

# *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

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# *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*

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Cherish Thomas  
16-year-old student at Mary Duncan School in The Pas, Manitoba

## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

**Marion Terry, Ph.D.**

Welcome to the tenth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Most of our authors for volume 5, issue 2, are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. This issue also features reports by researchers connected to the VOICE Pathways to Success project sponsored by SSHRC. I thank these educators for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles that explore issues of relevance to teachers and counsellors in various work situations.

- Malik et al.'s research report describes the findings that emerged from their study of teacher recruitment policies and procedures in Punjab, Pakistan.
- Deidre Gregory's refereed article supports the treatment of family violence and addictions as a prerequisite to healing that is grounded in Aboriginal identity.
- Heather McCormick's refereed article identifies measures to combat the effects of colonization and residential schooling, in order to increase Aboriginal students' retention rates at the post-secondary level.
- Claudette Christison's refereed article extols the benefits that accrue from student participation in extracurricular activities.
- Kyla McDonald's refereed article explains the benefits of being bilingual as proof of the importance of French language acquisition in school.
- Jerilyn Ducharme's refereed article recommends an Elder-in-Residence position as a means to support individual Aboriginal students and to integrate Aboriginal perspectives in adult education.
- Patricia Baker's refereed article shares a journey through the literature to develop a personalized understanding of herself as a learner.
- Barbara McNish's refereed article describes the role that storytelling through art plays in the healing processes of women who are recovering from trauma.
- Jackie Knight's refereed article proposes changes that are necessary to incorporate technological advances in school classrooms.
- Kayla Hanson's refereed article suggests strategies to combat teachers' stress and ultimate burnout.
- Karen Klassen's refereed article recognizes Response to Intervention (RTI) as a means to prevent burnout in school counsellors.
- Rebecca Gray's opinion paper identifies Restitution as an approach to helping children learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Reports by the following VOICE researcher celebrate opportunities for community engagement by children and youth in northern, rural, and Aboriginal communities in Manitoba: Louise Loewen

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## RESEARCH REPORT

### **Recruitment of Teachers in Punjab, Pakistan: A Qualitative Study to Explore Policies and Procedures**

**Amjad Malik, Aneela Hassan, Nadeem Irshad Kayani,  
Shafqat Hussain, Zaheer Ahmad, and Safdar Malik**

Teaching is not a mechanical job and it is not done in isolation. Besides academic qualifications, teachers are supposed to have other personality characteristics to meet the demands of their profession. This study explored our Teachers Recruitment Policy (TRP) and procedures in comparison with the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To investigate recruitment processes and policies to understand the reported gaps or factors that contribute to the lack of quality of Newly Recruited Teachers (NRTs).
2. To assess the alignment between the NPST and the TRP.
3. To inform research based on the TRP.

The following research questions were used to meet these objectives:

1. What factors do the Teachers Recruitment Policy Designers (TRPDs) consider?
2. How do the Teachers Recruitment Policy Implementers (TRPIs) apply TRP?
3. What are the views of newly inducted teachers about the recruitment process?
4. To what extent do the recruitment policies and processes align with the NPST?

### **Methodology**

The study used a qualitative research design. The population consisted of all the TRP designers and implementers, and the NRTs in Punjab, Pakistan. Purposeful sampling was used to select three TRPDs, 15 TRPIs, and 30 NRTs for five focus group interviews from five districts: Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Sargodha, and Mianwali. Data were collected by means of (a) semi-structured interviews with TRPDs and TRPIs, and (b) focus group interviews with NRTs at the elementary and secondary levels.

The interviews guides contained questions that emerged from the literature as well as discussion with experts in pre-service teacher education programs. The TRPDs' interview protocol covered the salient features of the TRPs, the procedure for involving stakeholders to design TRPs, alignment of the TRPs with the NPST, justification for giving uneven weight to applicants' qualifications during the selection process, TRP expectations by the policy designers, and reasons for changing the recruitment policy. The TRPIs' interview protocol covered their responsibilities as committee members, their experience in the recruitment process, strengths and weakness of the TRP, and suggestions to improve this policy. The NRTs' focus group protocol for included their knowledge of the NPST, their interview experiences as candidates, their satisfaction with the recruitment process, and suggestions to improve the recruitment process and policy.

The research team conducted 23 interviews with 3 TRPDs, 15 TRPIs, and 5 NRTs. Each interview was conducted in a single sitting and lasted 15 to 30 minutes. All but two of the participants agreed to be audiotaped. The researchers analysed the interview transcripts by means of an evolving inductive process that used thematic codes to link individual pieces of data to the research questions.

## Research Findings

### The Interviews with TRPDs

**Question 1: Salient Features of the TRP.** The policy designers believed that the 18th Amendment in the Constitution obligated them to plan for 100% enrollment, retention, and quality of education in all schools. One TRPD indicated that the policy development process required that “we keep in mind the new trends/changes in curriculum, needs of the schools and foreseeing the future expectation of the department.” For quality education, competent teachers were required, so the last two items in the new TRP caters to the subject area needs of different schools in Punjab: mathematics, science, English, and instructional technology (IT). Therefore, this recruitment policy was designed to select quality science and math teachers.

**Question 2: Procedure for Involving Stakeholders to Design TRPs.** The Secretary of Education was the focal person for designing the TRP. The Secretary of Education involved officers in the Directorate of Public Instructions who were responsible for sending representatives to each district to collect feedback about the TRP. Before drafting the new TRP, stakeholders discussed teachers’ needs, their working styles, psychology of children, and student performance.

**Question 3: Justification for Assigning a Higher Weight to Qualifications.** The policy designer claimed that they had implemented a merit-based recruitment policy throughout Punjab. The major strength of the policy was 95 marks for qualifications and 5 marks for the interview, which helped to verify merit. Further, to ensure transparent merit-based selection, pre-merit lists were displayed on notice boards and the candidates were invited to point out any discrepancy in their merits. These types of action assured clarity in the policy and its process.

**Question 4: Expectations of TRPDs from the NRP.** The policy designers claimed that as a result of implementing the new RTP, the enrolment of 0.2 million students had been increased. The NRTs could maximize the cognitive development of students because they were well equipped with content knowledge and pedagogical skills. They also worked hard and had science backgrounds, which optimized instruction in subjects that focused on math and science.

**Question 5: Reasons for Changing the Recruitment Policy.** The TRPDs pointed out that the majority of teachers working in the schools of Punjab had arts backgrounds and could not teach math and science due the change of medium of instruction from Urdu to English. Therefore, the last two TRP items focus on recruiting science, math, and English teachers.

### The Interviews with TRPIs

**Question 1: Responsibilities of the TRC Members.** The TRPIs described the recruitment policy in different angles and exposed many new dimensions to improve it. One District Monitoring Officer (DMO) on the teachers’ recruitment committee thought that his responsibility was data entry, preparing the pre-merit lists, displaying the lists, handling the queries and complaints, and finally issuing letters of offer to the candidates. Another DMO respondent believed that his responsibility was identifying and advertising job posts, receiving and entering the particulars of applicants from their applications into computer files, and cleaning the data for further processing. One District Education Officer (DEO) believed that his role was identifying vacant posts at the elementary level, and then collecting the applications and sending them to the DMO office on a daily basis for data entry and record keeping. He believed the DMO office to be responsible for receiving and readdressing any objections, and supervising the whole process.

According to the guidelines in the TRP, all members of the committee were responsible for supervising the whole recruitment process, but in practice they were only partially involved in all steps of the recruitment process.

**Question 2: Experience of TRC Members as TRPIs.** The TRPIs remarked that there were ambiguities and flaws in the policy documents. Even the District Coordination Officer as chair of the recruitment committee, and Executive District Officers as senior members of the committee, were not clear with regard to some conditions that were not self-explanatory in the policy document. The majority of TRPIs admitted that there was no political pressure to select their candidates because 95% of the merit marks were based on qualifications. For them, recruitment was a hectic activity due to its tight implementation schedule and the unavailability of special grants to finance the implementation process. However, one TRPI thought that the time given to complete the recruitment process was reasonable.

One TRPI evaluated the TRPs in an interesting way, as follows: “Friendly speaking, we are government employees. We cannot criticize it. We have no right. But it hurts me what future dreams we are giving them. They are better than me as far as their qualifications, knowledge and intelligence is regarded. We are giving 12,000 pay to them, but our sweeper in the office is taking 18,000.” This TRPI recommended that all TRPIs be trained at the provincial level for one or two days, in order to understand the recruitment policy clearly so that implementation would be standardized across the Punjab. Moreover, proper time is required for this implementation process. The scrutiny teams for candidates’ applications were not properly guided by the TRPIs regarding different subjects and programs at higher secondary and graduation levels. The TRPIs mentioned many problems in the implementation process: limited time for application processing, load shedding, posting/transfer during the recruitment process, less professionally trained staff, and unclear position vacancies.

**Question 3: Effectiveness of Interviews as an Instrument for Teacher Recruitment.**

Most of the recruitment committee members felt that the “interview is only a formality for checking the documents of candidates,” because of the 5% remaining after the merit marks for qualifications, only 2% was assigned to the interviews and the other 3% were assigned to the verbal computer test (or vice versa in some places). Another TRPI shared that the “only things that we ensured during the interview were that no deaf or dumb or handicapped candidates were selected for the general seats of teachers.” The TRPIs admitted that all committee members were not present during each interview. Furthermore, only one member from the recruitment committee, along with two to three irrelevant members (senior headmasters or IT teachers) conducted the interviews. Since the weighting of qualification marks was 95%, the interview committee did not think that the interviews were important, and did not take them seriously. The TRPIs recommended that the written test and computer test be completed before each interview to screen out less desirable candidates.

### **The Focus Group Interviews with NRTs**

**Knowledge of NRTs about NPSTs.** Interestingly, all of the NRTs admitted that they were not aware of NPSTs, and had not heard or discussed the NPST during their unabridged period of pre-service training programs.

**NRTs’ Views about the Recruitment Process.** Most participants were not satisfied with the recruitment policy and process for the following reasons: (a) the recruitment process started without the written tests of candidates, which added to the interviewers’ work, (b) there was insufficient time to conduct meaningful interviews, (c) there was no demonstration to assess candidates’ communication skills, so it was difficult to differentiate who could teach and who could not, (d) qualification marks were the sole criteria for selecting teachers, (e) the lists of



candidates were not displayed on the due dates, (f) equal weight was given to academic qualification marks regardless of whether students had passed through annual or semester system exams, and (g) the overall recruitment process was completed in haste. Only two NRTs from all focused groups were satisfied with the recruitment process and the low weighting of interview marks in comparison to the high weighting of academic qualification marks. One of these NRTs explained that “low weightage for interview marks helps to curb favoritism, and the equal scoring of interviews has ensured merit.”

## Discussion

The research findings indicate clear strengths and weakness of the current TRP. These findings have implications for the TRPDs and TRPIs who design and implement the policy.

**Strengths of the Current TRP.** Most implementers pointed out that a main strength of the recruitment policy is its 95% merits based on qualification marks for teacher candidates. One participant pointed out that vacant posts are being filled. This participant also anticipated that the recruitment of science graduates will improve the quality of education because science teachers can teach arts subjects very well in addition to science at the primary level. One implementer added that the strong point of the policy is the selection of science and math teachers for schools in remote areas.

**Weaknesses of the Current TRP.** Policy implementers remarked that the TRP is not self-explanatory with regard to rules of policy: Bachelor of Science courses, annual percentage marks and semester grade point averages (CGPA), and shortage of time for the scrutiny of applications. Moreover, students who have passed from different universities (annual versus semester system exam) have significant variation in the marks. This difference can be overcome by administering a written test to identify the competent candidates for teacher selection. The TRPIs felt that the TRP has higher standards than the National Testing Service (NTS) test.

**Suggestions for TRPDs to Improve the Teachers Recruitment Policy.** Most of the policy implementers recommended (a) that the software provided by PMIU for teachers’ recruitment be improved for converting marks in the merit list (b) that better training be given to the scrutiny committee, (c) that the NTS test be administered as a screening tool before the interviews, and (d) that different weightings be assigned to the academic qualifications of candidates with exam marks from semester versus annual systems. The TRP should be realistic, not idealistic. There must be clarification of the preferred subject area combinations and their relative weightings in the policy document. The TRPIs believed that a new recruitment policy requires one or two days of training.

One TRPI said that the “policy designers are good and competent people. Some flaws were in the TRP but they can be removed by decreasing the number of applicants by administering the written test in each district and making the recruitment schedule flexible from district to district according to the number of applications.” Teaching demonstrations would be helpful in the selection process, and weighting of the interview marks should be increased to 15-20% of the total marks. One TRPI added, “I think special allowance may be given to teachers who are working in remote areas.”

## Constraints Faced by the TRPIs Who Implement the TRP

Policy implementers pointed out that there was no special budget for stationery and other costs of recruitment. A few administrative posts (Deputy DEOs and DEOs) were vacant during the recruitment process, which created hurdles in the recruitment process. The clerical staff of

Executive District Officers and DEOs were not trained in computer skills to handle the huge activity of recruitment along with their other routine office work. A reasonable number of computers should be given to DMOs during the recruitment process, especially to female DMOs who have been posted in rural and remote areas of the province.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The TRPDs' main focus in the last two TRP items was to develop a merit-based policy to block favouritism for selecting science, mathematics, English, and IT teachers. Therefore, they assigned 95% weighting of marks to qualifications and only 5% to interviews for selecting teachers. This rubric lessened the likelihood of favouritism by the recruitment committee members, staff of the offices of the Education Department, and politicians who wished to pick incompetent teacher candidates. Admittedly, the new TRP has been partially successful in sorting and selecting quality teachers from available candidates in the market. Overall, however, the TRP selection criteria are not valid because they ignore many important traits of teachers in the recruitment process: aptitude toward teaching, communication skills, pedagogy and content knowledge, and classroom behaviour. The TRPIs were not appropriately educated to implement the spirit of the new recruitment policy. The TRP is not self-explanatory, and as a result the TRPIs have faced many problems in its implementation.

Therefore, it is recommended that the marks weighting for future teacher selection processes be as follows: (a) 20% for the NTS test, 50% for academic qualifications, 10% for professional qualifications, and 20% for the interview. The NTS test would be helpful to identify competent candidates and decrease the burden of the interview committee's work in the recruitment process. The reasonable weighting of interview marks may be helpful to select competent teachers. The TRPIs should be involved in designing future TRPs, and they need adequate training to implement changes in the recruitment process.

The previous and current TRPs do not align with the NPST because these policies were designed by recruitment policy designers without considering the NPST. The policy designers should keep the NPST in mind for developing more operative teachers' recruitment policies. Aligning the TRP and NPST will draw these standards to the attention of faculty in pre-service teacher training institutions. More research is needed to assess the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education programs with regard to their alignment with NPST in Pakistan. A specific study is also needed to compare teacher recruitment processes in well-reputed private institutions and government institutions. This study should be replicated for assessing the effectiveness of teacher recruitment policies and processes of other provinces in Pakistan.

### **About the Authors**

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## REFEREED ARTICLES

### Aboriginal Identity as a Catalyst for Healing

Deidre Gregory

#### **Abstract**

*Canada's Aboriginal people connect history to their loss of identity, grounded in Nation based languages and beliefs. Recovering from colonization requires healing wounds that festered during residential school and the 60's scoop. Treating family violence and addictions is more than an individual reality for many of today's Aboriginals. It is a prerequisite for entire Nations to recover their individual and group identities as survivors of Western trauma.*

Canada's Aboriginal people come from a diverse culture; many languages and beliefs exist within the different Nations. Although there are variances within the different Nations, there is a shared need for healing. Aboriginal people have been faced with several traumatic events since the arrival of the first settlers in the late 1400's (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). These traumatic events can be traced back to first contact or colonization, the time through residential schooling and the 60's scoop, the effects of which are still evident in family violence and addictions. Learning the Aboriginal history and understanding the traumas will be disheartening for many; it is the knowledge that is gained that will be restorative. Learning about one's Aboriginal identity can be a catalyst for healing.

#### **Colonization**

Colonization in Canada refers to the time when the first settlers arrived in North America. It was during this time that the settlers began to strip Aboriginal people of their cultural identity and land (Lavallee & Poole, 2009). Colonization brought about many changes for Aboriginal people; the introduction of new technology, diseases, and religion changed their lives forever. Once the settlers began to establish themselves in Canada, treaties were made and signed with the Aboriginal people. The treaties were made with the intent of removing Aboriginal people from their traditional lands, in order to facilitate settlement and the exploitation of natural resources by the settlers (Waldram, Herring, & Young, 2006).

Aboriginal identities suffered greatly with the onset of colonization. Prior to contact, the Aboriginal peoples lived off the land and had a spiritual connection to it. The land was used for survival: Aboriginal people hunted and gathered for foods and medicine. The dispossession of traditional lands was traumatic for the identities of Aboriginal people. The first Aboriginal people who were encountered were the Beothuk of Newfoundland; within 300 years colonization rendered them extinct (Waldram et al., 2006; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Identities such as the Beothuk vanished; those that survived colonization remain wounded.

Healing Aboriginal identities from the effects of colonization will vary according to experience and memories. The history is the first place to start, learning the history of Aboriginal people from the perspective of Aboriginals. There is a natural grieving process that will occur with any loss, and with colonization came many losses. For some Aboriginal people, healing can occur naturally, particularly if traditional Aboriginal ceremonies are practiced. Aboriginal ceremonies and beliefs give people a safe place to suffer. The Sweat Lodge is one such ceremony that promotes natural healing (Wagemakers Schiff & Moore, 2006). There are many other ceremonies and teachings that will help facilitate the healing process.

## Residential Schools

The residential school system marks a dark time in Canadian history. The first three residential schools in Canada were built in the 1880's under the leadership of Sir John A. Macdonald, who was both Minister of Indian Affairs and Canada's prime minister (Sinclair, Littlechild, & Wilson, 2012). The schools were funded by the government and run by the church; their goal was to civilize and Christianize the Aboriginal children. The children were forcibly removed from their families and, most times, their communities (Dion et al., 2003; Sinclair et al., 2012).

The trauma continued once they reached the residential schools, which were usually located a great distance away from their home communities. The residential schools were overcrowded and underfunded. The children experienced another separation once they arrived: they were divided according to gender. In most cases siblings were not allowed to speak to each other and were punished when they did (Sinclair et al., 2012). The traumas experienced damaged their identities, but with the recent report of "They Came for the Children" by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012), healing is now taking place.

