

University of British Columbia

Drawing on student funds of knowledge to increase success for ‘at-risk’ learners

Schnellert, L. (UBC), Moore, S. (UBC), King, J. (SD67), Searcy, N. (SD53), Manuel, T. (SD67), Moase, J. (SD67)
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Introduction

Research, practice and professional development (PD) related to diverse learners often frame children from a deficit-based perspective.

Continued attention to retrofitting normative teaching approaches for learners who do not “fit” standardized curriculum actually reinforces standardized notions of students as learners.

This initiative and study counters deficit perspectives to suggest that diversity is not a burden, but rather offers opportunities to learn with and from each other, creating more access points to learning for all based on diverse students’ funds of knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

CRT and Indigenous ways of knowing and being can extend, disrupt, and deepen understandings of inclusive education and reframe diverse and at-risk students as valued members of learning communities (Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Schnellert, Kozak & Moore, 2015).

CRT is, “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” – Gay, 2001 (p.106).

According to Ladson-Billings & King (1992), the concept of culturally relevant teaching, “is contrasted with an assimilationist approach to teaching that sees fitting students into the existing social and economic order as its primary responsibility” (p. 314).

Reconciliation and Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

In British Columbia educators are beginning to attend to calls to indigenize curriculum to further reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in response to historical injustices (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).



The First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL), jointly created by Ministry of Education and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) outline authentic ways of learning that reflect educational approaches recognized by Indigenous communities.

“Education is a complex process that is personal, holistic, and embedded in relationship to each other, to self, and to the land, and is most effective if it is authentic and relevant” - Chrona, 2014

The intended outcome of the creation of the FPPL was that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students will benefit from an education that emphasizes Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives (Kanu, 2011).

PD that Positions Teachers as Inquirers & Possibilizers (Schnellert, Kozak, & Moore, 2015)

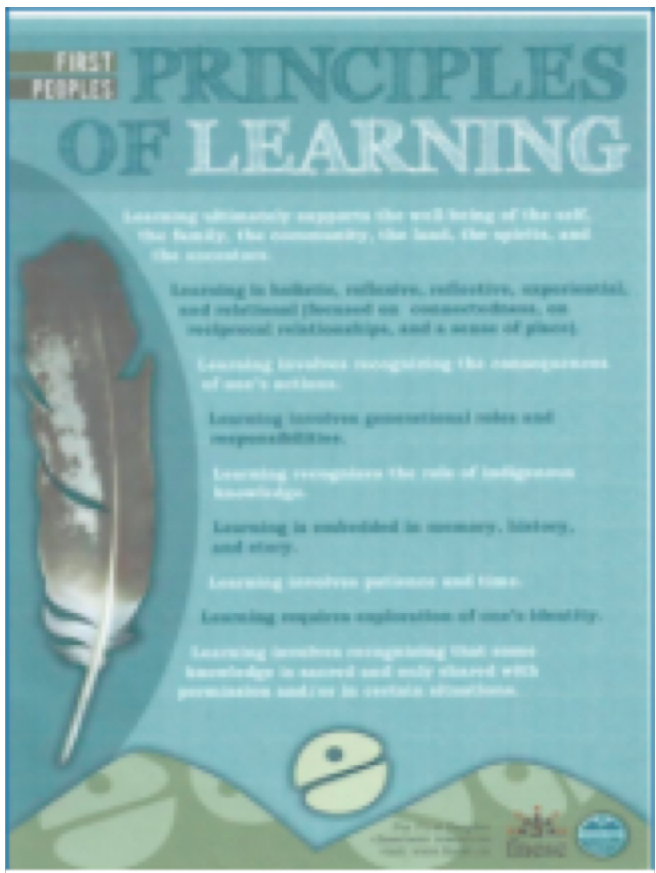
- Positive perspectives on educators using strength and asset-based beliefs and language
- PD facilitators are aware of their own experiences, background, biases, and cultural norms
- Reshaping PD activities using place, culture, and knowledge(s) of educators, their students, and families
- Questions for inquiry are surfaced by educators related to their contexts, students, and edges of their own understanding
- Fosters a sense of belonging
- Sharing and valuing diversity



Through a Different Lens

Design

- Teachers in this study engaged as practitioner inquirers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) drawing on theory and research related to inclusive education, Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and CRT, as well as exploring BC’s renewed curriculum to provide more voice and ownership for students in their educational experience.
- 4 inquiry groups: middle years, Indigenous ways of knowing, inclusion, formative assessment
 - Participants in each group included classroom teachers, special education teachers, and district helping teachers
 - 5-7 meetings with embedded collaboration time, technology, and materials
 - Cycles of action and reflection
 - Case study methodology
 - (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 2007; Stake, 2015)



