some control over their own learning naturally feel more empowered within the classroom and gain a deeper connection to the learning they are doing. Empowerment and connection increases intrinsic motivation to succeed and students' belief (self-efficacy) in their capabilities to do so. A huge component of SRL is the shared power and decision making, classroom environment and community, quality activities, and goal achievement. Setting up classrooms that are inviting to students and inclusive of all experiences, backgrounds, and diverse needs sets the tone for authentic learning to take place. The perfect classroom might always be just a dream for educators, but through SRL we may come just a little bit closer to that ideology.

A significant limitation indicated in a number of the articles reviewed was the lack of confidence expressed by most teachers in their knowledge and ability to teach students to self-regulate their learning. Few teachers know how to effectively teach students to learn on their own, and many rarely ask students to self-reflect and evaluate their work or predict what they are capable of in new tasks. More discussions around students' beliefs about themselves as learners and their learning processes are necessary. Further education and curricular frameworks for implementation of SRL are needed for teachers to truly understand the process and how to bring it effectively into classrooms.

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Going Beyond the School Doors – Home-School Partnerships

Carlee Quiring

Abstract

Over the first 18 years of life, students spend a large portion of their time in school and at home. Having a good relationship between the adults at home and school is vital for the success of children throughout their schooling. This relationship can often feel one sided, but what if there is another reason why the relationship between home and school is strained? Barriers that families face can interfere with their ability to be active participants in their children's education. Helping to break down these barriers is important to establishing a positive home-school relationship.

Home and school are the two places where children spend a large portion of their time for 18 years. Would it not make sense that those two places are engaged in a relationship as each helps to grow and morph children into individuals that one day could make an impact on the world we live in? As a new educator with very little experience, I taught at a local school where many of the families were experiencing a low socio-economic status (SES). Very little parental involvement became the norm as we worked to ensure students were set up for success. Many emails and phone calls were left unanswered, and parent teachers, meetings, and learning events were unattended. I just assumed that families were not interested in being part of their children's education without really exploring whether there was a reason for their distance.

Last year, while working with more families from the Ukraine and Syria, I experienced something that made me question what I had assumed about parental involvement. These families from overseas struggled to be involved in their child's education, but they wanted to be as involved as they could. That sparked a thought: Are all families who are presenting as uninterested or uninvolved facing obstacles or barriers to their involvement? Instead of assuming that parents were not interested in being a part of their children's education, I needed to consider why families were not involved.

This article explores the barriers that families face as they are trying to be actively involved in their children's education. Regardless of how involved a family is, they ultimately want their children to do the best they can in school, and as educators our goal is to provide the best education possible for those children (Manitoba Education, 2011). This often includes involving families in the educational process and empowering families to realize the impact they have on their children's education. For some families, however, the barriers that are stacked up against them prevent them from being involved. Taking away the assumption that families do not want to be involved helps to shine light on why they are not involved, and the barriers families might be facing as they try to become involved in their children's schooling.

Parental Involvement Defined

Parental involvement means many things. Parental involvement is more complex than simply communicating with school through email, phone calls, and face-to-face conversations. Epstein (1992) outlined six different ways in which a parent can be involved in their children's education: parenting, communicating, volunteering and attending events, decision making, learning at home, and collaborating with the community. Families therefore have various access points to their children's education and how they can be involved. Regardless of how families become involved, it is clear among researchers that parental involvement is important for the success of children at all levels in home, school, and the community (Lechuga-Pena, 2018).

Another important term that came to light is what we call the people who support children at home and school. Families have so many dynamics that it is not just parents who care for the

children outside of school. Using terms such as *caregiver*, or more broadly *family*, admits more than just a parent dynamic to be represented.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Caregivers who seem uninvolved in their children's education want to support and encourage them, but are thrown barriers that make their relationship with school difficult and unmanageable. Our schools are comprised of many different backgrounds, statuses, and stories, all of which come with experiences and situations that can make navigating the school system difficult. Families who experience barriers to their involvement in school have an interest in their children's education, but they are navigating a system that is not working for them.

English as an Additional Language

Immigrant families with limited language skills have a harder time engaging with their children's education because they are unable to connect with what their children are doing at school and at home with homework. In talking with parents who have English as a second language, Cranston et al. (2021) found that parents with limited language skills had difficulty engaging with their children's school because it was difficult to communicate with teachers, understand letters that were sent home, volunteer at the school, and participate in school life in general. Caregivers' children are sent home with notes to read or homework to be completed at home, but they cannot understand what is on the sheet in front of them. In these situations, many caregivers rely on other children in the home to translate for them, which causes problems because these children are still learning English as well and most of the time are not bridging the communication gap between home and school effectively (Zaidi, 2021). This often means that the work sent home is not completed or notes are left without being returned.

As teachers and caregivers are left to communicate with each other in any way they can, the children themselves may be asked to translate for their parent or caregiver. From my own experience, some children do not translate accurately because they do not want either home or school to know what the other is saying. This could be because they are in trouble or because they do not want to do something either at home or school. Neither the parent nor school staff realize that what is being translated by the child is incorrect. The informal translators also include neighbours and community members who are trying to help, but may unintentionally mistranslate or step into a private situation (Zaidi, 2021). When this occurs, parents are still left trying to figure out what the conversation they had was about or are worried that someone heard something about their child that they should not have. Using informal translators might be the quickest answer for parents and schools to communicate, but it can result in both sides being confused about the conversation that was had.