On June 11, 2008, Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, delivered a statement of apology, on behalf of Canadians, for the Indian residential school system. The apology was the first step in healing that dark time in Canadian history. Prior to the apology, a settlement agreement was made, and as a result the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed. One goal of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to educate all Canadians on the Indian residential schools system (Aboriginal Affairs, 2010; Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.). On October 24, 2012, The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, delivered a keynote speech to participants attending the "Creating a New Legacy Aboriginal Health & Wellness Conference" (Sinclair, 2012). The message given in the keynote speech was regarding finding one's self or identity. One must answer four questions:

1. Where do I come from?
2. Where am I going?
3. Why am I here?
4. Who am I?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has given Aboriginal people a safe place to learn about and heal their identities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission members listen to individual stories and they see the healing take place right before them (Fontaine, 2010).

## The 60's Scoop

The 60's scoop is one symptom of the residential school system. In the attempt to assimilate Aboriginal children, many teachings were lost, specifically traditional parenting values. Lack of parenting skills and family values left Aboriginal families in a dire predicament. Aboriginal parenting and families were greatly affected by this period, referred to as the 60's scoop: a time during the 1960's and 1970's when Aboriginal children were literally scooped from their parents or caregivers and placed in predominantly non-Native homes (Stevens, 2006). The Children's Aid Society, or present day Child and Family Services, was a key player in this ordeal that still has emerging effects.

Although the best interest of the child was in mind, the effects have shown to be traumatic on Aboriginal identity. Since then, those 60's scoop children have become parents and grandparents. The reactions are different, with some wanting to find out where they come from and others who cannot understand their identity (Lavallee & Poole, 2009). Some lost family connections to parents, siblings, and their communities. The losses of the 60's scoop are now being recognized and healing is beginning.

One way to begin the healing from the 60's scoop is to break the cycle of the number of Aboriginal children in care of Child and Family Services (Stevens, 2006). Breaking that cycle begins with education and understanding the history or intent behind the 60's scoop. Some themes that need to be considered when choosing healing methods are to include the whole family, to use traditional values, and to use ceremonies (Archibald, 2006). These considerations would be beneficial to the healing journey and positive identity.

### **Family Violence and Addiction**

Colonization, residential schools, and the 60's scoop experienced by Aboriginal people have resulted in the negative coping mechanisms of violence and addiction. In Canada, the substance abuse rate is one of the highest among Aboriginal people (Niccols et al., 2009). Aboriginal peoples' reactions are the result of not having the ability to control or escape the situations (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). The feeling of powerlessness is then taken out on other family or community members through violence, also called lateral violence. The Aboriginal population has a high rate of violence, with Aboriginal youth suicide considerably higher than other Canadian youth (Waldram et al., 2006). All are the result of unhealthy coping mechanisms.

The practice of Aboriginal traditional values and ceremonies has no room for violence or addiction. With the emerging trend of prescription drug use among Aboriginal peoples, ceremonies become unavailable to people that are actively using (Currie, Wild, Schopflocher, Laing, & Veugelers, 2013). In order to attend ceremonies, people need to be free of drugs and alcohol. Aboriginal people and families continue to suffer, with the children being the most vulnerable. Aboriginal youth in Canada also suffer high rates of violence and substance abuse (Crooks, Chiodo, & Thomas, 2009). In 2009, Statistics Canada reported that 13% of Aboriginal women reported being victims of violent crimes and were three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims (Statistics Canada, 2009).

There are several ways of healing from violence and addictions, and as a result maintaining a positive Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal specific treatment programs have become available for issues such as alcohol, substances, and violence (Niccols et al., 2009). In Aboriginal-specific programs, traditional ceremonies not only taught but practised as well, such as sharing circles. Sharing circles are organized talking sessions used for the purpose of healing (Hart, 2002; Waldram et al., 2006). Like the 60's scoop, violence and addictions can be overcome by breaking the cycles.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Aboriginals have proven to be a resilient people and have begun to learn about the connection of their history to their loss of identity. Colonization brought on many changes, foremost of which was a distinct Aboriginal identity. The residential school system attempted to assimilate Aboriginal children, but instead left intergenerational trauma throughout the entire Aboriginal population. The 60's scoop tried to save the Aboriginal children, but in reality it disrupted the family systems and identities of Aboriginal people. Violence and addiction were learned as coping mechanisms. Learning about Aboriginal identity can be a catalyst for healing. Utilizing Aboriginal healing methods will be beneficial for a positive identity.

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### **About the Author**

*Deidre Gregory is an Ojibway woman. She completed her Bachelor of First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling degree from Brandon University in 2009. She is now working toward her Master of Education degree with a specialization in guidance and counselling.*

# Aboriginal Post-Secondary Student Retention

Heather McCormick

## Abstract

*Aboriginal people face the lowest standard of living of any group in Canada due to the lasting and far-reaching effects of colonization and failed education. Without improved educational outcomes, in the form of increased Aboriginal retention rates, this situation will not improve. In order to accomplish this goal, post-secondary institutions need to offer academic, economic, and personal supports that will holistically address the issues facing Aboriginal students.*

The retention of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education within Canada is bleak. The unrelenting legacy of colonization,<sup>1</sup> including failed education for Aboriginal people, continues to affect all defining aspects of society. Due, in part, to the dismal levels of completed post-secondary education, Aboriginal people face the lowest levels of health, socioeconomic status and employment, and they are most likely to be victims of violent crimes (Keatings, Innes, Laliberte, & Howe, 2012). Improved levels of education have the potential to increase participation in society, affecting the socioeconomic status of the community (Sharpe & Arsenault, 2010). The educational plight of Aboriginal people is complex, and the retention of Aboriginal students who do enter post-secondary education is an important area of study. The reasons that Aboriginal students are not successful at the post-secondary level include academic preparedness, numerous social issues and personal barriers, and no sense of belonging in educational institutions. To assist Aboriginal students to complete their studies, these issues have to be addressed more effectively.

## Challenges and Issues

Due to the legacy of colonization and residential schools, the Aboriginal community faces unprecedented levels of disparity in all areas of life. All aspects of family and community were negatively affected as a direct result of residential schools. Loss of parenting skills, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and poverty are overwhelming issues (Anderson & Lawrence, 2006). Aboriginal people have the lowest academic achievement levels of any other group in Canada. As of 2006, 43.7% of Canadian Aboriginal people over the age of 15 had not completed any post-secondary education, compared to only 23.1% of non-Aboriginal people of the same age group (Sharpe & Arsenault, 2010, p. 9). Colonization and residential schools continue to have a negative effect on educational attainment in the Aboriginal community.

As a result of these dismal educational outcomes, Aboriginal people face the lowest levels of economic status, political participation, health status, and social engagement of any other group in Canada. The stark reality is that Aboriginal people face poverty rates that are more than double the rate of non-Aboriginal people. Suicide rates are five times higher, and children are two times as likely to have a disability and are more likely to be part of child welfare systems (Abele, 2004, p. 8). Addressing educational disparities will help to tackle the numerous social issues facing the Aboriginal community, all of which are affected by low economic levels. Increased educational levels are followed by increased employment and economic well-being

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<sup>1</sup> Kortright (2003) defined colonization as follows:

(1) Colonization begins with a forced, involuntary entry; (2) the colonizing power alters basically or destroys the indigenous culture; (3) members of the colonized group tends to be governed by representatives of the dominate group; and (4) the system of dominant-subordinate relationship is buttressed by a racist ideology. (p.3)

(Sloane-Seale, Wallace, & Levin, 2001). Increased economic well-being reduces poverty and therefore has a positive impact on social development because “education is by far the most important determinant of labour market outcomes and also plays a pre-eminent role in improving social outcomes” (Sharpe & Arsenault, 2010). Increased educational attainment is essential for the continuing growth and prosperity of the Aboriginal community.

## **Recommendations for Action**

In order to improve the retention of Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education, the discrepancy of educational attainment must be addressed for the students who are entering those programs. Many Aboriginal students are not academically prepared for post-secondary education (Preston, 2008). They need services such as mentoring, tutoring, study groups, and workshops. Not having the required skills at the outset does not mean that these students are not capable of attaining the required skills. With the appropriate supports, many academic issues can be alleviated and students can be successful (Malatest & Associates, 2010). These supports are critical to students who face academic challenges so that they do not fall behind in their studies, leading to additional stress. Aboriginal students require a variety of academic, economic, and personal supports that are specifically directed to their needs.

## **Academic Support**

It is crucial to identify post-secondary students who are struggling academically and to provide the appropriate supports, ideally before the students become overwhelmed. Engaging students right away ensures active participation and shows the students that the instructor, or institution, is aware of their struggles and is willing to help. By creating a retention strategy that includes early intervention for academic struggles and other areas of need, institutions can help to implement the required supports at the outset (Timmons et al., 2009). This approach highlights the importance of institutions taking an active role, because they “cannot assume that students will take the first step and seek help. The university must be proactive” (Seidman, 2005, as cited in Timmons et al., 2009, p. 11). Identifying issues and implementing action plans for struggling students is critical to their success.

## **Economic Support**

Tangible economic supports will address many students’ the immediate needs allowing them to remain in school during crisis. Such supports should include accessible housing, affordable childcare, assistance with transportation, resource centres, and financial support. These resources can make the difference in retaining students who have been rendered fragile by obstacles beyond their control. Institutions that provide this type of ongoing support highlight the importance of offering financial supports, housing, resource centres, and mentors (Timmons et al., 2009) on an individual and continued basis. Concrete, accessible, and meaningful economic supports are important to improving Aboriginal student retention.

## **Personal Support**

Aboriginal students have numerous personal issues to deal with in addition to the day-to-day struggles of completing a post-secondary education. Negative historical factors often affect the personal well-being of Aboriginal students. The harsh reality of the problems faced by these students includes “single parenthood, spousal violence, homelessness, poverty, trying to stay clean from an addiction” (Shankar et al., 2013, p. 3915). These can impact the ability of learners to complete their studies, as they are often deep rooted and encompassing issues which, when “combined with academic demands may increase stress levels, with many negative implications



for the personal and academic experiences" (Parrack & Preyde, 2009, p. 226). Providing supports to help students navigate through these difficult issues is another meaningful solution to low post-secondary retention rates.

Offering personal supports is a successful strategy in the quest for improved Aboriginal student retention (Malatest & Associates, 2010). These types of supports are frequently incorporated into the day-to-day operations of Aboriginal- controlled institutions, as part of their school culture. By providing access to Elders, support services, role models, and mentors, these institutions have raised their Aboriginal students' retention rates to 75% or higher (Hampton, 2008). Implementing these supports in the culture and fabric of educational institutions is yet another means of improving retention rates of Aboriginal students.

Another important factor in the retention of Aboriginal students is cultivating a sense of belonging. When students feel supported and welcomed, they are more likely to be engaged, which increases the likelihood of retention. Instructors can be supportive, friendly, and concerned, which can help to create a sense of family and belonging (Schmidtke, 2009). Community and cultural events offer students the opportunity to participate in safe, social events with their peers, creating a strong community. Native American students indicate that social supports and Native American Student Centers increase a sense of community and reduce feelings of alienation (Guillory, 2009). These types of social interactions nurture a sense of belonging.

## Conclusion

Retention of Aboriginal students at the post-secondary level is critical to improving the life circumstances of the Aboriginal community, and thus economic status. Education is the answer to improving the current situation for Aboriginal people (*Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, 2010). Whether by addressing academic concerns and implementing supports to assist in bridging the academic gap, developing holistic support systems, or building a sense of community, educational institutions need to identify and implement strategies that will improve Aboriginal student retention rates.

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### **About the Author**

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# The Benefits of Participating in Extracurricular Activities

Claudette Christison

## Abstract

*Understanding factors that contribute to students' success is of great interest to educators. Research indicates that participation in extracurricular activities positively correlates with students' development both academically and personally. Students who participate in extracurricular activities have greater academic success, greater character development, especially in the areas of time-management and leadership skills, more positive social development, and greater interest in community involvement. The educational system can use such information to encourage students to participate in activities that will enhance their personal and academic achievements.*

Participating in extracurricular activities has positive effects on students' success. More than 80% of youth participate in extracurricular activities (Fredricks, 2011, p. 379). Being involved in extracurricular activities offers important opportunities for adolescent development (Blomfield & Barber, 2009), such as peer relations, appropriate social conduct, and basic skills for academic achievement (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012). Students' academic achievements are the basis of most of the curricular outcomes that teachers use to evaluate students' success. However, it is becoming increasingly important that students have opportunities to learn much more than just the curricular outcomes. Adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, greater character development, greater social development, and a greater sense of the importance of community involvement.

## Academic Achievement

Students who participate in extracurricular activities experience higher levels of academic achievement. These effects have been researched since the early 1930s (Shulruf, Tumen, & Tolley, 2007). Students who participate frequently in extracurricular activities tend to have higher grades, better test scores, and more positive educational experiences in general (Fredricks, 2011). For example, participation in extracurricular activities is associated with a 2% increase in math and science test scores (Lipscomb, 2007, p. 470). Furthermore, students involved in activities have a 10% increase in their expectations of attaining a college degree, as compared to non-participants (Lipscomb, 2007, p. 470). Therefore, students should be encouraged to participate in such activities throughout their school years.

Adolescents practise skills while participating in the extracurricular activities that contribute to their academic success. First, through organized games, students learn to follow instructions. They learn to listen to instructions and apply them to achieve a desired outcome. Second, also through organized activities, students learn the importance of persistence and motivation (Fredricks, 2011). They understand that accomplishing goals often requires focus and hard work. Third, students learn goal setting and problem solving (Wormington, Henderlong Corpus, & Anderson, 2012). Following instructions, persistence, motivation, goal setting, and problem solving are all skills that are acquired during extracurricular activity participation and that transfer to students' academic success.

The type of extracurricular activity participated in has different effects on students' academic success. For example, students who participate in athletic clubs tend to have increased math and science (Lipscomb, 2007) and literacy (Shulruf et al., 2007) scores. Extracurricular participation in arts and crafts also results in higher academic scores and better working skills (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2011). Additionally, participation in academic clubs yields higher academic attainment (Shulruf, 2010). Understanding how participation in a variety of different

activities affects academic achievement can help educators to assist students in achieving their specific academic goals.

### **Character Development**

Participating in extracurricular activities contributes to adolescents' character development. Students who participate in extracurricular activities report higher levels of self-concept and self-worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009). They also have opportunities to develop personal interests and discover their strengths and weaknesses (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008), which is especially important during the adolescent stage of self-exploration (Knifesend & Graham, 2012). Building students' self-concept and character development will encourage confidence, which will inspire students to be comfortable being unique individuals.

Many of the character-building skills common to extracurricular activities are needed in the workplace, but are not regularly evaluated and practised in the classroom (Lipscomb, 2007). First, students develop time management skills (Burgess, 2013). They learn to prioritize and use time effectively. Second, students build leadership skills (Barnett, 2008) that will support their success in post-secondary institutions and lifelong careers. Students who possess leadership skills are more likely to become managers and earn a higher salary than students who do not (Lipscomb, 2007). Third, students learn to accept constructive criticism (Mckeyane, 2013), which is a skill required for intellectual and personal growth. Lastly, students have higher levels of self-confidence (Strapp & Farr, 2010) and resiliency (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). The participation in extracurricular activities builds students' time management skills, leadership skills, self-confidence, resiliency, and ability to accept constructive criticism, which are all components important to character development.

The type of extracurricular activity affects different components of character development. Students who participate in academic clubs build leadership skills, whereas students who participate in athletic clubs develop problem-solving skills (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Students who contribute time performing in the arts record higher levels of positive self-development (Metsapelo & Pulkkinen, 2012) and greater engagement in the school environment (Knifesend & Graham, 2012). Participation in both academic and athletic activities results in higher levels of self-worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009). Increasing students' levels of self-worth creates a feeling of connectedness to their learning environment, which enhances their motivation to grow academically and personally. Understanding which character development skills are practised by participating in specific extracurricular activities can guide students to improve precise areas of self-awareness.

### **Social Development**

Participating in extracurricular activities is beneficial to students' social development. Group activities build team-work and communication skills, which are necessary for success in the workforce and other future endeavors. Students are continually looking for a greater sense of belonging (Knifesend & Graham, 2012). Belonging to extracurricular groups is important for "providing access to the relationships and networks that influence positive outcomes for students" (Shulruf, 2010, p. 595). Group activities provide opportunities for students to build connections with others who have similar interests and goals, which will increase their motivation to commit long term to an activity that also increases enjoyment. Also, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to connect with positive social groups that influence students to avoid negative life choices (Veltz & Shakib, 2013). In addition to building peer relationships, participation in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for students to build relationships with supportive adults (Fredricks, 2011). Having a mentor is crucial for students who do not have adult support and guidance in their lives. Participating in extracurricular activities builds adolescents' social skills by creating a sense of belonging, building positive

networks of friends, and building relationships with supportive adults.

Different types of extracurricular activities have differential social skill benefits. Group activities build teamwork skills, communication skills, and relationship skills, but individual activities build independence and stimulate motivation (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012). Participation in either type of activity provides a sense of belonging to the school environment, which enhances their engagement in school. Engagement correlates with students' academic and social success (Wormington et al., 2012). Participating in extracurricular activities builds teamwork, communication, relationships, and a sense of belonging, all of which help students to develop socially and be successful in school.

### **Community Involvement**

Participation in extracurricular activities demonstrates the importance of community involvement. Students need more exposure to the whole community rather than the smaller school network (Gatto, 2005), and participating in extracurricular activities creates a network between individuals and their community, including the elderly and the working class (Gatto, 2005). Students can learn the importance of giving back to the community and helping those in need. Students are also more likely to volunteer in their community after high school if they participate in extracurricular activities during adolescence (Barber, Mueller, & Ogata, 2013). These activities generate a sense of belonging to the community as a whole (Barber et al., 2013), which inspires them to be contributing members of society.

Certain types of extracurricular activities encourage more community involvement than others. Participation in clubs that focus on community involvement, such as community service groups, give students into how it feels to give back to the community. Clubs that provide entertainment encourage community members to attend and support the event, such as a sports game or a school play. These events foster relationships between schools, students, and community members such as students' parents and friends. Students who have parents and peers who are engaged in the community are more likely to volunteer themselves (Barber et al., 2013). Encouraging students to participate in community-based extracurricular activities will create opportunities for students to experience the benefits of community involvement.

### **Conclusion**

Participating in extracurricular activities benefits students' personal and academic success. First, students who participate in extracurricular activities have greater levels of academic achievement. Second, extracurricular participation supports students' character development by giving them skills required for personal success, such as leadership skills, time-management skills, and the ability to accept constructive criticism. Third, extracurricular participation raises students' self-esteem and resiliency. Additionally, participation in extracurricular activities cultivates social development. Lastly, participating in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for students to experience the importance of community involvement. Understanding the benefits of extracurricular activities can help students to identify which activities to participate in, in order to support their academic and personal development.

