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Quarter Horse Mare Nudging Her Foal To Make Friends
Lenore, Manitoba



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INTRODUCTION

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

- Lyliam Jardine's ED.D. abstract summarizes describes her research with university educated Colombian immigrants to Canada.
- Jordana Etkin's refereed article advocates holistic physical education.
- Brenna Smith's refereed article explores psychological health and safety interventions in school environments.
- Stacey Fordyce's refereed article examines the role that self-regulated learning plays in student engagement.
- Adam Dobriansky's refereed article addresses student attendance problems.
- Matthew Buck's professional reflection considers how his core values and beliefs have supported his journey to become a school counsellor.

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with theses in 2023.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Exploring the Intercultural and Holistic Transformative Learning Experiences of Professional Colombian Immigrants in Canada

Lylia Janeth Jardine

Ed.D. Abstract

Colombians who acquire a university degree in Colombia may still face challenges finding employment. They may choose to immigrate to Canada because of the opportunities that this country offers. However, these immigrants may have to apply various strategies to overcome obstacles in their path to success. So, when they immigrate permanently to their host country (Canada as their country of settlement), they may have to overcome barriers, such as discrimination (Quillian et al., 2019) while finding a place in their professional field and integrating into their host communities (community of settlement). As a result, immigrants may find that having a career and speaking the target language is not enough to communicate effectively and build meaningful connections in their host communities.

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study with narrative inquiry methodology was to explore the journeys of eight professional Colombian immigrants who felt successful in Canada and had two or more years of adaptation and integration to answer the following question: To what extent did professional Colombian immigrants experience holistic Transformative Learning (TL) and enhance Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) after living in Canada for two or more years, in their path to professional success?

In this study, I explored how the eight participants were able to enhance their ICC through various strategies that fostered interpersonal connections. These connections allowed them to become more confident with their target language(s); they also became stronger, humbler, and more flexible, and open-minded. In turn, they enhanced their communication skills and their ICC in their host communities. Their positive attributes and interpersonal connections helped them reflect on changes in their identities and frames of reference experiencing holistic TL.

The study findings have the potential to inform the professional field of adult learning on how to incorporate learning spaces that promote interpersonal connections and learning through relationships to foster ICC and holistic TL.

Jardine, L. (2023). *Exploring the intercultural and holistic transformative learning experiences of professional Colombian immigrants in Canada* [Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary]. Open Theses and Dissertations. <https://hdl.handle.net/1880/116628>

About the Researcher

Dr. Jardine is a sessional instructor at Brandon University and the University of Calgary, and also an entrepreneur. Some of her research areas include intercultural competence and transformative learning around immigrants.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Embracing Holistic Physical Education: A Pedagogical Shift From Traditional Approaches

Jordana Etkin

Abstract

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Literature Review

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

Impetus for Change

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

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

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

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

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

The Holistic Approach

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

Holistic Physical Education

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

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

Discussion

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

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

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

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

Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

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

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

Ecological Awareness

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

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

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

Inclusivity and Accessibility

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

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

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

Benefits of Holistic Physical Education

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

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

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

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

Recommendations for Stakeholders

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

Curriculum Development and the Ministry of Education

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

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

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

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

School Personnel

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

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

Physical Education Teachers

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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Exploring Psychological Health and Safety Interventions and Their Value to Students, Classroom Teachers, and School Divisions

Brenna F. M. Smith

Abstract

Teachers are in a profession with high levels of stress, which play a role in absenteeism and burnout. Many studies have focused on teacher burnout; however, limited literature has examined how to support teacher well-being. Based on my research of school wellness initiatives, I discovered that the role and significance of teachers is the linchpin for establishing and sustaining school health. This article focuses on the stakeholders involved in the work of building a healthy school community, the role of school divisions, and how the whole school community benefits from teachers who are provided psychological health and safety supports in the workplace.

Monday Morning Struggles

It's a Monday morning before students have arrived at school, and as normal I turn on my computer and check my email. There is an update from the principal: an educational assistant (EA) will be away in one classroom and a teacher is sick in another classroom. No substitutes can be found for either, so the scramble begins of adjusting EA and teacher schedules to meet the needs of students and recess duty coverage for the day.

Unfortunately, this scenario is typical and there are many times our school struggles to find substitute teachers for teachers needing time off for medical, sick leave, or professional development purposes. The extra stress of coverage for other teachers, not having adequate preparation time, and losing EAs from one classroom to supervise students in other classrooms likely contributes to burnout for teachers. On top of these changes being made for coverage and day-to-day teaching duties, teachers are burdened with a heavy load of administrative tasks. Faced with increasing expectations from all levels – students, parents, and government – teachers are putting in longer hours at work that is more emotionally demanding.

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Over the past year, psychological health and safety in the workplace has been a topic of discussion within the school division where I work. As the Workplace Safety and Health Co-Chair and WSH Representative on the Swan Valley Teachers' Association, I am part of discussions relating to what steps our division needs to take to create better policies and strategic plans towards a culture of well-being. Von der Embse et al. (2019) stated that many interventions for stress have largely been targeted for students rather than teachers. Our division is in the beginning stages of change as new programs are being implemented for students, new roles such as counsellors are available for students to talk to, and therapeutic learning centers are being created to support students in need of self-regulation strategies.

Whereas efforts to build and maintain healthy school communities in support of mental well-being usually focuses on students' needs, in this study I ask the question: What is the role and significance of teacher well-being in establishing and sustaining these healthy school communities? Asserting the foundational importance of teacher well-being, this article explores key elements of the Comprehensive School Health framework (Stolp et al., 2023) to consider what strategies and interventions would best support teachers' psychological wellness, so that

they do not burn out but can continue to provide positive caregiving in supporting student well-being.

Teacher Stress and Burnout

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (Government of Canada, 2023) defines job burnout as –

A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term exposure to demanding work situations. Burnout is the cumulative result of stress...professions with high job demands and few supports can increase the prevalence of burnout and reduce engagement. (What Are Other Issues in The Workplace That May Affect Mental Health? para. 6).

