

# Field Project Report

DEVELOPING A MINDSET OF INQUIRY; CONNECTING THEORY TO PRACTICE

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# Mrs. Paula Thompson



Students must be permitted the freedom to think, to question, to reflect, and to interact with ideas, objects, and others – in other words, to construct meaning – Brooks (Auger et. al. Pg.40).

Through this Field Project, I had the privilege of interviewing Mrs. Paula Thompson who worked as a Science and P.E. teacher at W.J. Mouat and currently works at Abbotsford Senior Secondary School as a counselor. When asking Mrs.

Thompson these prompted questions it was clear that her main focus was on the student's success within the classroom; while also maintaining a clear focus on the school district's curriculum and achievements for all students. I found this quote relevant to this project because a lot of the questions answered by Mrs. Thompson was her explaining the importance of group work, student to student relationships, and teacher to student relationships.

Classroom environments are also a critical component to be aware of because the more important and safer the students feel, the more likely the students will be willing to participate and take risks. This results in greater success within the classroom.

The first round of questions focused on the learning environment and context. A typical learning environment for students in terms of space and organization is by having students sit in rows, groups, or pairs. Mrs. Thompson had her science class students in pairs or groups

because it worked better, it allowed the students to collaborate and learn by negotiation and learning through other classmates. This reminded me of Vygotsky's statement on page 44 where he mentioned that learning originated from social interactions and that these interactions, in turn, enable students to be integrated into a knowledgeable community (Auger et.al., Pg. 44). This capitalizes on how collaboration allows students to learn from each other.

A community within the classroom is a key component according to Mrs. Thompson. Trust is built by allowing students to answer questions without fear or judgement from the teacher or classmates. This concept relates to the risk-taking section in our textbook, where it mentions that learning environments where risk-taking is fostered and valued are places where learning can occur naturally (Auger et.al., Pg. 59). Risk-taking experiences are important, as they allow for students to learn through their mistakes, and to refrain from making the same mistake again. Regarding risk-taking, community and trust are important to build as that peer to peer respect allows for more risks to occur. Through this student will feel more comfortable sharing their personal experiences with other peers, which solidifies a concrete foundation and platform where trust and respect are valued within the classroom will allow for greater success overall.

As a future educator, it is important for the teacher to be passionate, excited, and enthusiastic about the topics being taught as this allows for the classroom to be made more dynamic and engaging. This is mentioned in many parts throughout the textbook. A strong statement that relates to this concept in the textbook is on page 192, when it states teachers who reflect a more approving attitude towards their students have an overall more positive learning environment result (Auger et.al., Pg. 192). Signifying the importance of how

excitement and passion make students want to participate and engage in the lectures being taught. Relating to what Mrs. Thompson said to me we did cover how important foundational relationships are between the students and the teachers, but we did not go into the depths of how important the teacher's delivery of material affects the students learning ability. With this being said, my assumptions changed when I read the heart of the teacher's article, as it mentions that "the connections made by good teachers are not held in their methods but their hearts." Meaning that the heart of the teacher is set in a place when intellect, emotion, and spirit are all covered when teaching material. As a future educator, it means that passion, integrity, and enthusiasm are all characteristics that I must show when teaching. I learned that through this project I really developed a passion for what teaching truly requires, and I know that even on the tough days, this is where I was meant to be and that my heart is what will be the most impactful. There is nothing more that I want than to be an influencer and to be the head and heart of the future generation to look back on and to realize that I was the most passionate teacher that the students ever encountered. By demonstrating these characteristics like I know I'll be showing as a future educator, simply brought me excitement and joy as this is what the future has in store for me.

Mrs. Thompson made it clear that not all students will actively participate in the activities. With this being said, these students may not be interested in the topic being taught, maybe having a bad day, or it could potentially be a multitude of other things. The best way to go about situations like these with students who are not engaged with the material being taught is to have one on one interactions. This relates to the week two PowerPoint presentation when it says the quality of the teacher-student relationship is the keystone for all

aspects of classroom management (Marzano). This concept capitalizes on the importance of the teacher-student relationship because having that conversation with the unengaged student it could resolve the unknown reasoning of their behavior. With this being said, it is important that as a future educator I learn and develop strong relationships with my students, as it will allow for better communication to occur so that I understand why they are unengaged. By building that trust with students allows for more success in the classroom because as the teacher I could then strategize and discover what would be the best alternative for the student.