Formal translators are essential for families to feel comfortable at school and to hear accurate information about their children. Coming into school is intimidating for families whose primary language is not English because of the fear of not having accurate translating (Lechuga-Pena, 2018). Because of the demand for translators and the lack of qualified translators, caregivers are left either to attend school events and parent teacher interviews without a translator and attempt to translate themselves – or just not go. Caregivers have expressed that they would rather not go to a school event without a translator because they would prefer to have an accurate representation of their child rather than attempting to piece together what school staff are trying to say (Lechuga-Pena, 2018). As Zaidi (2021) pointed out, "Interpreters are the voice for refugee families, and without them families are unable to self-advocate" (p. 917). Having a voice is an essential part of being an advocate for one's child, and when that is taken away or pieced together it makes the process difficult and sometimes impossible.

Culture and Trauma

Families from different cultural backgrounds may have varying expectations for what school is and how they should be involved. Varying cultural backgrounds can also come with trauma because of what they or generations before have experienced, and it carries into their current experience navigating the school system. In our classrooms, now more than ever, we are seeing people from various cultures and places around the world. Cultural differences between what the school's expectation of what qualifies as parental involvement and what the parents perceive to be required of them may differ (Milne, 2016). In some cultures and countries, the expectation is that parents simply drop their children off at the door of the school and then it is the teachers' responsibility from then on (Lechuga-Pena, 2018). In other places, caregivers are expected to take care of the home education and teachers are responsible for the school portion (Antony-Newman, 2020). Without clear communication about the school's expectation is in terms of parental involvement, it is confusing to parents on how and when they should participate (Cranston et al., 2021). Many newcomer caregivers do not have the experience of navigating school systems in their new countries, and learning about how to get involved deters them (Alexander et. al, 2017). Without specific instruction or information on involvement, caregivers go on what they know from previous schools or countries, which could make it seem like they do not want to be involved in their child's education.

Families coming from a background of trauma have experiences and situations that may result in families pulling away from being involved in their children's education. Negative feelings towards school can develop as they are trying to navigate a new place amid dealing with whatever is going on back home, or they are trying to achieve normalcy in the midst of stressful situations (Zaidi, 2021). The trauma that refugee families have experienced can cause stress, and often parents are more concerned about meeting the needs of their families and gaining a sense of normal before they can throw themselves into participation at the school level.

Trauma is not unique to families coming from other parts of the world; many families from Canada have generational trauma affecting their ability to successfully enter a home-school partnership. As Milne (2016) noted, "The history of Indigenous education in Canada has led to deep-rooted distrust of teachers and the education system" (p. 276). Milne's (2016) work on the experiences of school connection for Indigenous families in Ontario poses the question, "How do we expect them to come into the classroom and have a positive experience with their child if they themselves have not had a positive experience?" (p. 276). Having trust in an educational system that failed you repeatedly is difficult, and the post-traumatic stress from the residential school system deepens with each generation that passes (Martin, 2015). It is important to understand this trauma to begin to understand how it affects a family's ability to foster a positive home-school partnership. Caregivers with a trauma as deeply rooted as those with experience in the residential school system must trust that teachers and school administrators are going to take care of their children and have their best interest at heart, which for Indigenous peoples is something that has failed their people in the past (Milne, 2016). It is difficult to enter and maintain parental involvement when one's experience with the system is that of trauma.

Socio-Economic Layers

Families with lower socio-economic status have a hard time being engaged with their children's education because they frequently have different priorities, such as going to work to meet their families' basic needs. These circumstances are in addition to other pre-existing barriers. Anthony-Newman (2020) stated that sometimes this means taking whatever job they can get or working multiple jobs. Refugee families have the pressure of finding employment after resettlement, which Cranston et al. (2021) found was more of a priority than being involved with their children's school. Caregivers with low SES may have to work untraditional work hours or hold down more than one job, which does not align with traditional school hours and the

times they may need to be at school to volunteer, participate in parent conferences, or attend parent association meetings (Anthony-Newman). Being in this situation, caregivers try to make what they can work to be involved in school life and can be seen as interrupting, which can make for a strained relationship between school and home (Lechuga-Pena, 2018). Caregivers are doing the best they can in the situation they are given.

Because caregivers from low SES often have a lot going on and are juggling many plates, situations from home or school often affect the other. Graham et al. (2021) found that caregivers with low SES sometimes would request support from school in specific situations with their children, and when the school would not follow through it made the families feel unseen and that they could not ask for support from the school. On the other side, if a caregiver kept pushing for what they were asking for, the caregiver was seen as pushy or instigating the problem. Families want their voices to be heard and to be listened to; they are advocating for their child the best way they know how and for some their voice has been taken away before (Milne & Wortherspoon, 2020). Having an open ear and welcoming families to voice their concerns, or for schools to help with a situation that is rolling over from home, encourages families to send their children to school knowing they are being looked after.

Conclusion

The assumption that families do not want to be involved in their children's education is erroneous. Caregivers want what is best for their children, but sometimes being involved in a positive home-school partnership is difficult. The multitude of barriers that some families are experiencing may cause a strained home-school partnership. The research indicates that in most cases it is not that caregivers do not want to be involved; rather, they face barriers that affect their ability to be involved. Educators, schools, and the school system as a whole are obliged to reach out to families that are struggling to form a positive home-school relationship and support them in the midst of their barriers, rather than just assuming they want nothing to do with their children's education (Pushor & Amendt, 2018). Many families are facing multiple barriers to their parental involvement. Breaking down those barriers is essential to giving families a chance to be involved in the way that they are hoping for.

