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**Snow Children**

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**Cover Painting**

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# INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

## Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the twentieth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 10, issue 1, are BU Faculty of Education M.Ed. students and recent graduates. I thank these educators for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles engendered by their educational and work experiences in Canada and abroad.

- Bryan Schroeder's research report explores servant leadership within the context of his personal journey to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while working as a school principal.

- Lynn White's research report examines teacher responses to their experiences as participants in Surrey, B.C.'s Peer Support Program.

- Michelle Sabet's refereed article identifies the benefits of outdoor education and compares historical and current trends, particularly in relation to Indigenous perspectives and environmental stewardship.

- Megan Sloik's refereed article extols schools to meet the challenges of including all students in school by bridging the gap between "best" and actual classroom practices.

- Miranda Bowman's refereed article recommends peer mentoring as a means to maximize teacher performance and satisfaction, particularly within the context of living and working in northern and rural Canadian communities.

- Allyson Rock's refereed article applies the three-tiered Response to Intervention approach to helping early, middle, and senior years students with reading disabilities.

- Lei Yu's refereed article examines the statistics and reasons for attrition among new Chinese teachers, and suggests preventative academic and interpersonal support measures.

- Jordana Etkin's refereed article explains how self-regulation can enhance children's school experiences, including students with exceptionalities that affect their classroom emotions, behaviours, and attitudes.

- Stephen Lewis's refereed article considers Universal Design for Learning as a tool for educational leaders to transform teacher practice.

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with projects and theses in 2017.

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## RESEARCH REPORTS

# The Autoethnographic Reflection of a Christian Principal and His Great Desire to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly: A Story of Being Called, Encountered, and Changed by God While Growing as a Servant Leader

**Bryan Schroeder**

This study presents a qualitative data driven account of highly personalized and transformative experiences that I reflect on, draw meaning from, and summarize the professional value of how I was called, encountered, and changed by God, as I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while growing in servant leadership as a (vice) principal at a Christian school. In 2014, I stumbled upon and pursued the notion of using my journal entries from May 2010 to December 2013 (271 pages), as qualitative data to write an autoethnography. The guiding research questions for this autoethnographic study were as follows: *What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal? What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal? How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader, in the principal role, at a Christian school? What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine? How are my experiences of being called, encountered, and changed by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature? What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practicing servant leadership?* My responses to the research questions offer valuable perspectives and unique insight from my view of the world, as transformation in my personal life led to transformation in my professional life.

Autoethnography was the chosen methodology to vividly express the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual details from my life, and analyze and interpret the meaningful encounters that I had journaled about. Themes were established through the inductive process of coding data, and findings were framed by the servant leader theory, which led to the writing of Chapters IV through VII. Chapter I is an introduction, Chapter II reveals the theoretical framework and worldview of the study in order to give the reader a grid with which to connect my thematic chapters, Chapter III presents my methodological framework, and Chapter VIII is the conclusion that discloses the inward and outward implications of my findings. It has a summary of how my personal encounters influenced my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal of a Christian school, and it also displays implications for principals practicing servant leadership and for teachers at public schools and Christian schools. The sources that contributed significantly to the credibility of this autoethnography were extensive Christian literature references, Bible verses, supportive research of the servant leader theory, and my authentic journal entries. Although my experiences were unique to me, many authors shared similar experiences in the context of their Christian communities. The life changing journey that I experienced, while growing as a servant leader, must be known among principals who also have a similar desire to hear from and know God, and be called, encountered, and changed by Him.

## Seeking To Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly

My desire to know Jesus Christ wholeheartedly motivated me to rearrange my priorities, habits, and schedule so that in my pursuit to hear His voice, I could experience His fullness. I relentlessly sought Jesus, as a flame leaps out desperately hoping to find more oxygen in order to grow and burn with fueled intensity, because nothing else would satisfy. I longingly desired to

encounter the fullness of Jesus, the source of knowledge, wisdom, and revelation, in worship, prayer, fasting, and His Word. I expressed my raw thoughts and motions in my journal and simply wanted to know my Creator. I was strengthened with comfort, encouragement, and inspiration when I became aware of other people who could relate to my insatiable hunger to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. God was overhauling my heart and my mind as He molded me into a humble servant leader who was called to build a strong, purposeful, and caring school community (Crippen, 2010, p. 28). He knew what needed replacing, repairing, and refurnishing in order to equip me as an effective principal. Everything changed in my life when Jesus began to answer my heartfelt cries by opening up my spiritual eyes and ears and revealing Himself and His call on my life as we fellowshipped in closer and closer friendship.

## Fellowshipping with God

Nothing compares with having a real, personal, powerful friendship with Jesus Christ. I asked to know Jesus, and the Holy Spirit graciously revealed Jesus to me through powerful encounters. My spiritual ears and eyes were opened when I began to hear God's voice and see pictures and visions that stirred my spirit. He gently brought loving conviction and correction to my soul. The more that the Holy Spirit revealed Jesus Christ to me and conversed with me, the more I wanted to be near Him and know Him. I declared to the heavens and earth who the living God was and what He had done and was doing. The Holy Spirit caused the zeal of God to consume me as I read His Word and sensed Him speaking directly to me through it. I could not help but praise and thank Him for His goodness, kindness, and love for me. I was overwhelmed that He deeply loved and valued me. From a servant leader perspective, I grew in understanding of how Jesus modelled servant leadership to build His community of united and genuine believers. I learned much about the power of the sense of belonging and the feeling of being authentically valued as a result of His servant leadership (Stewart, 2012, p. 238; Sultan & van de Bunt-Kokhuis, 2014, p. 4) as I followed and fellowshipped with Him.

The more I discovered who He was, the more I communed with Him and expressed my love for Him. I fell in love with Jesus and realized that He is a passionate Bridegroom who wants to see His Bride, the Church, living victoriously with power and love, eschewing the lesser things of life. I submitted my life to the Lordship of Jesus, so that His will and ways would work their way through my spirit and soul, and then I set my heart to trust and obey Him no matter what the cost. Each transforming truth that I embraced, caused me to think, feel, and act differently because I was growing in confidence of who Jesus was and who I was. These changes affected me at home, at work, and in the community. I perceived Jesus differently, myself differently, and others around me different. I learned to love myself with more balance, love others similarly to how God does, and love Jesus more as my understanding of His love for me deepened. I also received a spiritual language of praying in tongues that God gifted me with to strengthen me, know Him more, and receive more revelation of the hidden mysteries of God. I was deeply and forever changed because I spent time daily in the presence of the sovereign God.

## Receiving Prophetic Ministry

Receiving prophetic ministry from people who showed me God's love through it changed my life. As I became comfortable with the practice of people sharing with me what they believed God was revealing to them about me, I was encouraged, comforted, and exhorted. I believed that Jesus was revealing, by the power and activity of the Holy Spirit, what He was thinking and feeling about me. I was strengthened in my spirit to trust that God the Father was working out His plan in and through me, but most importantly I grew in confidence in the goodness and nearness of God. I left many evenings of prayer and worship cheered up and filled with joy, hope, peace, renewed purpose, and love. I wanted to understand the biblical grounding for what

was happening through the prophetic encounters, and I found solid foundational teachings in God's Word and other resources about the spirit, gift, and practice of prophecy.
I learned how the prophetic ministry was different under the Old Covenant compared to the New Covenant; however, God's desire to reveal Himself to people never changed. I was astounded and inspired how God spoke to people by His still small voice, through His powerful and holy written Word, and through visions. When people shared the revelation with me, I wrote it down in my journal at home, compared it with God's written Word, and talked about it with Jesus. The spiritual, mental, and emotional equipping that I received through the spirit of prophecy prepared me as a servant leader to persevere with humility through hardships, negative thoughts, and temptations from the devil. I was being built up, equipped, and trained as a servant leader who would "truly offer hope and guidance for a new era in human development, and for the creation of better, more caring institutions" (Spears, 2004, p. 9). I do not fully comprehend God's plan for my life, but I am thankful for the prophetic ministry that I received and how God used it to transform me to live confidently and faithfully, and do my best serving staff members and students as the principal at a Christian school.

## Dreams from God

God gave me multiple dreams that strengthened my faith, character, calling, and relationship with Jesus. He answered my prayers of desiring to hear His voice through dreams. The Holy Spirit continually uses these dreams to confirm how much Jesus loves me and cares for me, and how powerful the Name and Person of Jesus really is. The Holy Spirit instructed me, directed me, corrected me, affirmed me, called me, equipped me, and encouraged me through dreams. Goll (2012) summarized, "Dreams and visions are wonderful, but they must direct us to Jesus. It is Jesus we really want. Let Him be our goal. In all our getting, let us be sure to get Jesus" (p. 139). The more dreams that God gave me, the more that I understood Jesus' thoughts and feelings. The persistence of asking the Lord to open my spiritual eyes and speak through dreams led to life-changing revelatory edification (Goll & Goll, 2006, p. 42) that God provided through the calling, end time focused, direction, warning, split, heart revelation, spiritual warfare, and intercession dreams.

God has given me other dreams as well, where I was a student in a classroom (Schroeder, May 27, 2012, p. 131; Schroeder, June 30, 2012, p. 136), a teacher in a classroom (Schroeder, June 3, 2012, p. 132), or praying for God's justice to be released on earth as it is in heaven (Schroeder, July 29, 2010, p. 11). Such dreams affirmed God's desire for me to grow as a servant leader and take seriously the divine call associated with it, because "leaders are what they say and do" (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 416). God revealed to me many things through dreams to seal His instruction in me and equip me to know how to transform teachers and students by modelling what I desired to see and hear from them. I am very thankful that God heard my prayers and effectively spoke to me to influence me as a principal. I am humbled that God chose to give me dreams from His fatherly heart and mind, in order to communicate with me and allow me to clearly hear His voice!

## Conclusions and Implications

My thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal were influenced because of how God called, encountered, and changed me in my personal life. Fear was changed to confidence, insecurity was transformed to boldness, and pride was replaced with humility. The professional mistakes, failures, and regrets became part of my journey of hopeful examination as my story of reflection and revision continues. My great desire to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly invited godly infiltration to the deepest parts of my soul and spirit, in order that I would surface victoriously as a changed man and servant leader in the principal role. Fellowshipping with God, receiving prophetic ministry, and being given dreams from God repositioned my heart and

renewed my mind, in order to see Jesus, myself, others, and the world around me differently. Through the consideration of my personal encounters, my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal growing in servant leadership were ultimately influenced for the betterment of the students and staff members whom I serve in my school community.

The implications of my experiences are for professional educators to draw ideas, models, and practical tips to educate students. Principals need to reflect on their value systems, get to know Jesus and understand His teachings and values, keep learning in a spirit of humility, and embrace the servant leader theory. “Principals and teachers have a very important function in school effectiveness” (Cerit, 2009, p. 616), and I hope that principals who read this study will develop as servant leaders and have a significant impact on their school communities. Teachers in public schools need a vision for their students to mature and learn from the regular practice of self-examination and reflective journaling. The freedom found in written expression of thoughts and emotions is unparalleled. It leads to personal growth because of the associated processes of metacognition and consciousness. The more time, encouragement, and opportunity that teachers give students to write reflectively, the greater vision and clarity students will have for their lives. Teachers in Christian schools have unique opportunities to pursue to know Jesus Christ and use the same journal writing strategies, except they can elevate the expectation that students will experience the presence of God and encounter Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. They can try holy experiments, which lead to holy expectations and holy encounters with God. Hope and the expectancy of good is needed by all students, teachers, and principals. My prayer is that this study will accentuate the goodness of God, reveal the love and truth of Jesus Christ, implicate the value and heavenly calling on each person’s life, and encourage educators to embrace servant leadership and reflective journal writing.

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### *About the Author*


*Bryan and Amanda Schroeder are happily raising their four children, Mayla, Callie, Hudson, and Deacon in Brandon, MB. They attend a local church called Catch the Fire, and Bryan continues to serve passionately as principal at Christian Heritage School.*

# Peer Support:
# A Collaborative Approach to Teacher Improvement

**Lynn White**

Many teachers today struggle to meet the differentiated needs in their classrooms. Mentorship programs are often available to teachers in the first five years of teaching, but after the initial induction process there is little support for teachers. In the past, when teachers were identified as struggling in the classroom, they were evaluated through the supervisory process by their administrators. With a collaborative mentor to guide and support them, would teachers have the ability to improve and sustain that growth? This study of the Peer Support Program in elementary and high schools in Surrey, British Columbia, had 31 participants: 19 female and 12 male teachers between the ages of 26 and 50, with 1-25 years of teaching experience. This mixed methods research incorporated an online survey with all participants and five one-on-one interviews to answer the following research question: "In what ways do teachers, identified as struggling, experience professional growth as a result of participating in a Peer Support Program?" Of the teachers who participated in the study, 85% rated the Peer Support Program as above average for effectiveness, and would recommend the program to colleagues. Teachers reported sustainable improvement to their teaching practice after participating in the Peer Support Program. Providing a collaborative program such as the Peer Support Program is one viable option to support teachers in improving their teaching practice and reducing teacher stress and burnout.