Within the research, teacher burnout has been a topic recently focused on more as the teaching profession experiences higher levels of stress. These stressors play a role in absenteeism, burnout, school climate, and teachers' behaviour management strategies (von der Embse et al., 2019). Research has found that "stress, burnout and lack of support can lead to poor mental health" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019, p. 26). Teachers are experiencing higher levels of emotional exhaustion, a condition in which one's emotional resources have been depleted, and can be characterized by fatigue, debilitation, loss of energy, and being worn out (Chang, 2009).

Teachers play a key role in setting the emotional tone within the classroom by providing timely and sensitive responses to children's emotional behaviour and consistently modelling respectful social interactions for students (Hatton-Bowers et al., 2022). In their research, Hatton-Bowers et al. (2022) discovered that when teachers are emotionally exhausted, there is a correlation between reduced sensitivity and increased harshness toward children, and lower levels of classroom organization and instructional support. They also found that teachers with more effective strategies for managing their personal emotions and dealing with negative emotions were better prepared to provide emotional support to their students. It is therefore important to discuss supports for reducing burnout, which will generate well-being. Well-being incorporates aspects of physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual health, food literacy, self-awareness, relationship skills, and injury prevention (Alberta Teachers Association, 2019).

According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2019), there is "a renewed focus across Canada to move beyond student wellness to that of understanding and supporting teacher and school leader wellness" (p iii). Teachers will inevitably experience high levels of stress at work; however, research suggests by moving toward a more Comprehensive School Health approach a healthy school community can be developed (Stolp et al., 2023). Identifying and describing essential strategies to develop and sustain a healthy school community (Stolp et al., 2023), and attending to teachers' needs, could address "their feelings of detachment, absenteeism, and the desire to leave their occupation" (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Addressing teacher burnout through targeted supports and a Comprehensive School Health approach is crucial for supporting a healthier school environment, which can positively enhance teachers' well-being.

Teacher Well-Being

Based on my review of the literature regarding the causes of teacher stress and burnout, I discovered that teacher well-being is the linchpin for holistic school health. On this basis, I focus on identifying and describing specific elements of a holistic approach to school well-being that contribute to the successful development and sustainability of a healthy school community, particularly in my Canadian context. I assert the following as key elements:

1. There are many stakeholders involved in the work of building a healthy school community (teachers, students, administration).

2. School divisions play a role in providing job resources to support teachers' well-being (e.g. peer support, school health champion, and updating policies and procedures).
3. The whole school community benefits from teachers who are provided psychological health and safety supports in the workplace (e.g., teachers, students, and school divisions).

Teamwork of Stakeholders

Many stakeholders are involved in the school system, from students to teachers, administrators, superintendents, board of trustees, parents, community members, and government. Each of these groups work together in helping to build a healthy school community. The more people are involved in this work, the easier it is to develop and sustain a healthy school community (Stolp et al., 2023). Teachers are the entrusted people who often get programs operating within the classroom to support the students' well-being, so it is important that teachers are also provided opportunities for support with their well-being by principals and administrators.

Because teachers deal with the daily stress of student behaviours, excessive workload, and emotional exhaustion, they play a vital role in contributing to a healthy school community with action-oriented steps in the classroom and school. When teachers buy into a healthy school community, awareness that healthy students learn better encourages teachers to provide lessons and role modelling opportunities for student well-being (Storey et al., 2016). Teachers must also encourage their school principal to make healthy school development a priority for teachers by including wellness on the agenda at staff meetings, providing opportunities for staff well-being, and involving teachers in healthy school development planning (Storey et al., 2016).

To reinforce healthy practices and behaviours and sustain a healthy school community, teachers must provide students opportunities for leadership. This enables students to take responsibility and ownership of their actions, leading to a positive school environment. Storey et al. (2016) stated that students taking a leadership role towards a healthy school community development is critical. When teachers provide opportunities for students to take these leadership roles and responsibilities, they help to reinforce healthy practices and behaviours.

Administrators such as principals and superintendents also need to take part in developing a healthy school community because they support teachers and they influence the priority of divisional change. When an administrator makes psychological health and safety a priority, it is easier to do the work needed to make positive changes in the workplace. Within the research of Montemurro et al. (2023), one principal indicated that "when you have a superintendent who makes it a priority – It's a whole lot easier to start doing the work" (p. 5). Upper administrators are instrumental in influencing the prioritization of well-being and catalyzing district level change.

Job Resources as Supports

To deal with the job demands of teaching, school divisions would benefit from providing job resources to teachers to support their well-being. These resources can include providing professional development (peer support) opportunities, funding for a school health champion, and updating school policies and procedures (Stolp et al., 2023). System leaders who consistently provide clear and ongoing communication of well-being, and work on initiatives of psychological health and safety, reinforce it as a value worthy of attention (Montemurro et al., 2023).

Professional development (peer support) is one strategy used to support a healthy school environment. Providing time for teachers to meet allows school members to be aware of school goals, build capacity to support well-being, and sustain knowledge and action plans to respond to emerging needs of students. Creating a workplace where teachers are provided the

opportunity for involvement and influence of their workplace helps to support psychological health and safety (Government of Canada, 2023).

Another job resource school divisions can take advantage of is providing funding to hire a School Health Champion. This is a person who can initiate the process of developing a healthy school community by being a central coordinator who is knowledgeable about interventions to support teachers' psychological health and safety, and works with district leaders and staff to implement these interventions (Montemurro et al., 2023). Due to the busy structure of a school environment, many times it can be difficult for administrators and teachers to start change on their own. Having a school health champion is valuable because they are able to take on some of the work required to make change (Storey et al., 2016).