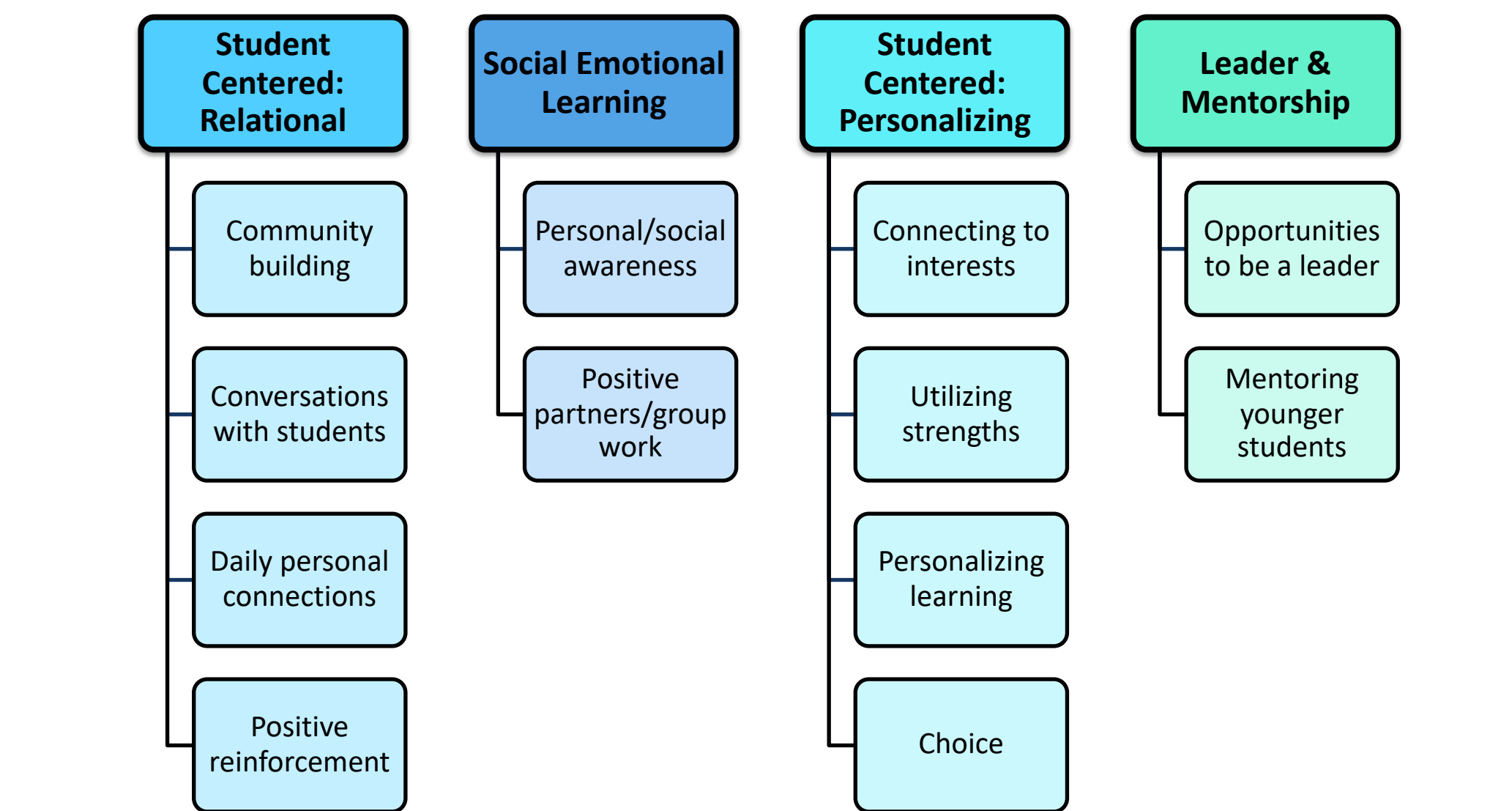
Research Questions

- Within and across sites, multiple forms of data were collected and juxtaposed in order to:
- 1) trace whether and how collaborative inquiry fostered teacher learning and practice change, and
 - 2) identify links between teaching practices and increased access for students to learning, particularly their most vulnerable learners