## Discussion of the Main Findings

### Required Supports

Many respondents made reference to high needs classrooms with multiple behaviour concerns and a lack of resources and strategies to address those needs. Classroom management was the area that they required the most support from the Peer Support Program. Curriculum and instructional planning was also a common concern due to the need for extensive differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all classroom learners. The peer support teachers worked closely with participants to determine the areas of struggle before working collaboratively to form a plan, develop strategies, and decide what resources were needed to support the teachers.

As the demands increase in classrooms, with class sizes rising, inclusion of students who until the 1970s were not included in regular classrooms, and resources and supports diminishing, it is no wonder that many teachers struggle to meet the high needs of their classrooms. It is also understandable that what might begin with classroom management issues may quickly escalate to issues with curriculum and instructional planning as teachers become more and more frustrated, and tired. Their own ability to access the necessary resources to help them will diminish as they become overwhelmed.

Survey respondents reported that they received support for a period of time ranging from one week to more than two years, with an average length of support being three to six months. The support occurred once or twice a week, with more intensive support taking place in the first month, and supports diminishing to a follow-up by the peer support teacher every few weeks, or on an as-needed basis. The supports provided were very individualized for each participant and put in place after meetings took place with the teacher and the peer support teacher, in order to ensure that the needs of each participant were met. This method of support helped to deepen

understanding of how students learn by facilitating self-reflection, bringing about changes in classroom instruction, and leading to increased student engagement.

The most common supports were meetings with the peer support teachers, with 86.2% of participants accessing this type of support. E-mails and telephone calls were often reported to occur on a daily basis as follow-up. Teachers reported that they "always felt like the peer support teacher was only an e-mail or telephone call away to provide support as needed, and that just knowing that they could ask for help when needed was a great assistance." Teachers also reported that they were given time to reflect on their own practice, and time to observe in other classrooms. The list of strategies consisted of e-mails, telephone calls, meetings with consultants, three-way meetings, demonstration lessons, team teaching, and observation in other classrooms. Improvement in teaching practice occurred by incorporating more high level thinking questions, encouraging active engagement, and increasing the ability to differentiate and adapt instructional materials. The researcher believes that this speaks to the high level of training provided to the peer support teachers in order for them to offer the necessary supports to the teachers involved in the Peer Support Program.

**Perceived Effectiveness of the Peer Support Program**

Survey participants were asked to rank the effectiveness of the Peer Support Program on a 5-point Likert Scale. The majority of respondents ranked the program's effectiveness as above average to excellent. Only five of the respondents ranked the program from poor to average. This is in keeping with the positive comments shared in the open-ended questions of the survey about the positive outcomes that participants felt were the direct result of the supports they received from the peer support teachers. Those teachers who gave the program a poor to average ranking cited the need for more observations of their classrooms, more opportunities to observe other classrooms, more time to reflect and receive feedback, and better clarification of the goals of the Peer Support Program in the initial meetings. It should be noted here that participants who ranked the program as above average to excellent noted that these features were present in their experiences.

The effectiveness of the program is also illustrated by the fact that the majority of participants accessed the Peer Support Program only one time. There was acknowledgement by participants that part of the success of the program was the ability to continue to remain in contact with the peer support teachers via email or telephone, even after they were finished participating in the program. The participants reported that the peer support teachers consistently checked back with them to follow up and ensure that all continued to go well.

Those teachers who accessed the program more than once reported that their willingness to become involved with the Peer Support Program again was due to the positive experience they had the first time. These teachers explained that they often reconnected with the Peer Support Program due to a different issue or a change in position, not because they continued to experience issues in the same teaching areas they had the first time. The researcher was pleasantly surprised by the fact that participants were comfortable accessing the Peer Support Program more than one time if they felt it was necessary. The researcher's assumption prior to this study was that if teachers had to participate in the Peer Support Program more than once, it would be because they continued to struggle and they had not experienced sustainable growth and improvement in their teaching practice. The opposite was reported by the research participants. They perceived that the Peer Support Program brought about sustainable change and altered their view of receiving support from the program, making them more willing to ask for and receive further assistance moving forward.

Finally, respondents were asked how they thought the Peer Support Program could improve. One suggestion made by 6 of the 31 participants was to advertise the program in a more positive light in the school district so that it would not be perceived by teachers as punitive or negative. Participants reported feeling anxiety at the onset of their participation and did not

want colleagues to know they were participating in the program. However, after experiencing the positive nature of the program, 21 participants said they would recommend the program to colleagues. Four respondents recommended the formation of a support group with participating members of the Peer Support Program so that teachers would know they are not alone and that struggles and ideas can be shared.

Another suggestion was to have peer support teachers who specialized in different areas – such as elementary school, high school, resource, library, and music – so that the peer support teachers would share expertise in specific areas of teaching that are more specialized.

Three respondents suggested a counselling component be available for those teachers who may have experienced a traumatic event while teaching or who are having personal difficulties outside of the school environment. These teachers shared that peer support in conjunction with counselling would be extremely beneficial to a struggling teacher's mental well-being.

**Positive Aspects of the Peer Support Program**

***Time for reflection.*** The participants gained insight into their own teaching practice, and the root causes of their difficulties. As a result, they experienced an increase in their level of confidence, and a change in their attitude about accessing assistance from the Peer Support Program, due to their positive experiences with the peer support teachers. Those teachers who were unable to continue in their original teaching roles expressed gratitude for the ability to find different teaching positions that better suited their needs. The teachers who decided to take a leave from teaching all came back to the profession, some in different teaching roles and different schools, in a better frame of mind, ready to demonstrate the strategies learned through the Peer Support Program to manage their classroom environments and relationships in a healthier way.

***Time for planning.*** The participants reported feeling that their teaching practice improved due to the support they received from the peer support teachers. Teachers reported that they had the opportunity to meet with their support teachers to identify their individual needs and to make plans for improvement and change. They had the opportunity to observe in other classrooms, have alternative classroom practices modelled for them, and receive support and resources as they attempted new strategies in their own classrooms. Given the necessary time to identify, plan and implement changes, the participants then reflected on those changes with their support teachers.

***Ongoing support.*** The aspect of the program that participants found the most beneficial was the ongoing contact they had with the peer support teachers. Many of the teachers reported feeling like their peer support teacher was always just a phone call or an email away. The support was received well, and was not thought of as intrusive or evaluative in nature. Participants reported that the support was given collaboratively and without judgement.

***Changing perspectives.*** The majority of the participants found the program highly effective, even if they did not start out feeling this way in the initial stages. Teachers were very complimentary of the peer support teachers and the supports that they accessed throughout their involvement. The perspective of many of the participants evolved from being nervous and embarrassed of their need to access the supports, to feelings of confidence and empowerment once they had established the necessary skill sets to manage their different teaching roles. Even those teachers who initially thought that their involvement with the program was negative and punitive changed their thinking and reported that they now considered the program a positive resource to assist teachers with their teaching practice.

***Sustainable improvement.*** Participants reported feeling that the improvement to their teaching practice was permanent and sustainable. The changes to each participant's practice were implemented by giving each the necessary time, resources, and support to ensure that the growth was sustainable. The sustainability can also be attributed to the fact that each participant maintained an ongoing, collegial relationship with the peer support teachers. Some teachers reported that if they had a question or an issue came up with respect to their teaching practice or classroom, they knew that the peer support teacher was only a phone call or email away. There was never any negative connotation to maintaining this relationship, and support was available before the teacher felt that the situation was out of control.

**Negative Aspects of the Peer Support Program**

***Misunderstanding of the program.*** One aspect of the program that participants consistently reported to be the least helpful was the general lack of understanding of the purpose of the program. Many of the participants reported being nervous when they first became involved with the program, because it held negative connotations for the participants and their colleagues in the district.

***Inconsistency between administrators.*** There was also inconsistency between the different administrators and their understanding and reception of the program, which led to discomfort on the part of the participants. Fortunately for most, these negative feelings dissipated as the teachers had more contact and developed an understanding of the supports that were available to them and were given the necessary time to access those supports.

## Summary

This Canadian-based study investigated Surrey, B.C.'s Peer Support Program designed to support teachers who identify as struggling to meet the differentiated needs of their classrooms. It is a collaborative, non-evaluative model that is perceived by the participants to assist teachers in improving their teaching practice without the stress of administrative pressure and punitive measures. This Peer Support Program model would benefit other Canadian school districts to assist teachers and reduce teacher attrition. The costs of operating a Peer Support Program are minimal in comparison to the costs of teachers accessing medical leave due to high levels of stress and the costs of professional development to train new teachers when more experienced teachers choose to leave the profession.

With the ever-increasing demands that schools place on teachers, and dwindling resources to meet those demands, teachers require supports like the ones offered by Surrey's Peer Support Program to assist them when school situations present challenges. The demands of the teaching profession are not going to decrease. Supports such as the Peer Support Program ensure that the needs of teaching staff are met and that classrooms are environments where the best student learning can take place.

## *About the Researcher*

*Lynn White has recently completed her second M.Ed. at Brandon University. Currently a grade two teacher in the Central Okanagan School District, Lynn has a passion for mentorship and strives to support teachers collaboratively and collegially. Her goal is to create classroom environments where innovative, engaging learning takes place.*

## REFEREED ARTICLES

# Current Trends and Tensions in Outdoor Education

**Michelle Sabet**

***Abstract***

*This article explores some of the benefits of outdoor education and examines some of the historical approaches taken to outdoor education, with an emphasis on current trends in the field. Specifically, fostering environmental stewardship through connections to the outdoors, incorporating Indigenous perspectives into practice, and place-based education are discussed. Natural links between these trends are explored, and areas of possible tension between these approaches are examined.*

The value of outdoor education lies in the multitude of benefits it provides to those who participate. Outdoor education has historically been adventure-based education, with a focus on individual health and personal growth through camping and survival skills. However, recent trends in outdoor education are shifting the focus away from individual health and wellness goals to fostering environmental stewardship through connections to the outdoors. Another current trend is incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the practice of outdoor education. Place-based education is another recent trend, which encourages teachers to focus their lessons on local places that students can relate to. These recent trends have natural links between each other, so they can complement each other. However, there are also areas of possible tension between these approaches that outdoor educators should be cognizant of and avoid.

Outdoor education is an important area for curriculum development and is beneficial to children and youth for several reasons. The physical benefits of being outdoors are too numerous to recount here, but include the usual gains that we associate with any physical exercise, such as improved balance, faster reflexes, and stronger bones and muscles (Dietze, 2016). It also boosts immunity and energy levels, and reduces the likelihood of developing nearsightedness (Suzuki, 2017). The physical benefits of outdoor education are crucial to the health of children and youth.

The benefits of being out-of-doors go beyond simply getting exercise to including emotional, cognitive, and social benefits. The emotional benefits to being outdoors include increased confidence and an increased ability to cope with stress and even trauma (Dietze, 2016; James & Williams, 2017). The cognitive benefits include more opportunities for independent problem solving, especially through manipulating objects (Dietze, 2016; James & Williams, 2017), and it gives students who may not demonstrate high-level thinking skills in regular classrooms a chance to do so (James & Williams, 2017). Another cognitive benefit of being outdoors, in more "natural" settings, is that it can be restorative and help people who have impulsive tendencies, are unable to concentrate, or are mentally fatigued, to work better and think more clearly (Louv, 2008). A child's social development benefits from outdoor activities in a variety of ways, including learning to work in groups, take turns, and understand social norms (Dietze, 2016). Students who are apathetic toward school-based learning are often more engaged in outdoor learning (James & Williams, 2017). I have personally witnessed, on more than one occasion, how students who do not normally interact with each other can more easily do so in the outdoors, and how some students who do not achieve well in regular classrooms can be engaged in lessons and excel during outdoor activities. Engaging in outdoor activities benefits students in many ways.

Outdoor education has historically emphasized outdoor skills and recreation. The precise focus of outdoor education is different in various countries, depending on their own historical developments and educational trends (Sutherland & Legge, 2016), but generally it has been viewed as a vehicle for personal character development and a method to foster a healthy lifestyle (Quay & Seaman, 2013; Sutherland & Legge, 2016). This is still one of the goals of outdoor education in many schools. However, the exact nature of outdoor education has shifted with the times. For example, in Kelsey School Division in The Pas, the outdoor education program has existed for about 30 years. As a "school-initiated" course, it has shifted its focus over time, mirroring the shifts that have happened in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (Sutherland & Legge, 2016, p. 301). This author has observed that the program has changed in emphasis from hunting and camping to general recreation, and is now incorporating environmental stewardship and beginning to incorporate Indigenous perspectives. This is not an isolated example, but rather is part of a larger trend to emphasize not only camping skills and personal development.