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# The Importance of Students' Learning French as a Second Language

Kyla McDonald

## Abstract

*Being bilingual is advantageous in almost all aspects of life. Bilingualism positively and permanently alters the mind and the brain. Being bilingual is more rewarding than being monolingual due to superior communication skills, enhanced executive functions, a delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease, and contributions to the Canadian economy. Learning a second language is the doorway to a child's future, and encouraging our youth to sustain their bilingualism or become bilingual is a necessary investment in our nation's future.*

Does being bilingual shape the mind? For years, the negative consequences of bilingualism were emphasized, including a warning to parents that speaking two languages created mental deficiency in children (Bernal, 1983). In 1962, Peal and Lambert offered a profoundly different answer; they revealed that bilingual (French- and English-speaking) children in Montreal surpassed monolingual (English-speaking only) children in a variety of areas. The majority of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual (Marian & Shook, 2012), and research shows that being bilingual is advantageous (Bialystok & Craik; Flores & Soto, 2012; Tucker, 1999). The importance of having students learn French as a second language can be explained through two key components: how speaking a second language immeasurably enhances one's livelihood and opportunities, and the practical implications of being and becoming bilingual.

## Enhanced Livelihood and Opportunities

Learning a second language is the doorway to a child's future. Having the command of more than one language not only improves the brain's ability to focus, but physically changes the mind, resulting in a stronger, more creative thought process (Roitman, 2013). The capability to speak both English and French positively alters the mind and the brain (Marian & Shook, 2012), enriching bilinguals' lives in key areas: superior communication (Roitman, 2013), an enhanced executive function (Luo, Craik, Moreno, & Bialystok, 2012), a delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease (Craik, Bialystok, & Freedman, 2010), and benefits to the Canadian economy (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013).

## Superior Communication

Some companies spend a great deal of money boosting their employees' communication skills. Good communicators increase a company's productivity, global business opportunities, positive relationships, and employee morale (Johnson, 2013). These factors translate into dollars and success, which all businesses strive for. There are close ties between a country's economic growth and the country's cognitive skills (Hanushek, 2011). How, exactly, is knowing more than one language beneficial? While engaging in oral dialogue in one's first language, it is rare to consider the grammatical structures of the native tongue (Roitman, 2013). Learning a second language brings these grammatical structures to the forefront, as the focus suddenly shifts to the order of words, verb tenses, and parts of speech. Bilinguals are not only stronger oral communicators, but also better listeners.

Communication includes both conveying words and listening attentively. The ability to listen closely is a valuable skill that can translate into a real dollar value (Roitman, 2013). Bilingual individuals of all ages can better attend to a speaker and ignore distracting stimuli, resulting in one who can focus better on what a client, boss, or employee is saying (Bialystok, Craik, Green, & Gollan, 2009; Luo et al., 2012; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008). The bilingual benefit has more

do to with an attentional advantage in selectivity and inhibition than with metalinguistic knowledge (Bialystok & Craik, 2010).

As a beginning French language learner, I placed, out of necessity, one hundred percent of my auditory attention on the speaker's words. My vision was focused solely on the French speaker's mouth. At first, the inability to focus on anything except the speaker struck me as bizarre. Eventually, I found myself transferring this skill to communications in the English language. I was soon able to tune out distractions and focus sole attention on the speaker in both French and English conversations, an operation of the executive function – the centre responsible for managing the brain's cognitive abilities and processes such as attention and inhibition (Marian & Shook, 2012).

### **Enhanced Executive Functions**

Bilingualism increases one's ability to focus when distractions are present, to decide between differing alternatives, and to disregard irrelevant information (Schwartz, 2011). Having the command of more than one language also keeps executive functions more efficient (Bialystok et al., 2009; Craik et al., 2010; Luo et al., 2012). Bilinguals are faster than monolinguals in both conflict and congruent conditions, and demonstrate advantages in task switching, another role executive functions play (Luo et al., 2012). Being bilingual does not simply change the way neurological structures process information, but it also may alter the neurological structures themselves (Marian & Shook, 2012). Martin-Rhee & Bialystok (2008) conducted a study involving bilingual and monolingual children and their performances on the Simon task. The results were conclusive: the increased ability to focus that is maintained by bilingualism positively influences the lifelong development of executive functions.

To maintain a balance between two languages, a bilingual's brain relies on executive functioning. Bivalent representations, for bilinguals, offer differing, potentially competing response options (Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008). Bilinguals manage these conflicts by attending to the relevant language system and ignoring the nonessential system to ensure fluent speech. Bilinguals solve tasks that require an individual to select one of two differentiating stimuli more efficiently than monolinguals (Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008). The Simon task was used by Martin-Rhee & Bialystok (2008) to examine the differences in executive functioning between monolingual and bilingual adults (aged 20-80 years old): "In the study with middle-aged and older participants . . . the bilinguals performed better than monolinguals in all conditions and the size of the advantage increased with age, indicating a less severe decline in performance with aging for the bilinguals" (p. 82). The constant exercise of attention required by executive functions, across the lifespan, leads to the advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals (Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008). I have been involved in a considerable number of experiences acting as a translator for those wishing to converse, but who could otherwise not due to a language barrier. The ability to switch between languages as circumstances dictate, when frequently exercised throughout one's life, keeps executive functions strong (Bialystok et al., 2009; Craik et al., 2010; Luo et al., 2012).

### **Delayed Onset of Alzheimer's Disease**

Research presents differences regarding when monolinguals and bilinguals are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Craik et al. (2010) conducted a study involving over two hundred monolingual and bilingual participants. Though there is evidence that executive functions are protected against age-related dementias through a variety of factors, the relation is unclear "whether intellectual, social, and physical activities genuinely improve cognitive performance, or whether individuals with better-functioning brains (perhaps for genetic reasons) are more likely to perform well intellectually and are also protected naturally against the onset of dementia" (Craik et al., p. 1726). Most bilinguals speak two languages because of circumstances that



require it, not because they are naturally gifted language learners (Craik et al.). Craik et al.'s study revealed that bilingual patients were diagnosed with Alzheimer's 4.3 years later than their monolingual counterparts; bilinguals reported the onset of Alzheimer symptoms 5.1 years later than the monolingual patients (p. 1726).

A follow-up study by Schweizer, Ware, Fischer, Craik, & Bialystok (2012) compared the brains of bilinguals and monolinguals, matched on the severity of Alzheimer symptoms. In regions commonly associated with Alzheimer's disease, the brains of bilingual participants showed a notable increase in physical degeneration; yet bilinguals performed on par developmentally, even though the amount of brain damage suggested bilinguals' symptoms should be more advanced (Schweizer et al., 2012). Schweizer et al. (2012) concluded what many researchers had already discovered: lifelong bilingualism protects against the onset of Alzheimer's disease (Craik et al., 2010; Luo et al., 2012; Bialystok et al., 2009). Due to more stable executive functions, a delay of bilinguals' symptoms of Alzheimer's disease four years after their monolingual counterparts is far greater than any effect associated with drugs (Craik, et al., 2010). This delay of symptoms represents extensive savings in health care costs (Bialystok & Craik, 2010).

### **Benefits to the Canadian Economy**

Proficiency in both French and English is a large factor for Canadian employers. Bilingualism fosters connections with French-speaking nations abroad (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013), and translates into a real dollar value: higher achieving persons have an increased lifetime income (Hanushek, 2011). Canadian employers intentionally seek bilingual candidates (Roitman, 2013), as trade with French-speaking countries boosts the Canadian economy (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Trade volumes with French-speaking countries would be significantly reduced if not for the 30% of Canadians, mostly residents of Quebec and New Brunswick, who speak French (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013, p. 24). In 2011, "bilingual Canada's" locations (Quebec and New Brunswick) exported 2.7 billion dollars to countries that designate French as an official language, while imports from these countries totaled 9.3 billion dollars (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013, p. 24). If "bilingual Canada's" trade with French-speaking countries was applied to "less bilingual Canada's" locations (all provinces and territories except Quebec and New Brunswick), exports to French-speaking countries and imports from French-speaking countries would have been just 1.1 billion dollars and 2.1 billion dollars, respectively, in 2011 (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013, p. 24). In 2011, "bilingual Canada's" proficiency in French boosted trade by approximately 8.5 billion dollars (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013, p. 36), fostering connections with French-speaking nations).

My current position as a Basic French teacher provides a clear indication of the need for French-speaking individuals. My employer conveyed to me, upon being successfully hired, the item that most set my resume apart from the rest of the job applicants was my ability to speak French. I received a permanent teaching contract the year following graduation with my education degree, an accomplishment practically unheard of in my school division. I am confident that my bilingualism increased my employability. Having the command of more than one language has been linked to reaching a universal diligence that opens the consciousness to broader worldviews of the way of life (Schwartz, 2011).

Cognitive processes are heavily dependent on linguistic abilities (Bialystok & Craik, 2010). Bilinguals' lives are enriched in many aspects: superior communication (Roitman, 2013), enhanced executive functions (Luo et al., 2012), a delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease (Craik et al., 2010), and benefits to the Canadian economy (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). These assets, and the reality that many Anglophones outside Quebec do not retain their bilingualism as they age (Statistics Canada, 2013), have serious implications in a school-based setting.

## Practical Implications of Bilingualism

Exposing learners to our province's French culture and providing them with the opportunity to learn French are key components in preserving Manitoba's heritage. Developing French-speaking individuals who are aware of the French culture fosters lifelong investment in these students' education and self-esteem, in addition to other measures in which bilinguals' lives are enriched through language diversity. In the two decades prior to 2011, the number of Basic French students in Canada decreased by 24%, and the number of schools that offered Basic French programs was reduced by 9% (Statistics Canada, 2013, p. 4). To ensure successful language learning experiences for Anglophones, with the ultimate goal being fluency in French and English, educators must foster students' confidence, success, and motivation; and have high quality teachers in every French classroom.

For the past decade, the Brandon School Division (BSD) has been involved in efforts to increase French-speaking capabilities within its middle years students (grades 4 to 8). The BSD currently has 3,300 students enrolled in middle years, and approximately 70% are enrolled in the Basic French Program (D. Guernieau, personal communication, November 1, 2013). In the BSD's English-speaking schools, students in grades 4 through 6 must participate in Basic French; students in grades 7 and 8 can choose whether they wish to participate in the Basic French program. The number of students in the BSD who choose to participate in Basic French has decreased by 9% since 2010, despite efforts to foster students' confidence, success, and motivation; and to have high quality teachers in every French classroom.

While we readily comprehend the extensive benefits of bilingualism, a further question arises: how can educators encourage students to learn both English and French? Laing (2011) extensively researched factors influencing student motivation in the French language classroom. Her work is straightforward, yet profound. Students learning French may experience a lack of confidence and thus struggle to find meaning in their study of French (Laing, 2001). Learners must believe that they are capable of performing a task in order to make an attempt; learners who believe that they are incapable are unwilling to make an attempt, as they believe doing so will reveal their inadequacies. When students experience achievement, the likelihood of a positive self-concept increases, encouraging continued success (Laing, 2011). Students who experience a sense of satisfaction from their learning are motivated in further accomplishments – the cyclical process of confidence, success, and motivation results. Exceptional teachers aim to create high motivation in their students. Every classroom should have a high quality teacher (Hanushek, 2011).

Students who have above-average teachers achieve more (Hanushek, 2011). Teachers in successful language education programs are well trained and have cultural competence and high subject-matter knowledge (Tucker, 1999). Whether it is their first or second language, quality teachers must be able to understand, speak, and proficiently use the language of instruction. My gains in confidence, success, and motivation surrounding her French abilities began well after high school graduation.

My experiences in secondary school were with, often at no fault of their own, unmotivated or uneducated French instructors. During the first year of my Bachelor of Education degree, I registered for a weekend course with two middle-aged, male French professors. These men were among the most energetic, lively, determined teachers I had encountered, and they soon surpassed my beginning French teachers in merit. They were passionate about the language and what they taught. I began to enjoy the challenge of learning French as never before; I became motivated to learn.

Now, five short years later, I am an entertaining and tenacious Basic French teacher who holds very high expectations for each of my students. Following my first teaching year, a returning student approached me. The student shared that during the summer he traveled to Montreal with his family. He was shocked, not only by the amount of French he could comprehend in conversations with Québécois, but by his ability to actually converse in French!

The student thanked me profusely, but I ensured him that he alone was responsible for his own successes. I had simply motivated the student to learn.

In addition to other measures in which bilinguals' lives are enriched by speaking French and English, developing French-speaking individuals who are aware of the French culture fosters lifelong investments in these students' education and self-esteem. The number of bilinguals in Canada has consistently increased during the past 60 years, with the exception of the decade prior to the 2011 census (Statistics Canada, 2013, p. 6). We need consistent increases in this demographic while ensuring positive French language learning experiences for Anglophones through the development of students' confidence, success, and motivation; and high quality teachers in every French classroom.

### Conclusion

As a bilingual, the boundaries of my life are infinitely more extensive. I strongly believe in the social and cultural benefits of speaking more than one language. Researchers have proved repeatedly that being bilingual is more rewarding than being monolingual (Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Flores & Soto, 2012; Tucker, 1999), because of superior communication skills (Roitman, 2013), enhanced executive functions (Luo et al., 2012), a delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease (Craik et al., 2010), and contributions to the Canadian economy (The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Encouraging youth, our future, to sustain their bilingualism or become bilingual, fosters lifelong investment in these students.

While it is evident that there are dramatic benefits to speaking more than one language (Roitman, 2013), such as an enhanced thinking process (Luo et al., 2012), much remains unsolved surrounding language learning. Intriguing questions arise: How exactly does bilingualism change the brain, and which aspects of these changes protect the onset of Alzheimer's disease? Is being trilingual further advantageous? Do the languages spoken reveal greater benefits depending on their similarity (such as Italian and Spanish) or dissimilarity (such as English and Japanese)? Does it suffice to speak two languages from the teenage years onward, or must one be bilingual from infancy to experience the most benefits? Many questions remain for future studies.

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## Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge within Student Supports: Elder-in-Residence Position

Jerilyn Ducharme

### **Abstract**

*Student supports are most effective when they are tailored to meet the needs of the student body. Aboriginal students comprise a particularly vulnerable Canadian student body, given the gap that remains between non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students in regards to completion rates. Aboriginal student retention remains problematic despite mandates to be culturally inclusive in the classroom, and the inclusion of language credit options, Aboriginally focused curricula, and culturally appropriate resources. As educators, part of our complex role includes finding creative ways to engage and support our students. One way to assist educators in engaging Aboriginal students within the school community is to have an Elder in residence who could work with both staff and students.*

Given the inter-generational trauma of the Residential School system, locations of First Nations communities, poverty, mobility, and socio-economic factors, it is not surprising that, at present, Aboriginal peoples are struggling to complete high school or post-secondary education. The addition of an Elder-in-Residence position would assist education centres in dealing with many of the challenges that Aboriginal learners face through addressing students' spiritual needs, mentoring and promoting cultural awareness, and enhancing the incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives.

Within First Nations communities, Elders are respected, older members of the community who are often active members of council, advisors, healers, and teachers. For Aboriginal peoples, the term *Elder* can have many meanings, and an Elder can have many roles. Stiegelbauer (1996) explained how a person is given the title as follows: "Elders are not born, they are not appointed, they emerge as the sum total of the experiences of life, they are a state of being" (p. 50). In most cases, an older person in the community is considered an Elder based upon his/her life experiences and how he/she has reconnected with traditions, culture, and the community. It is through life experiences, what the person has learned, and how he/she has returned to traditional ways to continue on the journey and share knowledge through a commitment of helping others that qualifies a person as an Elder (Stiegelbauer). Each Elder has his/her own area of expertise and may be sought out for specific roles. Currently in education, western-based practices are dominating modes used for teaching and supporting learners. However, this system is failing Aboriginal learners, and new methods and supports must be explored to assist Aboriginal learners to complete their educational goals.

At the Aboriginal Community Campus<sup>2</sup> in Winnipeg, Manitoba, administration and staff are aware of the complex issues that many Aboriginal peoples face, and provide additional services to assist adult students. Currently, the campus provides support through housing, day-care, advocacy, literacy, mature diploma programming, student support liaisons, employment, and post-secondary education counselling. As well, students can be referred to, and access additional supports on site including two Elders. Despite the many supports education centres provide, there remains a holistic aspect in education centres, which continues to be unaddressed. The addition of an Elder-in-Residence position would provide education centres

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<sup>2</sup> The author of this article is the Assistant Director of Education at the Aboriginal Community Campus in Winnipeg. The information that she discloses about this Adult Education Centre derives from her first-hand knowledge of this Aboriginal campus.

with a wealth of Indigenous knowledge and help to reach the goal of providing a holistic education to students.

There are a variety of reasons for adult education centres to include an Elder-in-Residence position in their facility. First, Aboriginal peoples make up 4.3% of the Canadian population, which amounts to over one million Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Government of Canada, 2011, Discussion section, para. 1). The rising population of Aboriginal peoples suggests that services such as educational institutions must prepare for an influx of Aboriginal students in the near future. Second, since the signing of the Constitution Act and the numbered Treaties, the Federal Government of Canada has claimed responsibility for Aboriginal peoples, including their education. Education is also a provincial, territorial, and First Nations responsibility. The Federal government is responsible for First Nations elementary and secondary education on reserves, managed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Simeone, 2011). Although the provinces and territories are responsible for Aboriginal education through educational programs, departments and schools, for delivery of education to those off reserve, First Nations authorities will gain more control over First Nations education through the proposed First Nations Control over First Nations Education Act, Bill-C-33 (Government of Canada, 2014). Because education is a joint responsibility, there are many issues that all parties cannot agree upon, which hinder the progress, development, maintenance, and success of educational programs. Third, the majority of people who do not complete high school enter the work force instead of continuing some form of adult education. This lack of education has created problems because not enough skilled Aboriginal tradespeople or professionals are entering and contributing to the workforce (Sharpe, Arsenault, & Lapointe, 2007). Education is by far the most important determinant of labour market outcomes, and also plays a preeminent role improving social outcomes.

The state of Aboriginal education affects not just Aboriginal peoples, but everyone, and is an issue that cannot be easily remedied. For current educators, it is difficult to understand the possible underlying issues that may be affecting their Aboriginal students. Issues such as academic success, lack of preparation, time, commitment by schools, students or families, or perhaps a lack of cross-cultural training, curriculum, and student supports may be affecting Aboriginal students' completion of high school and post-secondary education. There remains much racism in the current education system within institutions, curriculum, training, languages, accessibility, and assessment processes, as well as scepticism and avoidance on the part of educators to be culturally inclusive to Aboriginal students (Neeganagwedgin, 2013). Many in the field of education believe that incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum is a way of catering to one cultural group while ignoring the multicultural environment of the classroom (St. Denis, 2011). Nevertheless, including Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum is necessary to address a variety of issues.