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The Impact of Oral Dialogue on Educational Leadership Wellness and Practice

Simone Miranda

Abstract

Research shows that oral dialogue has a positive impact on educational leadership wellness and practice. Having regular focused and informal conversations about educational issues and daily challenges is instrumental in reducing stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among educational leaders. However, diverse tensions related to personal and professional situations, along with the lack of conversational competence, can affect educational leaders' wellness and practice. This article presents solid elements that demonstrate how constructive dialogue, through oral conversations with open-ended inquiries to understand perspectives, can positively impact educational leaders' well-being and, consequently, their professional performance.

The etymology of the word *dialogue* derives from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Dia* means "through," whereas *logos* translates to "word" or "meaning." Oral dialogue is a flow of meaning or a multidirectional exchange of speech. It is a conversation between two or more persons sharing ideas and opinions. Language is what humans use to communicate their thoughts while interacting with others. Dialogue is the cornerstone of these interactions and education is the result of them, whereas culture is the historical identity of a group (Kramsch, 1998). The satisfaction I experienced through my dialogic interactions with students was the main reason for my decision to switch from being a lawyer to a teacher a long time ago. Through dialogic interactions with students, teachers, principals, and parents, as a teacher and later as a vice-principal I comprehended the importance of oral dialogue to ensure clear communication, facilitate the teaching-learning process, and improve wellness and practice. My open conversations with the school community about daily struggles helped to reduce our levels of stress and increased performance. This life-changing experience confirmed that a dialogic approach – the focused, informal, and regular conversations with open-ended questions to understand perspectives – can enhance wellness and practices. When leaders and school communities work together in dialogue, transformational education occurs (Freire, 1970). Expressing thoughts and feelings through words is a powerful asset to the teaching-learning process.

Educational leaders dwell in between tensions aroused from conflicts at home and work. Currently, symptoms of many emotional issues can be perceived among educational leaders (Dor-Haim, 2023). From chief executive officers to educational assistants, tensions and lack of conversational competence are factors for wellness and performance loss. Principals, teachers, and other educational leaders are immersed in a problem-solving environment. Educational leadership often involves emotionally complex policy discussions and political matters like protests and voting policies (Grosland & Roberts, 2021). These policies directly affect not only schools but also the interactions among educational leaders, school districts, school boards, and school communities. The stress and anxiety caused by the pressure to follow such policies, which sometimes do not address the reality of all school communities, and the lack of oral dialogue contribute to leaders' burnout (Grosland & Roberts, 2021). Educational leaders' wellness and practice can suffer when they cannot handle the emotional distress triggered by various tensions and do not talk about it (Doyle Fosco et al., 2023). Emotional distress without proper oral communication can negatively affect the wellness and practice of educational leaders.

While Allen et al. (2023) and Hartney et al. (2021) suggested that a dialogic approach has the potential to develop only educational leadership practice, I argue that a dialogic approach also impacts educational leadership wellness. Practice development is a result of wellness development. When educational leaders have open conversations about everyday challenges

through constructive dialogue, their practices are improved because emotional distress is reduced (Jones et al., 2021). The reduction of anxiety, stress, burnout, and other emotional distresses motivated by a dialogic approach, results in better performances. A healthy and safe workplace environment is connected to generative dialogue among educational leaders (Stelmach, 2020). Hence, a dialogic approach empowers educational leaders with wellness and practice improvement (Rodríguez et al., 2020). There is a direct relationship between a dialogic approach and better wellness and practices. Better performances result in better well-being, which is feasible due to the power of oral dialogue.

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) through the Positive Leadership Theory is used to fulfill the main purpose of this article: to demonstrate the significant influence of dialogue on educational leadership wellness and practice. Through specific educational issues inquiries, all voices are heard, and the strong suits of people are always highlighted within a positive core that helps them feel safe and reach their highest potential (Singh et al., 2023). Therefore, the impact of oral dialogue on educational leadership wellness and practice study is divided into three distinct aspects: the importance of oral dialogue on educational leadership wellness and practice, the problems related to educational leadership emotional condition, and the relationship between oral dialogue and educational leadership wellness and practice.

Literature Review

Dialogue is the essence of any oral communication. The use of language is what makes it possible. Successful conversations occur through the power of dialogue because “solidarity requires true communication, and the concept by which such an educator is guided fears and proscribes communication. Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning” (Freire, 1970, p. 55). A balance between talking and listening is required when it comes to generating effective conversations (Headlee, 2017). Unfortunately, people do not listen to each other properly anymore (Goleman et al., 2013). Conversational competence has been an ignored expertise in the 21st century (Headlee, 2017). People prefer texting to talking.

When it comes to educational leaders’ relationships, building trust and listening with empathy are crucial to ensure a healthy, safe, and inclusive workplace environment. The best leaders know how to work through emotions because it is connected to having conversations with team members and openness to understand their perspectives and assumptions (Goleman et al., 2013). Oral dialogue is fundamental in these conversations due to its capacity to communicate ideas (Klein, 2017). The act of being truly heard and respected affects leaders' emotional condition and professional performances.

Associate teachers and mentors are positively impacted by the dialogical mentoring approach and relationships are strengthened by authentic learning conversations, which stimulate critical thinking, extend understanding, and generate wellness (Jones et al., 2021). Dialogue and deep reflection of teachers on pedagogical content can improve their self-efficacy and wellness (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Thus, chief executive officers, directors, superintendents, consultants, coaches, mentors, counsellors, principals, vice-principals, teachers, professors, assistant professors, deans, and all educational leaders have their well-being and work impacted when they communicate through constructive oral dialogue.