One of the common trends in outdoor education today is to encourage students toward a sense of environmental stewardship. In order to produce students who will take care of the environment, and even work or make sacrifices toward mitigating global problems such as climate change and loss of biodiversity, outdoor educators are taking students outside and providing them with experiences that will help them feel connected to nature. To engender students to care about the environment, they need to feel connected to it (Braun & Dierkes, 2016; Suzuki, 2017). In fact, "environmental attitudes develop early and are harder to modify as children grow older" (Braun & Dierkes, 2016, p. 2), so the work done by educators to connect children to nature is imperative, especially if the children are not getting nature-based experiences in their home life. Children need concrete, hands-on experiences. It is developmentally appropriate to begin this process of engendering environmental stewardship close to home, in local places, rather than learning about far away places like the Amazon Rainforest (Gruenewald, 2003; Sobel, 2005). Not only is it developmentally appropriate to connect with nature on a local level, but it can be damaging in the long run to learn abstractly about the many global environmental problems. Without the initial caring connection developed, children and youth will "tune out" problems they feel disconnected from, or feel helpless to engage in (Gruenewald, 2003; Sobel, 2005). Outdoor educational programing should have the long-term goal of producing students who care about the environment and are active protectors of it.

Another trend in outdoor education is the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into existing outdoor education programming. This is a trend with at least two aims. The first aim is to aid in the decolonization process of education (Lowan, 2009; Root, 2010). In Canada, the work being done toward reconciliation, addressing the legacy of residential schools, is a part of this process. The concept of decolonization is complex, and can be difficult to develop curriculum for, because it is necessary to recognize the diversity among Indigenous cultures, which vary greatly by region (Lowan, 2009). The decolonization process is multifaceted, but includes the following elements: revitalizing Indigenous languages (Lowan, 2009; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), acknowledging traditional territories and the treaty relationship (Lowan, 2009; Root, 2010; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), recognizing specific groups' relationship to specific land bases (Lowan, 2009; Lowan-Trudeau, 2014; Root, 2010), acknowledging elders as the keepers of traditional knowledge and involving them in educational practice (Lowan, 2009), and designing programs created from Indigenous perspectives (Lowan, 2009; Lowan-Trudeau, 2014; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The second aim of decolonization is to explore ways for people, as individuals and as a society, to live more sustainably on the land, in harmony with it (Gruenewald, 2003; Lowan-Trudeau, 2014; Root, 2010). Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into outdoor education is becoming increasingly important, especially in light of reconciliation efforts across Canada.

Place-based education is another recent trend in outdoor education. The premise of place-based education is that teachers should focus their lessons on local places that students can relate to. Generally, curriculum documents are developed for widespread use, and tend to be designed with a "one size fits all" approach. This means that they can not be specific enough for teachers to use for a place-based lesson without further research into what exists locally (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Tan & Atencio, 2016). Place-based education is going outside regardless of where one lives, whether it is a rural setting or an urban setting, to get to know the local conditions from many perspectives, whether geographic, social, or historical (Sobel, 2005; Tan & Atencio, 2016; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Place-based education strives to move away from abstract, subject-based lessons to practical, local concerns (Quay & Seaman, 2013). It looks different in various locations because it emerges from the attributes of a place and is inherently multidisciplinary (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-based education is a growing movement in outdoor education pedagogy.

These recent trends in outdoor education have natural links that complement each other and support each other's implementation. One such link is that all of the approaches emphasize the need for local connections. Indigenous knowledge of places is by its very nature local knowledge of the place, which, if respected and sought after, has a natural connection to place-based pedagogy (Lowan, 2009; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Another link between these trends is connecting children to nature. Children need local, hands-on connections to a place in order to develop a caring relationship with the environment (Braun & Dierkes, 2016; Lowan, 2009). This is a commonality between place-based education and the goal of developing environmental stewardship. Concern with developing environmental stewardship capacities also has a natural link to incorporating Indigenous perspectives, because "indigenous worldviews already include an inherent recognition of the land and the connectedness of all beings" (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012, p. 115). These are some examples of how recent trends in outdoor education support each other.

Although these approaches have some complementary goals and approaches, there are also areas of tension between these approaches that outdoor educators should be cognizant of and take into consideration when planning lessons. For example, the idea just discussed, that there are natural links between fostering environmental stewardship and incorporating Indigenous perspectives, can be problematic. A traditional Western concept of environmental stewardship would place human beings as custodians of the environment, and is based on the belief that the purpose of nature is for people to use it as they wish. On the other hand, "most Indigenous cultures situate humans as part of the natural world recognizing the web of interdependent relationships between humans and all other creatures" (Lowan, 2009, p. 49). Educators need to be aware of the ethnocentric bias that they, or their students, may have in favour of their own worldview (Root, 2010).

Another potential conflict between traditional outdoor education practices and incorporating Indigenous perspectives is the concept of using nature as a vehicle for "self-improvement," treating it like it is a challenge to be overcome or conquered. This can be viewed as exploiting nature for human gain, rather than living in ecological harmony with it (Lowan, 2009; Quay & Seaman, 2013). Many Indigenous worldviews place man as a part of nature, not above it, but rather in a symbiotic relationship with it (Lowan-Trudeau, 2014). It is important, as a matter of respect toward Indigenous cultures, for educators to think explicitly about how they view nature, and how their view influences their approach to teaching in and about nature.

Another important factor that needs to be considered by outdoor educators who would like to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their programming is the need to respect protocols around story telling and being on the land (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Michell, 2015; Root, 2010). Story-telling is a very effective method for creating connections to the land, and is used in both place-based education (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) and for transmitting Indigenous knowledge about the land (Michell, 2015). An educator must be aware of protocols associated with certain types of stories and which stories are appropriate to share, and when and by whom (Lowan,

2009; Michell, 2015). It is the educator's responsibility to educate himself or herself about "Aboriginal history, politics and culture, while at the same time creating an inclusive atmosphere that welcomes Aboriginal perspectives" (Root, 2010, p. 113). Fulfilling this responsibility may involve the teacher reaching out to local community members, perhaps elders, to learn more about such matters.

There is work being done in the field of outdoor education to blend various cultural approaches and understandings of nature and approaches to being in it (Lowan-Trudeau, 2014). Caution is needed, because to blend approaches without sufficient understanding of both could devalue or under-emphasize the Aboriginal content (Lowan, 2009; Lowan-Trudeau, 2014). It may be more respectful to use the different perspectives interchangeably, so as not to "subjugate" one to the other (Lowan-Trudeau, 2014, p. 354). Teachers should be conscious of how their worldview shapes their approach to outdoor education, and make it explicit to the students. That way, they can examine issues in outdoor education from a different perspective in a respectful way.

The benefits of outdoor education are many. Over time, approaches to outdoor education have changed from a primary focus on camping and personal development to other areas of development, in line with societal priorities and current understandings of how students learn best. Enabling students to become environmental stewards, incorporating Indigenous perspectives, and emphasizing place-based education are the most recent developments in the field of outdoor education. These approaches complement each other in many ways, but if taken out of balance they can also undermine the purposes of each other. As educators, we need to balance these various approaches to outdoor education and be aware that they are not always, in fact, compatible.

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# Inclusion for All:
# Bridging the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do

**Megan Sloik**

***Abstract***

*Classroom teachers are responsible for creating inclusive classrooms wherein every learner has the opportunity to succeed. Challenges include insufficient training and education in the areas of student exceptionalities, changing funding models and potential budget cuts, and effective co-teaching. Steps must be taken to bridge the gap between what is known to be best classroom practice, and what is actually taking place. Collaboration with teachers and administrators to address these challenges seems to be the most important role of today's resource teacher.*

Years ago, Canada mandated inclusion for all learners within the classroom (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Teachers are therefore obliged to embrace the idea of an inclusive classroom that addresses the unique needs of each student and sees that students succeed to their individual potential. However, our educational system works against itself in that it encourages the inclusion-for-all model, but continues to accept "pull-out" programs. Research shows that these types of programs are neither efficient nor effective (Tomlinson, 2014). Bridging the gap between proven practices of inclusion and what is happening in classrooms is critical. Some problematic areas that keep us from bridging this gap are insufficient teacher training and education in the areas of exceptionalities that students have, changing funding models and potential budget cuts, and proper implementation of co-teaching (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Successful inclusive classrooms are dependent on creating solutions to these problems.

## Teacher Training and Education

Insufficient teacher training and education impede authentic inclusion. The classroom teacher must thoroughly understand the individual needs and exceptionalities of all students in the class. This seems like a simple concept but is much more complex once teachers take over responsibility for those students. Teachers are responsible for meeting not only the academic needs of each student in their classrooms, but also the social-emotional needs, and dealing with any behaviour situations that often accompany students with exceptionalities (Lindsay, Proulx, Thomson, & Scott, 2013). Many teachers identify that they are not properly educated about the particular exceptionality that they are programming for (students with autism or ADHD, EAL learners, etc.). In addition, many teachers also express that they are not trained on how to manage some of these students' behaviour needs. As seen in my school, knowing what was in place for students with exceptionalities previously is potentially a good starting point when making considerations for academic and social programming. However, increased teacher training and education is what will help students progress from that starting point.

Additional training for teacher candidates is essential. New teachers must arrive to their first classroom with a solid knowledge base about inclusive education and the associated teaching practices. This knowledge base will shape a novice teacher's perspective of the role of the teacher to one that must design meaningful learning opportunities for every student in the classroom regardless of cognitive, physical, or emotional disability (Schwab, Holzinger, Krammer, Gerbhardt, & Hessels, 2015). When teachers are new to my school, they are matched with an experienced mentor. The mentor can offer practical guidance based on his or her experience to support the new teacher's educational base.

When teachers find themselves unprepared for programming for students with exceptionalities, despite their educational background, in-servicing is necessary. Teachers

express frustration with in-services that teach about an exceptionality generally, but offer no practical applications for the classroom and do not reflect their classroom composition (Alborno, 2017). In addition to accessing in-servicing, teachers must connect with any outside resources available. Providing an inclusive classroom is a team effort that involves contribution by the classroom teacher, student, parents, and outside community professionals (occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, counsellor) to make necessary modifications and accommodations (Srivastava, de Boer, & Pijl, 2017). I often see teachers planning and teaching in isolation. Teachers feel inadequate when they are new to teaching and are often self-conscious to ask for help. Feeling equally inadequate are teachers who are experienced in the field and do not feel comfortable trying something new. Inclusive classrooms have students with changing needs, and both pre-service and experienced teachers must be prepared to learn, work with the necessary team members, and try new things to accommodate those needs.

## Changing Funding Models

Changing funding models and potential budget cuts are a major factor when talking about inclusive classrooms. In the case of Manitoba, currently working with a block funding model in which enrolment, socio-economic, geographical, and other factors determine how much funding a school is to receive, school teams can be a bit more innovative with how to implement supports for students with exceptionalities (Sokal & Katz, 2015). Gone are the days when a student who qualified for individual funding would have an educational assistant who supported that one student. In my school, educational assistants are assigned to classrooms that require additional supports, not individual students. Naturally, an educational assistant may spend more time with a student requiring extra support, but he or she would be there to support the inclusive learning of all students. This model provides opportunity to be more fluid with support placement. The complexity of the model can be challenging because needs for support within a school change often, sometimes daily. Budget cuts can also present a problem for inclusive classes. In 2016, Newfoundland experienced a 50.9 million-dollar education cut (Cooke, 2017, “Money Talks,” para. 4). The province turned its focus to supporting kindergarten and decreasing resource teachers who had been supporting teachers in their inclusive classrooms. It is evident that in order for teachers to be successful in creating inclusive classrooms, funding models and budget cuts must be managed properly.

In the past, when students were funded on an individual basis, it brought with it the label that the students had a deficit (Banks, Frawley, & McCoy, 2015). As with a school district in Alberta, by using the current block funding model, funds can be attached to classrooms based on supports needed, while still being accountable to provincial legislation and special education (Howery, McLellan, & Pedersen-Bayus, 2013). While there are times when that support is focused on an individual student, it is known that the support is on an as-need basis. When the targeted student is able to participate in class activities independently, the support staff member is free to assist other students requiring assistance. Early in my career, I witnessed support staff hover over students for which they were funded. It stigmatized the students as being weak and as having a disability. Under our current funding model, it is invigorating to see a student succeed at a task, work in a group, or make a new friend without being attached at the hip to a support staff worker. However, the most logical solution would be to change the funding model to provide adequate financial support, therefore addressing the problem of budget cuts.