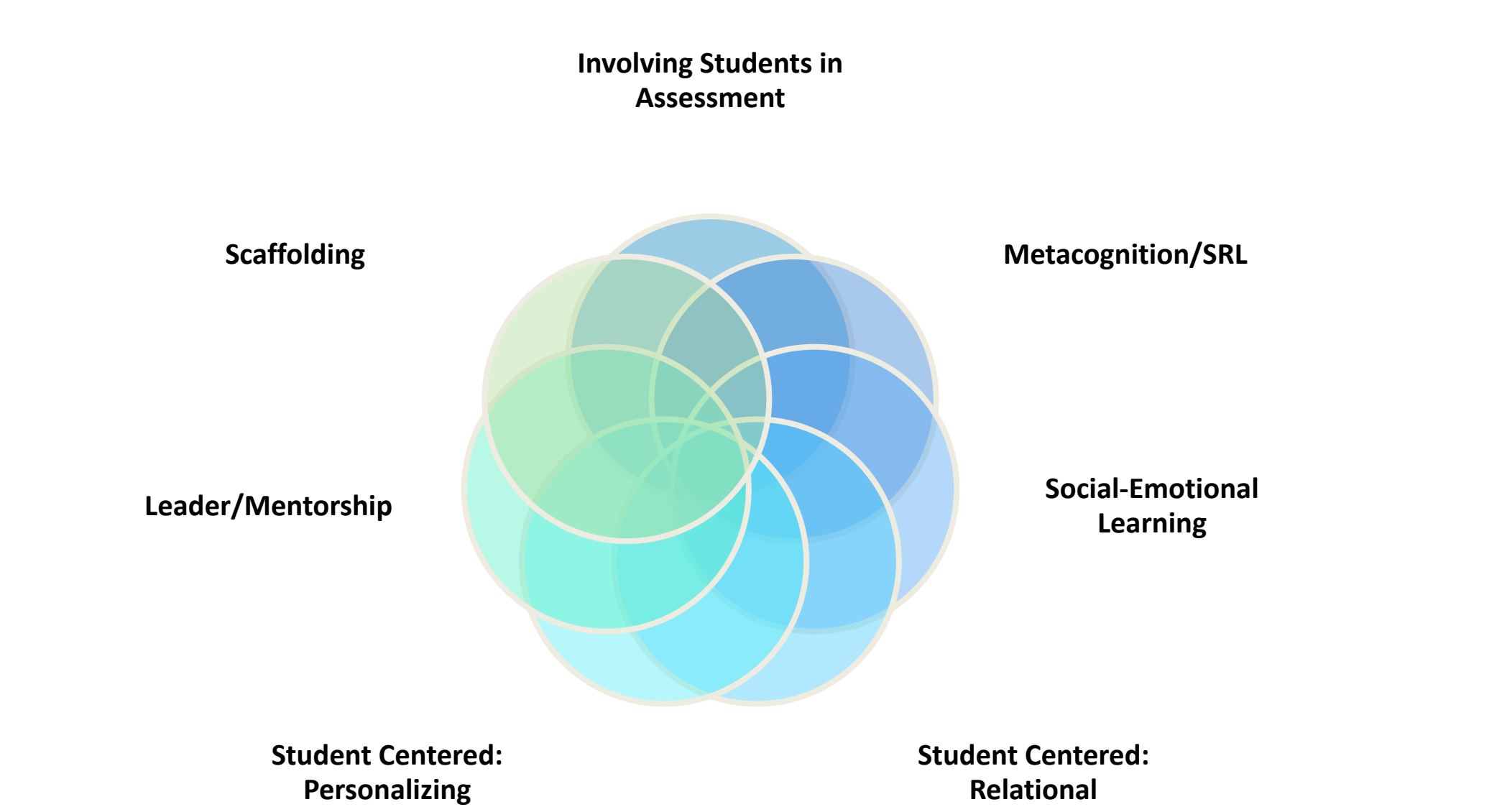
Findings

What did you try? • What did you try that worked for your student? •													
Assessment	Metacognition/SRL	Social Emotional Learning	Student Centered: Relational	Student Centered: Personalizing	Leader/mentorship	Scaffolding	Other						
Formative Assessment													
Assignments organized by outcome													
Class generated criteria													
Review/ give feedback to both students													
Growth Mindset													
Social/personal awareness rubric													
Positive partners/ group work													
Community building													
Conversations with students													
Daily personal connection													
Positive Reinforcement													
Connect to Interest													
Utilize strengths													
Personalized learning													
Choice													
Opportunities to be a leader													
Work with younger students													
Picture books													
Gradual Release													
Establish clear boundaries													
Culturally Responsive Teaching/ Responses													
Connecting with parents/family													

What did teachers do?



What made a difference?



Student Outcomes

Affect/Engagement	Agency	Academic
• Increased engagement and enjoyment in learning • Teachers reported, “students love it” • Developing and implementing student-centred, strength-based and diversity-positive practices • “Students are enthusiastic” • “Attitude and behaviour changed for the better” • “We have buy in”	• Students feeling more in control of their learning and taking ownership of their successes • Students felt they could make a difference for themselves and others, and had a sense of self-efficacy, and moved past dependence on teachers • Teachers in the project reported “Students teaching/helping others” and “Kids feel successful”	• Students did better academically • More tasks were completed and their performance on tasks – and overall in courses – increased as they personalized learning for students by tapping into their strengths and interests and offering choice

Discussion

- Choice was critical for educator engagement
- Sustaining attention to inquiries is challenging without a community to support you
- ‘Helping teacher’ roles have increased purpose and impact
- Tension between desire for concrete examples and nurturing creative and critical thinking in teachers
- Temptation to change case study student
- Perceptions and reality related to learning outcomes/expectations

Educational Importance

- This study illustrates how multiple entry points for teachers engaged them in redesigning their practice to welcome and support diverse learners
- Higher completion rates for students who are vulnerable
- Evidence of positive relationships between strength-oriented pedagogical approaches to diverse learners, inquiry-oriented teacher professional development, and positive outcomes for at-risk learners