The Problems Related to Educational Leaders’ Emotional Condition

Educational leaders are immersed in constant tensions at home and work. Coping with stress, anxiety, depression, panic syndrome, burnout, eating disorder, and insomnia among other emotional conditions, is quite challenging and daunting. The pandemic increased the tensions experienced by educational leaders (Dor-Haim, 2023). The imperative use of new technologies and the overload of work journeys in education prompted resignations, including

educational professionals who could not manage their emotions (Doyle Fosco et al., 2023). Some of these educational professionals did not have the appropriate support or dialogic approach to succeed. Educational leaders still struggle with numerous emotional issues driven by tensions that lead to performance and wellness deficits (Dor-Haim, 2023). Emotional issues negatively affect educational leaders' well-being and professional practice.

Educational policy discussions impact school communities and the interactions among educational leaders (Grosland & Roberts, 2021). The intense pressure to follow these policies affects curriculum outcomes and contributes to leadership burnout, stress, and anxiety (Grosland & Roberts, 2021). Principals are always busy with meetings, calls, emails, budgets, supervision, and appraisals. Similarly, teachers are busy planning, teaching, supporting, assessing, and managing classrooms. Directors, superintendents, principals, teachers, and other educational leaders dwell in a problem-solving workplace embedded in sheer tensity (Doyle Fosco et al., 2023). When they are not able to handle the emotional distress that such tensity provokes, there is an imbalance in their wellness and practices.

According to Headlee (2017), modern society has not valued conversational competence to the extent it deserves; hence, personal and professional conversations are often perceived as promotional opportunities where no one intends to learn from the other. Most educational leaders listen with the intent to reply, not to understand (Adams et al., 2019). As a result, this lack of generative oral dialogue is another factor for emotional problems and productivity decline.

The Relationship Between Oral Dialogue and Educational Leadership Wellness and Practice

Dialogue is the flow of words in conversations. Educational leaders should be active listeners for more efficient communication (Klein, 2017). Opportunities for generative oral dialogue play a solid role in ensuring educational leadership performance improvement (Hartney et al., 2021). Additionally, using a dialogic approach and critical pedagogy empowers educational leaders to achieve better practice results (Allen et al., 2023). On that account, dialogue personifies improvement in educational leaders' professional performances because it is intrinsically connected to clear communication, which is important in all relationships.

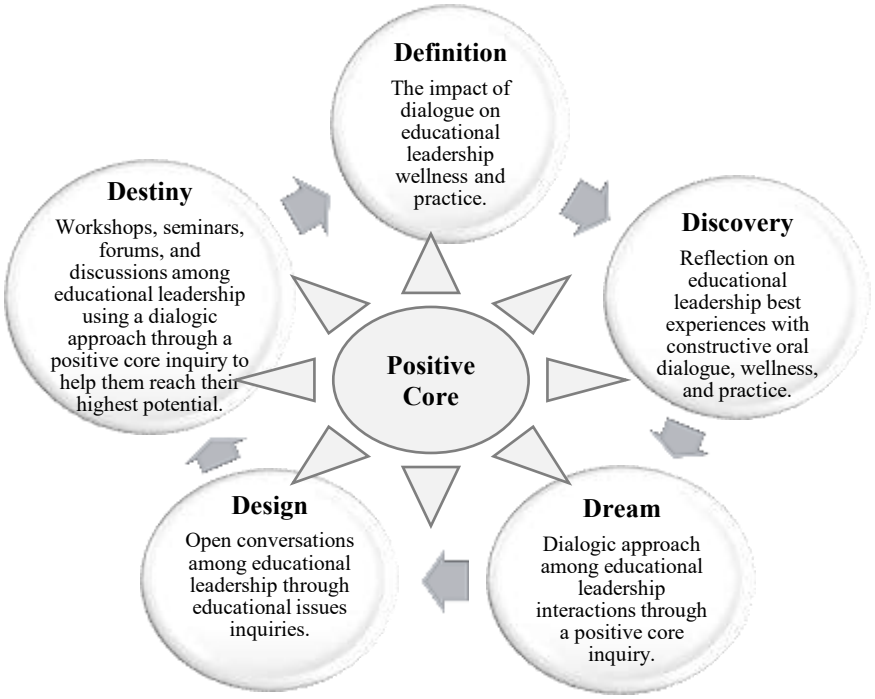
Dialogue also personifies educational leaders' wellness improvement because "when mentors are fully invested in the dialogic process the associate teachers experienced less anxiety when they were observed teaching and formed supportive relationships that allowed them to take risks in the classroom" (Jones et al., 2021, p. 10). Providing teachers, professors, and other educational leaders with focused, informal, and regular conversations with open-ended inquiries grants them a more in-depth understanding of the school environment and issues. Hence, "drawing on dialogic speech, participants in the seminar can understand the contributions of the previous research in teaching and related learning fields, providing them with key information to understand current school problems, school performance, and learning outcomes" (Rodríguez et al., 2020, p. 7). Providing opportunities for open conversations through oral dialogue is vital to comprehending educational issues, finding potential solutions, and reducing emotional distress.

Stelmach (2020) highlighted that generative oral dialogue is a process of deliberate conversations among school leaders, focusing on learning. Dialogue implies listening with empathy and learning from another person. When educational leaders are provided with open conversations about educational issues and challenges, there is a consistent enhancement in their well-being because their voices are heard (Goleman et al., 2013). Therefore, firstly, their emotional condition is balanced and, consequently, their performances are boosted.