The addition of an Elder-in-Residence position complements many of the recommendations that have been outlined in reports and in provincial legislation. In 1972, administrative powers were given to First Nations authorities after the National Indian Brotherhood (Assembly of Aboriginal peoples) published a report entitled, *Indian Control over Indian Education*, and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development accepted the report and took steps to initiate an Aboriginal education action plan (Antone, 2010). Following the release of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) report in 1990, it became apparent that Aboriginal people's issues, including education, were in dire need of solutions, as little was being accomplished despite various programs and initiatives.

The key issues as initially stated in the RCAP report were repeated in the 2002 report, *Our Children: Keepers of Sacred Knowledge*, released by the Minister's National Working Group on Education. The report stated a need to grant more authority to Aboriginal peoples and assist in the development of programs and organizations, with adequate funding and resources for these programs. There were recommendations to acknowledge, protect, and incorporate Indigenous knowledge in education by all levels of government.

In the 2002 report, there was a strong recommendation for more Elder, family, and community involvement in decision making, planning, and implementing education. As well, the report acknowledged the need to create more early childhood development programs and special needs programs, resources and services, and an increased need for more gifted education research, programs, and funding within Aboriginal education. Teacher recruitment, training, and retention must include more cultural training to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into curricula and planning. Lastly, this report noted that post-secondary education needs to be more accessible to Aboriginal students and the issue of racism in educational institutions needs to be addressed (Minister's National Working Group on Education, 2002). Many of these recommendations parallel the role of an Elder-in-Residence position in education centres.

The Aboriginal Community Campus, for example, has designed its supports and programs with many of the above recommendations in mind. The majority of the student population on campus is of Aboriginal descent, and have reported struggled as youth academically and with various other complex issues such as poverty, violence, addictions, mental illness, learning disabilities, health issues, single parenting, inadequate affordable housing, lack of transportation, legal issues, and language barriers. Just as incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum is crucial, incorporating Indigenous knowledge in student support services, preferably by means of an Elder in Residence, is also necessary for education centres.

Support services currently in place, such as the Student Support Liaison position or Student Counsellor as currently available in many schools, are invaluable in assisting with advocacy, counselling, guidance, resources, post-secondary guidance, employment counselling, referrals, and attendance reporting. Because many of these duties are part of a more Western, contemporary approach to student support, there remains a major component of adopting a holistic approach to education that remains unaddressed, which is spirituality. An Elder has the prerequisite experience to address this neglected area in a holistic approach to education.

Elders are carriers and teachers of Indigenous knowledge, which has been defined in a variety of ways throughout history. Through the lens of a Eurocentric, imperialist view, Indigenous knowledge was considered folklore, devalued, and considered inferior to Western knowledge and methods (Neeganagwedgin, 2013). As more Aboriginal scholars have emerged and more fields of study have become interested in Indigenous knowledge, there is now a resurgence of validation of Indigenous knowledge and traditional learning structures (Battiste, 2005). Some of the challenges facing Aboriginal education in Canada are the incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, proper supports, and engaging Aboriginal students.

In a study conducted by Friedel (2011), Aboriginal youth took part in a place-based study that connected Aboriginal youth with ancestral lands. An Elder was used to transmit traditional knowledge about land and uses, which engaged the students who, in turn, developed a sense of community with their peers. Attempts to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum without Elder participation are destined to fail, as there is no cultural understanding of the complexity of Aboriginal history or cultures.

Indigenous knowledge, or traditional knowledge that Elders possess, is information passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, Indigenous knowledge is community based in the sense that everything is connected and learning is gained through the experiences of interactions amongst family, friends, community, spirits, the land, animals, or plant life (Little Bear, 2009). In education there is room for Indigenous knowledge because it complements educational practices in the sense of building classroom communities in which students learn collectively.

Elders have a variety of methods of gaining, transmitting and sharing knowledge, which may include storytelling, ceremonies, medicines, beliefs, traditions, art, dance, music, languages, or skill and personal gift development. This information is considered necessary for an individual, so that he or she may learn to live a balanced life. Traditional knowledge is often based upon some form of the Medicine Wheel, depending on cultural beliefs. The basic concept of the wheel

is that an individual must find balance in four basic areas of the self: spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. Numerous teachings are contained within the Medicine Wheel, which provides a person, including many Elders, with a holistic framework by which to live one's life.

The difference between a holistic approach that an Elder would use and a Western approach is that traditional Aboriginal peoples look beyond just the physical self, while Western cultures believe in meeting one's own physical needs in order for a person to develop in a healthy manner. There is little recognition of meeting spiritual needs in a scientific framework; instead, there is a focus on meeting physical and psychological needs. In relation to education, adult education centres provide a student with the basic needs; however, little, if anything is done to nurture students' spiritual needs.

An Elder-in-Residence would provide students with culturally appropriate supports, including addressing spirituality, which has been greatly contested in being included in education (Neeganagwedgin, 2013). However, Indigenous knowledge and learning is a spiritual process that cannot be separated from one or the other (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). In education, is not necessarily the inclusion of spirituality into the curriculum that is required, but the approaches educators use in their teaching methods. An Elder would teach staff new holistic methods of instruction in order to engage Aboriginal students. Elder programs validate Aboriginal ways of knowing and put an Aboriginal person front and centre as the knower, thereby privileging an Aboriginal perspective by an Aboriginal person.

Similarly, as in the Medicine Wheel, the four aspects of a person must be in balance with one another for a person to live a healthy, fulfilling life. Education focuses on the mental and physical aspects, while the emotional and spiritual aspects are often neglected. An Elder can provide spiritual guidance and assist Aboriginal students to reconnect emotionally with themselves and their cultural identity. Through ceremony, story-telling, counselling, cultural teachings, feasting, and medicines, an Elder would be able to identify a student's spiritual needs, whereas a student support liaison, or counsellor, may not feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough in Indigenous traditions and practices.

Through mentoring, an Elder would guide a student and act as a positive role model in regards to living a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Many adult Aboriginal learners carry adult problems that hinder the continuation of their education and goals. An Elder would teach staff and students how to balance their lives and strengthen the sense of community on campus. Through classroom teachings, workshops, or ceremonies, an Elder would provide the time and space for staff and students to incorporate spirituality and cultural teachings into their lives as part of their education experience. By building upon the strength of the campus community and incorporating cultural activities, an Elder would strengthen staff and student relations, which would assist in the retention of students and help students to become engaged in the learning process.

Students are more engaged in their learning process when they feel a connection to their teachers as well as a connection to the materials being taught. Despite new resources and materials available that incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into curricula, there remains disengagement, or a lack of cultural awareness, on the part of educators. An Elder-in-Residence would bridge this gap for instructors, by providing staff with a sense of cultural awareness that would be passed onto students in the classroom and at campus events.

In a study conducted by Stewart (2013), Aboriginal counsellors and clients were interviewed about promoting Indigenous mental health and healing when counselling Aboriginal clients. Having a strong sense of cultural identity was considered a crucial means for a person to attain and maintain mental health, and the act of finding and strengthening that identity was part of the healing process. As in counselling, education provides a platform in which students learn new concepts, which alter their concept of self and their identities. Elders can teach instructors to be sensitive and aware of the type of cultural identity that they are building in their classrooms.

An Elder who understands the broad worldview of Aboriginal peoples would be able to work with staff to explore this worldview. In turn, an instructor who understands the complexities of



Aboriginal cultures would have a better understanding of how to adapt course materials to create more culturally appropriate resources and teaching methods. As a result, adult Aboriginal learners would feel more comfortable and experience a sense of belonging, which would help them to engage more in the materials and campus community (Wotherspoon, 1998).

Because many Adult Aboriginal learners have complex issues to deal with on a daily basis, it is necessary to provide culturally appropriate student supports in education centres. Through the addition of an Elder-in-Residence position, provisions for student support would be made by the Elder through the sharing of his or her Indigenous knowledge with staff and students alike, which would build upon students' sense of cultural identity and connectedness to the campus community and community at large.

The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum is but one step toward the reformation of education for Aboriginal peoples. Providing culturally appropriate student supports, such as an Elder in residence, is also necessary to support, develop, and nurture not just adult Aboriginal learners, but all Aboriginal students.

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# A Journey into Wonder

Patricia Baker

## Abstract

*This article explores the author's own learning experiences as a holistic learner. She describes the journey that she underwent in order to enhance her capacity for action in her chosen field of learning. She pursued her interests in the knowledge generated by her academic society, and it affected her individually. She demonstrates recognition of a cognitive construct or world view as the foundation of learning and self-improvement. Her personal constructs were deepened as she came to a fuller understanding of herself. This retrospective essay describes her lived experience of the development of her personal construct of motivation, research, and the mind.*

The journey began September 18, 2013, when a holistic learner awoke from slumber to rid her writing of the dead flies that cause the ointment of her apothecary to send forth a stinking savour (Ec. 10:1, King James Version). This learner put away her childish things (1 Cor.13:11) and embraced a new adventure. Seeing writing errors as the “leaven that leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6), she longed to eradicate these errors so “that when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:10) and she could be let to “keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8). Holding true to her holistic learning approach – critical, confident, and independent – she pursued her own self-improvement (Patel, 2003). Adopting Kolb’s (1985) convergent learning style (as cited in Terry, 2013), Learner<sup>3</sup> researched motivation and other areas impacted by educational research, and ended up in the fascinating functions of the mind. Learner embraced the experiential knowledge of her adventure, trusting that convergent thinking and doing were embedded in her understanding of the truth as revealed to her by her relationship with God.

## Convergent Learning Style

The cognitive process of a convergent learner involved a step-by-step approach, applying external regulations, and accessing expert instruction, in order to advance through higher level thinking to connect with the truth while being engaged in the process of doing what could be done. Learner was determined to depend on cognitive rather than emotional skills, to tackle problems by relying on her Christian cognitive moral development of “right” or truth as described by Kohlberg in his Stage 6, Moral Stages of Development Theory (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977), and to experiment in order to find practical applications and solutions to her writing problems (Di Muro & Terry, 2007). She worked through the process of applying theory and abstract conventionalization in order to arrive at the best solutions. Using well-defined conceptual systems, rigorous analysis, and systematic planning, she manipulated abstract symbols and performed qualitative analysis (Richmond & Cummings, 2005). She engaged in tasks that involved logical investigation and the application of ideas and concepts. Her whole process of convergent learning was focused on truth and perfection through guided cognitive processing.

Learner is a Christian. Her Christian World View is a compilation of all of her perceptions of the world. It is the core set of values and principles through which her world is understood. This world view has brought her into a relationship she is not willing to sacrifice, a relationship she would die for. If a cognitive connection is made between what she is experiencing and her Christian world view, then what she is presented with will become part of her cognitive construct. The event will be processed. It will be have meaning and significance, and will become part of her higher level learning. This connecting process is founded on her relationship

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the author uses “Learner” as a proper noun name to identify herself throughout the article.

and is essentially the way she understands reality. It impacts virtually every decision in her life. Learner is self-aware and in tune with her inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes. She is a reflective, metacognitive learner. She documents her learning processes. Prayer and the relationship that is the foundation of Christian prayer creates and governs Learner's world view. This is how she learns, develops and matures. Learner exemplifies Gardner's Existential and Intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Learner's interpersonal social bucket needed filling, but this could not be done in isolation (McCloud, 2011). She required connections with others. She needed community in order for her cognitive connections to live out its authority in her. As she worked in her chosen profession of teaching, she engaged herself and others in problem-solving processes that revealed world views. She found that the Christian world view "was sharper than any two edged sword and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:11-13). When confronted with problems, the Christian principles that governed relationships held true. Words of truth had authority, and her words improved. Learner learned advanced writing and self-editing skills. When she had completed her university course, she was more adept at using the word of truth in a manner that could be conveyed through the APA writing style. She was more able to conduct electronic searches and evaluate scholarly publications. She had improved in her ability to synthesize information and write with mastery. Though she still saw through a glass darkly, she continued to press toward the mark of the high calling of one who seeks to wield the word, filling her bucket with sincerity and truth, venturing forth on this road to academia.

Being free to choose, she had flexibility to take on different learning styles depending upon the context in which she found herself. In different circumstances, she adapted her learning style to whatever style worked best. Paul said, "I am made all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). Learner knew that through the process of providing diversified instruction, in response to the needs of her classroom students, she could adopt various learning styles in order to make connections and assist individuals with their learning process. This type of flexibility can lead to more "integrative development and perhaps greater personal fulfillment, better work life balance and a broader more holistic perspective on the world" (Taylor & Francis, 2011, p. 74). Moreover, students who use the convergent learning style have expressed greater satisfaction in courses taught online (Richmond & Cummings, 2005). Learner's own Graduate Scholarly Writing was a distance education university course that required thinking, doing, and problem solving. Therefore, in the cognitive pursuit for sincerity and truth and in the interest of development and fulfillment, she chose to embrace the convergent learning style, took up arms against those "dead flies," and was determined to resolve, once and for all, her writing problems.

It was not long before the holistic Learner who had adopted a convergent learning style discovered that her journey, the journey that she thought might be at an end, had hardly begun. Her writing had improved, but when it came to mastering the intricacies of the APA style, conducting electronic searches, evaluating scholarly publications, synthesizing information, or writing with mastery, she found that she had just started. From where she was, she had only a cloudy view of the mountains that she would need to climb. Before Learner could move on, she would have to maneuver some steep learning that held deep crevices created by her void in the understanding of commas and spaces. Her electronic searches had become intriguing distractions that uncovered fascinating groves of information. She got lost for hours indulging in the fruits of other travelers' studies, only to be left with her own work undone. Eventually all of these paths led back to her own path, where the air was fresh and there arose from within an excitement that energized and compelled her to continue.

### **Understanding Motivation**

Learner's path led her to the land of motivation. Her first stop was at Anderman and Dawson (2011), who resided in a subdivision of compilations written by leading researchers and experts on the science of learning and instruction. Learner read Anderman and Dawson's behavioral

overview and theoretical framework, followed by current trends and issues, practical implications, and future directions. They gave Learner a comprehensive review of the empirical research and clearly communicated that motivation is complex. Although instructional practices, social context, and instructional decisions are determinants, these researchers concluded that the most meaningful motivation emanates from students' goals, values, abilities, and beliefs.

Learner's second stop in motivation was at a refurbished Bloom's taxonomy. Here, in a perspective on learning, Forehand (2012) reviewed the history of Bloom's taxonomy. He explained the terminology and highlighted the revisions that had been made to this taxonomy. Forehand focused on the cognitive domain. He drew Learner's attention to the terminology changes and structural changes within Bloom's taxonomy, and he explained how these changes affected the emphasis and enhanced the taxonomy's use. Forehand encouraged Learner to credit foundations and embrace change. Learner developed a new appreciation for the initial principles upon which the work in motivation is built.

Leaving Forehand (2012), Learner moved on to the procedures involved in measuring motivation. Jordan et al. (2013) were working on how two different types of self-esteem, implicit and explicit, were affected by performance outcomes. These researchers had constructed an elaborate two-staged research project. They found that self-esteem and depressive symptoms did not differ in students' implicit self-esteem levels after the students received average mid-term marks. The findings suggested that individuals with low self-esteem were more adversely affected by negative outcomes and that implicit self-esteem is not always detrimental for those with low self-esteem. Learner was overwhelmed by the complexity of the calculations involved and the number of variables that these researchers took into consideration in order to obtain data. She had a new perspective and a growing respect for how difficult it is to work with complex concepts such as motivation.

Learner's second-last stop on this leg of her journey to explore motivation was at Lau and Roeser's (2008) personal-centered analysis of cognitive abilities and motivational processes in science achievement and engagement. Lau and Roeser gave 328 high school students who were in their first semester of school a survey to measure their motivational processes and demographic characteristics, and to assess their fluid, crystallized, and spatial abilities. Lau and Roeser defined and measured personal goal orientation in terms of test values, classroom emotions, test anxiety, competence-related beliefs, context beliefs, regulatory processes, and cognitive abilities. When the students were in their second semester, their performance in science class was assessed. Lau and Roeser used patterns of scree plot, factor replicability, parsimony, and interpretability to group the students into aptitude profile types one through four. Type one boys and type three girls had mastery-oriented patterns, and type four boys and girls had helplessness pattern profiles. Again, Learner saw the complexity of this work. She saw the importance of examining holistic patterns of individual functioning in order to identify profile types, and the need for studies like these to design interventions that target specific needs.

Learner's last stop was at Wang and Eccles's (2013) longitudinal study of student engagement. Wang and Eccles used a multidimensional perspective to look at achievement motivation and academic engagement within the context of a school. Wang and Eccles collected data on adolescents from 23 public middle schools in early fall of seventh grade (N=1157) and at the end of eighth grade (N=1039) (p. 16). Using a mixture of school data and questionnaires from students and their primary care givers, they collected information on school engagement, school characteristics, and achievement motivation beliefs. Wang and Eccles found positive associations between (a) behavioral engagement and perceptions of school structure, provision of choice, and teacher and peer emotional support, (b) emotional engagement and students who indicated positive experiences of social structure, provision of choice, teaching of relevance, and emotional support from teachers and peers, and (c) cognitive engagement and teaching of relevance and peer emotional support. This study provided information on the effects of emotional support and engagement on learning.

Looking at motivation revealed that this topic is complex and encompasses many domains. Motivation involves our goals, values, abilities, and beliefs. Motivation to learn is affected by our concept of self, our freedom to choose, our social supports, and our emotions. Forehand measured motivation by looking at self-esteem. Bloom's consideration of motivation defined knowledge, classified the different goals or objectives that educators set for students, and put analysing, evaluating, and creating at the top of the cognitive educational domain. Wang and Eccles focused on engagement. Learner developed a better understanding of how academics view motivation, which led to more questions about what motivates and why people what to learn. Not all, but parts of this experience would be absorbed into her long-term memory, form dendrite, and become connected to her world view.

### **The Impact of Research**

Wanting to know how research affected people's in the lands beyond the studies, Learner entered the field of educational psychology and cognition. Here she met Sousa (2010). He showed her how current advances in neuroscience influence our understanding of the development and functioning of the brain. Neuroimaging uses functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to track changes in the brain's blood flow and electrical and magnetic activity. Learner found that at any given moment she could watch any part of the brain as it functioned. Unlike other vital bodily organs, the healthy brain never ceased to be developing. Through the ongoing formation of blood vessels and nerve cells, new areas of the brain are continually being activated and developed. Not all areas are completely functional until the brain has matured. Learner learned that certain areas of the brain take years to develop. Executive attention networks for resolving conflict among competing responses develop between age 4 and age 7. The area of the brain that controls emotions is not fully functional until age 25. It is only at about the age of 30 that the healthy brain has developed a sufficient number of blood and nerve cells in all of its areas in order to be fully accessed and activated. Areas of significant activation grow stronger neurons with thicker dendrites, branch out, interconnect with other developed and developing areas, and activate further development. The more developed the area, the greater is that area's interconnectivity. These enhanced understandings about how the brain develops and functions have profound significance in the field of educational psychology and cognition.