## Co-Teaching

Proper implementation of co-teaching strategies means that students can access two teachers in one classroom (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). Problems arise when considering co-teaching, especially for teachers accustomed to the one-teacher model. Before co-teaching even starts, teachers have to see merit in the concept that students will be better served by the

collaboration of co-teaching practices than by pull-out programs. In my school, I have seen that when teachers are committed to the one-teacher model, it can be difficult to switch their mind set to something new. Another problem is that co-teaching requires time to build the trust necessary for entering a co-teaching relationship with a colleague (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016), to learn and experiment with different models of co-teaching, and to plan for co-teaching. As a teacher, I know that time can be hard to come by in a teaching workload. Nevertheless, a teacher investing time in co-teaching partnerships would be of the utmost benefit to students.

Possibly the greatest challenge may be reaching the teachers who have been educated, trained, and experienced in the one-teacher model of teaching (Běsić, Paleczek, Krammer, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2016). Teachers who fit into this category will only "buy in" to the co-teaching model if they are aware of the different co-teaching styles and witness it successfully implemented in a classroom environment. To ensure successful implementation of co-teaching, my resource partner and I created a "Request for Co-Teaching Support" form in which teachers could request co-teaching support from one of the resource teachers. On the form, they are asked to make considerations for which outcomes or goals they have for the class, individual students that will need to be considered, and the roles that the two teachers will play. The goal of identifying the roles that the two teachers would play in the class is to reduce the likelihood that the resource teacher would simply become an extra set of hands, or be seen as the teacher who comes in for the students requiring extra support (Schwab et al., 2015).

Co-teaching will see greater success when administrators are involved in the planning of co-teaching that takes place within a school (Kamens, Susko, & Elliott, 2013). Administrators can set a positive stage by communicating to staff that co-teaching benefits everyone involved: students with exceptionalities, students without exceptionalities, and teachers. My school is moving in this direction. Up to this point, it has been the resource teacher who would arrange co-teaching partnerships. Our administrators have begun to notice some of these co-teaching partnerships and the success they are having. At staff meetings, administrators will ask co-teaching partners to share ways in which they have been working together in the classroom. They will also cover teachers so that they can go into classrooms to observe co-teaching first hand. Administrators also ensure that same-grade teachers receive some scheduled prep time to accommodate the planning involved with co-teaching.

In addition to promoting co-teaching within the school, it is imperative that administrators provide ample opportunity for teachers to become educated and well versed in teaching students with exceptionalities by using a wide range of co-teaching strategies (Strogilos, Stefanidis, & Tragoulia, 2016). Lack of teacher training in this area could result in a reluctance to engage in co-teaching partnerships. I had the opportunity to present about the different models of co-teaching at an in-school professional development session. Co-teaching partners in the session had a chance to share their collaborative experiences, and those who seemed less familiar with co-teaching practices seemed engaged and eager to learn more. Supports necessary for pre-service and experienced teachers in co-teaching would include getting all teachers to buy-in to the benefits of co-teaching, administrator participation in planning and delivery, and proper education/in-servicing about co-teaching styles and implementation.

## Conclusion

In my new role as a resource teacher, my perspective has moved from supporting the student to supporting the teacher. It is up to me to help teachers access the necessary training and education required for working with each student in their classrooms. Addressing concerns regarding the funding models for the school is crucial in making sure that supports are allocated to the most appropriate areas. Finally, getting back into the classrooms to work with teachers in meaningful co-teaching relationships is how I see myself as being the greatest support. Helping teachers to bridge the gap between these known, best practices of inclusion and what is actually happening in classrooms is one of my primary responsibilities.

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# The Necessity of Mentoring Programs in the North

**Miranda Bowman**

***Abstract***

*Mentoring programs are beneficial in northern or rural Canadian communities. Educators teaching in these areas often have higher demands placed upon them and encounter different challenges including higher workloads, a lack of personal and professional resources, and difficulties adjusting to life in isolated communities. Mentoring programs provide the opportunity to improve teaching ability, provide professional development, enhance school climate, and promote teacher retention.*

Are teacher mentoring programs a necessity in northern communities? Teachers face different and arguably bigger challenges living in these communities. Teachers in the north have higher workloads than their southern counterparts and often have a difficult time adjusting to life in the northern. They face isolation and a lack of both personal and professional resources. Mentoring programs can help. They have a positive effect on school climate, and therefore impact student learning and engagement, and develop a level of confidence among educators. Mentoring programs foster consistency in the transfer of knowledge, develop confident leaders, and promote teacher retention. In helping teachers adjust to life in northern communities, a mentoring program is crucial. Mentoring programs are a means of utilizing a "non-threatening, non-evaluative" (McCann et al., 2009, p. 92) method for working with new teachers, prior to actually evaluating them, thus giving them the chance to overcome some of the problems they may face simply because they are inexperienced or encounter difficulty in adjusting to northern living. Evaluators would then be able to evaluate with school initiatives in mind, rather than focusing on the "growing pains" that a new teacher experiences.

## Northern Teachers Have Bigger Workloads

It is important for school divisions to have mentorship programs in northern areas. A study by Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NTTA, 2013) determined that teachers in northern, remote communities have bigger workloads than teachers in urban areas. A factor that contributes to the large workload of teachers in the north is the necessity of the teachers to plan for "highly diverse classes spanning two or three grades, and multiple ability levels falling outside of grade level curriculum" (NTTA, 2013, p. 7). With mentoring programs, educators shift from working in isolation to becoming more team and process oriented, which is a benefit to students. The pressure that a beginner teacher feels can be greatly alleviated by working and team teaching with a mentor (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 119). Being mentored provides teachers with the chance to "learn valuable skills and build instructional strategies and capabilities necessary to strengthen teaching ability and to grow in competence" (Clarke, 2012, p. 199). Teachers who are involved in a mentoring program can lessen the time needed to learn and master new teaching practices, thus taking some of the strain off their workloads.

Another factor that contributes to the high teacher workload in remote areas is that teachers are often the "only source of organized recreational activities for children and youth" (NTTA, 2013, p. 7), making the demands on them to coach sports and run arts programs a hardship. In these communities, it is imperative for teachers to pull together in order to provide services and support each other. Providing teacher mentoring is a way to ensure that this is happening. Lastly, the teachers in northern areas have "an added responsibility to know and understand not only the historical significance of education for Aboriginal communities but also to know and understand contemporary social, political and economic realities" (Burleigh, & Burm, 2012, p. 23). Considering the fact that these teachers are in the process of learning, often

in “far from ideal circumstances in comparison to schools in the south” (Burleigh, & Burm, 2012, p. 23), it is essential that they have mentorship programs to guide and support them.

## Difficulties Living in the North

Teachers regularly face difficulties that they are ill prepared for, or did not anticipate, when living in northern communities. Teaching in the north can be socially isolating, which is often “accentuated by the geographical location of the rural or northern community” (Hellsten, McIntyre, Prytula, 2011, p. 14). While “isolation is not unique to northern settings . . . the severe winter conditions coupled with patterns of extended light and darkness are conditions that are not often found in more southerly settings” (Klassen, Rosemary, Foster, Rajani, Bowman, 2009, p. 390). The fact that it is dark when teachers go to work and dark when they leave “has a profound psychological effect on people in the school” (Klassen et al, 2009, p. 390). It is difficult to adjust to the fact that it never really “gets dark” in the summertime. Additionally, the fact that it is very expensive and time consuming to travel south can add to the feelings of isolation that teachers may experience when they live in the north.

Another aspect of northern teaching that teachers find difficult is that there is a culture or manner of “doing things . . . and persons who ignore these phenomena are designed to experience a significant struggle if they attempt to import changes which run counter to the established way” (McCracken & Miller, 1988, p. 24). Teachers struggle with parents who go directly to administrators to solve problems, instead of giving them the opportunity to deal with situations themselves (McCracken & Miller, 1988). Another inconvenience that teachers face in northern communities is the high expectations of the parents and community members (Hellsten et al, 2011). In these communities, teachers are “highly, highly visible and are held to a higher professional and personal standard” (Klassen et al, 2009, p. 391). The local residents have an intensely strong investment in their communities because they often have very strong and historical ties (Eppley, 2015). As a result, the school is often viewed as the foundation for the community, one that is expected “to do everything, to fix everything – to fix all the problems” (Hellsten et al, 2011, p. 14). It is simply not realistic to expect teachers to rectify all of the problems that a community undergoes.

Teachers find it difficult to integrate themselves in these communities and frequently feel “scrutinized having not grown up in the community” (Hellsten et al, 2011, p. 13). Being a part of the community can be very difficult when one is referred to as “not from here” (Eppley, 2015, p. 71), even after having lived in the community for many years. This adds to the feelings of isolation. Teachers in the north deal with a “lack of facilities and opportunities for socialization” (Hellsten et al, 2011, p. 14). Similarly, teachers report that they have difficulty dealing with the “lack of privacy,” the fact that “everybody knows everybody's business” (McCracken & Miller, 1988, p. 25), and navigating the seemingly endless “community cliques, gossip and small town talk" (McCracken, Miller, 1988, p. 24). For these reasons, it is important for teachers in these settings to have a mentor and induction program to help them navigate the intricacies of northern living.

## Lack of Professional Development in the North

Teachers in northern areas have less access to professional development opportunities, which directly affects their job stress and satisfaction (Klassen et al., 2009, p. 389). There is thus a discrepancy between fulfilling “the professional development needs . . . in relation to the modes of professional development and their topics of interest” (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010, p. 871). Many teachers in the north struggle with understanding the culture and issues that many Indigenous peoples face, and do not receive the appropriate professional preparation to work with Indigenous families. Due to the inequities of professional development offered in northern areas, it is imperative that teachers share, collaborate, and learn from each other. In

doing so, teachers have the opportunity to become learners and leaders (Lieberman, Campbell, Yashkina, 2015), and to focus on the types of professional development that are within an "area of concern from their own context and school culture" (Lieberman et al, 2015, p. 122). Sharing resources may alleviate some of the financial burden felt by school divisions due to the high cost of travel from northern or remote communities. Having teachers provide professional development within their school divisions is a way to ensure the "opportunities for building capacity, rather than compliance, supporting development . . . and supporting the idea of learning in practice" (Lieberman et al, 2015, p. 128). Teachers who become leaders are proactive and empowered in their school divisions.

Mentoring is a form of professional development that benefits new teachers, rejuvenates current staff members, and provides a consistent transfer of knowledge that benefits the school as a whole. This form of professional development teachers can reduce the time it takes for teachers to acquire necessary information. Mentorship promotes rapid learning (Stanulis & Floden, 2009), and builds a level of consistency that is useful for administrators who are evaluating their staff members.

## Conclusion

Teacher mentoring programs are a necessity in northern communities. These programs can help teachers adjust to a lifestyle in which they may feel "social . . . geographical . . . and professional isolation" (Hellsten et al, 2011, p. 14). Mentoring programs can lessen some of the stressors involved with the higher workloads that teachers encounter in northern communities and help teachers adjust to the high expectations placed upon them by families and community members. Mentoring in the north offers teachers the chance to engage in professional development where they are otherwise limited. This professional development supports the "opportunity for teachers to network with others" (Lieberman et al, 2015, p. 126) and to use mentorship as a means to focus on an "area of concern from their own context and school culture" (Lieberman et al, 2015, p. 122). In terms of evaluations, the "role of principals in teacher evaluation is nowadays becoming more significant given the international calls for increased accountability in education and improving quality of teaching" (Orphanos, 2014, p. 245). When mentors work with new teachers, an intense partnership is created wherein the mentor can assist the teacher in overcoming some of the growing pains associated with being new to the profession. This gives principals the opportunity to evaluate based on school goals and initiatives. The chance for teachers to collaborate with each other in the north is needed for "teachers' professional development, morale, and long-term psychological and physical health" (NTTA, 2013, p. 6). Knowing that healthy teachers are a necessity in contributing "to a healthy school environment . . . student learning and well-being" (NTTA, 2013, p. 6), it is of vital importance that teachers in the north have access to mentoring programs that will help them adjust both personally and professionally.

