

SPECIAL EDUCATION THOUGHTS AND PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 27, 2018

ELIZABETH BIGWIN

OVERVIEW

- What They Said
- Environment
- Instructional Methods
- Student Assessment

IN THEIR WORDS

- “I need to be surrounded by what I know.”
- “When I watch, I learn.”
- “When I do, I remember.”
- “The best teachers know about us and how we view things.”
- “In circle we have to look at each other – we kind of connect.”
- “What’s with photocopied sheets?”

THE ENVIRONMENT

Questions -

- Does the setting reflect the students' home and all things familiar?
- Are they finding themselves in a traditional classroom – desks, chairs etc. more often than not?
- Is the outdoors used effectively?
- Are there “caring adults” – are there familiar faces, people who understand the lingo and the ways?

ENVIRONMENT

What Works –

Student Support Workers – Indigenous support staff in the learning setting who support students with academics, who take a walk with students when they need to, who listen, who understand where the student is coming from and who also –

Support the teaching staff with academic applications, provide school staff with insight, liaise with parents, facilitate staff learning sessions, enhance differentiated practice in even more tailored and creative ways.

ENVIRONMENT

Visiting Elders – many schools have a documented program that outlines protocols for bringing in Elders. Elders share a richness of thought and gently provide advice. Their stories are deep in meaning - lessons that may not be uncovered until long after they have been visiting. Indigenous students know who the Elders are. Elders may bring a sense of calm.

ENVIRONMENT

Dedicated Space – many schools have a dedicated room inside where there are traditional medicines, Indigenous Art, craft materials and literature that tells their stories. Spaces where a support person is available and where they may find balance. Outdoor spaces have also been carefully designed, built, and utilized to serve students.



ENVIRONMENT

After School Program - homework assistance; availability to cross curricular learning activities; reading programs; research support for projects and assignments; a well-equipped classroom and computer lab are available for student use; specialized worker also interacts two days per week with students in their school environment and provides a wide range of support to keep them engaged in their high school programs.

METHODOLOGY

Questions

- Is it sit and git?
- Lots of experiential learning?
- Copy off the board?
- Arts – drama to express ideas in all subject areas?
- Land-based learning?

METHODOLOGY

- The approach to instructional and interactional methods is best when they are culturally appropriate.
- Teaching methods are more effective when they are more **conceptual** and less analytical; **dialogue** with less lecturing; **creative thinking** with less memory work; **hands-on experiential** methods as opposed to just book learning.

METHODOLOGY

Each language and culture group is unique, therefore, educators need to understand the local cultural group. For example, northern Ojibwa learning styles may be defined very differently from southern Ojibwa based on their lived experiences. The language base defines the thinking and how the learner responds to others.

METHODOLOGY

To Think About -

Step Out of One's Own Frame - When student strengths and weaknesses are interpreted according to the cultural reference point of the “teacher”, they can be misinformed on what they "think they see."

Indigenous youth thrive best in learning settings characterized by balance, interconnectedness, and learning by doing, more so than in settings characterized by linear thinking, power, and fragmentation of knowledge (not holistic).

METHODOLOGY

Collaborative Language Model -

- All staff members engage in ongoing dialogue and reflection about the effectiveness of [special education] programs.
- Instructional practices are well-articulated and programs are evidence-based.
- Classroom teachers work collaboratively with special education resource teachers to develop and deliver effective instruction for all students.
- Special education resource teachers are highly trained and skilled in working collaboratively with other staff members, community agencies, and parents.

METHODOLOGY

Collaborative Planning Model – Classroom teacher, Special Education Resource Teacher, support staff co-plan series of language-based activities that include reading, writing, listening for a purpose, expression involving arts and other creative-based responses based on a continuum of skills. Teachers and support staff facilitate small group and individual sessions that rotate over a series of days. All students are involved, including those identified with Special Needs. Benefits – Special Needs student are not isolated to a different setting; expertise of each of 5 staff is applied to the plan.

ASSESSMENT

Questions –

Does the lesson/learning have a real purpose?

“Thoughtless mastery” versus reflection and critiquing?

Are we still using lots of tests and spelling dictation?

How well does the teacher know the student? Will this make a difference in terms of achievement and success?

ASSESSMENT

Criterion-referenced – personalized and tailored to the specific student needs and achievement goals; instruction is adapted to a broader conception of learning – it is about *this* student; the student participates in the development of what is to be learned and assess

ASSESSMENT

See the student in motion – assessment is ongoing; adaptive; capturing the learner in action; supporting the learner to learn how to learn; analysis for building next steps – in what setting is the student most successful?

Choice of response – write, orally share, dramatize, visual depiction, electronic

SOURCES

- “Nurturing the Learning Spirit of First Nation Students The Report of the National Panel on First Nation Elementary and Secondary Education for Students on Reserve”, 2011
- CHIEFS OF ONTARIO Special Education Position Paper, 2017
- Special Education:A Guide for Educators <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide.html>
- Meeting Special Education Requirements:A Toolkit to Better Assist our Children March 2014 Ontario First Nation Special Education Working Group