Another job resource that helps to sustain healthy school communities is the updating of school-wide policies related to health and safety (Stolp et al., 2023). Creating strategic plans for long-term goals is essential to reinforce well-being as a district priority (Montemurro et al., 2023; Stolp et al., 2023), and to promote alignment across schools to inform implementation (Montemurro et al., 2023). SAFEwork Manitoba (n.d.) is a public agency dedicated to the prevention of workplace injury and illness. Through prevention education, safety programming, and strategic direction, SAFEwork Manitoba strives to create a culture of safety for those within Manitoba. There are 11 elements of a safety and health program by which SAFEwork Manitoba encourages that psychological health and safety be adapted and incorporated into the workplace's safety and health program. Element 1: Safety and Health Policy, Element 2: Hazard Assessment, and Element 5: Inspections are areas in which school divisions can update and work toward improvements to ensure the sustainability of a healthy school community.

The School Community

School divisions that incorporate job resources involved in teachers' psychological health and safety will experience benefits for the whole school community. There are many stakeholders within the school. When psychological health and safety is addressed, not only teachers but also students and school divisions benefit.

When teachers' psychological health and safety is addressed, teachers feel supported both personally and professionally (Montemurro et al., 2023). Lower levels of emotional exhaustion and increased feelings of personal accomplishment help in dealing with teacher burnout (Montemurro et al., 2023). Within Chang's (2009) research, he found that emotional regulation strategies like suppressing, faking, or hiding emotions led to burnout. When teachers are encouraged to express their feelings and learn strategies for emotional regulation, and learn not to neglect their emotions, they are better able to role-model effective regulation strategies for students (Chang, 2009).

Fostering teachers' psychological health and safety also helps to support students' health and academic success (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019). Hatton-Bowers et al. (2022) found that teachers who participated in a wellness program demonstrated stronger attention to children's emotional cues and an increased ability to describe and observe the emotions of the children they cared for and educated. When students are well, they learn better. Students are also able to make better relationships with their teachers, reducing the burden of student behaviour for teachers and enabling students to increase their knowledge and graduate from school (Montemurro et al., 2023).

By addressing teachers' psychological health and safety, school divisions positively impact their school community that may be struggling to retain staff and experiencing teacher absenteeism, sickness, depression, and low job satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Like my personal experience at the beginning of this article where teacher absenteeism and sickness led to further burnout and stress of other colleagues, von der Embse et al. (2019) found that this chronic understaffing in schools led to loss of high-quality instruction for students. Attrition not only lowers morale, job satisfaction, and job performance among teachers (Ibrahim et al., 2021),

but it also leads to loss of financial and occupational resources for administrators needing to deal with teacher turnover (von der Embse et al., 2019). Merrill et al. (2016) also found that teacher participation in a wellness program resulted in lower average medical claim payments.

Discussion

Job stress, defined by Chang (2009) is a combination of high job demands and low job control, which impacts employees' well-being and productivity. Using the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model helps to better understand why it is important to research the elements that contribute to the successful development and sustainability of a healthy school community. Job demands refer to role ambiguity, task stress, and psychological stressors involved in accomplishing a heavy workload (Chan et al., 2021). Job control refers to "a working individuals' potential control over his tasks and conduct during the working day. Lack of job control leads to psychological distress" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 4). Providing job resources such as social support, encouragement, and effective communication from school leaders helps to enhance teachers' well-being in the workplace (Ibrahim et al., 2021). This type of supportive supervision (Chan et al., 2021) increases self-esteem, sense of competence, good coping strategies, and the ability to accept change (Ibrahim et al., 2021). "Employees who receive high support from colleagues and supervisors are less affected by adverse emotional effects" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 5), and job satisfaction increases.

The Comprehensive Health School framework is "an internationally recognized framework for supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated, and holistic way" (Stolp et al., 2023 p. 300). Because this framework focuses on developing a healthy school community as a whole, teachers' psychological health and safety benefits.

Conclusion

Incorporating psychological health and safety in the workplace helps to support new and experienced teachers who are part of the school system and may be experiencing stress. Resources are vital in a workplace that requires personal emotional regulation dealing with the heavy workload and student behaviours. These resources help teachers to provide role-modelling on how to deal with student emotions, which in turn supports students' behaviour regulation and learning. When students and teachers are well and cared for, such as by using The Comprehensive Health School framework, a healthy school community is developed and can be sustained – which benefits all stakeholders within the school.

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Brenna Smith has been teaching within the Swan Valley School Division for the past 12 years in various positions, including early years music and homeroom subjects. She completed her Post Baccalaureate from the University of Manitoba in 2021 and is currently working toward completing her Master of Education with a focus on educational administration at Brandon University.

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

Stacey Fordyce

Abstract

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

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

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

Self-Regulated Learning

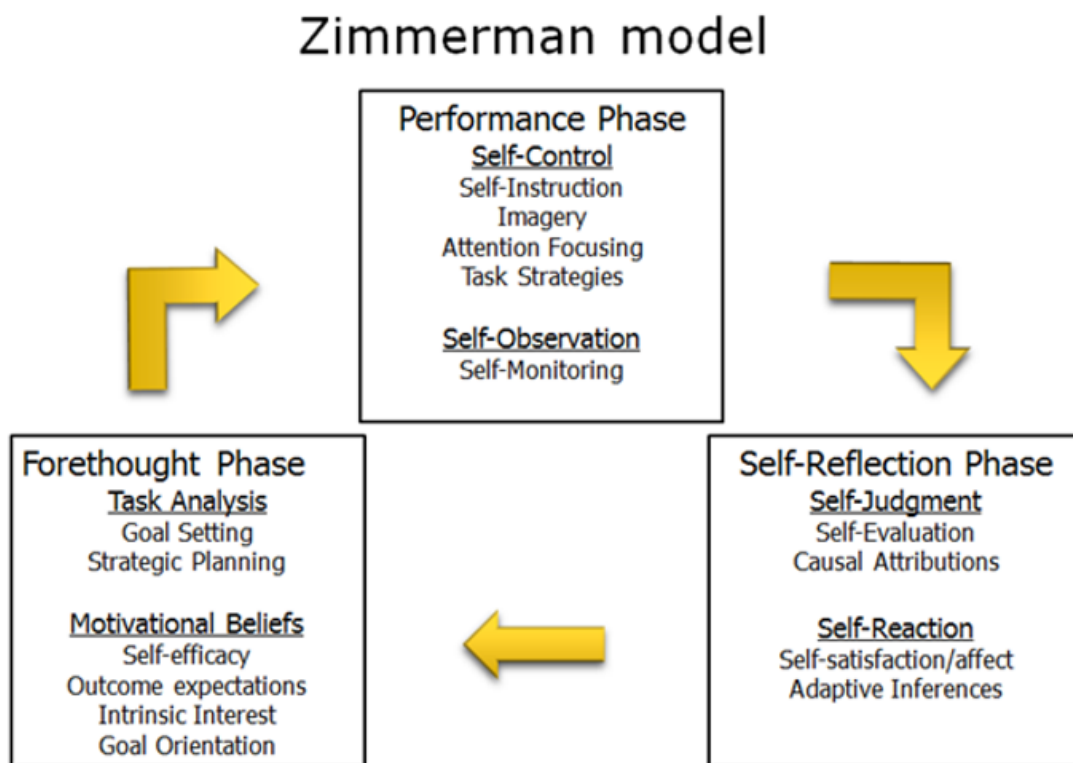
Self-regulated learning has been at the forefront of contemporary education for well over three decades as "a self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). SRL is not an ability or a skill, but rather an active process that researchers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