Students are diverse when it comes to their ethnicity, their socio-economic status, their intellectual abilities, their social abilities, and their mental capabilities. The main concept that I took away from the questions I asked Mrs. Thompson, is that equality to all students is what makes the students feel inclusive despite the diversity that exists. It is important to have different opportunities for learning while still maintaining equity for all students. This concept relates to cultural competencies that I learned in week 6 as it mentions that cultural competencies are having awareness of one's own cultural identity and differences. As well as having the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of my students and their families. Some schools such as W.J Mouat and Abbotsford Senior Secondary School have cultural programs that exist such as the English language learner program (ELL), which helps students and teachers communicate through the language barrier. By having programs like this offered in schools, it allows for teachers to practice different teaching techniques that allows for greater success for these students who have a language barrier. This relates to the spiral of knowing model, as it allows for students to encounter different experiences, as they are prompted to reorganize their earlier views of the world and create

new categories by building upon previously held beliefs (Auger et.al., Pg. 68). The circumstances might differ due to the language barriers; however, the students will still express the same openness and dynamic nature through these learning concepts. This made me realize how important it is to have a safe environment for those students who come from a variety of different ethnicities, religions, and cultures than the cultural norm. Having a language barrier or a very obvious cultural difference from classmates may make a student feel uncomfortable. With this being said, as a future educator, I must do my research on the student's background to make sure that the student feels safe and comfortable in the environment they are in to allow for the greatest progress and success for the student. It is important in these situations that I do not assume how the student is feeling, and that instead, I take the initiative to know exactly how that student is feeling by making sure that the uncertainty is properly communicated. Making sure the student feels comfortable and safe in the working environment.

One of the most important components that I have learned in this course is to have a safe environment that allows students to take risks and make mistakes. By asking Mrs. Thompson the question about the importance of risk-taking, it is clear that everyone learns their greatest lessons through failure. This relates to the concept in the *Curriculum Theory and Methods textbook* where it mentions, "only when they are wrong and have to make adjustments to existing mental structures can new learning occur" (Auger et.al., Pg. 59). Capitalizing on the importance of how wrong answers can act as positive approximations and springboards to new ideas. It is important that students do fail from time to time. Not that it is necessarily intended, but because the student can take their failure and learn what not to do in

the future; as failure is generally when students learn the most. As a future educator, it is important to model and demonstrate to the students that it is okay to fail and show them that you can overcome them. Indicating to the students that the mistakes made are simply just a learning opportunity.

The second main focus of this questionnaire is working with all learners. When it comes to teachers supporting the learning of each child in their classes through activities or assignments, Mrs. Thompson mentioned that it is important to do individual check-ins. The teacher walks around the classroom checking in on students' work and group assignments to make sure everyone understands the rubric and learning outcomes. This also relates to the relationship-building concept as it is important that students feel comfortable talking to their teachers and to ask questions. By developing personal connections with my students, it will allow me to develop a greater understanding of what the student's strengths are so that I can focus on what the students can do as opposed to what they cannot.

In terms of routines for a class, Mrs. Thompson decided to focus on what a typical P.E. block would look like. Students would typically get dressed first and find their teachers in their designated spots. She would then greet her students by doing attendance and then begin with a warmup usually with another class and collogue. Students would then do some sort of cardio and then would break into their classes for a specific activity. It would then end with a cool-down activity weather that's stretching or light jogging, and then students would end the class by giving Mrs. Thompson a score based on their participation/involvement for the day. When hearing this information, it made me realize how important routines and lesson planning is. It is evident that the more the teacher comes prepared the smoother the class operates. Resulting

in overall better outcomes. This action of self-evaluation also made me think of the term progressivism because students learn by doing and involving themselves in activities that require them to make their own decisions and to evaluate their own learning (Auger et.al., Pg. 172). This also demonstrates the maturity that occurs as the integrity of their actions become more cognitively implicit, allowing for the student to reflect on their participation levels as they give their teacher a mark regarding their participation and daily work ethic.

When it comes to projects and assignments, expectations should be the first thing that is discussed using tools such as rubrics, guidelines, or core competencies. Through these practices' there is a more inclination of consistency when the marking occurs. Staying consistent is essential when it comes to the teacher to teacher marking practices, rubrics, and units so that the same information is being delivered even though students are assigned to different classrooms. This relates to the curriculum as the planned and guided learning experiences are formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences (Auger et.al., Pg.238). It is important to take information from BC's New Curriculum and to test the student's ability to understand new information based on their grade level; and to use a rubric for consistency when marking assignments amongst a variety of teachers teaching the same material to the same grade level.

Having a consistent daily schedule and set routines are good because it gives the students a predictable day. However, on the opposing side to routines, Mrs. Thompson talked about how it is good to mix things up once in a while when the students appear to be unengaged or off-task. When the opportunities arise and the students seem to be distracted, routines should be dismissed as quick adaptations need to be emplaced. This relates to the

section in my textbook where it explains daily schedules as teachers often move from the general timetable to the daily schedule that is organized in their daybook. With this being said, it is important that as a future educator I have well-established lesson plans as well as many alternative plans to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that the students are engaged and on-task.

