

the agenda. Eli was anxious to discuss the idea of extending monetary incentives to younger students.

Jan Holder, one of the resource teachers, began, "I think it comes down to either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Our students need external motivators until they develop that intrinsic desire to learn. You have to give them praise and other things because they've had so many difficulties in their lives, they just don't have that internal drive to do well in school."

Steve Parsons, the principal, agreed: "Lack of internal drive is common among the students we have. A lot of them haven't experienced academic success, and they don't see the benefits of an education beyond getting a piece of paper. They may be smart, but it doesn't help that there are such huge gaps in their learning from missing so much school along the way."

Eli said, "What about providing some kind of incentive, like money for completing assignments?"

"No way," Steve said quickly, shaking his head. "We can't afford that . . . and anyway, learning should be its own reward. That's what we want to foster, isn't it? Our students can do it. We just need to help them get there."

Eli considered whether these students really would become intrinsically motivated eventually or whether that was just a pipe dream. He thought back to his own experiences in school and didn't recall any strong internal desire to learn. He couldn't blame lack of motivation on a troubled childhood or lack of parental support, because he had both encouragement and support in abundance. As he reflected on his own education, Eli realized that intrinsic motivation had come later, once he decided to become a teacher. He had needed an authentic purpose for learning before he had experienced the shift from "grade grubbing" to being actively engaged in learning.

Maybe his students would have the same kind of experience, but he suspected that Jan had it right. His students needed extrinsic rewards to keep them motivated and in school so they could reach the point of being intrinsically rewarded by learning. In the meantime, without cash as a reward, Eli resolved to find other ways to make learning more authentic and personally rewarding. He would continue to advocate for his students and do his best to show them that learning was not just about getting a job.

Questions

The Case

What makes Eli think that paying students to learn will improve their life chances? Is his argument convincing? Why or why not?

History

At different points in time, cognitive psychologists have either encouraged or discouraged the practice of rewarding students for academic achievement or good behaviour. Where do you stand on this sometimes thorny issue, and what support can you find in the literature for your position?

Philosophy

Is it morally defensible to pay students to learn? Why or why not?

Sociology

Some argue that high schools, as they have been traditionally structured, disadvantage students like Carolyn who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In what specific ways are such students denied the opportunities afforded to their more advantaged peers?

Implications for Practice

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of giving students external rewards? What would you need to think about before adopting such an approach in your class?

Whose Culture? Who's Teaching?

The three-day August retreat for teachers and administrators of the Upper Niskawa School District began with the acknowledgment that it was taking place on the traditional territory of the Niskawal'ly in the easternmost part of the Artiv'na'yp' River region. The organizers hoped that this retreat, designed to promote better cultural understanding, would help to heal some of the rifts in the district.

During the retreat, participants immersed themselves in discussions about a variety of educational topics, as well as cultural activities, such as morning treks to cook breakfast on the riverbank; eating bannock, reindeer meat, and berry sauce; woodcarving and working on a giant dream catcher; and personal storytelling about sweat lodges and peace pipes.

The speakers included a young Indigenous father who spoke passionately about what it was like to be colonized, a grandmother who recounted the horrors of living in a residential school, and a pair of teenaged sisters who talked about the problems of living alternately with their father on the reserve and their non-native mother in the city. The topic for two of the afternoon sessions, "Accommodations," was especially well-received. The facilitators highlighted the actions that teachers, students, staff, and community members could take to help

students and teachers feel included, respected, and valued and gave participants opportunities to practise their new skills.

However, the retreat had not been *all* sweetness and light. Early on, there had been verbal scuffles over the topics “Who are we?” and “Who do we want to be?” Decibel levels rose steadily as attendees grew more and more comfortable with close-up debate and conflict. Generally speaking, everyone seemed to take the sharp exchanges and nervous laughter in stride; however, as the days wore on, deep concerns about Canada’s immigration policies and self-government initiatives came bubbling to the surface.