Sousa (2010) took Learner further into the mind, the brain, and the relevance of neuroscience to education. His anthology of experts examined the growing knowledge of how the brain develops and functions. These experts helped Learner to explore the neurological foundations of learning and what this means for education and the classroom.

One of the contributors to Sousa's anthology was Posner (2010). Posner wrote about how mental operations occur in separate areas of the brain, and about how quickly these activations can be changed with practice. As the connections become longer and more prominent, there is often a reduction in the number and extent of the activations.

Another contributor, Willis (2010), focused on how the emotional content of external stimuli affects the brain's processing of the stimuli. The brain has filters that influence what information enters the neural network. The first filter is the reticular activating system (RAS), located in the lower brain stem or amygdala. When changes in the stimuli or environment are appraised as threatening, the RAS automatically selects a small portion of the related sensory information and directs it to the amygdala, triggering an involuntary fight, flight, or freeze response. This input takes preference and hinders higher cognitive processes. The amygdala also responds to positive emotional influences. If threatening stimuli are removed (fear, anger, sadness, stress), activation of the amygdala promotes active focus and higher cognitive functioning.

Immordino-Yang & Faeth (2010) explained how building academic knowledge involves integrating the emotional and the cognitive in a social context. If academic content seems emotionally meaningful, the learner connects with the knowledge. The more the learner can become emotionally connected to the learning, the more advanced the learning will be.

Sousa's (2010) expert contributor Williams (2010) wrote about the networks of the brain involved in speaking and the development of language. Williams discussed how results from studying fMRIs suggest that boys may actually process language differently than girls. For auditory and visual stimuli processing, girls use similar regions of the brain while boys use separate regions for visual and auditory processing. Therefore, boys may not convert sensory information into language as easily as girls. More fluent verbal learners probably have higher refined connections between conceptual and word generating networks. Being slower at language processing does not mean that the learner knows or understands less; it simply means that the learner needs more time to express what he or she knows.

From Gabriele, Christodulou, O' Loughlin, and Eddy (2010), Learner discovered that, unlike spoken language, reading has no specialized area of the brain. The brain has to recruit certain regions to recognize written text. Gabriele et al. explained how major regions interact with other regions of the brain to support learning. The brain solves problems in reading by using two different routes, the phonological route and the direct route. The direct route bypasses the sound-pattern route and matches printed words directly with meaning. Event-related potentials (ERP) and magneto encephalography (MEG) are methods of neuroimaging. These methods reveal that word processing occurs quickly. It is not a serial step-by-step process of visual analysis to meaning, but is a lower-and higher-level cognitive process occurring early and in tandem. Higher-level brain areas do not wait for the visual analysis to be completed before the visual input takes on meaning. Different areas of the brain are involved in reading different languages. From 5% to 17% of all learners have developmental dyslexia, which makes it difficult for them to develop reading skills. Weak phonological processing skills typically underlie dyslexia. Reading requires a complex process of interconnecting many areas within the brain.

Croch (2010) wrote about constructing the reading brain, and Devlin (2010) wrote about how the developing brain uses innate number sense to learn to process numbers. Learner learned that two days after birth, babies exhibit knowledge of basic arithmetic facts, and that arithmetic ability beyond the number 3 involves language, or at least the ability to assign symbols to objects. Number sense requires training because mental storage and access to this knowledge is through the symbols, at least in the initial stages. It takes a considerable number of exposures for basic number facts to be committed to memory, and rote learning must be accompanied by understanding (Devlin, 2010). Dehaene (2010) looked at the calculating brain, and Ansari (2010) looked at the computing brain.

It was one of Sousa's (2010) final contributors to his anthology, Hardiman (2010), who brought Learner back to her original hunger. Hardiman's article on the creative, artistic brain brought Learner back to her questions. She wanted to know what causes the creative thinking that gives rise to breathtaking solutions and revolutionary inventions that put people on the road to freedom, reform, and change.

### **The Brain the Mind, the Mind the Brain**

Learner could not wait. She hungered for answers. Astington and Edward (2010) introduced Learner to the theory of mind (TOM). She consumed Rief's (2008) work on metacognition and self-monitoring, declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, and the ability to integrate these into the learning process. She looked at Boigly's (2010) article on embodied cognition, and how social and technical conventions influence the grouping of motor and perceptual stimuli onto a hierarchy that is subdivided according to similarities and differences. Learner was on a stretch of constructed academia that was connecting her to a place she wanted to be.

In Evans and Stonbech's (2013) work, Learner found Kahneman's dual processing theory that identifies intuition and reasoning as two separate cognitive processes. She also saw how Kahneman's theory is supported by recent evidence in cognitive science. Stage one is the foundation for hypothetical thinking, the analysing, the evaluating, the creating and stage two is the foundation for working memory. Stage one thinking involves the activation of many areas of

the brain and evolves into the activation of advanced brain development. Stage one, intuitive thinking, is thought to involve more complex interconnections between specific areas of the brain than what was originally theorized.

Blanchard, Devaney, and Hall (2012) took Learner into the field of cognitive neuroscience and showed her how small changes in dynamical systems may not make qualitative change in the initial phase state until a significant value is reached, but when that value is reached the dynamic system goes through bifurcation. During bifurcation, the dynamical system changes its stability, splits into new structures and merges with other structures. Hayne and Rees (2006) wrote about the dynamic structure of the brain and provided evidence of psychological brain states that directly correlate with mental states. These were two of the cognitive pieces that Learner needed in order to connect cognitive learning styles, motivation, the impact of research, and the influences of current advances in neuroscience to her Christian world view.

Holding this information in her working memory, Brown (2013) showed Learner that the process through which the brain is activated discloses how the brain's content is created. Creative thinking, advanced learning, and higher level cognitive functioning involve subsurface branching. New brain cells that hold content emerge from deeper, older, more developed layers through the process of selection, and connect to form what we refer to as a cognitive structure. Content development consists of some conscious awareness. However, much of this unfolding process is concealed from the individual, who is aware of only the events in the consciousness. The brain's content is created in a complex, selective, interconnected climate. The process of connecting is not just the result of consciously and continually being exposed to something new. Cognitions, ideas, and thoughts are constantly unfolding. Through a selective interconnectivity of thoughts, Learner was beginning to understand cognitive structuring.

Leaf (2013) took Learner on a similar tour of the life of the mind and an explanation of Microgenetic Theory. Leaf concurred with Brown (2013) that while content development consists of conscious awareness of objects, acts, and inner states, these surface events are only the tip of the iceberg. Mental representations, perceptions, and ideas, as well as actions and cognitions, have a prehistory that form the major part of an emergent cognitive structure. All the cognitive structures combined are often referred to as the mind.

While tracking brain activity, Leaf (2013) watched the mind as it functioned. Activated areas grew stronger neurons with thicker dendrites, branched out, interconnected with other developed and developing areas, and activated further development. At the same time, neuroimaging detected conditions within the brain that were toxic. As these conditions emerged and developed, they progressively eliminated the blood flow and the electrical and magnetic activity, and destroyed the neurons within that immediate area. Leaf showed Learner that there are other conditions that are antitoxic and can eliminate the toxins and create conditions for restoration and enhanced functioning. These conditions are referred to as states of mind. Differing external states and conscious thoughts affect the levels of toxicity within the brain and the resulting conditions within the mind. Because the mind controls the body, of which the brain is a part, these states of mind permeate the brain and affect the cognitive structures of the mind. The mind and the body are so interrelated that conditions within the mind affect the health of the body, our outward actions, and the very expressions of our being.

Learner was beginning to conceptualize thoughts as physical things that have mass and take up space. Moment by moment, every day, as the structure of her mind was changing, she thought, was the physical nature of her brain changed? Our thoughts change our brains. Leaf (2013) reminded Learner of scientific studies' confirmations that as we consciously direct our thinking, we are making significant alterations in the structures within our brain. Leaf helped Learner to see how these changes can change the state of our mind and the health of our brain. Because the mind controls the body, the mind, and the health of the body are interrelated.

Leaf's (2013) research supports the theory that a person's physical body is altered by what a person believes and thinks. Learner knew that just as the body is governed by the laws of the body, so is the mind governed by laws of the mind (Rom.7: 1-23). Knowing the laws of the body



and mind has helped Learner to make healthy choices. Analyzing and observing the states of her body and brain, and the structures of her mind, have significantly promoted her physical and mental health. Learner now understands that the process of selection that gives rise to the new thought is influenced by the content of the thoughts within the deeper layers, the state of mind in which the new thought emerges, and the conscious control that the mind can exert upon the thought. If consciously influencing a thought, once the thought has emerged, is the foundation of education, and the building of deeper interconnected layers of thought is at the centre of learning, then wonder may be one of the states of mind at the heart of wisdom.

### Conclusion

Overlooking this vast landscape of studies reaching far beyond what Learner's eyes could see, she thought about her own holistic learning, her convergent learning style, and her Christian world view. She saw how her search to understand motivation had led her to others who were also searching. She paused to consider her brain, and how marvellously it was made. Learner recognized that she is what she believes, that she believes in Jesus, and that by this belief she sees everything else. She wondered, and her wonder grew. This mysterious concept, "wonder," coupled with awe, was causing the most radiant beauty. Was this state of mind really influencing every cell, every neuron in her body? This curious, spectacular, astonishing, miraculous cognition was a gift, and this gift was from her Creator, the one who woke her from her slumber. Would she believe? He was calling her onto an adventure, a journey into wonder.

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### **About the Author**

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## Spirit of Healing Group: Safety in Storytelling

Barbara McNish

### Abstract

*Creating safety for women within the holistic model of self – emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual – is essential for healing and recovery from trauma. Building trust and providing safety gives women the permission to share their stories by using creative storytelling media without violating their boundaries. The process is about bringing awareness and empowerment to the self in all areas, and growing to a place of healing and recovery through the creative expression of painful and shame-based feelings. Creating safety provides the opportunity to begin the process of healing and recovery.*

Healing and recovery for women who have suffered trauma happens in a group that provides a safe, creative format in which they can tell their stories without enduring further psychic trauma during disclosure process. The Laurel Centre clinical framework concept of reconnecting and moving on is based on creating and understanding physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual safety (The Laurel Centre, 2013). Creating safety begins as early as the pre-screening process. Building trust and intimacy, setting up boundaries, and teaching mindfulness is essential for safety within a group. The steps of safety, trust building and intimacy, overcoming old messages, and sharing feelings are part of the process that supports healing and recovery. That process occurs in other models of therapy and varies only in the techniques of the learning and teaching style preferences of the therapist. Trauma recovery is about the women, their own healing, and improving their lives as they decide what is manageable for them (Rothschild, 2010). Storytelling can include many art forms – painting, clay, drama, writing, dance, and music – which are used to generate safety (Ledgard, 2012). The use of storytelling in the healing process is an approach that promotes recovery from traumatic events in the women's lives when the group is a safe, intimate, and trustworthy place that creates a respectful healing journey (*Trauma-Informed Storytelling*).

### Safety and Trust

The key to creating a safe environment and building trust is by developing awareness of self and others in relationships (Hodges & Myers, 2010). The group relationship is based on the pre-screening of participants to ensure safety of all, the understanding of safety within the women themselves, and other group members, as well as preparing for storytelling. Trust issues linger from years of trauma and even current relationships. Women bring numerous and complex issues to group sessions. The therapist requirement of safety is essential in order to create an atmosphere of trust in an environment that invites healing within the group (Pack, 2008).

In the pre-screening process, it is very important to interview and assess the participant for their safety and that of the group. The warning signs, which present themselves in this interview, are paramount in distinguishing the women who are not ready to attempt the healing process from those that are. An effective pre-screening process increases the chances of women's joining and successfully completing the group. With trust building already begun, women have a clearer understanding of their own barriers (Doylan, 1991). In the interview, women hear that they have a safe place to disclose some of their feelings that up to this point have never been safe to disclose. Working in a group setting helps women to find their voice that has been lost. This lost voice does not have to be verbal. This knowledge comes as quite a relief and imparts a sense of safety for them to try the group. The women attending must be at a place to reach out and endeavour to join a group that will, for them, begin a place to start to trust.

For many women, the years of trauma have left scars, fears, old messages, and scripts that say, "Do not trust anyone." Perhaps past relationships have added to these messages, reinforcing that it is not safe to trust anyone and that one is hurt in relationships (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010). When sharing in a group, these scripts run over and over in their minds and produce fear. These messages say, "Do not trust," "Do not share," and "It is not safe." This fear is very real and it is hard for the women to trust the process, themselves, and others in the group unless they can take a risk and say, "I am safe here." Hurnard (1985) uses "Much Afraid" and her journey to the high places to show healing (p. 17). She must leave her "Fearing" family to receive her healing and become what her "Chief Shepherd" had promised (Hurnard, p. 18). She began her journey scared, full of fear, and needing to learn to trust again, but she followed His lead and learned to trust in difficult situations even when she doubted. This story resonates with women who are on that same healing path and want to overcome fear, hurt, shame, and losses, in order to build trust and to be loved and accepted.

The women's process of rebuilding their identity and learning new messages is an ongoing process. One part of relearning new messages is to become aware of old messages running through their thoughts and replacing them. This relearning of old messages requires time and practice. The thoughts that are instilled in the mind are associated with the past and negative messages. These messages have a strong impact on their identity and, because of this, women who have survived trauma often have low self-esteem. In the group, reframing thoughts and trusting feelings are keys to learning new messages and redefining the self for women. This rebuilding in a safe environment is the beginning of healing and trust (Rothschild, 2011).

Women have learned early on that other people could violate their boundaries and they had no power to stop them. They were powerless and helpless then, and they continue to behave in that manner out of fear of being hurt as adults. Learning boundaries is good, as the boundaries help women to say no. They may be taking on too much responsibility for others or become dependent and take too much from others. They may never share their feelings or talk too much. Boundaries are about the ability to be able to keep some thoughts private but still share. Childhood trauma can cause women to be out of balance and be left with unsafe boundaries (Cloud & Townsend, 1992). In the group, women learn about boundaries and the ability to set limits. This begins with awareness and knowledge that they have a problem with boundaries (Rich & Copans, 2000). The women learn that they have the power to share their feelings and share only what they feel is safe for them.

In order to share, trust needs to be present. Erikson's building block for trust versus mistrust is one possible key to early childhood development stages for healthy trust relationship (Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughan, 2011). When safety is ensured, the participants are more willing to step out in group to share some hard feelings and know that they will be validated and honoured. It may be possible that it is the first time that some have ever been believed. The women start the process by learning how to be grounded in the present, take care of self, and trust the process. Their physical safety is ensured by trusting that their boundaries are not being violated by someone moving into their space. This sense of safety can be enhanced by wrapping a blanket around themselves, or have their grounding item in the form of something tactile or a creative image to focus on, which provides emotional, intellectual, and spiritual safety. They control how much or what they share. When women give themselves permission to share what they feel is safe for them, then women become their own authors, knowing that recovery can take place only within the context of group relationships (Herman, 1997). This process is modelled and reinforced in weekly group sessions. Through the maintenance of safety over many weeks and building trust, intimacy is slowly established. The women are beginning to rebuild their identity. They feel safe and comfortable to share, and are empowered.

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is to be aware of one's feelings, body, and thoughts in the moment, in a non-judgemental way. To focus on what is happening in our body is part of mindfulness (Stahl & Goldstein, 2010). Music playing softly in the background and visualization of a safe place are all part of mindfulness. This sense of awareness includes the women's feelings, thoughts, fears, and sensations that are produced in the process, the ability to check within and be mindful of breathing, to stop and use a tool to keep focused, and to know that they are safe in the present – which grounds them.

Teaching mindfulness builds trust and safety within the group and the women themselves, because it teaches the women to refocus within themselves and reminds them that they are in a safe and trustworthy place. They are encouraged to use the safe place that they have created in a mindfulness exercise.

## **Storytelling**

The weeks leading up to the storytelling are preparatory. Keeping women safe is essential as they process their inner thoughts, feelings, essence, and body (Lesaho & Maxwell). Women use their self-care wheel, relaxation techniques, and grounding to maintain a sense of security as they share their story in art form. Being mindful is creating an awareness of the whole of themselves and their feelings (Callahan Jones, 2012).

## **Painting**

Storytelling by painting is less traumatic when it is put out on paper with no preconceived idea of what will be painted. No words are required; they just let their hands create the picture of whatever feelings come forth. The process is the experience, and the feelings are the beginning of healing. When provided with a safe place to be connected to the inner self with all the feelings, good or painful, painting becomes a healing process (*Trauma-Informed Storytelling*). Just knowing that there is support and understanding, instead of isolation and loneliness, is an enormous weight lifted off the women's shoulders. The women have stated that there is a freedom in just knowing "I am not alone." The women paint their stories and even when they do not share the same story, they share the painting experience and they are more often able to talk about the effects that it has left on their lives. Expressing their feelings through painting is an easier and less threatening way of storytelling.

## **Clay**

Anger is not always a safe emotion to express. The use of clay to form an object associated with anger is enlightening for many, as anger was always scary for them. Anger takes many forms when modeled with clay, and the process is helpful for others as they see that anger can be expressed in a safe way. A two-sided coin shows anger as sad or mad and helps a woman to understand that she no longer is just mad, but actually was sad and flipped to the mad when she was sad because it was safer. The angry monster in red clay is less scary when it is set on a table outside the woman. Anger can lead to motivation, and motivation to discovery of self, and separating the issues of others from self to provide awareness and understanding. This can be one of the many insights into the healing journey. The women can see anger as an emotion that is not something to be denied, but an emotion that can be expressed in a safe way.

## Journals

Journals are part of the storytelling process. Each week a picture is drawn, or words written in a journal to express feelings in a safe way. The validating of the women's feelings provides empowerment and permission to honour them. These journals help to debrief the thoughts, feelings, and questions. Journals can be used to see an area of success and awareness (Anderson & Hiersteiner). Journaling brings encouragement and can motivate the self to continue on the journey when feeling overwhelmed. The use of music and poetry in journaling keeps feeling in a place of safety when grounded. Journaling helps to celebrate the journey to healing in a safe way.

## Drama

Drama storytelling can be anything from dance to role playing. Women can look at sadness, grief, and loss in this creative tool. There are many pantomimes wherein we have seen the sad faces of the actors. The women are asked, "What does sad look like?" "Act out sadness in any way that works for you." "Give yourself permission to be a sad clown, a sad puppy, or whatever you choose to use, and then draw that feeling." "Use sadness in dance or a non-verbal short skit." All avenues of drama express the sad feelings (Archibald, 2012). In the process of looking at feelings, shame is often present. Shame says, "I am bad," not "I did a bad thing." Separating who we are as opposed to what we do is about identifying with our shame, putting it into perspective, and accepting the losses and sadness that it has produced. Use of objects like hats – a ball cap, sombrero, flowers, veiled, or a pill box – with each portraying a different feeling, provides a safe way to try on a feeling. Wearing the hat and then discarding it provides an opportunity to take on a new view of it. In the reframing of the shame in this process, there is safety and permission to be creative and embrace the process of healing using storytelling drama.