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# Response to Intervention: Reading and Reading Disabilities

**Allyson Rock**

***Abstract***

*Reading is a skill that is required in a variety of settings. It is a skill that begins developing early in children's school years and continues to develop well into their adult lives. Unfortunately, many children struggle to become successful readers with only basic classroom instruction. Therefore, it is imperative that schools use a three-tiered Response to Intervention approach to target children who have, or are at risk of having, a reading disability. Response to Intervention has proven to be successful in providing much-needed targeted interventions so that students of all ages can become proficient readers.*

The ability to read fluently and comprehend text is a crucial skill that everyone requires at some level, whether in an educational, workplace, or everyday setting. Literacy is often introduced to children before entering kindergarten; it develops throughout their school years, and then continues to grow beyond exiting school. It is vitally important that as children grow, their ability to read increasingly difficult texts grows, too. However, some children are unable to read adequately with only general classroom instruction, and the large number of struggling readers and children with or at risk of having a reading disability (RD) is concerning. Currently, there is a movement toward using a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach to identify and support students with reading difficulties and those who are diagnosed with RD.

For a substantial number of children, learning to read is a difficult task (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016). More than 80% of students diagnosed with a learning disability are identified as having RD, making it the most common of all learning disabilities (Lee & Yoon, 2017, p. 213). However, while some children are diagnosed with a specific RD, many are not. While most children can learn to read with quality classroom instruction, that is usually not enough for struggling readers (Denton et al., 2013). Typically, students who struggle with reading or who have been diagnosed with RD have difficulties with reading fluency because of inadequate phonological skills and a slow oral language processing speed (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Without intervention, 74% of struggling readers at age nine continue to have difficulties reading in high school (Lee & Yoon, 2017, p. 213). The students who continue to struggle are at risk of continuous academic failure because learning gaps begin to form and grow as they move on to higher grades and more difficult curriculum goals (Jones, Yssel, & Grant, 2012). In addition, career goals and employment could also be at risk (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that struggling readers, including those with or at risk of having RD, be provided fluency and comprehension support in the early years of school (Jones et al., 2012; Lee & Yoon, 2017). This extra reading support can be provided in the form of the three-tiered, RTI approach to reading intervention.

RTI is a three-tiered intervention initiative designed to identify and support students who are unsuccessful in academic subjects such as reading, including those who have or are at risk of having RD (Catts, Nielsen, Bridges, Liu, & Bontempo, 2015). RTI is also used to prevent reading difficulties and RD in children (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). There are five fundamental components to a successful RTI program: (1) screening students, (2) monitoring students, (3) providing tier one differentiated instruction, (4) providing tier two small-group interventions, and (5) providing tier three intense, individualized interventions (Jones et al., 2012). The three tiers represent increasingly intensive interventions for struggling readers or students with RD who do not respond to the less intensive tiers (Denton et al., 2013; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012; Wanzek et al., 2013). Eighty percent of students are able to read adequately when provided with tier one interventions; thus, 20% of students require more intensive tier two or three interventions (Collier, 2010, p. 4). Therefore, it is critical that the three-tiered RTI identification procedures are

conducted as early in a child's education as possible, in order to prevent RD or limit the effects and gaps that can occur from inadequate reading (Catts et al., 2015).

It is critical that, during the RTI process, students at risk for RD are identified early and accurately (Catts et al., 2015). Evidence shows that screening students as early as kindergarten or grade one, and then providing them with RTI support, has led to positive reading outcomes (Catts et al., 2015; Wanzek et al., 2013). In fact, the effects of targeting students in kindergarten and grade one are more positive than the effects of RTI in grades two and higher (Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth, & Vaughn, 2014). Consequently, using universal screening measures, such as letter naming fluency, to determine the students at risk of RD is a vital aspect in the RTI process; these screening batteries can predict future reading outcomes and help teachers to target the at-risk students before a gap in learning occurs (Catts et al., 2015). Some screening measures can take place even before a child begins school; letter knowledge and sounds at ages three and four can also predict reading failure (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016). Therefore, it is possible to determine the children who are at high risk for difficulties in attaining adequate reading skills; these children can be supported before they can experience failure at school. Screening students is an effective and necessary step in the RTI process (Jones et al., 2012), but there are also numerous individual, familial, and demographic risk factors that can help to identify children at risk of RD.

Currently, more than 10% of English readers read inadequately (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016, p. 25), but there is no single risk factor that can be used to predict who these students will be (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2017). However, individual, familial, and demographic risk factors, in combination, can provide some insight into who is affected by RD (Snow et al., 2017). For example, many children with reading difficulties or RD have a genetic history of inadequate reading (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016). In fact, 40% of children with a familial risk of RD faced difficulties in acquiring reading skills; 20% of those students encountered severe reading problems (Lyytinen & Erskine, 2016, p. 26). In addition to familial background, limited home literacy experiences, low socio-economic status, or being diagnosed with specific language or hearing impairments can all contribute to reading difficulties (Snow et al., 2017). Taking into account the various risk factors and information gathered from screening measures, effective prevention and early intervention techniques can be provided to children beginning in tier one of the RTI program.

Students who are perceived to have or be at-risk of RD during the screening process are provided with the first tier of intervention within the whole-class setting; this intervention is included in everyday instruction and is intended to be a preventative measure for RD (Jones et al., 2012). During tier one interventions, classroom instruction is given to all students, but differentiation is also provided to those needing support in reading (Jones et al., 2012). Differentiated instruction is varied to meet students' needs, and the instruction can be altered to target specific lagging skills such as reading fluency and comprehension. In this tier, teachers can use whole-group instruction, but they can also work with struggling students in small groups, in pairs, or one-on-one. The main idea behind differentiated instruction is that "one type of instruction does not necessarily work for all students" (Collier, 2010, p. 69); in other words, the learning needs of the students direct the teacher's instruction and they engage in activities that meet their specific needs, strengths, and preferences. During a typical reading or language arts class, differentiation would include whole-group modelled and shared reading, small-group guided reading, and supported daily independent reading (Denton et al., 2014). Differentiated instruction provides supports not only for students who have been identified as struggling readers, but for the class in general, because the instruction is tailored to meet each student's needs (Jones et al., 2012). It is critical that students are continuously monitored throughout this first tier of intervention; students who do not respond to classroom differentiation can then be provided with more intensive, tier two interventions.

When students have not responded to the first tier of intervention, they require tier two interventions, whereby they receive more intensive, small-group support (Collier, 2010). One

example of a tier two intervention is the Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI), whereby students receive targeted decoding, comprehension, and/or fluency support to supplement their classroom instruction (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2010). Throughout this short-term intervention, struggling students are placed in small groups outside the classroom, and the interventionist follows a set of structured, predictable lesson plans. Although the intervention is located outside the general classroom, it is linked to classroom instruction and there is a home-school connection to include students' families (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2010). The goal of tier two interventions is to accelerate the progress of struggling readers. They are designed to be short term and are therefore monitored frequently; for the majority of students placed in a tier two intervention, the additional support they receive provides them with the skills they need to become adequate readers (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2010). However, for a small number of students, tier two interventions are not enough and they require even more intensive, tier three support (Denton et al., 2013).

The number of students identified as being at risk diminishes as each tier of intervention is provided; therefore, only the students with the greatest impairment in reading and language skills require tier three interventions (Denton et al., 2013). Tier three interventions involve intensive, individualized instruction, with even more frequent monitoring, and are designed to prevent the need for special education (Collier, 2010). Whereas tier two interventions typically use evidence-based intervention programs, tier three interventions are individualized to target each child's specific needs (Denton et al., 2013). Tier three interventions often include explicit instruction in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Explicit instruction has resulted in increased positive outcomes in reading for students who did not find success in tiers one or two (Denton et al., 2014). Explicit instruction in fluency often includes repeated reading (RR), which positively affects a student's decoding and comprehension abilities, too (Jones et al., 2012). After reading a passage several times, students can gain automaticity and can read more fluently (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Fluency, word knowledge, and comprehension are all inter-related and enhance one another (Jones et al., 2012); therefore, only when students read fluently can they focus on the meaning of the text (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Tier three interventions are not meant to be short-term; the intervention often lasts several months, or even one or more school years (Denton et al., 2013). In many cases, the individualized, tier three interventions accelerate children's learning so that they can eventually reach grade level requirements; however, if tier three interventions are not sufficient, the data collected through the process can be used to refer students to a special education program (Collier, 2010). While the three-tiered RTI initiative has proven to be successful when students are identified as struggling readers early, it also has the potential for success for students in grades 3-12.

Given the success of the RTI program at the elementary level, many schools are also implementing the RTI approach with upper-elementary and secondary students (Wanzek et al., 2013). After the early elementary school years, the emphasis on reading instruction diminishes, which means that students who do not read adequately by this time may face serious consequences in their overall academic achievement (Wanzek et al., 2013). At this level, the screening and identification processes of RTI are less significant because it is usually clear who the struggling readers are (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). In addition, tier one, the preventative measure in RTI, is typically no longer feasible (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012). Instead, bypassing the less intensive interventions and beginning with tier two interventions is more likely to provide positive outcomes (Bemboom & McMaster, 2013). Most often, older struggling readers have the ability to decode, but have difficulties comprehending what they are reading (Bemboom & McMaster, 2013). Therefore, explicit practice in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, either in small groups (tier two) or individually (tier three), can be effective interventions for older readers (Wanzek et al., 2013). With older students, tier two and three interventions are not quick fixes; they require extended periods of intervention, often for more than one year in order to maintain reading growth. Thus, it is not too late to intervene with older, struggling readers; reading can be improved in small amounts over a length of time if they are provided with explicit

instruction in small-group or individual interventions and if administrative support is provided (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012).

Even with all of the success using the RTI initiative, there are still a number of obstacles in the way of implementing the program; one of these obstacles is a lack of administrative support (Jones et al., 2012). Ongoing administrative support is key to executing a successful RTI initiative; administrators can motivate and guide teachers toward providing an effective RTI program. It is not feasible to expect teachers to engage in the RTI process without their support and guidance (Petrone, 2014). This support also includes providing teachers with meaningful professional development and appropriate resources for each tier of intervention, and enabling collaboration between teacher-peers (Petrone, 2014). In addition, administrators need to provide teachers and school staff with scheduled time to provide intensive interventions, because they generally do not take place in the regular classroom (Jones et al., 2012). Therefore, receiving support from administrators is crucial, and is the likely first step to facilitating a successful RTI program.

There have been many positive outcomes resulting from using the RTI initiative with struggling readers, as well as students with RD, as compared to using only general classroom instruction. Many schools have already implemented, or are in the processes of implementing, an RTI program that will target the needs of students from kindergarten to grade 12. It is important that struggling readers and students with RD be identified as soon as possible, in order to prevent academic failure and learning gaps. Those students who are identified as at risk then have numerous opportunities to meet their learning needs through the three-tiered, increasingly intensive program. For older students who are not experiencing reading success, and who may have gone unnoticed, skipping to tier two interventions has proven to be the most successful; they more than likely have already experienced academic failure and it is important to accelerate their learning as quickly as possible. However, their success is likely to occur at a slower rate than in those students who are screened and provided with interventions early on. RTI is a beneficial initiative that, if supported and used, will help many struggling readers and those with RD become successful in school, work, and their everyday lives.

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# Solutions for New Chinese Teachers' Quitting

**Lei Yu**

***Abstract***

*This paper is focused on the issue of new Chinese teachers' attrition and some resolutions. Chinese novice teachers' leaving results from professional and personal factors, among which the excessive workloads caused by the current curriculum reform and new teachers' lack of self-efficacy, together with unrealistic career expectations, are the pushing factors. Building a cooperative and supportive environment is an effective way to solve that issue, wherein collaborative partnership and supportive leadership have a positive effect on new Chinese teachers' intention to stay in the career. Sufficient academic and emotional support from colleagues and school leaders empowers new Chinese teachers to overcome the challenges during the early years of their career.*

As an educational issue, the attrition rates of new Chinese teachers have drawn increasing attention. For example, of the 510 teachers who participated in a survey in Jiling Province of China, 40% expressed their intention to leave the teaching profession (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 160). Being exposed to new roles and workplaces, new teachers start teaching but then choose to quit, which is a cumulative and lingering process, and is not triggered by one specific event (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Among the various reasons for Chinese novice teachers' leaving are both professional and personal factors. In terms of solutions, sufficient support from colleagues and school leaders has a positive effect on new Chinese teachers' intention to stay in the career. Collaborative partnership functions well with new teachers, especially in knowledge sharing and reflecting on colleagues' feedback. Supportive leadership is effective to enable new teachers to overcome challenges in the workplace by setting up workshops and offering emotional support. A cooperative and supportive school culture has a significant and sustained influence on new teachers.