And there had been lunchtime arguments—not just discussions but open disagreements—about whether any group had sovereignty rights or decision-making power over themselves and/or other groups in the region and in the district. Tempers occasionally flared about some of the cultural assumptions that undergird Canada’s judicial, financial, and educational systems. There were also conflicting views about how school districts might integrate local culture into provincially developed public school curricula.

However, the most heated exchange occurred during a plenary session on the subject of who should teach the new Indigenous language course. Connie, the granddaughter of an elder, was adamant that only elders or teachers who had been personally prepared to teach by elders should be allowed to instruct Indigenous languages. Pitted against Connie, and just as articulate and insistent, was Armand, the school district’s human resource specialist who was responsible for staffing.

When the moderator called upon Armand to respond to Connie’s concerns, he stated emphatically, “There can be no favouritism in our staffing complements. We have no choice but to abide by the union contract. If we have to assign a certified non-Aboriginal teacher—or even two—to teach Indigenous language courses, that is what we will do. None of the elders hold valid teaching certificates or seniority in our district, and that is contrary to the terms of our agreement.”

Armand’s statements sent a chill through the plenary session, but several heads nodded in agreement. The audience was clearly divided on the issue. On Connie’s side were teachers of Indigenous background who broke into quiet conversation among themselves and stared disapprovingly at Armand as he regained his seat. Several White teachers, who were also on Connie’s side, left no doubt about their convictions, muttering loudly,

“Yet another example of why neo-colonialist attitudes must be identified and changed.”

“After all, Canada’s First Nations were here first.”

There were others who, sympathetic to the district’s commitment to Indigenous education, could also see the pragmatic side of this thorny issue. After all, there were contracts to honour, and student numbers, staffing ratios, and

teaching loads to consider. It became increasingly clear that matters involving language and culture did not always co-exist easily with financial and legal imperatives.

As the moderator brought the discussion back to the floor, the speakers who followed captured the strong discomfort evoked by Armand’s comments.

“We would die, our culture would just die out—if we were to allow ourselves to think only inside the box like you administrators almost always do.”

“Armand talks a big line, but when it comes to preserving *our* cultural heritage, he doesn’t stand *with* us!”

“Our language IS our culture! We’re the only ones who can preserve and promote it. If we were to give away something as critical as this, we’d simply be helping Indigenous individuals, families, and communities commit cultural suicide.”

Finally, the moderator called for a nutrition break and walked around with others outside the lodge where she hoped participants would refresh their outlook, cool down, and prepare for the next session. By the end of the retreat on Friday, the mood had lifted and everyone joined together in a winding “circle of hope” organized by local band members. As the musical instruments, food, and backpacks were loaded back into vehicles for the return trip, hugs and handshakes were exchanged and participants headed home for the long weekend and the beginning of another school year.

The following Thursday, a letter from the district office appeared in faculty mailboxes. The letter, signed by Armand, announced the assignment of two seasoned teachers in the district, one Indigenous, the other White, to teach the two sections of the district’s Indigenous language course. The letter stated the teachers had been assigned according to seniority and because their teaching loads required “topping-up.” With budget shortfalls looming, Armand made the case that this was the only way the district could offer the course, considering the limited resources available.

As Connie quickly scanned her copy of the letter, she could feel her blood pressure rising. She knew that neither of these teachers was fluent and that both would have trouble teaching the language effectively. Connie marched down the hall to the staff room and as she waved the letter and raised her voice, she brought the conversations to an abrupt halt.

“Has everyone seen Armand’s letter? There’s a copy in each of your mailboxes. After our retreat last week, I can’t believe that he has just gone ahead and appointed those two teachers! What happened to consultation? All we get is cultural oppression!”

“Armand just doesn’t listen!” she continued angrily. “How can we let people who don’t even speak the language teach this course? I can see it all now—they’ll just give the kids busy work. It’s not like we don’t have elders available who know the language and who would be thrilled to pass it on to our kids. Let’s hire *them*!”