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

Phases of Self-Regulated Learning

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

Figure 1
Zimmerman's Phases of Self-Regulated Learning



Forethought Phase

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

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

Performance Phase

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

Self-Reflection Phase

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

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

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

Student Choice

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

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

Intrinsic Motivation

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

Self-Efficacy

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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About the Author

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School Ghost Towns: Combating the Increasing Number of Absences in Schools

Adam Dobriansky

Abstract

Student absenteeism is a prevailing issue for schools, impacting academic performance and social-emotional development. This article explores the definitions, rates, and causes of absenteeism. Through analysis of existing literature, it proposes a comprehensive approach to address the problem. Drawing on concepts of trauma-informed education and Response to Intervention (Rtl), the author endorses a framework with a tiered structure of supports to create safe and supportive environments, alongside a more targeted approach to address individual root causes. By combining trauma-informed practices with the tiered approach of Rtl, schools can address absenteeism and promote well-being.

Attendance and student absenteeism is a serious issue facing schools today. The purpose of this paper is to define absenteeism, deepen understanding of the scope of the problem, discover possible causes of this problem, and explore the impact of absenteeism on student learning. The goal is ultimately to explore existing literature centered around attendance and student absenteeism to identify potential solutions that can be implemented within the context of my urban Manitoba school. To address student absenteeism, I advocate a school wide trauma-based approach embedded within existing support structures such as Response to Intervention (Rtl).

Absenteeism in the Literature

Student absences are categorized into (a) explained absences of which parents/guardians are aware, such as illness, quarantine (particularly important in recent years due to pandemic restrictions), injuries, or medical appointments; and (b) unexplained absences of which parents/guardians are unaware, which includes any reason where absences have not received approval (Aucejo & Romano, 2016). The term *truancy* is sometimes used when relating to students with unexplained absences. Truancy describes multiple unexplained absences that last full school days, as willful behaviour of either the student or their parents choosing to be noncompliant with the school system (Shute & Cooper, 2015). In this article, school absenteeism is quantified as a percentage that reflects the relationship between the total number of school days missed, encompassing both explained and unexplained absences (truancy), and the total number of school days possible in a given year.

Prevalence

A sharp increase in school absenteeism has been experienced in recent years. Dee (2023) gathered extensive data on school absences, encompassing 40 states and 92% of all K-12 public school students in the U.S. from 2022. Examining this data, Dee suggested that on an average day in the 2022-2023 school year almost 10% of kindergarten to grade 12 students were absent. This issue is also reflected by local data in Manitoba, from the Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) where during the first 3 months of the 2022-2023 school year there was an overall absenteeism rate of 11.8%, almost double the 6.3% pre-pandemic rate seen in 2016-2017 (Louis Riel School Division [LRSD], 2022).

These rates are further developed using the term chronically absent, which is defined as a student missing more than 10% of the total school year. When drilling down into the data

regarding chronically absent students, there was an increase in the 2021-2022 school year to 28.3% from the pre-pandemic 2018-2019 school year of 14.8% (Dee, 2023). LRSD (2022) reported an even higher percentage, with almost 40% of students in LRSD qualifying for chronic absenteeism. These international and local absence percentages are strikingly similar when analyzing school-based data within one of the schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Data gathered through student information systems where teachers were required to report daily attendance show a 30% daily absenteeism rate for the 2022-2023 school year in that particular school. Putting these numbers into context, almost 100 of the 300 students in this school were missing on any given day and 33 students inside those daily absences were likely from the same grouping of chronically absent students.

Causes

Discussing possible causes of absenteeism assumes that there is a reason for students missing school. The functional model of unexcused absences “poses that youths miss school to avoid school-based stimuli that provoke negative affectivity, escape from aversive school-based social and/or evaluative situations, pursue attention from significant others, and/or pursue tangible rewards outside of school” (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013, p. 4). Finding one exact cause for the sharp increase in absenteeism is difficult. The changes in the data from recent pre-pandemic years to pandemic years indicate that a shift occurred during this period. Taylor (2021) extensively explored the classification of COVID-19 as a disaster due to its profound psychological impacts and implications for schools. Taylor explained,

Worldwide, education has been disrupted in 188 countries for approximately 1.5 billion children and youth ... as the pandemic was in the early days, school employees reported anecdotal evidence that some students were struggling with the changes to their normal routines, exhibiting behaviours such as remaining inside their own rooms, refusing to shower, eat or even get out of bed. (p. 125)

During the pandemic the social aspects of schools were greatly disrupted through public health measures designed to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, through physical distancing, remote learning, and cohorting which physically kept students apart. Even with the return to in person learning, masking disrupted the ability to read social cues affecting approachability and trust, important for social interactions (Carbon, 2020; Bylianto & Chan, 2022).