When it came to the question of what is the greatest issue that teachers may face in the class, Mrs. Thompson made it clear that it appears when students don't have the stepping blocks for their upper-level classes. It would be difficult for a teacher to move forward with their upper-level classes if the student simply does not have the prior knowledge or skill sets to do so. The teacher would have to spend a couple of days going over these specific skill sets that the students should already know, which could potentially cause a drawback on the curriculum if the students need an ample amount of time to re-learning these skills. This would make it hard for the teacher because it would put a lot of pressure on them to make sure the students understand these foundational skill sets, while also making sure the students still have enough time to get through the units that cover the learning outcomes that are listed in BC's New Curriculum. With this being said, it would be difficult to teach and re-discover the foundational building blocks for the class, while also discovering ways to challenge those students who have already grasped these concepts.

The third focus was on pedagogical strategies. It is important to incorporate all kinds of models of teaching and instruction as it is important to understand that all students learn best in a variety of ways. It mentions in the textbook about Gardner's multiple intelligences, and how it is important to practice these when providing lectures (Auger et.al., Pg.26). Providing

multiple teaching strategies that incorporate different teaching techniques provides for greater success in the classroom as students can understand the concepts better based on their best learning intelligence.

Challenging students is a very important component when it comes to teaching. Mrs. Thompson noted that not only do teachers need to meet the needs of the weaker students, but they also need to meet the needs of the higher achieving students. As mentioned in the textbook, an important skill for a teacher to develop is to provide the appropriate scaffolding of questions that leads the child to a deeper awareness's of relationships to facilitate their understanding (Auger et.al., Pg. 46). It is important to challenge those students who are advanced so that they can develop a greater understanding of the information being taught. Another way to do this is to challenge the students' suppositions, buy asking the students to justify their beliefs which causes them to examine their thinking more critically (Auger et.al., Pg. 47). As mentioned in Eisner's challenges teachers need to be mindful of the advanced students as they continue to challenge, encourage, and support the talents that the children possess.

It is important to have a variety of activities planned for students because different activities target different learning styles. Mrs. Thompson noted that for those students who are visual learners it is important that as the teacher we explain an assignment using pictures or PowerPoints so that we reach their learning needs. For those students who are linguistic or hands on learners, a physical photocopied paper that show graphs and rubrics would be beneficial for these types of students. This concept relates to Howard Gardner's 8 multiple intelligences as there are verbal-linguistic learners, logical-mathematical learners, visual-spatial learners, musical-rhythmic learners, bodily-Kinesthetic learners, interpersonal learners,

intrapersonal learners, and naturalist learners (Auger et.al., Pg. 26). With this being said, it is important that as a future educator I try to match at least one of these preferred multiple intelligences to each learner, to exemplify the greatest results when it comes to the students learning new material.

Focus four is based on the effects that Covid-19 had on teaching and learning that appears within the school. When I asked Mrs. Thompson about how the initial switch was from in-class instruction to online learning in May-June, she said “it was horrendous.” By having Paula explain some of the challenges that existed during this switch, it was clear that the students struggled with the online learning techniques, especially those students who did not have the support at home or access to technology. Those students who were on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum had more challenges due to their inability to afford a laptop. Luckily, some schools were able to supply students with laptops, but a lot of the students who borrowed them did not return them. The opportunities that were associated with this switch to online school were that those students who were passing their classes before the outbreak of Covid-19 were unable to fail.

According to the social-emotional well-being from the transition to online school, it is clear that the transition has become detrimental to some students because they are not receiving that face to face interaction in the classroom that they are used to. By learning on the computer, it is only one way of learning and therefore, it may be more challenging for some students to learn and engage themselves because this learning tactic doesn't match up with the students' learning intelligence. Learning in the classroom allows students to learn from other students and their teacher, capitalizing on the fact that hands-on, visual, and auditory learning

would be more effective for some students. Also, if a student was headed in the wrong direction, discussion about a topic, project, or assignment, the in-class environment will allow the student to get more guidance and re-direction. Whereas, online learning only allows the students to develop their own perspective as there is no collaboration with classmates.

I have struggled with the transition of being in a classroom environment to the quick adjustment of having all my classes online. I truly believe that environment is an important component when it comes to growth for a student. Not only does a classroom environment allow you to communicate with classmates about the subject matter, but it also visually allows you to see other classmates working hard on the assignment or projects, which motivates you. This personally is a huge factor and indicator that has heavily motivated me throughout my years of school. Regarding this transition, it has mentally challenged me to discover new ways to find motivation and to develop new study habits I never knew I had.

It is clear that there are a lot of things I would need to consider when becoming a teacher. It is important to remember that all students are different in terms of their learning abilities, personality, and ethnicity. Through this field project, I learnt that it is vital that I model what's best for the students and to demonstrate that risk-taking and mistakes are encouraged. It is also important as a future educator that I develop personal connections with my students so that they feel comfortable and safe in the classroom, and that connections about how the students are feeling are clearly, easily, and comfortably expressed to me. Lastly, as a future educator it is also important that I have well thought out lesson plans, as well as many backup plans prepared just in case my activities and lessons do not go as planned.

**References:**

Auger, W., & Rich, S. (2007). Curriculum Theory and Methods. John and Wiley & Sons  
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