## Why the Teachers Quit

The pushing factors that cause Chinese beginning teachers' quitting can be narrowed down to professional and personal factors. Professional factors that push new Chinese teachers out of the door are the challenge from the current curriculum reform in China and the heavy workloads caused by that reform. The latest curriculum reform emplaced in 2001 aims to change the traditional system, which overstressed knowledge delivery by promoting student-centered methodology (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Meanwhile, the current educational system in China remains examination driven. Most teachers struggle with a balance between preparing students for examinations and encouraging students' participation in the classroom. It is overwhelming for new teachers, because they are not equipped with sufficient teaching experience. As a result, they feel lost in excessive workloads with various responsibilities, which affect new teachers' physical and mental health. Under such circumstances, most new Chinese teachers experience a high level of work pressure, 42% of whom are reported to be under an extreme stress (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 160). Complex teaching tasks, in conjunction with mental health problems, are unmanageable for new teachers, because they are in the process of turning from "student teachers" to "real teachers." Becoming stuck in paperwork and accountability tasks decreases teachers' motivation and leaves them worn down (Pells, 2017). This is when teachers' burnout occurs. Being unable to handle workloads to meet the curriculum reform's requirements, Chinese teachers tend to leave early during their career.

Personal factors consist of unrealistic career expectations and lack of self-efficacy, which play an important role in novice teachers' decisions to quit. Embracing unrealistic career

expectations is a dominant factor that wears new Chinese teachers down. The moment they start to teach, many new teachers wrongly match their ideal with reality (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Those teachers who leave later expand their responsibilities, often with the purpose of making a difference in teenagers. Some teachers compare teaching with successful experiments of their teaching training and teaching practice at university (Harfitt, 2015). When they are preoccupied with what they expected, they have little flexibility in adjusting themselves to the real situation. Being idealistic during their early teaching days causes some beginning teachers to quit because there is a gap between reality and idealism.

Weak self-efficacy is another personal factor that contributes to early career attrition in China. Self-efficacy is strongly associated with teacher burnout (Larrivee, 2012). Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy treat difficulties as challenges and devote themselves to reverse adversities in order to solve problems actively and positively (Hong, 2012). However, new teachers with weak self-efficacy perceive tough problems as impassable obstacles, and they choose to shrink back. They convince themselves that it was their personality that brought about problems (Hong, 2012). Weak self-efficacy exacerbates their frustration, and gradually they come to the point where they suffer depression and leave.

Taking a deep insight into those pushing factors, we find that isolation and lack of support lie in the consequence of both professional and personal factors. Novice teachers start to teach, hoping to make a difference, but they find it disappointing that it is impossible to obtain adequate support to fulfil that goal (Buchanan, 2012). Without adequate professional and emotional support in the workplace, new teachers possess weak self-efficacy and limited resources to conquer challenges, which range from classroom management to teaching approaches. Therefore, they are hindered by a lack of confidence and job satisfaction.

## How to Keep the Teachers from Quitting

The effective solution for that issue new Chinese teachers' quitting is to set up a cooperative and supportive school culture in which new teachers have access to collaborative partnership and supportive leadership. Teachers need collaboration and support, but new teachers experience isolation (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, & Prescott, 2015). Collaborative partnerships inspire teachers to create powerful ideas and enable them to handle school-based problems with effective methods (Ado, 2013). Sharing knowledge with colleagues and reflecting on feedback from colleagues are two highly valued forms that embody collaborative relationships between new teachers and other colleagues. Growing into a skillful teacher requires more than knowing the theory of teaching (Zhang, Zhou, & Zhang, 2016). Sharing knowledge with experienced teachers is desirable for most new Chinese teachers to obtain practical knowledge. Set in the Chinese educational system, beginning teachers are at the phase when they need time and practice to perceive teaching in a complicated situation. It indicates a transition from pre-service to in-service, which implies that teachers are developing into professional educators with positive attitudes toward teaching and objective perspectives of education. The hands-on experience from veterans is of great help to accelerate this process, because sharing knowledge enables new teachers to fit into the new environment quickly, and build up their confidence. Sharing knowledge provides direct assistance for new teachers and contributes to collaboration among teachers of all experience levels, which is vitally important to retain new teachers in schools (Ado, 2013).

Reflecting on feedback from colleagues is an effective way to enable new teachers to improve teaching skills continuously. Being reflective is a core benchmark in the teaching profession (Ng, Murphy, Mccullagh, Doherty, & Mcleod, 2014). It is important for teachers to develop self-awareness and be ready to change through reflective practice. Following planning and teaching, reflective practice provides myriad evidence for teachers to assess their daily practice. Critical feedback stimulates teachers to rethink, challenge, and refresh the quality of their teaching practice (Daniel, Auhl, & Hastings, 2013). Feedback from colleagues is beneficial

for novice teachers to realize what they need to explore in teaching. Positive feedback conveys evaluation to new teachers, which helps to enhance teacher efficacy (Hoi, Zhou, Teo, & Nie, 2017). It empowers new teachers to become professional educators, which represents that they have gone through the initial years of frustration. Preeminent teachers are those who undertake reflective practice, during which they estimate and identify their own abilities, and address vulnerabilities in order to achieve professional development (Ng et al., 2014). Reflecting on feedback from colleagues contributes to a strong sense of job satisfaction and a low rate of novice teachers' departure.

Supportive leadership is closely linked with building a positive and collaborative school culture. New teachers are more sensitive to school culture and principal leadership (Hong, 2012). School leaders are the key drivers to foster growth and job satisfaction among early career teachers. Academic and emotional support from school leaders reduces new teachers' work-related stress, and facilitates their participation in professional development opportunities. Regarding academic support, principals are responsible for developing programs for new teachers to attain assistance from colleagues. One main duty that principals demonstrate is to create an environment wherein teachers have access to continuous and collaborative support (Meador, 2016). Being engaged in academic programs, new teachers have more chances to experience successful teaching practice, which in turn improves teachers' self-efficacy. Academic programs vary in forms, such as action research workshops, co-teaching, and observing partners. Partnership in action research empowers new teachers to improve themselves by learning actively. The advantages of co-teaching include working with a friend giving critical advice, enhancing confidence, developing the learning environment, and improving teaching methodology by means of taking more drills (Ng et al., 2014). Observing partners' behaviours is a valuable method to strengthen new teachers' reflective practice. By providing academic support, principals are instrumental in decreasing new teachers' isolation and anxiety.

Sufficient emotional support from principals positively affects new teachers' personal and professional well-being. Emotional support from the school leadership appears to have a significant and sustained influence on new teachers (Gallant & Riley, 2014). The reason lies in the fact that the first years of teaching are stressful for novice teachers. Most of them are struggling to become involved in school culture, hoping that they have access to professional advice and humanistic care from the school leadership. Authentic and humane communications between principals and new teachers are valued by many beginning teachers. School administrators' verbal persuasion and acknowledgment of teachers' devotion are effective ways to boost teachers' sense of efficacy (Hong, 2012). An open-door policy is beneficial for both school leaders and teachers, which indicates the first step to develop a healthy and professional relationship between leaders and new teachers. School leaders create an atmosphere in which teachers feel comfortable to talk about their concerns and confuse. It is particularly necessary for principals to give advice and guidance to beginning teachers (Meador, 2016). In this case, principals are instructional leaders. Regular personal communication is inspiring, and it accelerates novice teachers' engagement with confidence in the new environment. Emotional support from leaders strengthens new teachers' feeling of being supported and responded, which increases their willingness to stay in the profession.

## Conclusion

New Chinese teachers are leaving schools in alarming numbers for a variety of reasons. Two leading professional factors are the latest curriculum reform and burdensome workloads. Two personal factors relate to unrealistic expectations and a weak sense of self-efficacy. New teachers are isolated without sufficient support. Mental health concerns caused by heavy workloads and lack of support could force teachers to leave (Pells, 2017). The solutions involve setting up collaborative partnerships and supportive leadership, which root in a positive and

cooperative school culture. Valuable support for early career teachers contributes to teachers' efficacy and lower rates of attrition due to burnout (Burke et al., 2015). Collaborative partnerships involve giving new teachers enough time and space to share knowledge with experienced teachers. Being reflective on feedback from colleagues is another useful way for early career teachers to gain support from colleagues. Principals who are engaged in supportive leadership develop academic programs to ensure that new teachers do not work in isolation but work collaboratively. Emotional support from leaders, which includes communicating frequently with new teachers, is an effective way to ease new teachers' anxiety. When new teachers become capable to overcome challenges with adequate support from colleagues and principals, they will have a strong sense of job satisfaction, and they will strive to become professional educators.

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# Understanding Self-Regulation in Education

**Jordana Etkin**

**Abstract**

*Self-regulation is a process referring to the knowledge and awareness of one's own ability to learn. Recent studies focus on self-regulation in the classroom environment, because it is recognized as an important component of student academic achievement. Exploring factors such as the five-domain model, learning disabilities, mindfulness, and the classroom and its connection to self-regulation, provides a greater understanding of how best to support students with these challenges. The ultimate goal of educators is to create lifelong learners; therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to provide strategies that will contribute to student success.*

Self-regulation is a learning process in which one manages their emotions, behaviours, and attitudes, to reach an ideal level of stimulation where they are best able to learn. The classroom is an environment that constantly demands self-regulation behaviours, because they are critical for success with teachers and classmates, abiding by classroom rules, and attentively listening to the teacher (Montroy, Bowles, & Skibbe, 2016). The objective for understanding self-regulation in a school setting is to provide students with the tools necessary to help them focus, find a state of calm, and regulate themselves, while strengthening their personal well-being. To effectively support the development of self-regulation, it is important to observe students' development, encourage and support each student in specific individual ways, and recognize what self-regulation looks and sounds like. Educators and special education teachers ought to be familiar with the factors that influence a student's ability to self-regulate in their classrooms. It is pivotal for students to attain essential self-regulation skills in order to guide them toward a successful, functional future. Understanding factors such as the five-domain model, learning disabilities, mindfulness, the classroom, and their connection to self-regulation will provide classroom educators and special education teachers a deeper appreciation of how to support students with challenges in this area.

## The Five-Domain Model as Applied to Self-Regulation

The key to understanding self-regulation is to recognize the five domains that help students to stay calm, focused, and alert. The domains explored are the biological domain, emotional domain, cognitive domain, social domain, and prosocial domain. Students with optimal self-regulation in the biological domain can focus and perform during their learning experiences and physical activities (Shanker, 2013). However, challenges in the biological domain often lead to self-regulation problems in at least one of the other four domains (Shanker, 2013). A critical component for educators is to observe students' behaviour regulation throughout the school day, because it directly affects the students' ability to self-regulate. An example is changing the tone, level, and speed of the teacher's voice when frustrated (Shanker, 2013). These minor teaching changes assist in student self-regulation and provide optimal, effective learning environments.

Positive emotional and social development are the foundation for mental health and malleability throughout life (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2018). The Mental Health Commission of Canada (2018) estimates that 1.2 million children in Canada are affected by mental health and emotional challenges. It is important for educators to guide students to optimal emotional self-regulation where they are resilient and have positive self-esteem (Shanker, 2013). Students struggling with emotional self-regulation find it challenging to recover from negative emotions such as disappointment or embarrassment (Shanker, 2013). Educators must acknowledge that it is acceptable for students to feel and express negative emotions,

before shifting the focus to positive emotions such as happiness. Emotional regulation occurs when students attend to their negative emotions: fear or anxiety, and concentrate on positive emotions: excitement or enthusiasm.

The cognitive domain focuses on how students gather and process new information, relying on their executive functions and metacognition (Shanker, 2013). Current research on executive functions suggest that students must recognize when they need to self-regulate (Short, 2016). When students are proficient in the cognitive domain they, can focus, think logically and critically, comprehend, set goals, prioritize tasks, and be cautious of their own strengths and challenges (Shanker, 2013). Metacognition and executive function, as part of self-regulation, are the main components of the cognitive domain and play a critical role for classroom educators and special education teachers.

The social domain is a major factor of self-regulation, due to the amount of time that students spend in school or participating in extracurricular activities. Students struggling to cope in the emotional domain generally find it difficult to regulate themselves in the social domain (Shanker, 2013). Optimal regulation in the social domain means that the needs for approval and equal opportunities are met, and students have ample opportunities to understand their emotions and themselves as learners (Katz, 2012).

The prosocial domain focuses on positive behaviours expected in the classroom environment. Issues in this domain occur when conflicts arise, or students have challenges with social interactions, and they often affect the four other domains (Shanker, 2013). Students able to self-regulate in the prosocial domain excel in authentic actions; they are empathetic and altruistic, often engaging in actions to benefit others, such as classmates or peers (Shanker, 2013). For positive interactions among students to be created, they must learn and practise intrinsic behaviours such as compassion, honesty, kindness, and a genuine interest in others. Acknowledging the components of each of the five domains will provide educators and special education teachers insight into the demands of students who need self-regulation support.

