

My Beliefs about Teaching, Learning and Leadership

Relationships

My work as a teacher and leader is grounded in my core belief that relationship is at the heart of learning both for children and adults in school. Students' trust in their teachers helps them develop the commitment and motivation needed to tackle challenging learning tasks. The quality and richness of relationships between and among adults and students fosters learning for everyone and ultimately makes a positive difference in school improvement.

Learning as Unique as Every Student

I believe that all human beings are natural learners whose inclination is to make sense of their experience. However, how each of us comes to understand and then demonstrate what we know is dependent on individual strengths and unique abilities. As such, learning is individual, but is shaped by feelings and attitudes that are formed within a social context. When learners experience successful outcomes the resultant feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, and confidence provide them with the courage to take risks, make mistakes and learn from their experience.

Personalized Learning

Children need to be provided with learning experiences that are hands-on, and dynamic. Teaching, then, must be concerned with more than "delivery of instruction" as we strive to involve students' voices, hearts, and minds in learning. As well, learning must be purposeful and meaningful. This means helping students to make connections between what they already know, what they are learning, and where the new understanding fits in their lives and the world. Teachers must be prepared to help students see the larger context, and to respond openly to students who ask the question "So what?" with respect to their learning. The mandate of the Calgary Board of Education is to provide personalized learning for each and every student. The description above includes some of the essential elements of personalized learning.

Leadership

Leadership in the 21st century faces many challenges including continuous change, school improvement, community-based governance, shared decision making, building school community, and accountability. I see all of these challenges as inherently collaborative in nature. To this end, I believe the principal is a key player in developing the web of relationships that will support this work. Leaders need to develop relationships through open and honest communication. In fact, I believe that listening to all the voices of the school community including staff, parents, students and community members is a moral obligation of principals. Leaders need to be committed to the human aspects of education- the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of all people who work and learn in schools. Leaders who focus their energy on nurturing relationships assist staff in creating their own support structures and informal networks and in turn develop leadership in others.

Finally, returning to relationship as the heart of learning, it is clear that when adults in the school feel a sense of connection to each other, they will also learn and grow based on this sense of interdependence and the will to learn from each other.