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ED 4240

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Sept, 14th, 2014

Deciding to Teach Them All

Carol Ann Tomlinson’s article “Deciding to Teach Them All” discusses the ability to ask the right questions about pursuing equity and excellence in our classrooms (Tomlinson, 2010). The value of asking the right questions to yourself as a professional educator is a part of powerful thinking and this turns into powerful questions. Asking questions helps one think critically and reflect on their role as an educator and how to approach teaching. I can apply these principles to my intermediate/secondary classroom, for example, through having a curriculum that students can follow that will challenge their knowledge and understandings, but at the same time, offering help to those who may need it. I think it is important to be open minded as every student is unique and has different ways of learning. I also agree that being an educator is to support and guide the learner. Education requires us not just to be knowledgeable, but to address deep questions about the meaning and value of teaching – to ask questions at all levels. Asking yourself questions as a professional educator requires us to better understand diversity of all types – gender, ethnicity, learning styles, and other existing complexities. Educators also have to think how they are going to apply these principles to a classroom as technologies have advanced and, although technology has enriched our connections between people, it can also isolate us from others and ourselves. I took distance education courses when I was in high school and I know a lot of students struggled because a teacher is not there in person to see if a student is there doing the work. At the same time, I found the distance education courses that I took can teach people to take on reasonability and to go to classes and participate. Lastly, education is not just knowledge; it is about rethinking the goals and processes of education that becomes a lifelong experience.

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Labels in Special Education: Is it helpful?

Fraser Lauchlan and Christopher Boyle question whether using labels in special education is helpful, leading to more questions and issues that must be considered (2007). Labels in special education can be helpful in identifying a student with a specific disability and this classification process illustrates knowledge about the characteristics of the student’s learning disability. Lauchlan and Boyle state that labeling leads to increased awareness and understanding of particular difficulties (2007, p.38). However, labeling has been much criticized by many because labeling changes the school experience of many students. Nonetheless, labels can bring comfort to children and families by putting people first and exceptionalities second (2007, p 40).

Labeling can lead to the development of specialized teaching methods, assessment approaches, and behavioural interventions. Lauchlan and Boyle states that this could help individual needs (2007, p.39). Labels can be harmful when it leads to stereotypes, such as when a student with an exceptionality is placed into a category by citing the characteristics of the label while referring to one’s academic achievement and teachers’ expectations. Thus, labels may serve as beneficial in terms of health and research studies and understanding one’s needs, but labels still have a huge negative impact, and it is important understand how and the appropriate usage of words. Labels may help us to understand the difficulties of a student with an

exceptionality and help us to see all individuals as unique. To minimize the negativity of labeling, it is important to know people’s first language, to understand the characteristics of a disability, and the difficulties that students with exceptionalities may face such as stigma and judgment. If labels are to be helpful in special education then these labels must be applied to benefit all.

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What Is It Like to Be Gifted?

“Giftedness and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance” (Class Lecture, 2014). From my interviews with others about people who are gifted and their giftedness, I have gathered more insight as to what it is like to be gifted. A person who is gifted differs intellectually from others. It can be challenging for students who are gifted because there are some traits that set them apart as gifted traits are not just intelligence, IQ, and creativity. People who are gifted have heightened capacity to appreciate the richness of the world and long to exchange their ideas with other people who are gifted to engage in intellectual discussions. They also generally have a sense of humour which differs from others sense of humour. People who are gifted often find that their jokes are received with silence because they are not understood. Furthermore, people who are gifted can have strong feelings in the sense that they have difficulty understanding the inconsistent behaviour of others because they can see the foolishness and dangers of many actions in life.

In terms of learning, people who are gifted often develop their own method of learning and understanding of concepts. Giftedness can cause frustration because other students may not use their learning methods and people who are gifted are confronted with too many abilities in too many areas where they can work and excel. As a result, choosing a career path may be difficult because of their many abilities. They have many abilities because they learn at a faster

pace, to a greater depth, and with less practice. Perfectionism is also a trait common among people who are gifted as they feel the urge to fulfill their own expectations, however; people who are gifted can also experience bullying and are often called “know-it-all”. They can also feel isolated from others because it can be difficult for them to relate to others and also because of introversion (the desire for private space and time). People who are gifted may also deny that they are gifted or feel embarrassed to show their giftedness.  Sometimes their traits can create awkward social interactions and these traits can make these people misunderstood and underestimated by their peers, by society, and even by themselves.

In the classroom, it is important for teachers to realize that students who are gifted are students with special needs. The curriculum is modified when a student performs below grade level and it is equally important that the curriculum is modified for students of high potential. Students who are gifted may require a range of services, such as enrichment in the curriculum or levelled assignments that meet their depth of knowledge. Students who are gifted do not need teachers who are gifted – they need teachers who are genuinely interested in teaching students who are gifted, with all their challenges and diverse needs. Lastly, it is important to note that equality does not mean that all students should receive the same services, but that all students should receive the same opportunities to grow.

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Nov. 9th 2014

ADHD and the Use of Medication

According to Theodore Mandelkorn, “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is characterized by a prolonged history of inattention, impulsiveness, and sometimes variable amounts of hyperactivity” and is diagnosed by the degree to which these symptoms persist (2012, p.2). Decisions regarding medication for ADHD can be difficult. It requires a lot of learning about what medication can and cannot do. ADHD medication may help people with ADHD to improve the ability to concentrate, control impulses, plan, and complete tasks, but medication is not a complete cure for ADHD. A child who takes medication for ADHD may still struggle with forgetfulness, emotional problems, social interactions, and relationships. Medication can help with some of the problems that a person with ADHD may experience, but maintaining a healthy lifestyle consisting of regular exercise and a healthy diet is just as important.

