

Through Spiral of Inquiry, investigate the development of a “culturally responsive curriculum”

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Purpose of this Sabbatical

- Use Spirals of Inquiry (Halbert and Kaser) to reflect on successes and determine change that is needed to make Ravensbourne School more culturally responsive.
- To investigate how Ravensbourne School through effective leadership, can increase the capabilities of Staff and Board, to build and implement focused policies and practices that will meet the needs of an increasing percentage of Māori students, with a “culturally responsive curriculum”

Acknowledgements:

I would like to acknowledge the Professional School leaders who gave of their time

- Laura Tait – Acting Superintendent of Aboriginal Education Vancouver Island, British Columbia
- Llyn Brown and Staff Dover Bay School, Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Rationale for Inquiry:

- To personally gain better understanding of Maori achieving success as Maori.
- To have confidence and set up structures for Ravensbourne School to become more culturally responsive to the needs of our Maori students.
- For all, in the Ravensbourne School Community, to see the benefits of being culturally responsive and that by understanding this, all learners will achieve.

Our mission statement says:

Ravensbourne School acknowledges the Treaty of Waitangi and all students will be given the opportunity to acquire the knowledge of Te Reo and Tikanga.

With better understanding, this will become more visible and evident through planning, and teaching and learning. It needs to become part of our "whole", not an add on. We, as learners, (students and teachers) need to become confident in the use of Te Reo and better comprehend and respond to Tikanga in a natural way. We want all our children to achieve and reach their full potential.

Activities and Findings

On a trip to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, I met with Laura Tait, an Aboriginal lady with amazing mana. She works across schools, building Aboriginal understandings. (AESN)

The intentions of AESN (Aboriginal Education School Networks) and Noii (Networks of Inquiry and Innovation) are:

- Every learner will cross the stage with dignity, purpose and options.
- All learners leaving our settings more curious than when they arrive
- All learners gaining and understanding of and respect for Indigenous ways of knowing

Aboriginal students who are strongest in their Aboriginal identities, are having the most success in their learning. This statement struck a chord – Success for Maori as Maori, and success for all learners. It is imperative that “culturally inclusive learning activities, strategies and approaches become the norm not the exception – see all students as culturally diverse more so than ethically challenged/ challenging.”

Chris Sarra (author of “Good Morning – Mr Sarra), believes teachers “know what they need to know” and what strategies to use, but get “spooked by the cultural differences and become professionally crippled.” He says, “We forget, that at some level they are just children, like any other, hungry to learn. Aboriginal parents wanted their children to be as clever as white kids, but retain their sense of cultural identity.”

Reforming education for Aboriginal (First Nations) students requires those in charge of education to become students again themselves. The same could be said for Maori students. Through AESN and Noii, schools in BC are being challenged to do this by using Spirals of Inquiry. (Halbert and Kayser.)

We need to listen to culture. Teaching strategies need to be inclusive and collaborative, allowing for reciprocal teaching and learning. Learning needs to take place in an appropriate cultural context. (Angus H McFarlane 2004)

Dover Bay School effectively used the Spirals of Inquiry model with their students. (Yr 7) The question “where we live affects how we live,” was looking at Aboriginal life from an interdisciplinary approach. The same question was asked across all curriculum areas. The students, and teachers’ understandings were extensively expanded. Conversations were continued at home and the community developed their own understandings.

This work required teachers inquiring into their own practices. Feedback from students assisted with reflecting, questioning and developing an understanding of the extent that learners own their learning. These 4 questions are a start for teacher inquiry and need to be asked during scanning and checking stages of the Spirals of Inquiry. (Kayser and Halbert)

- Can you name 2 adults in this school who believe you will be a success in life?
- Where are you going with your learning? (What are you learning? What big ideas are you exploring?)
- How are you doing? (What would you like to tell others about your learning?)
- Where to next? (What do you need to get better at?)

Implications

To move forward as a leader and a school, we need to confidently move from being “culturally competent” to being “culturally safe”. We need to be careful of negatively stereotyping students. The potential is there for each of us, through our own beliefs and values, to stereotype others. Each student needs to be accepted as an individual, with different needs and abilities. Students should be allowed to embrace a positive sense of their own cultural identity, with the help of the educators and the community.

Laura Tait has developed an Aboriginal Understandings Learning Progression. This could be adapted for our schools’ context to develop a whole school community understanding and will assist in progressing cultural responsiveness across the school. This could be used as a basis for inquiring into school community understandings. (Spiral of Inquiry) Inquiry is not just finding answers, but questioning practice It takes scanning the environment, generating questions and trying new approaches, analyzing information and data and then questioning again. It demands regular reflection and the development of a deeper insight into personal beliefs and attitudes.

Conclusion

We need to build knowledge and capability of different cultures to achieve collective ownership and thereby success for all. We need to know and understand the past, to move forward.

Should we not be moving from and beyond a celebration of diversity, to taking difference into account in all our teaching and learning? (Prof Blye Frank)

References

- Kia Tangi Te Titi, Permission to Speak (Paul Whitinui)
- Kia Hiwa Ra! (Angus McFarlane)
- Good Morning, Mr Sarra (Dr Chris Sarra) (pg141, 209,284)
- Spirals of Inquiry (Halbert, and Kaser)
- Culture Matters (Prof Konai Helu Thaman – lecture)
- Noii –Network of Inquiry and Innovation Symposium – Connected Learning Matters
- AESN- Aboriginal Education School Networks
- Beyond the Celebration of Diversity: Taking Difference into Account in Leadership - Prof Blye Frank, Faculty of Education University of British Columbia

Definitions: Prof Blye Frank

Cultural Competency is central to the ability to respond to others in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner.

Cultural Safety – from a set of competencies to an environment of safety, taking the cultural values and norms of others into consideration, be that in our teaching, or more generally in all aspects of our institutional environment.