Taylor (2021) outlined three key criteria that influence a child’s response to disasters: the extent of their exposure to the event, the amount of support during and after the event, and the degree of personal loss and social disruption experienced. The pandemic produced a general level of disruptions and increased stress for all, but given the wide range of experience amongst the three indicators outlined by Taylor and given the different level of resources of each family, it would be difficult to determine a causal effect on attendance. Interestingly, Dee (2023) found no statistical differences between states with stricter distancing mandates, mandatory masking regulations, and higher rates of COVID-19 – which suggests that the pandemic itself is not a predicting factor of school absenteeism. Instead, Dee pointed to declining youth mental health and disengagement as byproducts of the pandemic as contributing factors for student absenteeism remaining high with the return to regular in-person learning.

Kipp (2022) indicated that current research into absenteeism does not adequately account for students’ personal decisions. To explore the daily decisions students make about their school attendance, Kipp employed an ecological agency theoretical framework to capture the intricate relationship between the environment, the individual, and the decision-making process, analyzing how school dynamics impact these decisions. In gathering data for this model, Kipp conducted exhaustive case studies of two students, using a mix of interviews, relational maps, drawings, and extended observations. From this research, Kipp concluded that experiences within the schools themselves amplified anxiety, and that social factors such as peer relationships and bullying have the greatest impacts on attendance.

Effects

School absenteeism affects students' social-emotional and academic learning. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study 2010-2011, Gottfried (2014) explored the effect of absenteeism on academic and social emotional outcomes for 10,000 kindergarten students in the U.S. He compared attendance rates with academic success on two achievement tests for Math and English, four teacher-rated social scales, and two behavioural scales. Students with chronic absenteeism tended to exhibit lower academic scores, reduced educational engagement, and increased social disengagement.

These learning loss trends were demonstrated at later grades in a study by Santibañez and Guarino (2021) using data from over 600,000 kindergarten to grade 12 students in California. Comparing absence rates with test scores from the Smarter Balanced Assessment in ELA and Math survey data measuring self-management, growth mind-set, self-efficacy, and social awareness, Santibañez and Guarino found that absenteeism negatively affects student outcomes and harms social-emotional learning especially in social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management. Interestingly, this study shows that absenteeism has a statistically greater impact on both academic and social-emotional learning in later grades than in early ones.

Trauma-Rooted Response to Intervention as a Solution for Absenteeism in an Urban Manitoba School

The following considerations had to be accounted for when looking for solutions that could be implemented within my urban Manitoba school: the limitations within an already overburdened school system, minimal financial cost involved, and the use and adaption of existing structures of support. Solutions had to address root causes identified (i.e., trauma caused by COVID-19, anxiety of students, and relationships), and they had to be broad enough to cover all students yet flexible enough to target specific high-problem areas. With these limitations in mind, I recommend using a trauma-informed approach embedded within existing support structures of our Student Intensity Scale framework called Response to Intervention (Rtl) to support, monitor, and assess attendance interventions in my school.

Rtl "refers to a systematic and hierarchical decision-making process to assign evidence-based strategies based on student need and in accordance with regular progress monitoring" (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013, p. 3). In Rtl, the interventions progress from Tier 1 universal support targeting 80-90% of learners requiring monitoring attendance data twice a month, to Tier 2 targeted interventions for a smaller group of 5-10% of students requiring weekly monitoring of attendance data, to Tier 3 requiring intensive strategies for individuals making up the final 1-5% of students with daily monitoring (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013). This framework offers easy and specific monitoring intervals to assess student growth with specific interventions that can be scaled up or down depending on student need. Given the widespread prevalence of varying degrees of attendance problems amongst the student population, there is need to deploy a comprehensive strategy that can reach all students while still having Rtl's flexibility for targeted interventions (Taylor, 2021). The framework is also commonly used within the school and division that I work in and therefore all school-based stakeholders are familiar with the format and language, requiring no additional professional development for teachers or support staff.

Trauma-informed education takes into consideration the effects that stress and trauma have on the brain and the extraordinary impacts they have on learning. Bath (2008) explained that traumatic experiences rewire the pathways in the brain to be hypersensitive, protecting the individual from future distress. This heightened reactivity triggers the body's stress response system, even in non-threatening situations, leading to challenging and unexpected behaviors. It is crucial to recognize that for students to engage in effective learning, efforts must be made to deactivate this response system. At the root of trauma, students grapple with a sense of

powerlessness and seek out ways to evaluate the safety of their surroundings and relationships (Dombo & Sabatino, 2019). To address trauma, Bath (2008) offered three pillars: safety, connection, and managing emotions. In alignment with these pillars, Dombo and Sabatino (2019) highlighted the importance of healing through relationships built on the principles of empathy, support, and curiosity, thus aiding in the identification of trauma triggers for students. Taylor (2021) offered a series of steps for schools to integrate trauma informed care: taking inventory of current practices in schools, ensuring all stakeholders know the effects of trauma on the brain and how they impact student learning and behavior, reviewing existing policy, and building connections for families to mental health supports.

Specific strategies within a trauma informed Rtl response to absenteeism would include a flexible but escalating response dictated by student need and absence rates. A whole-school level response, incorporating the lens of Rtl Tier 1 supports and the lens of trauma informed education, would involve building connections with adults and teachers, increasing connections between peers, increasing teacher knowledge of how trauma effects the brain, and increasing safety within the classroom. Dombo and Sabatino (2019) advised that clear expectations, well-defined routines, time for transitions, choices whenever possible, and attuned teachers contribute to safe classrooms. At Tier 1, Kearney and Graczyk (2013) suggested increasing access to health services within the school system, including mental health supports, prioritizing social emotional learning in classrooms, and increasing parental involvement.

Layering in trauma informed education at Tier 2 would involve considerations of individual students' specific triggers to trauma within the school/classroom and increased coregulation with an adult to help students calm (Dombo & Sabatino). Dombo and Sabatino suggested coregulating through labeling emotions, focusing on emotions behind challenging behaviours, and teaching calming and mindfulness exercises. At Tier 2, Kearney and Graczyk suggested using problem solving with students and families to identify the barriers to attendance, increasing academic support or tutoring for this group of students to target gaps in learning, working with clinical teams to pursue testing for learning disabilities, working with medical doctors to diagnose and treat psychological reasons for absenteeism like anxiety, and increasing engagement.

