

An Examination of Teaching Affective Skills in Isolation Using the “Quality Intelligence Connection” Program

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Bev Podborochynski and Roberta Amos talk about their McDowell project at the 1996 Learning from Practice seminar.

Teachers in a rural elementary school near a small city believed they were spending too much time preventing, mediating and punishing student misbehaviour. They decided that this time would be better spent teaching their students affective skills that might counteract the influence on them of the trend towards violence in our society. The result was the development and implementation of the Quality Intelligence Connection (QIC) program to teach affective skills to the students. Each day, time was scheduled to teach these skills directly and then

reinforce them throughout the day in other subjects and on the playground.

The QIC program drew on a number of concepts provided by educational research, including Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, William Glasser’s work on Choice Theory and Quality Schools, and Thomas Sergiovanni’s ideas on school leadership. It also established connections to Saskatchewan’s goals for education as articulated in *Directions*, the report of the curriculum and instruction review of 1984.

Roberta Amos, a graduate student at the University of Victoria, provided assistance with the project by investigating the attributes of the QIC program, the conditions and processes for implementation, and the support garnered for the program from the school division and parents. The primary focus of her study was whether or not teaching students affective skills in isolation would lead to general application of the skills at school and at home. Qualitative data were gathered from interviews with the teachers and questionnaires completed by students and parents on how well students were generalizing the affective skills learned in the QIC program. As well, quantitative data were drawn from school records on incidents of misbehaviour at the school.

In two years, the number of documented incidents of student misbehaviour at the school dropped from 1,597 to 545 per year. Although teachers, students and parents made numerous comments about increased understanding and use of affective skills, less than half the students and parents believed that a behaviour change had occurred due to the QIC program. A backlash to the program was noted amongst some students and parents that underlined the need for parent involvement in all stages of program development. The consensus was that the students understood their behaviour better as a result of the program but many had not yet chosen to make changes in it.

Amos identified four major components of the QIC program and presented recommendations with respect to each one. The components were self-knowledge, self-directed learning, behaviour, and generalization of affective skills. Several recommendations indicated that the program needed to operate over a longer period (5 years) in order to have the desired impact. Amos concluded: "Students who have a strong awareness of self, and who have learned and internalised affective skills will be less likely to become behaviour problems in school or juvenile delinquents in society. Schools need to focus on a curriculum that teaches these skills to students."

Much can be learned by a group of teachers who come together to research a topic they are passionate about and believe in. The synergy created cannot be replicated by any externally driven professional development.

We haven't made the global difference in the school we had wanted, but there are some indicators that there are things happening. It's going to take longer than a year and a half to do what we wanted.

Teacher Comments on Student Generalization of the QIC Program

(N=8)

- Improved communication using a common language. (8)
- More problem solving between students (4)
- Fewer instances of aggression (3)
- On-going development of self-understanding likely (3)
- Understanding developed of own intelligence (2)
- Development in student pride in what they do (2)
- More cooperation among students of different ages (2)
- More control over emotions and anger (2)