While there are two types of medication for treating ADHD, both stimulant and non-stimulant medication, stimulant medication is the most common type of medication prescribed. Stimulants have been recorded as being the most effective for many people with ADHD by boosting concentration and focus and reducing hyperactivity. Stimulants for ADHD also have short-term and long-term acting dosages and the long-term acting dosage is the most preferred since most people have trouble remembering to take their medication. However, there are many side effects from taking medication ranging from difficultly sleeping, depression, to headaches, but there are also other health concerns than side effects that are associated with stimulants used for treating people with ADHD. Some of those problems are the effect medication has on a developing brain, heart-related problems, psychiatric problems, and potential for abuse.

Alice Charach and Rebeca Fernandez note that adverse effects are an explanation for discontinuation of taking medication (2013). Thus, choices about using medication are complex. In terms of taking medication, effectiveness and adverse effects are two major factors that are reviewed for people with ADHD and they discuss the challenges facing clinicians working with young people with ADHD (Charach & Fernandez, 2013).

Some factors that influence the use of medication for ADHD involve the parents’ beliefs about ADHD and attitudes towards treatment. For example, Charach and Fernandez state that “those parents who view the child’s medical difficulties as a medical disorder that requires biological intervention will agree with using medication, but many prefer behavioural strategies, such as dietary changes, exercise and counselling” (2013, p.4). Thus, parents have mixed feelings about using medication and often weigh the concerns of adverse effects and social disapproval against potential behaviour and academic benefits (Charach & Fernandez, 2013). Another concern for parents is being able to trust their health care provider in the decision of starting medication for people with ADHD (Charach & Fernandez , 2013). Furthermore, Charach and Fernandez also claim that another challenge about taking ADHD medication is that it is important to include children as active participants in treatment decisions (2013).

In conclusion, medication for children with ADHD and its treatments are complex. Charach and Fernandez conclude that more research is needed to learn about how to assist greater numbers of young people with ADHD to maximize their potential (2013). As more is discovered about brain health and development, additional ways to help young people care for themselves will emerge. Overall increased awareness for shared decision making and monitoring the use of medication for people with ADHD will remain key to enhancing ADHD medication adherence (2013).

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Resources

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<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/index.html>

**The Department of Education in Newfoundland** has a policy and outlines for

Safe and Caring Policy - Education Department of Newfoundland

- The purpose of the policy is to set clear expectations and set direction for all members of the school community.

-The policy also has a section about School-Wide Positive behaviour Supports, which is a decision making framework

- Schools implement this by fostering preventative approaches to inapproperiate behaviour

- Create inclusive, engaging, responsive and productive environment

- Addressing classroom management and disciplinary issues.

- Supporting students whose behaviours require more specialized assistance (ex: emotional and behaviour disorders, mental health).

- The Positive Behaviour Support System used to promote a positive learning environment

[https://www.nlesd.ca](https://www.nlesd.ca/)

**The English School District**

-this site is designed to help teachers, guidance counsellors, and others who have direct contact with young people, by providing information about mental health problems/illnesses on student learning

- to provide support for students learning

- the site lists signs and symptoms of mental illness and mental problems that contributes to behavioural problems/disorders that impact their learning.

<https://www.pbis.org/school> (**Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support)**

* School wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting student behaviour to create positive student environments.
* Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention

    4 PBS elements:

* Supporting staff behaviour
* Supporting student behaviour
* Support decision making
* Support social competence & Academic achievement
* Bullying prevention
* RTI

[http://www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org/) - **Mindfulness in Schools**

* Mindfulness: Paying attention on purpose to the present moment in a non-judgmental way
* Helps people to deal with stress, anxiety, depression and other behavioural problems/disorders
* Teaches people to become more empathic, compassionate, and forgiving
* Mindfulness is for everyone! (Children and Adults can practice)

[http://www.prevnet.ca](http://www.prevnet.ca/) - Bullying Prevention

* Canada’s authority on research and resources for bullying prevention
* promoting relationships & eliminating violence newtwork
* tips for Kids, Teens, Parents, Educators and includes a section on Cyberbullying

Depending on where one lives in Newfoundland, there are resources for teachers to seek support to help deal with student's behaviour and students with behavioural disorders (Also, some programs are community based)

**Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line**

* 24 hr access to talk to a professional or registered nurse relating to mental health or addictions
* advice and support

**Eastern Newfoundland -  http://www.channal.ca**

Channal is a Consumers’ Health Awareness Network Newfoundland And Labrador (CHANNAL)

* exists to build and strengthen a self-help network among individuals who live with mental health issues
* Channel also provides a Mental Health First Aid for Adults who interact

**Corner Brook Western Health** -

provides services for children such as autism and other behavioural problems

<http://westernhealth.nl.ca/index.php/programs-and-services/services-a-z/autism-services>

**Central Newfoundfoundland - Community Behavioural Services Programs**

There are also Community Behavioural Services Programs throughout Central Newfoundland (Gander, Grandfalls-Windsor, Botwood, Lewisporte, St. Alban's , Springdale )

- this program offers basic behavioural problems to people who behavioural disorders, such as ADHD, FSAD, parenting skills, and non-violent crisis intervention.

- this service is offered for school age  and older and it is free

<http://www.centralhealth.nl.ca/assets/Department-Information/Community-Support-and-Residential-Services/CH-CRS-001-Community-Behavioural-Services-Program.pdf>

**Labrador Grenfell Health** also offers services for behavioural interventions throughout Labrador comprised of two primary programs Direct Home Services and Community Behavioural Services.

<http://www.lghealth.ca/index.php?pageid=94>