Finally, at Tier 3, Kearney and Graczyk suggested incorporating clinician staff on the school team, changing attendance plans by offering reduced time in school, use of alternative spaces, smaller class sizes, and increasing engagement through offering vocational programming – which are also supported by trauma informed practices. At this level of support, it becomes increasingly crucial to have students build trust with an adult, thus having a safe relationship to serve as a secure base. To foster this relationship building it is important to designate a point person within the school team, who will be responsible for the increased monitoring required for Tier 3 support along with working towards building the required relationship so that students can begin to feel comfortable identifying the barriers that are stopping them from attending school.

Conclusion

Exploring the literature around attendance and student absenteeism clarifies the scope of this problem and the urgency with which school systems must respond in order to support their students and families. I advocate addressing the problem by using a trauma-informed approach within the framework of Rtl, which offers a flexible way to react with a structured monitoring and assessment schedule. As a school, the suggestions offered through both of these lenses are practical and easily implemented. Future research into the effectiveness of this approach would involve a pretest posttest method, comparing attendance numbers by using student information systems (such as Power Bi), before the targeted intervention years and after implementation.

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About the Author

Adam Dobriansky is a Master of Education student at Brandon University, with a focus in educational administration. He is a vice principal, husband, and father of four children. Adam is passionate about alternative education and finding practical solutions to improve the school experience, well-being, and academic success of students.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

Growing Into the Role of Counsellor

Matthew Buck

Continuing to refine my approach to counselling has been a journey for me. As I develop my framework, I am reflecting on my core values and beliefs, and my learning in the M.Ed. program in addition to my lived experience, and how they are interrelated. I am considering what led me to want to be a school counsellor, what is important to me, how I view people, and how I believe I can help them. I am reflecting on what resonated with me in my previous courses and how that learning has shaped me in developing my approach. I am also reflecting on how my experiences influence how I can support people, and how I developed my initial framework. Using these components as a foundation, I believe I can incorporate what I have learned from more approaches to better support people who come for help.

Who I Am As a School Counsellor

This year I am fortunate to be in the role of school counsellor and to practice my skills and techniques with the students I support. I frequently reflect on why I initially chose to become a school counsellor to my current “why.” I initially decided to pursue counselling in part due to COVID-19 and its effects on the school community: school closures, social isolation, adjusting to a “new normal,” and fear of the unknown, to name a few factors. I believed these factors would need attention for years after restrictions were lifted, and that there were not enough school counsellors to meet the demands of the students we work with. I also believed that my beliefs and core values aligned with becoming a helper.

During the early onset of COVID-19, I noticed my core values and beliefs emerging because of my own experience and learning of others’ experiences. I saw the inequities in how many people were profoundly impacted by COVID-19 through job loss and reduced or restricted access to food, shelter, and health care. I was fortunate to have my needs met, but I felt a responsibility to society to help others less fortunate than me, so I began donating to Harvest Manitoba and became involved in my local New Democratic Party (NDP) Constituency Association. This was also around the time the former provincial government tried to pass the Education Modernization Act (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2020-2021), which was viewed as harmful to public education (The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, n.d.). Through these experiences, social justice became an important core value to me. With this core value, I believed it was important to serve the community.

I began serving the community through donations and volunteering, and I also perceived it important to help people in their personal journeys. As a counsellor, I help people become who they want to be, to live a good life and share their gifts with the world, as well as help people navigate challenges and problems that arise. Challenges and problems result when people’s lives are “out of sync” (Sharry, 2004, p. 38) because of unhelpful thoughts, distorted beliefs (internal barriers), external barriers, or all these factors. External barriers emerge in social and physical environments, some because of racism, oppression, and colonialism. When I took Intercultural Counselling, I learned that effective intercultural counsellors are advocates of social justice, and that effective intercultural counselling requires strong relationships, developing competencies, cultural humility, and recognizing the importance of intercultural counselling. Intercultural counsellors also empower clients to have influence in improving their lives (Monk et al., 2019), in addition to “seeking commonalities and the bonds that connect us as human beings” (Martin et al., 2015, p. 281).

How I Developed My Approach to Counselling

A year ago, I had the opportunity to learn about different theoretical frameworks to counselling and to develop my own. I reflected on my beliefs and values and stated that everyone is unique, bringing their strengths, challenges, and identities, and that we have a collective responsibility to help each other become our best selves by reaching goals and sharing our gifts with the world. My approach and beliefs align with the Rogerian conditions of unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathy (Rogers, 1992). When I developed my framework, I returned to the “why” of my desire to become a counsellor, and perceived that my beliefs and core values aligned with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and the Social Ecological approach.

Applying my beliefs and core values to counselling with CBT and the Social Ecological approach was the “how” of my framework. Helping people become their best selves and sharing their gifts with the world when their lives were “out of sync” or when they faced external or internal barriers (or both), or all these factors required building their resilience, self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and some cognitive strategies.

Ungar (2015) believed resilience was developed through “complex patterns of environmental influence, along with cognitive factors” (p. e124). People are influenced by social and physical environments, which can be positive or negative: positive environments are protective factors and negative environments are risk factors. Furthermore, a collective responsibility to help each other reach goals and share gifts with the world shows “communalism that reflects the importance of social bonds and social duties, a fundamental sense of interdependence and a focus on collective well-being” (Ungar, 2010, p. 422). Building capacity and self-efficacy can counter unhelpful thoughts and beliefs; the degree of belief in building one’s capacity to be successful influences the degree of success in applying a new skill (Bandura, 1977). As a school counsellor, I believe in the importance of advocating for the students I support and teaching them how to self-advocate (Ungar, 2021). It is also beneficial to help students increase positive thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about themselves and others with CBT techniques, which can reduce negative thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Adding more approaches to this framework will help me to better support the students who come to see me.