The Positive Leadership Theory

David Cooperrider developed the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach which belongs to the Positive Leadership Theory, representing a shift from individualistic and weakness-focused leadership to relational-dialogical and strength-focused leadership (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2011). When it comes to effective motivation, people sharing their stories and images of success makes the entire difference in an organization's development (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). AI focuses on leveraging an organization's positive core strengths, eliminating authoritarian attitudes and promoting collaborative attitudes for an efficient and sustainable future (Whitney et al., 2010). It is a revolutionary method of change management that is implemented using the 5D Cycle: Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny through a positive core. The 5D Cycle regarding the impact of oral dialogue on educational leadership wellness and practice is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Appreciative Inquiry Approach and Constructive Oral Dialogue



Note: The 5D Cycle is in the order demonstrated in the text.

AI initiatives are based on the 5D Cycle through a positive core that irradiates resonance throughout the cycle like the sun in the solar system. Educational leaders are led to reflect on their best experiences with constructive dialogue and how that impacted their wellness and practice. A dialogic approach is used to conduct these interactions among educational leaders. Open conversations related to daily challenges and educational issues inquiries are provided through regular workshops, seminars, forums, and discussions among educational leaders using constructive oral dialogue. Through specific educational issues inquiries, all voices are heard, and the strong suits of people are highlighted within a positive foundation that helps them reach their highest potential (Singh et al., 2023). AI is related to the dialogic approach and its capacity to positively impact, first, educational leaders' wellness and, second, their practice.

Educational leaders can perform well with imbalanced emotional conditions. However, such good performance is temporary. Sooner or later educational leaders will not be able to control their emotions anymore, affecting their professional practices (Goleman et al., 2013). On that account, a dialogic approach through informal and regular conversations among educational leaders is essential to promote better well-being and performance.

As previously mentioned, when educational leaders can discuss educational issues and challenges together, potential solutions are found, their voices are heard, and the feeling of belonging is achieved. Also, trust is built when educational leaders listen to each other with empathy (Headlee, 2017). Consequently, their emotional condition is enhanced, which is directly reflected in their practices. Thus, AI embodies a dialogic approach through a positive core that makes oral conversations about challenging topics achievable (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2011). Allowing educational leaders to voice concerns is a means of demonstrating that their wellness is as vital as their performance since they are intercorrelated and interdependent status.

Discussion and Recommendations

The dialogic approach positively impacts educational leadership wellness and practice. Having open conversations regarding educational issues and difficulties from a positive lens is proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional distress among educational leaders (Jones et al., 2021). This reduction of emotional distress generated by constructive oral dialogue echoes educational leadership professional development (Allen et al., 2023). Thus, a relationship exists between oral dialogue and educational leaders' wellness and practice.

Building trust and listening with empathy are imperative when it comes to establishing a safe, inclusive, and healthy workplace environment (Goleman et al., 2013). The dialogic approach is what makes oral communication sustainable among chief executive officers, superintendents, principals, teachers, and the whole educational leaders. Constant discussions, seminars, workshops, and forums about challenges faced by educational leaders are vital for a reflection upon their professional practices and, especially, on their well-being.

Educational leadership wellness and practice are both affected by the power of oral dialogue. Nonetheless, educational leaders' wellness is affected first and their practice second (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Educational leadership practice enhancement is an immediate consequence of a harmonized emotional condition perceived as wellness. The more stable the emotional conditions are, the more proactive educational leaders are (Goleman et al., 2013). This means that balanced emotional conditions have a primal relationship with productivity. There is a proportional connection between them.

Generative oral dialogue is the cornerstone of emotional and professional growth (Stelmach, 2020). When educational leaders feel heard and respected, there is a shift in their emotional condition. They feel comfortable expressing their thoughts related to delicate issues because there is a positive atmosphere that highlights their strengths, not their weaknesses (Whitney et al., 2010). In this way, educational leaders seek responses to daily challenges together as a group, not individually. Appreciative Inquiry and constructive oral dialogue make this viable. Hence, I agree with Doyle Fosco et al. (2023) that educational leaders deal with many tensions and demands at home and work, negatively influencing their emotional conditions. I also agree with Headlee (2017) that conversational competence is necessary to ensure clear communication. Stable emotional conditions are an outcome of conversational competence.

As reported by Freire (1970), constructive dialogue is what makes human interactions truly meaningful. That is why open and authentic oral dialogue among educational leaders generates better well-being and performance (Klein, 2017). Adams et al. (2019) affirmed that the power of generative dialogue lies in social, emotional, and professional development. The dialogic

approach engenders better well-being conditions in educational leadership and, as a result, better practices.

Dialogue positively impacts wellness and practice not only for educational leaders but also for informal and formal leaders of other fields because of the deep relationship between the dialogic approach and well-being and professional improvement. When educational leaders receive opportunities to express their ideas about daily challenges and educational issues through constructive oral dialogue, from a positive perspective, there is an enhancement in their wellness and, consequently, in their professional performances. Some challenges are the lack of funds from school districts or divisions for promoting specific workshops, seminars, forums, and discussions; the prioritization of a dialogic approach in educational leaders' relationships; and the fear of showing vulnerabilities of educational leadership. However, such boundaries are mitigated when school districts or divisions, professors, deans, principals, teachers, and other educational leaders cooperate to increase their own wellness and practice through a dialogic approach embedded in trust and listening with empathy, always focussing on their strengths.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates the extent of the impact of oral dialogue on educational leadership wellness and practice, regarding the causal factors of educational leadership emotional condition and performance imbalance: various tensions aroused from home and work, and lack of conversational competence. Educational leaders must be provided with opportunities to have open conversations related to educational issues and challenges through a positive core that makes them feel comfortable enough to seek potential solutions to daunting educational inquiries. Oral dialogue plays an important role in developing educational leaders' wellness and professional practices through building trust and listening with empathy. On that account, knowing why there is a lack of balance in educational leaders' emotional and professional conditions is vital to understanding how educational leadership well-being and performance are associated with the use of a dialogic approach.

