**University of British Columbia**

**Drawing on student funds of knowledge to increase success for ‘at-risk’ learners**

Schnellert, L. (UBC), Moore, S. (UBC), King, J. (SD67), Searcy, N. (SD53), Manuel, T. (SD67), Moase, J. (SD67)  
Division K, Section 4, AERA Annual Meeting, Toronto, ON.  
April 5, 2019

---

**Introduction**

Research, practice and professional development (PD) related to diverse learners often frame children from a deficit-based perspective.

Continued attention to retrofitting normative teaching approaches for learners who do not “fit” standardized curriculum actually reinforces standardized notions of students as learners. This initiative and study counters deficit perspectives to suggest that diversity is not a burden, but rather offers opportunities to learn with and from each other, creating more access points to learning for all based on diverse students’ funds of knowledge.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)**

CRT and Indigenous ways of knowing and being can extend, disrupt, and deepen understandings of inclusive education and reframe diverse and at-risk students as valued members of learning communities (Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Schnellert, Kozak & Moore, 2015).

CRT is, “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” – Gay, 2001 (p.106).

According to Ladson-Billings & King (1992), the concept of culturally relevant teaching, “is contrasted with an assimilationist approach to teaching that sees fitter students into the existing social and economic order as its primary responsibility” (p. 314).

**Reconciliation and Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being**

In British Columbia educators are beginning to attend to calls to indigenize curriculum to further reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in response to historical injustices (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

The First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL), jointly created by Ministry of Education and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) outline authentic ways of learning that reflect educational approaches recognized by Indigenous communities.

---

**“Education is a complex process that is personal, holistic, and embedded in relationship to each other, self, and to the land, and is most effective if it is authentic and relevant” - Chrona, 2014**

The intended outcome of the creation of the FPPL was that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students will benefit from an education that emphasizes Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives (Kanu, 2011).

**PD that Positions Teachers as Inquirers & Possibilizers** (Schnellert, Kozak, & Moore, 2015)

- Positive perspectives on educators using strength and asset-based beliefs and language
- PD facilitators are aware of their own experiences, background, biases, and cultural norms
- Reshaping PD activities using place, culture, and knowledge of educators, their students, and families
- Questions for inquiry are surfaced by educators related to their contexts, students, and edges of their own understanding
- Fosters a sense of belonging
- Sharing and valuing diversity

---

**Through a Different Lens**

**Design**

Teachers in this study engaged as practitioner inquirers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) drawing on theory and research related to inclusive education, Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and CRT, as well as exploring BC’s renewed curriculum to provide more voice and ownership for students in their educational experience.

- 4 inquiry groups: middle years, Indigenous ways of knowing, inclusion, formative assessment
- Participants in each group included classroom teachers, special education teachers, and district helping teachers
- 5-7 meetings with embedded collaboration time, technology, and materials
- Cycles of action and reflection
- Case study methodology
- (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 2007; Stake, 2015)

---

**Research Questions**

Within and across sites, multiple forms of data were collected and juxtaposed in order to:

1) trace whether and how collaborative inquiry fostered teacher learning and practice change, and

2) identify links between teaching practices and increased access for students to learning, particularly their most vulnerable learners

---

**Findings**

- **What did teachers do?**
  - **Table:**
    - [Data table]
  - **Figure:**
    - [Insert figure]

**What made a difference?**

- **Table:**
  - **Data table**
- **Figure:**
  - [Insert figure]

**Student Outcomes**

- **Affect/Engagement:**
  - Increased engagement and enjoyment in learning
  - Teachers reported, “Students love it.”
  - Students said, “I enjoyed learning...”
  - Engaged in student centered, strengths-based and diversity-positive practices
  - “Students are enthusiastic” “We have buy in”

- **Agency:**
  - Students feeling more in control of their learning and personalizing their own learning
  - Students felt they could make a difference for themselves and others, and had a sense of self-efficacy and ownership

- **Outcomes:**
  - Teachers in the project reported “Students’ learning helping others” and “felt more successful”

**Discussion**

- Choice was critical for educator engagement
- Sustaining attention to inquiries is challenging without a community to support you
- ‘Helping teacher’ roles have increased purpose and impact
- Tension between desire for concrete examples and nurturing creative and critical thinking in teachers
- Temptation to change case study student
- Perceptions and reality related to learning outcomes/expectations

**Educational Importance**

- This study illustrates how multiple entry points for teachers engaged them in redesigning their practice to welcome and support diverse learners
- Higher completion rates for students who are vulnerable
- Evidence of positive relationships between strength-based and personalizing pedagogical approaches to diverse learners, inquiry-oriented teacher professional development, and positive outcomes for at-risk learners

---

**http://differentlensblog.blogspot.com**