## The Role of Learning Disabilities on Self-Regulation

A misconception about students with exceptionalities is that their lack of self-regulation is caused by a learning disability; however, self-regulation challenges are often a negative side-effect of their disability (Shanker, 2013). Special education programs in Canadian schools assist with education plans and supports, in order to ensure that students with learning disabilities receive the same education as those without (Shanker, 2013), and are successful in their learning environment. These are based on the inclusion model that suggests students with exceptionalities benefit from classroom environments wherein they have supports in place that provide them opportunities for success (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2015).

Within the classroom setting, self-regulation challenges affect students with learning disabilities in kinaesthetic, auditory, visual, memory, and critical and logical thinking domains (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2015). Practising self-regulation and obtaining school supports are imperative for students with learning disabilities because they are more likely to demonstrate impulsivity (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2015), and are less equipped to effectively deal with stressors that arise (Shanker, 2013). The capacity to self-regulate is crucial for students in the classroom, because it affects their ability to perform academically and function behaviourally in an acceptable manner (Graziano et al. 2015). Typically, students with learning disabilities are similar intellectually to their classmates, but have noticeable challenges that hinder optimal academic achievement and task performance (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2015). Students capable of self-regulation monitor their emotions and adapt their behaviours, conducting a desired outcome (Blalock, Franzese, Machell, & Strauman, 2015).

It is a common challenge for students with impulse behaviours to adjust their actions and self-monitor (Shiels & Hawk, 2010), leading to ineffective self-regulation processes. A goal for students with learning disabilities is to recognize their ability to self-regulate and find motivation

to do so for both academic and performance tasks. Constant practice of self-regulation strategies and techniques encourages students to strive for educational success (Shanker, 2013). Students with learning disabilities will benefit from opportunities that increase their understanding of behaviour adaptations and self-regulation within the classroom.

## Mindfulness as a Means To Achieve Self-Regulation

Mindfulness is an increasingly common technique in schools and classrooms, and is a successful tool for achieving self-regulation. Mindfulness research suggests that the practice of awareness – being focused and present in the moment - helps students to make appropriate, conscious decisions, rather than those based on an emotional reaction (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). Mindfulness is not a time for students to zone out; instead one should purposefully focus their attention to their physical being and their immediate surroundings, thoughts, and emotions. A critical piece of mindfulness practice is concentrating in a nonjudgmental way (The Hawn Foundation, 2011), encouraging reflection on emotions and behaviours.

Core Practice (The Hawn Foundation, 2011) is an effective strategy for students to take responsibility for their own regulation needs. The method for Core Practice consists of three steps: (1) pause: stop what you are doing, and find a comfortable position to sit in, (2) listen: notice the sounds in your immediate environment, and (3) breathe: take long, slow breaths. Methodic breathing will help students to regulate both their behaviour and emotions, becoming less likely to react impulsively, and to respond in a controlled, reflective manner. Students participating in mindfulness exercises are more adept at regulating their emotional state and their behaviours, while lessening feelings of anguish (Short, 2016). To achieve optimal self-regulation, students use mindfulness to relate directly to whatever is happening, and practise strategies that encourage an open and focused mindset. Reducing stress and fostering a balance of positive emotions increase one's well-being, and ultimately their ability to attain a state of calm.

Transition periods are difficult for students (Van de Geyn, 2017), prompting teachers to use instruments such as singing bowls or nature sounds to help children relax, and then successfully transition into the next activity (Shanker, 2013). In Bracebridge, Ontario, singing bowls are used with students following their first recess transition, in order to help them return to a focused state, and to ensure that they are calm the rest of the day (Van de Geyn, 2017). There is a positive correlation between mindfulness and its effect on self-regulation, behaviour, and well-being (Howell & Buro, 2011). The reward for students using mindful strategies is to achieve an optimal level of self-regulation on their own.

## Self-Regulation in the Classroom

The classroom environment is key for optimal student self-regulation. Because students spend a large part of their day in the classroom, the quality of the learning environment is an important component for student success. Involving students, and encouraging them to take part in the decision process, inspire ownership of their learning, while developing intrinsic motivation and competence in themselves (Katz, 2012). When students are included in decisions regarding their learning and well-being, they are more willing, and better able to control themselves.

In the classroom, educators may offer students a variety of methods for self-regulation success. Examples include chewing gum when agitated, differentiated seating such as yoga balls or Hokki chairs, weighted blankets or other objects, or a microphone system to help students focus on the teacher's voice rather than other distractions (Pooley, 2017). The constant communication between teacher and student empowers students to take responsibility for their own learning and monitoring, with the support and guidance of the classroom teacher.

Students become more aware of the self-regulation practices that work for them and that can be used throughout their learning journey, and outside the classroom.

## Conclusion

Self-regulation is not a one-size fits all strategy; rather, it encompasses many components that can be used to create functional, successful classroom environments. The greater our understanding of the five-domain model, the better able we are to implement strategies that support a student's capacity to learn and develop the skills necessary to effectively and efficiently deal with life's demands. Similarly, practising mindfulness is paramount to encourage students to be present, non-judgmentally, and live in the moment. When students become aware of their emotions and surroundings through mindful experiences, they can increase focus and self-regulation, while reducing high levels of anxiety and stress.

Students with learning disabilities often require greater support developing an understanding of effective self-regulation strategies to use when in the classroom environment. When students establish strategies they deem successful, they are more likely to be involved in their self-regulation. Self-regulation requires students to regulate their own feelings, focus their attention, and manage many other daily tasks. It is crucial to adopt individual strategies for self-regulation at a young age, so they will contribute positively to the students' lives as they grow into competent adults.

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# Universal Design for Learning:
# A Support for Changing Teacher Practice

**Stephen Lewis**

***Abstract***

*Educational leadership is facing a need for change; this change requires innovative approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to transform teacher practice. Principled modelling by these leaders is integral to sustained change. In addition, to initiate this change, traditional practices such as group work can be used with a UDL focus to show teachers that it is a natural and helpful change. Administrators need to leave the office and learn with students and teachers in order to demonstrate their commitment to group work skills. Administrators will help their communities by sharing their vision and by using instructional coaches.*

Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are effective strategies for helping educational leaders to be successful in supporting changes to teacher practice. Success can be defined as "meaningful, sustained change" (Knight, 2007, p. 200). UDL principles are in line with the moral behaviour put forward by the United Nations, which gave all people choice in their lives, and should inform a school's mandate for change in teacher practice. An emphasis on group work is a logical starting point for these leaders, because teachers can see students develop the social skills and the thinking skills required in any course of study. A practical example of UDL showed how technology can augment group work, and it can show resistant teachers the difference between traditional group work and UDL group work. School administrators should also model themselves as learners, and they should reflect the collaborative social skills needed for group work. Leading new initiatives at a school requires the administrators to share control of this vision, as well. Instructional coaches are another leadership group that is instrumental for successful long-term change by modelling the principles of UDL in order to change practice. An instructional coach from a Manitoba public school division confirmed that UDL principles can help to build trusting, professional relationships for collaboration. Thus, teachers can change practice for the long term, if they see the value in using UDL for lesson planning because it is moral and because it reflects their school plan.

Moral UDL principles will help school leaders to change teacher practice, because these principles are reflected by the United Nations in that both seek to help vulnerable people live with choice (Ok, Rao, Bryant, & McDougall, 2017). This moral behaviour is integral to the "capability approach," and should be considered in school plans to influence teacher practice, which is necessary for all students, including vulnerable students, to succeed because these people are treated with "human dignity and respect" (Toson, Burrello, & Knollman, 2013, pp. 490-491). This idea was reflected by the work of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Harnacke, 2013). The CRPD's goal was to give all people, including those with a disability, more freedom to live their lives without the denial of any rights. The CRPD used the work of Martha Nussbaum, based on the capabilities approach, in developing their goal (Harnacke, 2013). This theoretical framework was not only useful for the United Nations, but it was also helpful to educators because it set out to protect students from feeling vulnerable within a system or school (Toson et al., 2013). Thus, schools supported by the moral principles of UDL will have stronger mission statements that will support changes in classroom planning by teachers.

These stronger mission statements, underpinned by the moral principles of UDL, will further support changes to teacher practice because of the focus on social skills through group work. Students will require specific lessons prior to any group work, in order to "develop empathy for

others" (Katz, 2012, p. 48). In the past, UDL successfully utilized group work to create positive interactions, which were necessary for students at all levels to inform their thinking through dialogue. Positive interactions within a classroom that used group work as a strategy enabled each student's voice to be given time and respect (Katz, 2012). This focus helped students to listen to other viewpoints, and it created an atmosphere in which students "develop(ed) critical thinking and analysis skills" (Katz, 2012, p. 18). Self-reflection was then achieved, which helped students to grow as learners as they focused on a complicated topic that required thoughtful conversation. Therefore, teachers can see by using a familiar practice, such as group work, that a UDL principle from their school's mission statement reflects an intentional focus on social skills and that this focus will result in better student learning.

To further emphasize the powerful influence of UDL on planning, teachers will need to see a practical example of its use. UDL is a contrast to present classroom lesson planning and practice. UDL includes the needs of all learners in a classroom lesson, especially those students who have difficulty learning if UDL strategies are not present (Ok et al., 2017). For instance, one such UDL strategy that worked with all students used a commercial software or PowerPoint to scaffold the writing process. In this process, learners looked at one image at a time as they developed their ideas for their writing (Hitchcock, Rao, Chang, & Yuen, 2016). This process of writing an essay with slides breaks down the task into smaller guided chunks. Writing in a group setting during the PowerPoint slides resulted in positive feedback from educators toward learners, and there was more frequent sharing of information by students. This use of technology and group work showed that planning for all students helped with "reducing barriers to learning" (Ok et al., 2017, p. 117). When all students are included in a lesson, the classroom becomes a stronger community that could help all students with their learning engagement (Ok et al., 2017). Learners who use unique strategies that incorporate technology, along with group work, may become more involved in the lesson. These strategies will help teachers to see the practical benefits of UDL.

Similarly, administrators, as part of the learning community of a school, need to show that they are willing to learn collaboratively from students and teachers (Fullan, 2014). Therefore, in effect, collaboration or group work is being modelled by another educator to build a stronger learning relationship wherein risks can take place (Alvarez-Bell, Wirtz, & Bian, 2017; Ok et al, 2017). If a principal participates visibly in a collaborative process, then students and teachers will see the results of this collaboration working at all levels. The administrative team is vital to successful programs at any school (Sterrett & Irizarry, 2015). For teachers to seek improvement, they need to know that they are part of plan that their administrators value. These administrators need to model "improving and refining instructional practice" (Fullan, 2015, p. 4). Thus, traditional barriers are broken down with modelling, because students, teachers and administrators are modelling the social skills necessary for group work and collaboration used in UDL.

Schools that seek a new shared vision of their approach to education need to share control of this vision with each of the stakeholders who will experience change (Sergiovanni, 2017). All individuals involved in this change will feel empowered if they are informed and if they are given opportunities to make decisions that logically fit their roles (Fullan, 2015). Each school will have its unique vision, which needs to account for government assessments and the needs of the community (Sergiovanni, 2017). In order for students to learn, they need to build authentic and respectful relationships with the educators at their school, which include administrators and teachers. This support will help teachers and students to feel that they are part of a school that values a "deep culture of teaching and learning" (Sergiovanni, 2017, "School Culture," para. 5). These relationships work more effectively if the students have "control of their education" (Capp, 2017, p. 793). Learners require choice, because each student possesses a variety of strengths that need to be recognized. Through implementing choice, students are given the opportunity to build "intrinsic motivation" (Capp, 2017, p. 793). For these reasons, each part of a school's plan

must reflect the community's need for control in the education of its children, and they need to feel part of the school's vision.

Another role that can aid in modelling the proper programming for students, but more importantly for teachers, is an instructional coach position to support the change in programming put forth by the administration team. The instructional coach can provide a link between students, teachers, and administrators because this person will provide "opportunities to see the new practice performed" (Knight, 2007, p. 110). Before instructional coaches can introduce a change to traditional practice for a classroom teacher, they must build relationships so that teachers who are entrenched in a traditional teaching approach will seek help because they see the instructional coach as an ally. The external help must build the trust necessary for resistant teachers to accept help and to begin to change their practice. The external help must be seen by the classroom teacher as focused on improvement of student learning (Knight, 2007). This shift in thinking on the part of the teacher means that the teacher is committed to a "responsibility for continuous improvement" (Fullan, 2015, p. 4). If teachers have accepted their role as learners, then they will seek out help due to a genuine interest to enhance their teaching. A successful change from known practice can take place only within a school in which change is accepted and supported by the school administrator (Fullan, 2015). Therefore, instructional coaches can be successful once trust is gained from teachers.