When it comes to managing emotional distress, it is easier for educational leaders to deal with diversified tensions at home and work within a constructive oral dialogue environment, where conversational competence is properly valued. The dialogic approach through a positive foundation resonates with harmony in educational leaders' relationships. This resonance brings balance to educational leadership emotional conditions. As a result, their professional practices are enhanced. This is feasible due to the power of dialogue, to the flow of meaningful words in conversations. For these reasons, educational leaders will benefit from focusing on their strengths, enhancing their wellness and practice through a dialogic approach encapsulated in a positive atmosphere. Oral dialogue firstly impacts educational leaders' emotional conditions and secondly their professional performances. There is a shift from finding solutions individually to a collaborative perspective where weaknesses are not ignored but strengths are positively emphasized. Enhancement in educational leaders' wellness and practice benefits the entire educational system.

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PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

What Is Blocking the Path to Inclusion? A Look Into Individualized Programs in Manitoba High Schools

Heather McCorrister

The ongoing movement for diversity, equity, and inclusion urges the educational system to reflect on and improve the learning experiences for every student. What does inclusion look like in high schools for students with severe disabilities? In Manitoba, students are assessed by a psychologist to determine appropriate programming. Students with severe disabilities **[(such as . . .)]** often qualify for an individualized program with learning goals outside the curriculum.

At my high school, students are organized into a sheltered program that was previously called Skills for Living but is now referred to as Individualized Program (IP). Last year, there was an incident with a new student in IP that caused me to contemplate what inclusion looks like in my school. An older student took a compromising picture of this student and shared the image on a large group chat. When working to resolve the situation, I was faced with strong criticisms from the mother, who stated that the programming we offered at our school was not inclusive. She made valid observations and comparisons to the experience they had at their elementary school. She found it overwhelming to get her child involved in school activities. Her argument was that if her child was truly seen and valued, students would look out for them instead of taking advantage of them. From this incident, questions emerged about the social and learning experiences we provide students who are diagnosed with a severe disability.

In this reflection paper, I explore the barriers that prevent students with severe disabilities from participating as valued members of their school community. The intention is not to hunt for deficits but instead to engage in a genuine search for understanding of a complex system with a history of segregation. I am curious about the gap between the ideals, including Manitoba Education's statement, and the execution of inclusion in schools.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (2022) states, "Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members" (p. 1). In Manitoba, we are provided with a philosophy to direct our practices. The literature touches on the beliefs about inclusion but has a larger focus on placing students with disabilities into general classrooms, which implies that placement is the standard of inclusion education. Within these general classrooms are considerations of academic, social, and adaptive skills acquired by students with disabilities, but missing are the benefits of a whole school approach to inclusion that cultivates belonging through high expectations, appropriate supports, participation, and genuine membership (Ballard & Dymond, 2017).

The backdrop to this reflection is my personal experience as a high school leader who works with a program designed to support students with severe disabilities. As a leader in a high school, I think it is vital to understand the issue so that my actions, words, and decision-making can improve the experiences of students with disabilities. Three themes have shaped] my understanding of inclusive education in my [own] school: a lack of common understanding, limited ownership, and conflicting structures within high school. These three themes are interconnected and collectively have a large impact on inclusive education.

Thoughts and Perceptions on Inclusive Education

One significant barrier that students with disabilities face is that inclusion is defined differently by different people, which limits opportunities for them. As Dukes and Berlingo (2020)

explained, “Inclusive education is conceptualized in many ways – as a belief, philosophy, or perhaps even a stance. The language of special education is replete with encompassing terms that have a myriad of meanings” (p. 14). In Manitoba, despite having an inclusion philosophy provided by the government, high school staff come to the table with a variety of understandings and beliefs about what inclusion is for students with disabilities. Inclusion is more than just being placed in a general classroom.] Dukes and Berlingo (2020) focused on the accessibility and experience that students with disabilities deserve. As well, inclusion was about having more quality interactions with the entire student body which can lead to an increase of students’ understanding the potential of a student with a disability. A high school needs to have a working definition of inclusion that expands beyond determining a place for learning.

A muddy definition of inclusion diminishes the strength of a school vision for students with disabilities. In addition to a common understanding, a shared vision that outlines the process is needed for all invested parties to bring about change. From a common vision, operational changes can be outlined for all personnel to engage in creating inclusive schools (Agran et al., 2020). If those aiming to make systemic changes have conflicting or vague views on inclusion, then the process can be blurred, stagnant, or ineffective.

Another significant obstacle is negative perceptions of the application of inclusion in general classrooms. Though there are positive beliefs of the benefits of including students with disabilities in general classrooms, people have struggled with the execution of learning for students with disabilities. Carter and Hughes (2006) surveyed teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals in 11 urban high schools in the United States. Participants agreed on the benefits of having students with disabilities in general classrooms, but there were contradictions when it came to instructional strategies. Even with staff holding a value for inclusion, the study found that limited numbers of students with severe disabilities were enrolled in general education classrooms.