## Conclusion

The women in group are continuing to grow toward healing and freedom to express the inside feelings outwardly in a safe way. Using expressive art form material becomes very powerful and safe for the women's journey towards healing. Becoming aware of their feelings, how to express them, and where to put them, is all about safety. The women gain insight into their own process, no longer in isolation, but part of a group wherein permission is given to choose the healing path that works for them. They can move beyond fear to the process level (Pearson & Wilson). Healing and recovery becomes a safe personal journey that produces growth by building on safety within a relationship. Women can look into all aspects of their self, when they find and make sense of it all by telling their stories without being traumatized (Anderson & Hiersteiner). They receive healing and recovery from trauma in a way that gives them a sense of empowerment.

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### **About the Author**

*Barbara McNish returned to school at age 61. As of December 2013, she had applied to Brandon University's graduate program and completed one course. Barb is a women's counsellor, with 18 years of trauma experience related to domestic violence and emotional and sexual abuse. She is a fun-loving, laughing "gramma" of 10 who enjoys acting.*

# Technology in Education Creating Structural Change

Jackie Knight

## Abstract

*Digital technologies are becoming increasingly common in our schools. However, the pedagogical changes required to use them effectively are not adopted as quickly as the hardware is physically installed in our classrooms. This paper discusses the changes that are required to the traditional structure of educational systems in order to maximize student learning with the power of technology. There is a need to look more closely at how the technology is used rather than simply the presence of the technology itself.*

Digital technologies, also known as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), have affected the physical nature of the traditional schoolroom, and are also affecting the very structure of our educational systems. As a result, there is a need for a dramatic shift in paradigm and pedagogy to re-align practice with the desired outcome of education, which is student learning. These technologies have changed the ways that people around the world live, work, communicate, and learn. Access to digital technologies and the internet has changed the context of education through a greater access to information, and the ability of those at a distance to participate in educational programs. Digital technologies facilitate greater interaction, multi-modal education, and a different kind of learning. This functionality demonstrates the importance of how technology is used, rather than simply the amount of technology available. Teachers are the fundamental key to making this shift. Teacher professional development, evaluation and restructuring of policies, and a commitment to improvement of the status quo are fundamental for moving forward in the educational community.

ICTs have permeated many aspects of our daily lives, and increasingly continue to do so every day. Computers are profoundly reshaping children's lives and are a necessary part of the global economy (Nayak & Kalayankar, 2010). For young people, access to the internet through mobile digital technologies, particularly cell phones, has become so ubiquitous that it becomes difficult to examine learning from within the strict parameters of a school or a school day. Use of technology has blurred the boundaries between different institutions and facets of students' lives: schoolwork is routinely accessed from home, interaction with friends and extra-curricular groups often occurs online, and personal interests are developed through interaction on the internet (Furlong & Davies, 2012). Educational systems must recognize that students are connected, interacting, and learning beyond the classroom.

Many of today's youth agree that they must be constantly connected and available through technology, often in the form of multi-tasking during other activities. In fact, a cell phone is viewed by many as an extension of self (Schofield Clark, 2009), and ICT use has been identified as helping to shape a young person's identity (Furlong & Davies, 2012). Digital technologies are an extremely important and natural part of the lives of today's students.

Access to information for those in remote communities has opened opportunities through ICTs and distance education. Access to education is no longer determined by geographic location but access to a network (Anastasiades, 2010; Kozma, 2011). An example is New Zealand, where digital technologies and educational systems have evolved together to create "virtual schooling" (Davis, Eickelmann, & Zaka, 2013). This access is changing the lives of many people, but it must be noted that there are still challenges in accessing networks and the internet, especially in rural areas of developing countries (Bracey & Culver, 2005). ICTs provide opportunities for more people around the world to participate in learning and communication.

The benefit of using ICTs for students in distance education, in particular, is the inherent qualities of multi-modal communication and a great degree of interaction. Technology can be used for inquiry, communication, construction, and expression (Bracey & Culver, 2005), and to



provide the opportunity for adaptability and rapid feedback (Rienties et al., 2012). Evidence has also shown increased peer collaboration, self-assessment, and potential student ownership of learning with an ICT platform (Andersson & Hatakka, 2010,). Furthermore, learning is social, not individual (Furlong & Davies, 2012; Livingstone, 2012), which has a positive correlation with the ability to interact using ICTs and the digitally connected nature of our youth. The success of ICTs in distance education can be transferred to our face-to-face school programs where students can be learning outside of the classroom in their connected lives.

Other demonstrated benefits of ICT include increased peer collaboration, self-assessment, and student ownership of learning (Andersson & Hatakka, 2010). It is reported to be more engaging, allows students to work at their own pace, and can decrease dropout rates (Lopez-Perez, Perez-Lopez, Rodriguez-Ariza, & Argente-Linares, 2013; Livingstone, 2012). The use of technology also has a positive effect on skills such as problem solving and decision making, not simply memorization of content (Lopez-Perez et al., 2013), and should be used to improve instruction and engage learners (Schrum & Levin, 2009). These positive attributes of technology in learning support increase student achievement.

Many post-secondary institutions are creating remedial, transitional, or other courses to prepare students for their university studies. The use of interactive ICTs for this purpose has been important, especially when students have large gaps or need to study from a distance (Rienties et al., 2012). A blend of face-to-face and internet based formats has the most potential for success and students, not teachers, should determine the appropriate “blend” or combination of learning activities that will maximize engagement and skill development (De George-Walker & Keeffe, 2010). ICTs are very useful for facilitating independent student learning in post-secondary schools.

Many of the benefits of using ICT are contrary to the traditional structure of the educational system. Significant system-wide changes are required to take advantage of these benefits of technology. The shift in paradigm begins with the traditionally hierarchal roles of teacher and student; there is a need to change from a mind-set of “schooling” to one of “learning” (Bonk & Graham, 2012, p. 4). No longer is the teacher a giver of knowledge and the student the receiver. Instead, there is interaction and guidance (Kress & Selander, 2012), and the teacher, as facilitator, must use a constructivist approach to learning activities (Anastasiades, 2010). The shift “from teacher to student, content to experience, and technologies to pedagogies” (De George-Walker & Keeffe, 2010, p. 2) is central to gaining the most from the use of ICTs. This release of control may be a difficult change for many educators, but it demonstrates the power of ICTs and learning.

Access to digital technology is not as important as how it is used (Bracey & Culver, 2005; Kozma, 2011; Livingstone, 2012). An example is the evidence that there are both positive and negative effects of owning a home computer. Students need a combination of investment and ownership in their learning, digital literacy and citizenship skills, and metacognitive skills, in order for ICT to have a positive effect (Owen, 2013). There are many examples of schools installing interactive whiteboards, using educational computer games, and increasing reliance on internet applications without the expected increase in student learning (Livingstone, 2012). Powerful learning experiences can be accomplished with careful design of learning environments, teaching, and curricula, but human capacity must be built at the same pace as installing computer hardware (Bracey & Culver, 2005; Rienties et al., 2012). Technology alone is not enough to improve student learning across curricular areas.

The importance of careful planning for implementation of ICTs is more than simply a concern about lack of progress or growth in education. The implementation of ICTs without a sustainable model may intensify the existing inequalities in society and reinforce the distance between social groups (Bracey & Culver, 2005). The power of ICTs can contribute to creating a knowledge society and economy (Kozma, 2011) with economic and social effects, but must be managed with foresight. Poor implementation strategies can actually be counter-productive and increase the existing disparity of students.

Innovations, including ICT, have not replaced the classroom teacher. Teachers have remained the most influential aspect of educational systems and are not predicted to be replaced by ICTs (Davis et al., 2013). The key to implementing such dramatic shifts in educational pedagogy requires teacher training (Kozma, 2011). Teachers are fundamental in the transition to using ICTs to their potential, and governments and administrators must make significant commitments to professional development with digital learning in mind.

Teachers have varying comfort levels with implementing ICTs, and many are reluctant to use it (Kreijns, Vermeulen, Kirschner, van Buuren, & Van Acker, 2013). Factors such as ICT policy and vision, work pressure and autonomy, and personal behaviours and dispositions (Kreijns et al., 2013) will affect the successful integration of ICTs. Administrators and other stakeholders need to look carefully at all aspects of the teacher's reaction to ICT implementation, in order to support the transition to ICT use in education.

Policy makers must have a vision for the potential of ICT to improve access to education and improve student achievement (Kozma, 2011). To act on this realization is to redesign infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum and assessment at all levels. These changes in the structure of education will produce far greater demands on resources than simply getting technology into classrooms (Livingstone, 2012). The financial commitment and perseverance required to facilitate the system-wide changes to education will be greater than it has been to install computers in classrooms.

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge the significant changes that digital technologies have brought to individuals and systems in today's world. ICTs are an integral part of young people's daily lives. At school, home, work, and leisure, mobile technologies are an extension of self that have blurred the lines between these aspects of life. The result is a significant change in the ways that students learn, share, and access information. The fact alone that this technology exists is superficial; it is the optimum use of the technology that can significantly improve student learning. Unfortunately, the beneficial applications of ICTs in education are largely contrary to the traditional structure of educational systems, so careful planning and large-scale redesigning at all levels must be implemented to maximize the potential of this technology for student achievement. Teacher professional development and creation of policies that commit to a shift in pedagogy are important in building success with ICTs in education. How technology is used is more important than the technology itself; therefore, it is important to implement system-wide changes to maximize its potential.

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## **Biography**

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# Turnover in Teachers: Stress, Burnout, and Fixing the Problem

Kayla Hanson

## Abstract

*Teacher burnout is a major problem in the education field. Student misbehaviour, loss of independence, increased workload, and lack of support are only a few causes of increased stress in teachers. With turnover rates at an all-time high, it is important to find ways to increase overall teacher well-being. Methods such as reflection on one's practices, goal-setting, doing more physical activity, and developing resilience can help decrease stress in teachers, improve self-efficacy, and therefore prevent turnover.*

Teaching is known to be one of the most vital and challenging occupations in society (Vesely, Saklofske, & Leschied, 2013), but many times the demands can become too overwhelming, causing numerous educators to leave the profession. Every day, teachers prepare and plan lessons that need to engage a classroom full of diverse students, and that is only a small fraction of the demands of the job. Turnover rates in educators are increasing each year because of growing stress and burnout, with a staggering 30-50% of Canadian teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Reichel, 2013, para. 3). Teacher attrition can be caused by such factors as student misbehaviour, loss of autonomy, lack of support, time pressures, and increased workload. It is important to improve the overall well-being of teachers and increase their self-efficacy. Some strategies include reflecting on current practices, finding tactics to reduce the stressors, goal-setting, physical activity, hobbies, being given autonomy, and developing resilience. If teachers can successfully increase their well-being and see their value, the chances of reducing turnover can be achieved.

## Stress and Burnout in Teachers

Although stress is a normal part of life, teachers have a high risk of becoming stressed out because of changes and demands in the profession. Stress is someone's "physical, mental, and emotional" response to demands in life (Larrivee, 2012; Mrozek, n.d.). Because high stress is so dominant in teachers that it can be the root of many physical and emotional problems. A staggering number of illnesses can be caused by too much stress in one's life. These illnesses may include exhaustion, headaches, indigestion, sleep problems, high blood pressure, chronic pain, depression, and many more (Larrivee, 2012; Pickering, 2008). The most dominant symptom of stress found in teachers is the feeling of being drained. When the pressures become too much on educators, they reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, and can cause burnout (Larrivee, 2012; Vesely et al., 2013). Teachers are more vulnerable to stress and, although stress can be healthy, it is important to find strategies to reduce the negative effects.

Burnout is often the result of prolonged stress. It is when someone has reached complete "physical and mental exhaustion" in his or her professional life (Pickering, 2008). Teachers who have reached burnout show high levels of depersonalization from the job, low morale, and emotional exhaustion (Martin, Dolmage, & Sharpe, 2012). Once the negative feelings become too overwhelming, it is hard for teachers to feel their value in the profession (Vesely et al., 2013), and they leave. L. Larson,<sup>4</sup> a recently retired teacher, revealed that she neared burnout numerous times throughout her teaching career (personal communication, October 23, 2013). She explained that changes such as new curriculum, formalities from the division, and different

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms have been used to protect individual identities in all personal communications in this article.

course loads each year prevented her from focusing her time on students, and the stress was sometimes too much for her to handle. Burnout is preventable. Self-efficacy, increased self-esteem, getting the passion back (Fernet, Guay, Senècal, & Austin, 2011), as well as learning how to maintain stress in a healthy way, can all prevent burnout in a teacher.

### **Factors in Teacher Attrition**

Students' disruptive behaviour has been found by many teachers, in various studies, to be one of the leading causes of stress (Fernet et al., 2012; Larrivee, 2012; Parker, Martin, Colmar, & Liem, 2012). When students are not motivated to learn, it can be a frustrating process for teachers. Behavioural issues in the classroom can wear down a teacher's feeling of effectiveness (Fernet et al., 2012), and it can be even more disheartening when there is no support from parents. N. Frocklin, a first year teacher, said that her biggest struggle so far has been classroom management (personal communication, October 29, 2013). She explained that the most frustrating part about classroom management is that a strategy that works for one class will not work for another. If teachers do not have effective strategies for classroom management, this can increase disruptive behaviour, create emotional exhaustion, and in turn decrease the teachers' self-efficacy (Larrivee, 2012; Vesely et al., 2013).

Loss of autonomy and inadequate support are also crucial determinants in teacher dissatisfaction. Not being given independence to do the job can cause disengagement, and is a large reason why many teachers leave the profession (Devos, Dupriez, & Paquay, 2011; Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012). Teachers are professionals, and when there is constant interference and constraints from administration and division personnel, it can cause a feeling of powerlessness and, furthermore, resentment (Elias). Administrative decisions that involve significant changes in a teacher's work environment, and that are unsupportive, can disconnect the teacher. Turnover in administration also creates inconsistency in the school, reduces teacher morale, and affects student behaviour (Pas et al., 2012). For example, one Pre-K-12 school in rural Saskatchewan has had three administrators in the past six years. Various staff members of the school have identified that it is impossible to keep up with the constant changes and expectations of different administrators (K. Bender, L. Larson, & M. Javette, personal communication, October 23, 2013). They indicated that just when something begins to work for the school, a new administrator will come in and change everything, which is very overwhelming and frustrating. If teachers do not receive the support they need from administrators, and are not trusted to make decisions on their own, there is an increased chance of turnover.

When the needs of the job become too much to handle, there is an escalation of stress in teachers. An educator can feel as though there are too many demands and not enough time to meet them. Course overload, paperwork, government and division initiatives, and extra-curricular activities can all increase the attrition of a teacher. Teacher health, performance, and job satisfaction are all negatively affected by a challenging workload (Martin et al., 2012). Furthermore, a varied course load, especially when not in a teacher's area of specialization, can lead to increased stress (Bilash, 2009-2011), which many teachers experience. M. Javette, a fourth year teacher in a rural school, revealed that his course load has changed every year of his teaching career thus far (personal communication, October 23, 2013). He explained that it is hard to feel successful as a teacher when one does not even have the chance to become familiar with a course before it is gone and something new is on the plate. Educators use personal time to complete tasks, and they work well over the 40-hour work week that society sees as full-time with no overtime pay, and many still feel behind. Teachers who feel more prepared to endure the many demands of the profession are less likely to burn out (Pas et al., 2012), but sadly a majority of teachers never feel that they can get ahead.

## Methods in Increasing Self-Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is imperative. Educators need to believe that they are doing a good job and effectively providing learning opportunities to students (Pas et al., 2012), in order to succeed in their career. When teachers feel this job satisfaction, they are more engaged, which in return amplifies student achievement (Devos et al., 2011). In order to reduce attrition and increase efficacy, teachers need to be aware of methods and strategies that can successfully reduce the stress in their lives.

Reflection on tools that have worked in the past is a step in increasing self-efficacy of a teacher. By looking at their own strengths and weaknesses, and using the challenging moments as learning experiences, teachers can overcome some of the anxieties that they are feeling (Gorow & Muller, 2008). It is also important for teachers to reflect on how they deal with behaviour in the classroom, manage the demands of the profession, and meet their own personal goals. Reflection can lead to individuals' developing successful strategies to cope with the stressors that they face (Pas et al., 2012; Vesely et al., 2013), which in return can alleviate some of the pressures of the career.

When teachers feel hopeless and are too overwhelmed, it is important for them to admit that they are approaching burnout, and try to do something to fix the problem (Friedman & Reynolds, 2011). Attending professional development sessions, receiving a reduced schedule, working with a mentor, prioritizing, finding balance, and goal-setting are all effective strategies in helping educators to cope with stress (King, 2002). Interventions to decrease the demands placed on a teacher are crucial in preventing burnout (Fernet et al., 2012). Developing long and short-term goals, and eliminating goals that are too unrealistic to achieve, are effective in relieving the feeling of being too overwhelmed (Gorow and Muller, 2008; King, 2002). If teachers work at finding strategies to reduce the stress that they are feeling, they are more likely to stay in the profession long term.

Regular physical activity and other stress-reducing activities, such as hobbies, are methods that can reduce teacher attrition. Physical activity is one of the most recommended ways for individuals to relieve and reduce stress (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2010-2013). It can lower the probability of developing physical and mental stress problems, improve sleep, and increase self-esteem. K. Bender an educator for 26 years, said that his daily walks during lunch allow him to clear his head, and he finds it to be an excellent stress reliever (personal communication, October 23, 2013). Teachers who are physically and mentally healthy are less likely to burn out (Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013). Therefore, when physical activity or hobbies are used as an outlet to free the mind of the daily demands that a teacher faces, turnover can be reduced.

Teachers are more likely to connect with the workplace if administrators provide "autonomy-supportive conditions," which give teachers independence and certain decision-making freedom (Fernet et al., 2012). Administrators also need to provide a culture of trust and support, and supply teachers with opportunities to express their frustrations and concerns (Devos et al., 2011). When teachers have positive perceptions of school administration, they are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to exhibit better well-being (Fernet et al., 2012; Pas et al., 2012). If teachers are regarded as professionals and given a voice (Elias, 2012), they are more connected to the job, and are less likely to leave.

Teachers also need to develop resilience towards factors that may be enhancing their stress. Being optimistic and flexible is important (Friedman & Reynolds, 2011), and furthermore, a work-life balance needs to be created. Educators can develop resilience by using protective factors in their lives, such as support networks at work, personal and social relationships, and interests to counteract the stress (Doney, 2013). M. Javette disclosed that after four years of teaching, he is still working at establishing a balance in his life (personal communication, October 23, 2013). He explained that each year he feels that certain stressors do not affect him as much as they did, because he relies on his family, friends, coworkers, and hobbies to distract

him from the overwhelming demands of the career. This is an example of developing resilience. Resilience creates flexibility and enables individuals to cope after dealing with adversity (Doney, 2013). Furthermore, teachers who can successfully develop buoyancy and resilience are more engaged in their job, and have greater well-being (Parker & Martin, 2009).