Integration of More Approaches

In the M.Ed. program I have learned the value of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), mindful self-compassion, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). Effectively integrating these approaches into my counselling framework will help people to become their best selves and share their gifts. These approaches can also help me work with people to build their resilience, capacity, self-efficacy, and cognitive strategies for coping with unhelpful thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

SFBT addresses building resilience, self-advocacy, social justice, self-efficacy, and capacity building. This is achieved through focusing on what works for the clients and positive changes (Kim et al., 2017). SFBT empowers clients to have influence in working towards a desired future – the clients can create their own solutions and use their existing strengths in those solutions. In an approach where the clients are the expert in their own lives, SFBT is conducive to practitioners’ gaining cultural competence. In my experience, I have found SFBT appropriate in working with many students I support, and it aligns with my belief in helping students become their best selves.

Every student who comes to see me is unique and is more than the challenges they face. Kim et al. (2017) described SFBT as very effective when there is a safe, trusting, and supportive relationship between the counsellor and the student. Furthermore, they deem it important to take a strength-based, positive approach with clients, rather than a deficit and pathologizing approach. Sometimes, students who come to see me need acknowledgement, validation, and

hope. Using SFBT can address these needs through building resilience and capacity. Resilience is developed through identifying and enhancing protective factors while reducing risk factors. Building capacity is achieved through “focusing on the clients’ strengths, coping skills, exceptions, and past successes” (Kim et al., p. 131). When students come to see me, they often cannot immediately see their positive attributes, but by establishing a safe, trusting, and supportive relationship they are able to see possibilities for success.

Having the opportunity to practice ACT has been helpful in applying it with the students I support. When listening to students tell their stories and challenges, I consider how their thoughts and feelings interfere with them becoming who they want to be, or they expend much of their energy on trying to “get rid of” uncomfortable or unwanted thoughts and feelings. I have found adapting ACT to age-appropriate concepts effective in gently challenging an unhelpful thought or behaviour pattern. Some of the students I work with are beginning to grasp the essential concepts of ACT (which are not their thoughts), and to focus on what helps them become who they want to be.

I currently use ACT with three students who are at different stages in the change process. I found many different access points with each of the students, and each is moving at their own pace. Two see the importance of change and are open to working through ACT, and one is ready for Creative Hopelessness (Harris, 2019). I have used Harris’s (2019) Choice Point Theory with each of them, and it is interesting how each can articulate goals, values, and toward or away moves, but needs guidance in putting together the whole puzzle.

I am appreciative of the relationships I have with students because they are trusting me to walk with them on their path, just as I am walking my own path. I have had the discussion of how suffering is part of life, at an age-appropriate level. The analogy I used was identifying an object as unhelpful thoughts and feelings: when I put the object in front of my eyes it keeps me from doing the things I like doing, and trying to push the object away also keeps me from doing the things I like doing. Putting the object on my lap shows it is still there; I have made a place for it so I can do the things I like doing. This is how I explained cognitive fusion, experiential avoidance, and acceptance. I also used the YouTube video of driving the bus and have repeated the message that thoughts will always be there for the ride, but they are the driver (Oliver, 2013). Once they understand the process and are open to working further, we go deeper into mindfulness, which involves noticing, grounding in the moment, being open, paying attention, and developing self-kindness (Harris, 2019). I emphasize that mindfulness takes time and practice, and that each day is different.

After learning about mindful self-compassion and how it has helped me in my journey, I believe it is another component I can integrate into my counselling framework. Many times in my life I have struggled with negative self-beliefs and negative self-talk: I was not good enough; I was a failure if I did not do my best; I was too emotional. Some of the concepts in Neff and Germer’s (2018) book resonated with me and helped me shift my perspective. In the first chapter, Neff and Germer stated that we often do not treat ourselves like we would treat a friend who is suffering, and that helped me shift my perspective to treating myself how I would treat my friends. Furthermore, understanding the foundation of self-compassion as self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness has helped me in moments when I have struggled, specifically saying words of comfort to myself, such as “I am sorry you are having a hard time right now,” recognizing that others have been in my situation, and answering the question of what I might need in that moment of struggle. It was also important to learn the difference between self-compassion and self-esteem, and to practice mindful self-compassion because of moments of feeling hurt, rather than beat myself up for whatever caused the feeling of hurt. These concepts are what I share with students when they come to see me, and align with my values of building resilience, self-efficacy, capacity, and self-advocacy.

Throughout Neff and Germer’s (2018) book, there are explanations and examples that complement resilience, self-efficacy, capacity, and self-advocacy. The authors stated that self-compassion builds resilience because it is a source of inner strength and courage that helps us

when we face challenges. Self-efficacy and capacity building are addressed through the exercises, particularly the compassionate friend activity, with their words of wisdom and support coming from within. Answering the question of “What do I need?” is an example of self-advocacy. Extending compassion to others and the concept of common humanity are important for social justice as well. I believe these skills and practices are effective for all the students I support, but I have noticed that mindful self-compassion is difficult to implement when students come to see me in a dysregulated state.

Some of the students I regularly support struggle with regulation, and I have found DBT an effective framework to help them to regulate and work on becoming the person they want to be. The four domains of Mindfulness, Tolerance, Emotions, and Interpersonal can be effective in supporting students when they are struggling. The purpose of mindfulness is to “reduce suffering and increase happiness,” “increase control of your mind,” and “experience reality as it is” (Linehan, 2015, Mindfulness Handout 1). Interpersonal effectiveness promotes building positive relationships, working effectively with others, and working towards balance in relationships (Linehan, 2015, Interpersonal Effectiveness Handout 1). Emotional regulation works towards understanding and naming emotions, decreasing the frequency of unwanted emotions, emotional vulnerability, and emotional suffering (Linehan, 2015, Emotional Regulation Handout 1). Distress tolerance aims to manage crisis, accept reality, and release from needing to satisfy demanding desires, urges and intense emotions (Linehan, 2015, Distress Tolerance Handout 1). DBT is effective in building capacity for emotional regulation. This approach is effective in recognizing where the student is at in their journey and working towards meeting their needs in living a fulfilling life.