Carter and Hughes’ study may be from 2006, but similar observations persist] today. For example, in my current high school in Manitoba students with severe disabilities are not enrolled in a general classroom. This situation could be influenced by what Agran et al. (2020) identified as a “lack of knowledge of current research and evidence-based practices for teaching students with severe disabilities” (p. 8) or “inherent bias against the appropriateness or feasibility of inclusive education for students with severe disabilities” (p. 7).

How can we address the important work of inclusion for students with disabilities when everyone invested in the process is not on the same page? Individuals in the educational system need to reflect on potential biases and engage in critical conversations to co-create a broader in-depth definition of inclusion. Developing a common language and understanding are crucial in building a shared vision for high schools. This vision can direct important resources and guide an entire staff in creating opportunities for students with disabilities. Having current, evidence-based best practices would influence teacher confidence in supporting students in general classrooms. Our thinking and knowing about inclusion could be one of the biggest roadblocks that students face.

Collective Responsibility

Another barrier in a high school is when only a few individuals have responsibility for it. There is a dynamic in some schools whereby a student service person or special education teacher is solely responsible for the education of students with disabilities. At my school, we have a program that is cared for by a teacher, an occupational therapist, and a student services teacher. Students with severe disabilities are placed in sheltered spaces at school community outreach experiences. They are rarely invited to classrooms outside their designated spaces. This situation can limit the resources and reach of inclusion within a school community.

Subban et al. (2023) investigated the importance of ownership and found “that ‘it takes a village to raise a child,’ particularly for school communities tasked with accommodating student

diversity" (p. 301). They also clarified that we need to leverage the skills and knowledge of a diverse group of teachers. What would it look like if teachers outside a sheltered program invested in students with severe disabilities? A teacher's reach is to every corner of a school, and their network is a powerful tool for inclusion.

In addition to every teacher, there is a need for strong leadership not only to share the responsibility, but also to promote inclusion. Alquraini and Gut (2012) listed various ways school principals can impact change, such as through training, resources, and problem solving. I know there are opportunities as a leader in my school to empower staff through dialogue and professional development. Upper organizational leadership also has a role to play because –

> many of the key issues surrounding the success of inclusion lie not only at the level of the teacher in terms of their attitudes and their practical application of inclusive strategies in the classroom, but … also lie in the school climate and culture, and through systemic support from leadership and the Board. (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2018, p. 240)

When one group is left holding a puzzle piece, the image is left incomplete. Leaders have a crucial responsibility in carrying out a vision for inclusive education, but they cannot do it alone.

Ownership needs to be a community commitment. This statement may seem idealistic, but the bigger investment may be what is needed for better outcomes for students with severe disabilities. Bélanger and Gougeon (2009) examined four Canadian schools to understand their approach to inclusive education, and noted one school's effort to involve all students in producing inclusive practices and to collaborate with parents and community members. Whereas some may solely focus on the classroom, others recognize a larger network of participants involved and the need for what Subban et al. (2023) referred to as "a communal mindset" (p. 292). This community approach circles back to a shared vision and a need for collective efforts when we broaden our view to an entire complex educational system.

There are limitations when a select few advocate and implement inclusive practices in a school. At times, these dedicated individuals can provide quick fixes and make small shifts, but big picture solutions require the expertise, resources, and commitment of a school community. We can increase success when we draw on the strengths and efforts of guardians, educational assistants, teachers, and leaders to tackle the roadblocks to inclusion. The circle of support for students with disabilities also increases when we include fellow students and draw on neighborhood resources.

Structures That Barricade

The final critical barrier is the organizational structures that characterize a high school. There are elements of the high school experience that collect and prevent students with disabilities from functioning as members of the school community. When my student's mom critiqued the program at my school, she began to draw on her child's experience in elementary school. It was more than her child being a valued member in their classroom – they were actively involved in the whole school. I heard from her that there are features of the high school experience that have changed from elementary school.

Extracurricular high school clubs and activities are organized with an expectation of independence on the part of the students. Students are responsible for finding needed information on extracurriculars through listening to announcements, looking online, or accessing social networks. High school students typically navigate an extracurricular activity independently from location to involvement. Taheri et al. (2017) looked at participation of students with disabilities and found a decrease for those students with a physical disability, and for those students with lower adaptive skills as they became older. If we are aware of the challenges students will have in participating in extracurriculars, what can be done? Can high schools respond thoughtfully to students' varying levels of developing independence in order to increase participation?

Some high schools have coexistence programs that are guided by teachers and school psychologists. They aim to provide opportunities for students with disabilities and to deconstruct negative stereotypes through social and academic activities (Vasileiadis et al., 2021). These programs not only provide direct rewards to their members, but also work on a larger scale to build an inclusive school culture. Independence can also be a prerequisite to many high school learning environments. Learning is not always accessible when presented in traditional lecture style. Carter et al. (2023) recommended activities that build interdependence between students with and without disabilities as they increase engagement for students with severe disabilities.

High school learning can be far more fragmented because of the structure. Students in high school fall into a learning stream that can be more restrictive than fluid, depending on the school and its support teams. Most students in Manitoba high schools are working to achieve 30 credits in order to graduate within an average four-year period. This path differs from the experience of my students in IP who will stay in the program for six years, working on individual social, adaptive, and academic goals outside the curriculum. The organization of learning is packaged into courses and periods in a day that operate separately from each other. Teachers can struggle with how to engage a student with a severe disability within a classroom that is focused on an intensive curriculum. These structures can create competing demands for teachers (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2018). Teachers who are faced with these demands may default to traditional structures that segregate rather than include students with severe disabilities.