## Conclusion

It is crucial for educators to develop strategies that help them to deal successfully with the numerous demands of the teaching profession in order to reduce stress, burnout and, with any luck, turnover. Many educators feel as though teaching is comparable to a “sink or swim” experience wherein they cannot handle the countless demands (Hultell et al., 2013), which explains why attrition dominates this occupation. The turnover rate of teachers is higher than any other profession (Riggs, 2013), and strategies need to be in place to prevent educators from leaving the field. Although issues such as disruptive behaviour, loss of autonomy, inadequate support, and increased demands are major factors in teacher burnout, many published works support methods to help teachers reduce stress created by these issues, and hopefully improve self-efficacy. Some strategies include reflection of own strengths and weaknesses, goal-setting and finding methods to improve the situation, becoming physically active and finding a hobby, being provided with autonomy and support by administration, and developing resilience by using protective factors in one’s life. Teaching is a demanding profession, and there will always be stress associated with a job where so many external factors come into play. The most crucial element in retaining educators and reducing turnover is to provide awareness and strategies to help them overcome the adversity that they face.

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# Using Response to Intervention (RTI) as a Means of Restructuring to Prevent Counsellor Burnout

Karen Klassen

## **Abstract**

*As the responsibilities of school counsellors have expanded from traditionally supporting students with academic and career planning, to include often complex mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse, it becomes increasingly important to structure counselling intervention models that support the health and wellness of both students and counsellors. Using a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of counselling intervention provides an opportunity to meet the needs of students more effectively, while enabling counsellors to manage their caseloads more efficiently.*

As outlined by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY), school counsellors are responsible for supporting the educational, career, and personal/social development of students (MECY, 2007). These responsibilities mean that counsellors routinely deal with complex student needs, which include cases of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, pregnancy, substance abuse, school violence, and child abuse, while also providing support in course selection, career exploration, and post-secondary planning. In addition to offering student support, counsellors also deal with the ever-emerging expectations of other individuals, such as parents, teachers, administration, and outside agencies. These tasks alone are monumental and further complicated by large caseloads, time-consuming non-guidance-related activities, and constant role ambiguity (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Moyer, 2011). School counsellors faced with high job demands, and the realities of merging education and mental health, may feel stressed and overworked, potentially making them more vulnerable to professional burnout (Falls & Nichter, 2010; Gunduz, 2012). One way to address the needs of counsellors, in order to reduce stress, is to examine the current resources, and consider restructuring these resources to create a counselling program that provides greater role clarification and access to large numbers of students in a more effective manner. Response to Intervention (RTI), as a counselling intervention, is a three-tiered model that offers the opportunity to provide meaningful supports for students, while providing counsellors with a greater ability to manage their caseloads, increased collaboration with colleagues (thus reducing role ambiguity), and perhaps a platform from which to argue for a reduction in the amount of non-guidance-related duties.

## **Factors Contributing to Counsellor Stress and Burnout**

Often contributing to the professional counsellors' job stress is the feeling that they are unable to keep up with daily demands and are therefore not providing services to students in a manner that matches their own expectations (Gunduz, 2012; McCarthy, Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzmán 2010). Other research suggests that the inability to keep up with daily demands stems from spending an increasing amount of time on inappropriate duties, largely administrative tasks, which are non-counselling related (Evans & Payne, 2008; Rayle, 2006). In addition to extra duties is the pressure from teachers, parents, and at times administration, to produce quick "band-aid" solutions to student problems that they have not been successful in solving. All of these factors, combined with role ambiguity (when roles are not clearly articulated or understood by others) leave counsellors vulnerable to high levels of stress, as they often find themselves having to justify, explain, and defend their role in supporting students' academic, career, and social-emotional development (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2011). Restructuring student services, by utilizing the RTI model, may serve to address many of the

factors that contribute to counsellor stress and potential burnout, while more effectively and efficiently providing counselling supports to students.

### **RTI as an Instructional Model**

RTI is a tiered instructional process that utilizes universal screening and process monitoring to assess learning strengths and weaknesses in order to match instruction to student needs (Canter, 2004; Ockerman, Mason, & Hollenbeck, 2012; Shapiro, 2013). Typically, RTI is a three-tiered model. Tier one involves using strategies and providing instruction to students in a classroom setting as directed by the teacher. The expectation is that if skilled teachers are implementing the tier one program with integrity, then approximately 75%-85% of the students will achieve at least minimum standards of the desired outcomes (Shapiro, 2013).

Tier two often involves problem solving at a team level, whereby school personnel collaborate to develop the intervention plan (Canter, 2004). Tier two interventions are required for students who are not meeting minimum standards through tier one instruction and require supplemental intervention in order to meet the desired outcomes (Ockerman et al., 2012; Shapiro, 2013). Educators offer instructional programs to smaller groups and focus on the specific needs of the students as identified through an assessment process.

Educational professionals often consider tier three as special education, and students receiving tier three supports are at high risk for not meeting the outcomes even with tier two interventions (Canter, 2004; Shapiro, 2013). This tier may also include students not formally identified as requiring special education, but whose needs require intensive supports (Ockerman et al., 2012). Usually, this tier utilizes smaller groups consisting of 3-5 students and one-on-one instruction.

Fundamental in the success of the RTI model is the progress monitoring of students within each tier, with an increased focus on tier two and three (Shapiro, 2013). The purpose of this monitoring is to assess whether the chosen intervention is meeting the progress needs of the student. Instruction programs in tier two and three involve differentiations on several levels, including skill development, frequency, and intensity. With regular progress monitoring, professionals can make adjustments to programming in a timely fashion, in order to meet the needs of students more effectively. When earlier interventions are in place, it often results in a reduction in the number of referrals and inappropriate special education placements, and a restructuring of school personnel to meet the needs of all students (Canter, 2004).

### **RTI as a Counselling Intervention Model**

While the original purpose of RTI was to address inadequacies in conventional methods for identifying students with potential learning disabilities, its multi-tiered approach has recently become an integral part of creating comprehensive counselling programs that attend to similar inadequacies within past models of school counselling (Gresham, 2007; Ryan, 2011). Gresham (2007) suggested that conventional methods in counselling are failing, as “the behavioural characteristics and needs of students at risk or with emotional disturbances (ED) have overwhelmed the capacity of schools to effectively accommodate these students” (p. 14). Consequently, educators and counsellors often spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy working with a small number of students who exhibit behavioural or social-emotional problems (Saeki et al., 2011). This approach means that counsellors are most often providing reactive counselling strategies or crisis counselling, rather than proactive preventative services. Not only is this method weak in addressing student needs, it also creates an atmosphere of high demand and low control for counsellors, thus increasing job stress (Falls & Nichter, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010). Adopting an RTI approach to counselling may serve to reduce the number of students requiring intensive interventions, by instilling earlier interventions that more

efficiently and effectively prevent or reverse social-emotional and behavioural problems of students.

RTI as a counselling model is a multi-tiered structure, whereby each tier represents the level and intensity of counselling intervention required for students (Ockerman et al., 2012). A main goal of RTI is to provide effective intervention, using evidence-based strategies in order to match the gravity of student problems with appropriate tier, or targeted interventions (Gresham, 2007; Saeki et al., 2011). All levels of intervention call for use of appropriate strategies that serve to reduce or prevent problems, rather than respond reactively with inappropriate measures.

Tier one involves evidence-based counselling interventions at a school-wide level, which focus on prevention and also include frequent assessment for early identification of students requiring more targeted interventions (Ockerman et al., 2012; Saeki et al., 2011). These interventions occur in all settings for all students, thus requiring school staff to share a collaborative approach in supporting the mental health of students. Counsellors and teachers work together to provide a counselling curriculum and universal screening to most students, approximately 80%-90% of the school population, through regular core courses (Sprague, n.d.). Implementation of these two elements enables identification of possible school-wide social-emotional or behavioural concerns. For example, if data collected revealed a growing number of students experimenting with marijuana, the next step may be to address this behaviour by developing a Drug Awareness campaign to reach most students. Benchmark monitoring and assessment must occur periodically, in order to monitor student progress and determine whether the intervention was successful or adjustments are required.

Tier two interventions take on a more targeted approach and serve students identified as having greater needs and requiring more focused support (Ockerman et al., 2012). The primary goal of tier two interventions is to reverse harm for students identified as being at risk, approximately 5%-10% of student body, for a particular problem (Saeki et al., 2011; Spague, n.d.). For example, the benchmark assessments and monitoring during the Drug Awareness campaign may identify a small number of students as at risk for drug abuse. These students may then receive more focused group or individual supports, such as continued school counselling, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) counselling, and parent training and collaboration, which specifically address the areas of concern. Evidence-based drug intervention practices would be utilized, as would frequent assessment and monitoring necessary, in order to gauge student progress and the success of the intervention.

Tier three provides intensive individualized supports for students on a one-to-one level (Ockerman et al., 2012; Saeki et al., 2011; Spague, n.d.). In order to reduce harm, RTI aims tier three interventions at students with the most severe difficulties, approximately 1%-5% of the student population, who have not responded to tier two interventions (Ockerman et al., 2012). Tier three often incorporates wrap-around support through multi-agency involvement. For example, any student who did not respond to tier two interventions targeting drug abuse, and displays severe difficulties in this area, may receive continued support from AFM, parent collaboration, and the school counsellor, in addition to intensive intervention through other agencies such as The Behavioural Health Foundation Treatment Centre, or the Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre (CATC). Monitoring and assessments occurs frequently in this tier, in order to determine whether the intervention strategies are working.

### **RTI as a Tool for Stress Reduction**

One of the main factors contributing to counsellor job stress is high student-to-counsellor ratios, resulting in caseloads that are difficult to manage, especially when utilizing conventional models. The tiered framework of an RTI counselling intervention model advocates for counsellors to spend the greatest amount of their time, approximately 70%, implementing guidance curriculum at the tier one level (Ockerman et al., 2012, p. 10). This strategy is contrary

to historical models of counselling in which the majority of time is spent in individual counselling, which creates an impossible situation wherein counsellors often have caseloads of 450 students or greater. Using an RTI model, whereby counsellors give most of their attention to tier one intervention, provides the most efficient means for serving the greatest number of students, thus enabling counsellors to manage large caseloads with potentially less stress.

Because an RTI model of counselling intervention also supports a school-wide approach to mental health and wellness of students, counsellors may experience a lessening of the burden of solving all social-emotional or behavioural problems that students may experience while attending school. Tier one interventions are often offered to students through core programs and team-taught with classroom teachers. This increased collaboration between counsellors and school personnel may also serve to lessen the role ambiguity that counsellors experience as they take on a more visible role that becomes valued within the school culture. Perceived role stress decreases as ambiguity decreases, and a counsellor's role becomes more clearly articulated in terms of responsibility (Culbreth, 2005). Greater clarity in terms of a counsellor's responsibilities and functions may also assist counsellors in avoiding non-guidance-related activities that add to job stress, as administration and stakeholders become more aware of the vital role that counsellors play in the larger school community.

### Conclusion

Although counsellors cannot avoid all job stress, counsellor burnout is preventable by recognizing and addressing the contributing factors, and making adjustments to current practices which would then enable counsellors to perform at their best. Among the significant aspects that may affect stress levels of school counsellors are large caseloads that create a high demand with not enough time to see students, too many non-counselling duties assigned, and an unclear understanding of the school counsellor's role. In addition to these factors, job stress is associated with external demands from administration, teachers, parents and students, who all think that their needs are most important. In order to reduce job stress, school counsellors can advocate for reduced caseloads, appropriate duties, and clarification of their roles, by providing information to administration and other stakeholders regarding the impact that they have on student success. Supporting the need to develop a comprehensive counselling program, by restructuring the current model to an RTI model of counselling intervention, may play a major part in this advocacy. RTI enables counsellors to spend the majority of their time in direct service to students, offering meaningful supports, thus managing large caseloads more efficiently and collaborating with school personnel more frequently. Manageable caseloads, greater visibility, and increased success of counsellor interventions may reduce role ambiguity and inappropriate task assignment, consequently protecting counsellors from burnout.

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## OPINION PAPER

### From Compliance to Self-Discipline: My Journey with Restitution

Rebecca Gray

In my undergraduate training, I was well educated in theories of child development and how to effectively discipline children. I learned all about stimulus-response behaviour, and how children learn appropriate behaviour if they experience a consistent negative reinforcement each time that they engage in a particular action. I learned about how important it was to respond immediately to misbehaviour, or risk the child not connecting the consequence to his/her behaviour. I learned about natural consequences and how, ideally, consequences should be connected to the misbehaviour that occurred. It all seemed quite sensible, and I felt ready to begin a career in working with children.

I took my shiny new degree and found my first job. It was working as a child-care worker in a level four professional foster care program. The youth in this program were considered the “toughest of the tough,” and this was an amazing opportunity to cut my teeth. The staff in this program were all on the same page; as a team, we put into action all those principles that I had learned in school. We responded consistently to bad behaviour, and the kids learned quickly what the expectations were, and what would happen if they crossed the boundaries that we had set. We also set up positive consequences, and taught the kids that good things would happen when they followed the rules. I was pleasantly surprised to find that working with such challenging kids was not overwhelmingly stressful; we adults had a plan, knew what to do, and simply followed through when infractions occurred.

But all was not perfect. There were some kids who pushed every boundary. They were prepared to accept the negative consequences, and did not change their behaviour. There were some children who loved the power struggle; they seemed to get a rush out of finding a loop-hole in our plans, or in seeing the frustration that staff felt when we were unable to make them comply. On those occasions when we did get caught up in a power struggle, the resulting “war” inflicted serious damage to the relationships that we worked hard to build with the kids. Some youth behaved well when we supervised them and they knew that they would get a reward, or that a consequence would result if they behaved inappropriately, but all that went out the window if they thought they could get away with something. Of greatest concern to me was that when these children turned 18 and ventured out on their own, they struggled. As much as we were generally able to make these kids successful while they were in our care, I worried that we were somehow failing them. They were unprepared for independence. Without someone supervising and directing them, they were lost.

I moved to a new position, working as a school social worker. It was a different setting, but with a similar result. Most students responded well when the rules were clearly established and the consequences were fair and consistently applied. There were always those few kids who pushed everything; they were “frequent flyers” to the office. There were those who viewed adults as the enemy, and following through on consequences seemed only to reinforce this belief to them. It was common to hear teachers lament that their students behaved well when under their watchful eye, but behaved terribly the moment the teacher left the classroom or when a substitute teacher was in for the day. Again, I worried that we were somehow not preparing these children for the future.

Those of us who work with children talk a great deal about building responsible and internally motivated people. However, our actions were really focused on teaching children to be compliant. We set the rules, and expected them to listen. We did not ask our kids to reflect on their values and beliefs, or on what their actions said about the kind of people they were. We

were not asking them to consider the outcome of their choices, beyond what the potential short-term consequence might be. We said that we wanted kids to be respectful, but we were not having conversations about respect; instead, we were having conversations about rules and consequences. We wanted internal motivation – kids doing things for the “right reason” and not just to get a sticker or to avoid a punishment – yet all we were focusing our kids on was the external world of consequences and rewards.

It was a stroke of good fortune that I found Restitution. It was a busy spring, and I had not yet spent my professional development money for the year. With the deadline looming, I scanned through the training opportunities that were being offered, and I came across a brochure. It seemed odd to me that it required two days of training to learn about the concept of paying back the money that it cost to replace the window that had been broken, which was my idea of what Restitution meant. However, the brochure talked further about exactly the issues I was struggling with: how to build responsible, internally motivated students. Mostly, I needed to sign up for something, and I didn’t have time to do a lot of searching. Little did I know how this choice would change my life.

I found that Restitution was much more than a pay-back of damages. Restitution taught me that all behaviour exists to meet a need. Sometimes people don’t have a repertoire of behaviours to meet their needs effectively, but we all do the best we can in the moment to do so. When you consider behaviour through this lens, there really is no such thing as bad behaviour: only effective and ineffective behaviour. Instead of telling children that they are wrong, we can help them to consider what need they were trying to meet, and help them to find ways to meet these needs in a better way.

The most amazing shift occurred when I implemented a Restitution approach. Instead of going “toe to toe” with students, I was standing “shoulder to shoulder” with them. Instead of telling children that they were bad, I felt like we were on the same side. My role became that of a coach. I recognized that they were trying to meet their own needs through their behaviour, and I could help them find ways that would work better for them. Our relationships grew stronger, instead of being harmed as they were when I was in the role of the authority over them. Most importantly, I witnessed students who were being challenged to think and make decisions for themselves. They were learning independence. They being motivated not by consequences and rewards, but by meeting their own needs. I had found the key to encouraging internal motivation!

I have witnessed some magical moments since I started to use this approach. I’ll never forget the child who, when I validated that he must have had a really good reason for fighting, responded that he was trying to stick up for a friend, but knew that hadn’t been the right way to do it. Or the young lady who sobbed that she did not want to be a violent person and needed to fix her mistake when reassured that we would figure this situation out together. Or the girl who was ready to walk away from an important relationship after an argument until I asked her if it would be better for her if she was able to find a way that she could stand up for her own beliefs and still maintain a friendship. These kids didn’t need someone to tell them that they had made poor choices; they already knew that. They needed support to find a better way. How many opportunities like this had I missed by focusing only on following through on consequences?

As my skills in using Restitution improved, I discovered that these principles were really not about disciplining children; they were about resolving conflict. They equally applied to understanding my mother, my husband, my colleagues at work, and my own internal conflicts. Instead of judging others, or myself, when I recognized that every behaviour exists for a reason and validated that we are all doing the best we can in the moment, my anger would dissipate and I could respond with more understanding. Instead of focusing on the wrong that was done in the past, I was freer to explore the possibility of finding a better way forward.

Although my gut tells me clearly that this approach is correct, I get really excited each time I read about research on the topic of brain functioning and learning. Restitution is more than someone’s opinion or philosophy; it is consistent with what science tells us, as well. We know

that when people are feeling threatened, their capacity to learn and to problem solve is compromised. We know that internal motivation is much stronger than external. We know that people do not become independent problem solvers by having compliance demanded of them. We know that rewards can decrease external motivation. We know that strong relationships improve academic achievement and decrease the potential for violent behaviour. It never ceases to amaze me how so many discipline practices ignore what science tells us. We continue to inflict guilt and shame on children and segregate them from the group when they do wrong, instead of helping them to learn, to become stronger, and to repair relationships.