Connie's voice strengthened as she concluded, "Join with me *now* and stand up for your beliefs! We can't stand by and watch our culture being destroyed. You know and I know that language is absolutely essential to our survival as a people!"

A chorus of support cheered Connie on, but no one knew what would happen next as language, legalities, and the bottom line came crashing together.

Questions

The Case

With whom do you sympathize most, Connie or Armand, and for what reasons?

History

The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988) is intended to ensure that all Canadians are able to participate equally in Canadian society. Based on what happens in this case, is that even possible? Explain.

Philosophy

In this case, Connie makes a passionate plea for allowing non-certified elders to teach the Indigenous language course. Should all teachers be certified? What might be the consequences if we opened up teaching to non-certified persons? Justify your response.

Sociology

Much of what happens between school districts and cultural groups involves issues of power and authority. Explain how these two concepts play out in this case.

Implications for Practice

What would you do if your teaching load was "topped up" by having to teach a language you didn't know very well?

Unmasking Hallowe'en

It was recess at Middleboro Elementary School, and the chilly prairie air which had crept across the school yard was causing the leaves to yellow and the school children's cheeks to redden. The teachers at Middleboro had been thoughtfully planning fall activities and celebrations, some in relation to seasonal changes and others in relation to ongoing classroom inquiries. In particular, they had been considering various field trips for the 31st of October in order to minimize the focus on—and distractions of—Hallowe'en. The teachers had worked diligently

over the past few years to make school celebrations more inclusive of different cultures, particularly since the community's immigrant population, especially families from the Philippines and India, was continuing to increase. They came to understand that Hallowe'en falls one day before the Filipino celebration of All Saints' Day, an extremely important holiday in which families honour their loved ones who have passed on. Knowing this, many teachers questioned whether the Canadian tradition of organizing garish Hallowe'en parties at school might be considered cultural insensitivity by these communities. In fact, some of the teachers argued that school-based Hallowe'en celebrations privileged and perpetuated a narrow North American perspective that simply disregarded the values and traditions of immigrant families and their children.

With this in mind, the teachers made alternative plans for October 31st. The Kindergarten classroom teachers planned pyjama parties highlighting the various stories they had been reading. The Grade 3 class planned a trip to the Art Gallery to see a photo exhibit of their city which complemented their current community study, and the combined Grade 1 and 2 class planned to go on a nature hike in an urban forest to support their study of animals and their habitats. By all accounts, the children were looking forward to their field trips and special events.

The new principal, Jennifer Bassaraba, supported the teachers' rationale for changing their approaches to Hallowe'en. As she was accustomed to doing, Jennifer engaged in a casual conversation with some parents of Kindergarten children who were outside the school, waiting for the bell. One of the parents, Kim Petrowski, who was excited about her child's first school experiences, asked Jennifer about the school's plans for Hallowe'en. Jennifer, proud of her teachers' thoughtfulness in honouring both the curriculum and multiculturalism, explained the school's alternative plans for Hallowe'en this year. Jennifer explained to Kim the stress that Hallowe'en usually creates for young children, the economic inequities that become more apparent, and the cultural privileging that Hallowe'en perpetuates.

Kim, who was also the vice-chair of the parent council, asked, "So, when did the school district pass a policy to ban Hallowe'en?"

"Oh, it's not a policy," said Jennifer quickly. "Teachers are simply using their professional judgment to accommodate our new children and their families. As you may or may not know, we have many new families in our community who don't celebrate Hallowe'en. It is not a part of our curriculum, so the teachers think that the classroom time is better spent on more relevant and inclusive activities. We aren't banning Hallowe'en, we are just trying to minimize the disruptions that it causes while doing a better job of including our families who do not celebrate it."

The conversation was interrupted by the school bell, and the children and parents entered the building to greet their teachers. Jennifer replayed the