Conclusion

In my first year as a school counsellor, I have had the opportunity to implement my theoretical framework to counselling. I have found that CBT and the Social Ecological approach resonate with my core values and beliefs. I have also found SFBT, ACT, mindful self-compassion, and DBT valuable approaches to incorporate into my framework, in addition to my own personal growth. Social justice, resilience, self-efficacy, building capacity, and self-advocacy are important to me, based on what I have learned in my M.Ed. program, in addition to my lived experience, and these values and beliefs are evident in my framework. These beliefs, values, and lived experiences are what led me to be a school counsellor and help me support the students who come to see me. I want to help students become the people they want to be and share their gifts with the world, and I will continue to incorporate new approaches, techniques, and skills into my counselling framework.

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About the Author

Matthew Buck completed his Master of Education in guidance and counselling through Brandon University in June 2024. He is a guidance counsellor at a K-5 school in Winnipeg. Prior to becoming a guidance counsellor, Matt was a resource teacher for nine years, and he taught in Thailand for five years.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses in 2023.

Alexandra Paiva April 24, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Breanna Lawrence

Ordinary in the Unordinary Lessons on Resilience and Hope – A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experiences of Youth Well-Being and Learning During COVID-19

Emergency remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic had an array of implications for youth and their families. This qualitative case study explored youth experiences and their parent's perceptions about youth mental health and learning during imposed emergency remote instruction throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a multi-informant and semi longitudinal case study research design, the purpose of the study was to describe the resilience processes related to navigating remote learning at two different points in time (May 2020 and May 2021). Participants included four youth aged 12-16 years old and their four parents that totaled 16 separate semi-structured interviews.

The findings include rich descriptions about the in-depth experiences of youth and their families navigating the uncharted territory during the pandemic with social restrictions and online learning living in rural Manitoba. Participants described themes related to learning, mental health, family dynamics, interpersonal competencies, and adaptive processes. These findings highlight the many systems and adaptive capacities within the youth, in relationships with caregivers, families, educators, helpers or friends, and in resources and capacities in order to support resilience in a post pandemic world. Many of these center around the powerful adaptive systems variously referred to as agency or mastery motivation, active coping, hope or optimism, and connection. The results have important implications for research and practice regarding resilience, education, and counselling.

Robert Dinsdale August 16, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Jackie Kirk

The Bison Way: Organizational Unifiers and Values as a Driver of Sustained Success

Sustained success is a significant challenge in a rapidly changing world. Changes in leadership present a notable obstacle to sustained success. The North Dakota State Bison football program is the most successful Football Championship Subdivision football program in history. Over the last twelve years, the team has won nine out of a possible twelve national championships. This was achieved with the leadership of three separate head coaches.

Factors that contributed to the unprecedented success of North Dakota State were the focus of this study. A case study was used to examine the football program through the lens of complexity leadership theory. Interviews with the athletics director and head coach were combined with focus groups involving assistant coaches and players to discern key factors of the Bison's success. Identity, values, and the community of Fargo, North Dakota, guided the Bison in establishing a unified culture. Expectations placed on the program, combined with the recruiting philosophy, created the opportunity for movement and growth in a complex environment. Finally, empowered player leadership and the establishment of clear processes within the program created conditions to support sustained success.

Angela Klassen August 31, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Breanna Lawrence

Isolation, Loneliness and Hope Among Older Adults Living Alone in Rural Southern Manitoba

Isolation was commonplace throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, but loneliness was not well understood with researchers finding mixed results. Social isolation significantly impacts physical and mental health outcomes, including mortality rates. While social isolation does not equate to loneliness, many people who are isolated are also lonely. People who are isolated also tend to live alone. Even before the pandemic, older adults experienced more loneliness and social isolation than those who were younger. Considered especially vulnerable to severe health outcomes, older adults faced extraordinary daily experiences during the height of the pandemic. Yet, many older adults reported coping well throughout the pandemic. Understanding the unique ways in which older adults navigated these conditions despite adversity was needed.

Using a resilience framework, in my thesis I explored how six older adults who lived alone in rural Manitoba experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. A semi-longitudinal multiple case study was conducted to elicit in-depth descriptions about loneliness, isolation, hope, and mental health experiences. Rating scale and qualitative interview data was collected at three different points in time over a one-year period. My results revealed the challenges to maintain hope and well-being despite mounting concerns. Many participants explained unmet needs as they experienced voluntary and involuntary isolation within the context of mandated public health restrictions. Even so, participants reported that loneliness remained unchanged from pre-pandemic levels. Adaptability and negotiating social conditions were described. Amplifying the voices of older adults, this study allowed participants to speak candidly about their experiences during the pandemic while also revealing resilience.

Joanna Ford November 16, 2023 Thesis Supervisors: Dr. Candy Jones and
Dr. Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou

Making Community Connections a Priority in Curricular Planning for Young Adult Newcomers

This Master of Education thesis explores how bridging programs and strategies can enhance academic success of young adult newcomers and students with refugee backgrounds in small Manitoba cities and rural areas. Employing a qualitative approach with a constructivist epistemology, the research utilizes interpretive constructivist methods, including practitioner inquiry research. It features the experiences of participants who graduated from the bridging program under study, along with the author's own observations and reflections.

The study identifies factors affecting this student group, including language and literacy needs, the learning environment, barriers to academic success, educational gaps from limited prior education, and personal/family dynamics. Key findings stress the importance of fostering community connections to provide tailored support. The study also highlights the importance of flexible school environments that accommodate students' diverse needs, enabling focused skill development in academic learning, literacy, and numeracy.

The research calls for schools to review their practices and policies, promote equity, collaborate with community organizations, provide flexible scheduling, and to seek genuine student input. The research also provides evidence and justification for prioritizing and funding bridging programs. Suggestions for further research include expanding the sample size, collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations, avoiding deficit mindsets in research, and exploring program models, funding, policymaker attitudes, and advocating for support to ensure academic success.