Francie,[1] an active instructional coach, confirmed that she can help teachers with change, but the relationships need to be built first (personal communication, November 20, 2017). Francie was assigned during the 2016-17 school year the task of working alongside teachers at a Manitoba high school, in order to aid these teachers in the development of a number of new initiatives that included UDL. According to Francie, it was difficult to work with teachers at first, because teachers either did not feel the need to make any changes to their programming, or they did not know how she could support them and consequently their students. Despite this, Francie built a relationship with one English teacher, by gaining his trust. Control was given to this classroom teacher in terms of how Francie would help during a unit of study around the theme of identity for a grade nine English class. A male student was resistant to the English teacher, because the unit was too difficult. Francie provided support by creating UDL lessons, and she held meetings with the teacher to ensure that the teacher felt comfortable with the materials and activities. During these meetings, an Identity Literature Circle Google Document was created and shared with other like-minded English teachers from across the division. This gave the teacher an opportunity to collaborate with others working on the same unit and a space to work on a lesson tailored to the student who was struggling. The English teacher created an activity open to all students, but because it involved drawing, the struggling student could complete the task, and he felt success. Therefore, this program was successfully implemented by the instructional coach, because Francie worked hard to earn the trust needed to build the teacher's confidence by helping a struggling student to overcome a challenge with UDL.

In conclusion, the use of UDL principles by educational leaders can support changes to teacher practice if the teachers see it as helping students because it is part of a school plan. Change can be easier to facilitate and accepted if change is in line with values set out by international organizations such as the United Nations. Teachers will also accept new practices when a traditional practice, such as group work where social skills and thinking skills are developed, is bridged with new practices. As an example of new teaching practice, UDL will use group work and technology to ensure that inclusion occurs. School administrators need to model the collaborative skills needed for change to occur. Of course, any changes to traditional teaching need the stakeholders to have control, and they need input to build a school's vision. Finally, instructional coaches are needed to support new initiatives, so that these practices last as part of a school plan. The instructional coaches need to build relationships with teachers for

[1] A pseudonym has been used to protect this person's identity.

change to occur. Therefore, school leaders who wish to see lasting change to better practice from traditional models need to provide moral support for their teachers by using UDL as a philosophical foundation for a school plan; in addition, these leaders need to provide vision and then model the desired changes to teacher practice.

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### *About the Author*


*Stephen Lewis is beginning his Master of Education degree in school leadership. Currently, he is working at Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate in the capacity of Department Head of English. Stephen is grateful for the support of his spouse, Kim Carter, and children, Emma and Iaon.*

## CELEBRATION OF GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses and projects in 2017.

**Derek Marvin** March 13, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Marion Terry

*Canadian Education Abroad:*
*Exploring the Strengths and Weaknesses of Two Distinct Models*

A growing number of schools around the world are using different models of Canadian education. There is a dearth in research that examines how each model operates and how their policies, processes, and programming are implemented in foreign contexts. This mixed method thesis study explored the strengths and weaknesses of two distinct models of Canadian education implemented abroad: educational franchise schools and provincially affiliated schools (PA).

Educational franchise schools contract experienced Canadian educators to train local teachers to implement Canadian curriculum and pedagogy in their country of origin. Canadian Educational Services Latin America Inc., otherwise known as Maple Bear, is the educational franchise presented in this study. There were 28 participants from 10 different MB schools. MB stakeholder groups consisted of franchise administrators, teacher-trainers, curriculum writers, school owners, academic coordinators, and classroom teachers. PA schools require provincially certified teachers and administrators to provide an education for local students using Canadian curriculum. There were 48 participants from 12 different PA schools. PA stakeholder groups were government liaison officers, schools principals, and teachers.

Quantitative data were gathered through an online survey consisting of 15 Likert-scale questions. Qualitative data were collected through 5 open-ended survey questions and one-to-one interviews. A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each distinct model was organized into 11 themes: systems and structures; staff profile; recruitment and retention; community perspective; school climate; cultural and professional preparation; professional development; curriculum, resources, and materials; methodology; English language learning; and student as a learner.

**Angela Voutier** August 17, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Karen Rempel

*Improving the Achievement and Engagement of At-Risk Learners*
*Through Professional Development*

Professional development programs for teachers are subject to ongoing evaluation in regards to their effectiveness in improving teaching practices and subsequently student achievement levels. This qualitative study explored the professional development experiences of teachers and their perceived effect on the engagement and achievement levels of at-risk students.

The research question that guided this study was “What are the professional development experiences of practising teachers and what are the effects of these experiences on the

success of at-risk students?" Data were collected from eight high school teachers and four elementary teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher used open-ended questions to interview the participants and used their voices to attempt to identify the most effective professional development experiences for teachers to improve the engagement and achievement of the at-risk students in their classrooms. A goal of this study was to apply its findings in the creation of suggestions for school principals to improve the professional development experiences of teachers, with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

Both the literature and the teacher participants in this study called for a move from traditional professional development models. A focus on experiential, collaborative professional development learning opportunities and the importance of relationship building with students, colleagues, and community stakeholders were common themes derived from the research. Although teachers requested personalized professional development, there was also evidence that they would require substantial support and guidance from school leaders about this type of restructuring. The conclusions and recommendations for this case study provide suggestions for further study and practical strategies for school leaders who want to support their staff to be effective in their complex, diverse classrooms.

**Jennifer Kramer** August 22, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Karen Rempel

*A Case Study of Transformative Learning and the Development of a Christian Worldview in a Christian School*

This case study looked at the alumni of one Christian high school in western Canada and the possible connections between their experiences in the Christian education program and their Christian worldview development. This study was grounded in transformative learning theory and Christian worldview development.

The purposes of this study were to (a) relate the effects of the school's Christian education program to alumni's transformative learning experiences, and to (b) explore how alumni's experiences in the Christian education program have influenced their Christian worldview development and, consequently, their long-term faith retention. The research questions asked (1) What Christian education learning activities contributed to alumni's transformative learning experiences? (2) What Christian education learning activities contributed to alumni's Christian worldview development? and (3) How do alumni perceive their interactions with religious thought and worldview development subsequent to their graduating from a Christian high school?

To answer these questions, the researcher used a parallel research method, including an anonymous electronic survey and in-person semi-structured interviews. The findings show that the Christian education program in this case study may not have had a significant impact on the respondents' transformative learning experiences and the development of Christian worldview development; however, other school influences did have an impact. These influences include staff and student relationships, event-based activities, school missions trips, and extra-curricular activities. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends (1) that Christian school staff work to collectively understand the process of worldview formation and develop an inclusive worldview statement, (2) the development of a discipleship pathway for staff and students to refer to, and (3) the increased incorporation of varied disorienting dilemmas into Christian education programs.

**Janice Jebsen** August 30, 2017 Project Adviser: Dr. Marion Terry

*Self-Harm: A Meta-Analysis*

Moderate self-harming behaviour, which excludes both extreme acts of mutilation exhibited in patients suffering from psychoses, stereotypic behaviours displayed in autistic individuals or those impaired by mental retardation, or diagnosed with a bipolar disorder, has been identified as a major problem affecting the health and safety of adolescents, youth, and young adults in many countries world-wide. Terminology used to describe the phenomenon is diverse and has hindered assessing the full extent of the issue. Prevalence remains a contentious issue, a further impediment to the development of a more complete understanding of acts of self-harm dependent upon the range of underlying or contributing factors investigated.

Identification of potential risk factors and theories on the purpose self-harm serves continues to be expanded. Influences or causal associations, socio-economic and demographic implications, in addition to cultural considerations have more recently been studied in the ongoing development of understanding the choice of self-harming behaviours as coping strategies. The array of professionals who encounter individuals who self-harm impedes both an accurate compilation and an analysis of statistics. Additionally, for most professions, there is limited training to assist clients, patients, or students who injure themselves. Appropriate therapies, treatments, strategies, and interventions continue to be studied, developed, and made more readily accessible for individuals, primary care-givers, and professionals. The need for continued research is universally recommended.

**Ebenezer Duncan-Williams** October 24, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Jacqueline Kirk

*Making Inclusion Work for Young People in Manitoba: Developing a Flourishing Framework for the Education of Marginalized Offenders*

The purpose of this qualitative framework analysis study was to examine issues of inclusion in Manitoba. I specifically focused on exploring the conditions that are required to develop an inclusive education framework within which marginalized youth who are involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the justice system, can flourish. This study extends the common definition of inclusive education to include education that satisfies the needs of all children and youth, specifically those who are marginalized by their tendencies to participate in criminal behaviours.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with six research participants who had extensive experience working with these marginalized young people. My analysis of participants' interview responses yielded fourteen themes that I grouped into four main categories: (1) interpersonal qualities: relationship, respect, trust, authenticity, advocacy, and self-esteem, (2) emotional capacities: love, compassion, empathy, belonging, and caring, (3) enabling pedagogies: critical pedagogy and assessment, and (4) intended outcomes included flourishing. The framework shows participants' views about what is needed to improve the educational outcomes for young people.

From my analysis of the data, I concluded that interpersonal qualities are opportunities to improve engagement in the learning process because these qualities improve how teachers and students treat each other. The respondents also revealed that although it is challenging,

educators and students can use their emotions to develop sensitivities to personal stories that lead to motivation and inspiration to seek alternative ways of improving educational outcomes. In addition, teaching practice presents opportunities for teachers and students to examine educational structures and provisions, and find ways to improve access and remove barriers. Flourishing was found to be an end goal that starts from the beginning and motivate teachers to be persistent and wavering about how they communicate love to youth.

**Alann Fraser** November 24, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Cam Symons

*Implementation of a Response to Intervention Model in Rural Early and Middle Years Schools*

This qualitative study explored the experiences of principals while implementing a Response to Intervention model in early/middle years schools in rural Manitoba. The principals were interviewed to discover how they experienced the implementation process and to glean advice for other administrators who are beginning the process of implementing RTI. Data collected through recorded phone interviews was compiled and coded according to recurring themes. Triangulation and member checking were utilized in an effort to ensure credibility of the findings.

The study's findings demonstrated that the decision to implement RTI resulted from a need to support students who presented gaps in their skills. The decision was made by principals and superintendents in an effort to close the skill gaps. The principals shared the experiences that they encountered during the implementation process, as well as expected and unexpected results of implementing RTI in the school. The principals provided advice that would support an administrator new to the process of implementing RTI in a rural early or middle years school. The study also revealed some resources, professional development, and strategies to implement RTI effectively.

**Bryan Schroeder** November 30, 2017 Thesis Adviser: Dr. Marion Terry

*The Autoethnographic Reflection of a Christian Principal and His Great Desire to Know and Love Jesus Christ Wholeheartedly: A Story of Being Called, Encountered, and Changed by God while Growing as a Servant Leader*

This study presents a qualitative data driven account of highly personalized and transformative experiences that I reflect on, draw meaning from, and summarize the professional value of how I was called, encountered, and changed by God, as I pursued to know and love Jesus Christ wholeheartedly while growing in servant leadership as a (vice) principal at a Christian school. In 2014, I stumbled upon and pursued the notion of using my journal entries from May 2010 to December 2013 (271 pages), as qualitative data to write an autoethnography. The guiding research questions for this autoethnographic study were as follows:

> *What prominent themes did I, a young (vice) principal at a Christian school, naturally write most about in my journal?*
> *What meaning did I derive from the personal encounters recorded within the prominent themes of my journal?*

*How did the transforming experiences in my personal life influence me as a growing servant leader, in the principal role, at a Christian school?*
*What kind of encounters did biblical characters, who were seeking God wholeheartedly, have with God that were similar to mine?*
*How are my experiences of being called, changed, and encountered by God supported and paralleled by Christian literature?*
*What implications do my findings have for (future) principals practising servant leadership?*

My responses to the research questions offer valuable perspectives and unique insight from my view of the world, as transformation in my personal life led to transformation in my professional life.

Autoethnography was the chosen methodology to vividly express the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual details from my life, and analyze and interpret the meaningful encounters that I had journaled about. Themes were established through the inductive process of coding data, and findings were framed by the servant leader theory, which led to the writing of Chapters IV through VII. Chapter I is an introduction, Chapter II reveals the theoretical framework and worldview of the study in order to give the reader a grid with which to connect my thematic chapters, Chapter III presents my methodological framework, and Chapter VIII is the conclusion that discloses the inward and outward implications of my findings. It has a summary of how my personal encounters influenced my thoughts, feelings, and actions as a principal of a Christian school, and it also displays implications for principals practising servant leadership and for teachers at public schools and Christian schools.

The sources that contributed significantly to the credibility of this autoethnography were extensive Christian literature references, Bible verses, supportive research of the servant leader theory, and my authentic journal entries. Although my experiences were unique to me, many authors shared similar experiences in the context of their Christian communities. The life changing journey that I experienced, while growing as a servant leader, must be known among principals who also have a similar desire to hear from and know God, and be called, changed, and encountered by Him.