Time is not a challenge unique to high school, but it is very relevant to the discussion about inclusion. One of the significant barriers identified in Carter and Hughes' (2006) study was time to collaborate. This time may be spent focusing on a specific student or analyzing a school-wide issue related to inclusionary practices. The ongoing challenge is the limited working time built into the school year. Sometimes the time that is provided to collaborate can be eaten up by competing demands. Inclusive education needs collaborative teams, and these teams need time. Furthermore, the pace of learning increases in high school courses, which is a struggle for many students but is particularly important for students with severe disabilities. Time becomes an added pressure depending on the course, teacher, and climate of the learning environment – all of which can prevent access to certain learning experiences.

High schools often can have conflicting elements, time pressures, and requirements of independence that block inclusion for students with disabilities. The focus of the high school experience can be credit acquisition in select courses that can contrast the program goals for students with severe disabilities. These structures can be challenging for a student in IP, which operates outside the curriculum and credit system. One way to address these issues is by providing collaborative time for all invested parties to seek creative solutions, align goals, and adjust structures.

Final Thoughts

The three main themes of understanding inclusion, ownership, and organizational structures are all interconnected when it comes to looking at barriers for students with severe disabilities in a high school context. We cannot assume that everyone comes to the table with a common understanding of inclusion or the potential of all our students, so the work might start here for some schools. Establishing a shared vision will take the commitment, perspectives, and strengths of a whole school community. This investment will take collaboration and time to address the legacy of barriers that are still present in the system. In high schools, there is often a prerequisite of independence for extracurriculars, which can obstruct involvement for students with disabilities. Given the Government of Manitoba's (2022) philosophy that "an inclusive community consciously evolves" (p. 1), there may be no destination to be found, but there is an accountability to revisit and revise our practices. Shared ownership of the educational journey of my students will hopefully remove roadblocks for them and increase meaningful participation in their school community from kindergarten to high school.

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BOOK REVIEW

Review of the Book *Normal Sucks: How to Live, Learn, and Thrive, Outside the Lines* by J. Mooney

Karen Vaarmeyer

Jonathan Mooney's *Normal Sucks* is an entertaining, poignant, heartbreaking, and inspiring novel that seeks to address how the manufactured concept of normal influences the lives of human beings in our world, and consequently in our schools. Embedded in a memoir that is lovingly addressed as a letter to his sons, Mooney presents an examination of the evolution of "normal" and its direct effect on the mental health and learning of himself as young man and ultimately our students. Informed by authors and scholars such as Michel Foucault, Georges Canguilhem, Peter Cryle, Elizabeth Stephens, and Lennard J. Davis, Mooney traces the term *normal* from its roots in mathematics to its use in anatomy and physiology in the mid-1800s when normal became linked to a state of rightness. From here, Mooney clearly connects normal as becoming synonymous with "average" and its application to humans via Adolphe Quetelet's "average man" (p. 29) and later Francis Galton's "normal man." This provided the foundation for the eugenics movement and its impact on all people who were deemed to be outside the "normal."

Mooney emphasizes that while the "normal man" was elusive and non-existent, the application of the theory by scholars such as Sigmund Freud shifted the focus from what is normal to what is deviant (p. 34). This concept was further entrenched in our social fabric through statistics and science in the early 20th century with anthropometrics, craniometry, and psychometrics wherein "difference became abnormalities" (p. 55). The influence of "deviant" culminated with Charles Davenport in the North American Eugenics Records Office, which was generously funded by the Carnegie Institution in the early 1900s. Davenport's efforts were key to the "experience of correction" (p. 65) which led to fixes such as lobotomies, segregation, sterilization, and institutionalization of predominately non-white, immigrant, disabled, or poor, people who were labeled as "defective." The groundwork of the eugenics movement saturates our society today. The concept of correcting, fixing, or remediating is pervasive in our lives. It is present in social institutions such as our education system and serves as the backdrop of Mooney's life experience.

Interspersed in the historical examination of "normal," Mooney shares his memories and struggles as a neurodiverse kid in an education system dominated by the medical model of special education. His recollection of himself as a ten-year-old boy who realizes something is "wrong" with him and asks his mother "Am I normal?" after leaving the educational psychologist's office is heart-wrenching. So are Mooney's descriptions of the years that followed as he grappled with self-loathing and shame reinforced by his struggle to learn and fit in as "normal." Mooney's story demonstrates the soul crushing effect of labels but also the absolute necessity of personal connections. Through the connections to his mother, an English teacher in high school, his college friend Dave, and later his wife and sons, Mooney gradually comes to view his dyslexia and ADHD as something "other than a problem to be fixed" (p. 140). In this acceptance of himself, Mooney finds his way (with the encouragement of his young son) to also accept others, including his elusive and very much "not normal" father.

Jonathan Mooney's book demonstrates the trauma inflicted upon human beings by our social institutions which are clearly influenced by a culture of "normal" that is as harmful as it is erroneous. Mooney success is not in "overcoming" his disability but in persevering in his acceptance of himself. Through his memories, humor, knowledge, and success, Jonathan Mooney's work is an inspiration for educators to ensure that we embrace a culture of connection

and acceptance of one another as diversely abled human beings, and thus empower our students to learn and grow unencumbered by the concept of “normal” because *Normal Sucks*.

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About the Author

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