I believe that part of the problem is that this approach is radically different from the way that many of us were raised as children. It feels like we are somehow “letting kids away” with poor behaviour if we do not treat them harshly. If the only thing you know how to do is punish and reward, it’s difficult to take a different approach. I’m so thankful that I stumbled upon a brochure when I had professional development money that had to be spent. It truly changed the person that I have become.

Readers who wish to know more about Restitution may consult the following sources:

Gossen, D. (2004). *It’s all about we: Rethinking discipline using restitution*. Saskatoon, SK: Chelsom Consultants.

Rebecca’s blog: [www.rebeccagrayblog.wordpress.com](http://www.rebeccagrayblog.wordpress.com)

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

*Rebecca Gray works as a social worker in Rolling River School Division, Manitoba. She is a certified Restitution Level 1 Trainer, and is the past-president of the Canadian Association of School Social Workers and Attendance Counsellors. She has a B.S.W. from the University of Manitoba (1993) and is currently pursuing her M. Ed. in educational administration from Brandon University.*





## VOICE RESEARCH REPORTS

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

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

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

iPad Learning Project at Mary Duncan School, Phase 1  
Louise Loewen, The Pas Community Circle

iPad Learning Project at Mary Duncan School, Phase 2  
Louise Loewen, The Pas Community Circle



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

# iPad Learning Project at Mary Duncan School, Phase 1

The Pas Community Circle

**Louise Loewen**

The focus for this research was to use iPad remediation applications to improve literacy and numeracy skills in targeted students from grades 5-6 and 7-8 in Mary Duncan School. At the same time, we sought to enhance these students' engagement in school.

## **Method**

The research began with Mary Duncan teachers getting to know the iPads and then selecting the applications that they felt would be appropriate for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics remediation in grades 5-6 and 7-8. Of the 41 recommended apps, 4 were selected specifically for the iPad sessions that we used for data collection: 3 for math and 1 for language arts.

The 21 students who were targeted for the research because of their low literacy and math performance spent a total of 90 minutes per day in iPad remediation in April and May 2013. Two 30-minute pull-out sessions, one for math and one for language arts remediation, occurred with the Student Support EA. The third 30-minute session occurred in the students' classrooms.

Our research question was as follows: Will incorporating iPad technology into the classrooms at Mary Duncan School/Kelsey Learning Center enhance student engagement and strengthen the at-risk learners' literacy and numeracy skills? The data that we chose to answer this question consisted of the following school records:

- student attendance = records for February-March and April-May 2013
- student achievement = in-school ELA and math assessments in April and June 2013
- behaviour incident reports = discipline referrals from September to June 2012-13

## **Results**

There were no significant changes in the targeted students' attendance and discipline referrals between the months prior to the iPad sessions and the months during the iPad sessions.

However, there were significant increases in the targeted students' ELA and math scores between April and June 2013. In ELA, 12 of the 21 students (57%) showed improvement (see Figure 1). Of these 12 students, 6 increased by a full grade level, and 3 increased by two full grade levels. In math, 14 of the 21 students (67%) showed improvement (see Figure 2). Of these 14 students, 4 increased by a full grade level, and 7 increased by two full grade levels.

When September and June ELA scores<sup>5</sup> were compared for 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13 for the same classrooms (albeit not necessarily the same students), the results showed that the remedial iPad sessions in 2013 were effective (see Figure 3 for 2011-12). While students did progress in all three school years, the September-to-June ELA improvements were similar in 2010-11 and 2011-12, and then significantly higher in 2012-13. Furthermore, the ELA progress made by students who participated in the iPad sessions in 2012-13 was greater than the progress made by students who did not have this remediation.

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<sup>5</sup> No mathematics scores are available for September and June of 2010-11 and 2011-12. Therefore, our annual comparisons are restricted to English language arts.

Unfortunately, anecdotal feedback from the Student Support EA and the classroom teachers indicates that most of the targeted students did not enjoy spending 90 minutes a day on remedial ELA and math apps. Therefore, although the digital literacy sessions appear to have been successful in raising many of the at-risk students' literacy and math scores, they were primarily unsuccessful in enhancing these students' engagement in school.

Figure 1

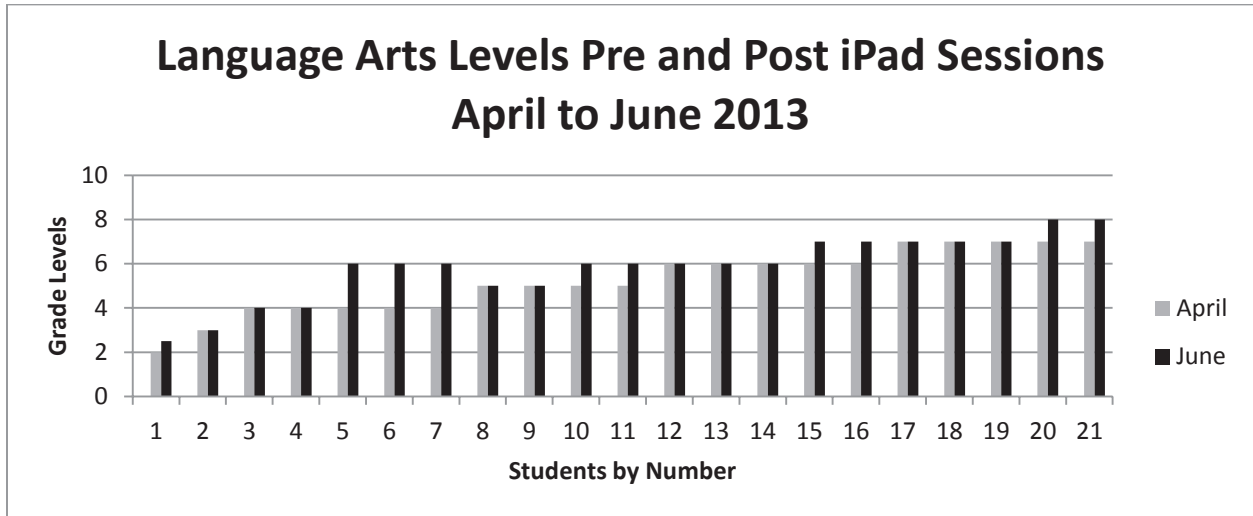


Figure 2

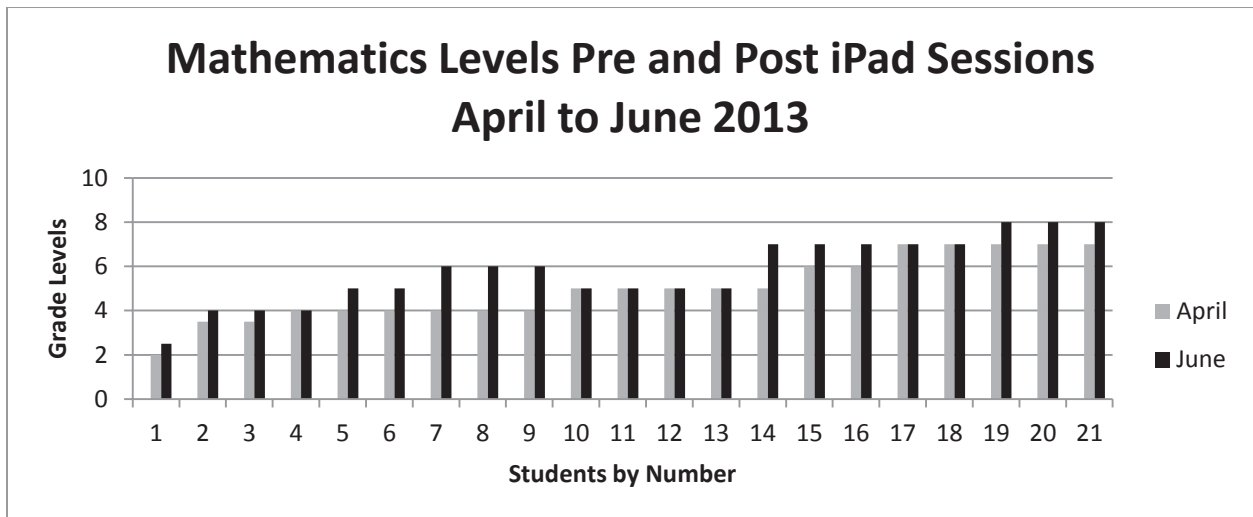
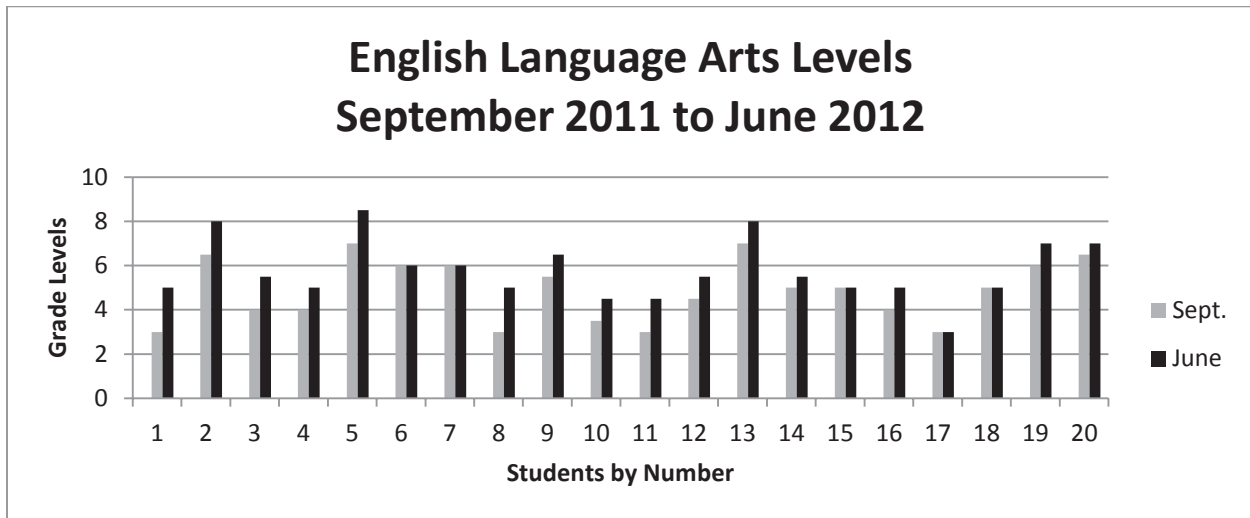


Figure 3



### Discussion

During the individual and small-group pull-out sessions in April and May 2013, the targeted students were engaged with the iPads and appeared to be on task. They progressed through the app levels, and many of their ELA and math scores improved – several by two complete grade levels. However, the overall consensus of staff members who were involved in the intervention was that the students did not particularly enjoy the iPad experience.

### Recommendations

We decided to incorporate iPad technology in lessons that would include all Mary Duncan and Kelsey Learning Center classes in 2013-14. The number of digital literacy classes was reduced to three 65-minute sessions per week for students in grades 5-6, 7-8, and an ungraded continuous education class. We implemented professional development training for the teachers who would be using the iPads in 2013-14, and we developed a sign-out system for teachers to access the iPads for classroom use.

### About the Author

*Louise Loewen is the assistant principal and resource teacher at Mary Duncan School/Kelsey Learning Center in The Pas, Manitoba. Louise has been employed by the Kelsey School Division for the past 27 years. Her teaching experience ranges from kindergarten through grade 12. Louise has also taught Pre and Post Confederation History for University College of the North in The Pas.*

## **iPad Learning Project at Mary Duncan School, Phase 2**

The Pas Community Circle

**Louise Loewen**

iPad technology was incorporated in the classrooms at Mary Duncan School/Kelsey Learning Center in order to enhance students' engagement and strengthen their language arts and numeracy skills in 2013-14. Based on the results from phase 1 of this VOICE research project in 2012-13, we decided to enlist an iPad expert to train our teachers in the effective use of iPad technology, and we expanded iPad use to include general classroom-based lessons in addition to our scheduled digital literacy classes.

### **Method**

First, we addressed security issues, in order to restrict app downloads by students and facilitate app downloads by staff. Students were assigned numbered iPads, making it easier to identify which students to check with if the iPads were compromised.

Then, we made the iPads available to all of our grades 5-12 and adult high school teachers. We also scheduled three weekly 70-minute digital literacy classes for students in grades 5-6, 7-8, and an ungraded continuous education class. We provided two full days of professional development by Darren Kuropatwa, an iPad expert from St. James-Assiniboia School Division. The teachers learned to use iPads to enrich classroom instruction in a variety of subject areas. iPad-based projects replaced the previous year's "remedial apps" during digital literacy classes.

iPad use was tracked by means of sign-out sheets for the teachers and feedback response sheets for both teachers and students. We sought further teacher feedback during staff meetings, and we accessed the following student records: attendance, discipline referrals, and marks in English language arts and mathematics.

Our research question was as follows: Will incorporating iPad technology into the classrooms at Mary Duncan School/Kelsey Learning Center enhance student engagement and strengthen the at-risk learners' literacy and numeracy skills?

### **Results**

Our results focus on issues of security, technological support, feedback from students and teachers, and the following student records: attendance, discipline referrals, and marks in English language arts and mathematics.

#### **Security**

When two students put passcodes on the iPads, we had to rely on them to reveal the passcodes before the iPads could be reset in the iPad configurator. Using the iPad configurator to return the iPads to their original state every day also proved problematic because work could not be saved from one day to the next. In April 2014, we changed to a once-a-week restoration.

#### **Technological Support**

Between September 2013 and April 2014, Gord Patton (Mary Duncan School teacher and technology enthusiast) volunteered a total of 166 after-school hours to look after the iPads.

In addition to maintaining and updating the iPads, Gord developed our online iPad sign-out system and wrote two manuals: *A Beginner's Guide to Apple Configurator* and *Mary Duncan Starter Applications*. We currently have 137 apps on each iPad in addition to the apps that are standard to the iPads.

## Professional Development

It is one thing to try out the apps, but another to use the apps and the iPads effectively in a classroom setting. VOICE sponsored Darren Kuropatwa to provide two days of PD: to Mary Duncan teachers in November 2013 and to interested Kelsey School Division staff in February 2014. Feedback for both days was very positive. The teachers came away feeling confident that they could use iPad applications to enrich their classroom instruction. For example, the digital literacy class teachers developed 24 projects, with clear and concise rubrics for assessment.

## Feedback from Students and Teachers

Students of all ages reported that they enjoyed the iPad projects and would welcome further opportunities to engage in iPad-based classroom instruction. In addition to the non-curricular projects during digital literacy classes, teachers reported using iPads to enhance classroom lessons in language arts, math, family studies, and science. Some of their comments follow:

- I worked directly with an adult student who was having a lot of difficulty in math, responded well to the use of an iPad instead of times table paper.
- The iPads filled a lot of the gaps of resources that a first year teacher may experience. My students . . . come to class every day and request an iPad before they even sit down.
- The iPads provided some fun teachable moments for our students.
- I found it challenging to teach how to use various apps . . . connecting to a projector would have been a big help. . . . It took a lot of manpower and small-group explanations before students could complete their assignments.
- Students from different age groups worked well together and it was nice to watch. They got to know the other students better.
- Some projects worked better than others and engaged all the students. The “how to” was one such project. Some students who normally would try to do the least amount of work possible were actually being creative, using book creator to create a “how to” book and looked like they were having fun.
- Initially, my intention was to use the technology for science class . . . The problems were continuous. Loss of internet access on some iPads, delay in getting earphones for use while listening to videos made it too noisy in the classroom, difficult to monitor students to ensure they were on track.

The following comments were shared by teachers who did not use iPads in their classrooms:

- As a teacher, if you don't have access all of the time to an iPad, it is hard to plan what you will do with them. I think iPads are great teaching tools, but as a teacher not skilled in its use, it is hard to apply in class.
- The inability to save work from day to day and to have paid apps was a deterrent.
- I find it easier to keep students' focus on one thing. I use a projector and desktop computer in my classrooms.

There was also an overall consensus that the 70-minute digital literacy classes were too long.

## Student Records

**Attendance.** Although 8 students attended a total of 167 days more between September 2013 and May 2014 than in the same months in 2012-13, overall there was little difference in the 21 students who participated in the digital literacy classes.

**Discipline referrals.** Of these 21 targeted students, 19 (90%) were referred to the office at least once for behaviour incidents between September 2013 and May 2014. However, of the total 168 discipline reports, only 18 (11%) were from the digital literacy class. One student who had all 5 of his referrals from the digital literacy class was permitted to take an alternative class but later asked to rejoin the digital literacy class without further incidents.

**English language arts.** We compared marks in September 2013 and May 2014. Of the 21 targeted students, 12 (57%) improved their language arts levels, including 6 who increased by a full grade. The teachers explained the other 9 students' (43%) lack of progress as follows: 1 had significant learning challenges in writing, 1 had ongoing health issues, and the remaining 7 had chronic attendance and classroom behaviour problems. When in school, 6 of these students participated fully in the digital literacy classes, but they did not submit language arts assignments.

**Mathematics.** We compared marks in September 2013 and May 2014. Of the 21 targeted students, 14 (67%) improved their math levels, including 2 who increased by a full grade. The teachers explained the other 7 students' (33%) lack of progress as follows: 1 had ongoing health issues, and the remaining 6 had chronic attendance and classroom behaviour problems. When in school, these 6 students participated fully in the digital literacy classes, but they did not complete any math units in 2013-14.

## Discussion

Attendance patterns did not change from 2012-13, but teachers reported that students were more engaged and participated readily in the iPad activities. The teachers created a rich set of lesson plans and assessment rubrics, which will serve as a foundation for continuing the iPad program next year. The digital literacy classes need to be shortened, but they offer students of various ages an opportunity to collaborate and develop social interactions. Our most notable conclusion is that iPad instruction can improve at-risk students' literacy and numeracy skills.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations will guide phase three of our iPad research project:

- We will purchase training videos and the Barton Reading and Spelling System for iPads, and we will look for a parallel math program.
- Mary Duncan School's educational assistants (EAs) will be trained in the delivery of this literacy enhancement system.
- On the basis of the Flynt Cooter Comprehensive Reading Inventory in September 2014, students will be targeted for inclusion in three weekly 30-minute digital literacy classes.
- On the basis of the Math-Level Indicator assessment in September 2014, students will be targeted for individualized support using the iTooch math apps.
- We need another set of iPads and a configurator to accommodate classroom use of the iPads during digital literacy classes. We also need to purchase more e-titles.
- We need to offer release time for technological support.

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Brandon University's Faculty of Education invites current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students to submit the following types of manuscripts for publication in the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*.

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### Note to authors:

Prepare your manuscript according to the 2009 (6<sup>th</sup>) edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

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Send your paper electronically to Dr. Marion Terry, Editor ([terry@brandonu.ca](mailto:terry@brandonu.ca)), as an email attachment in Microsoft Word. Include the following copyright permission notice in the body of your email message:

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