

No Aboriginal Students Left Behind in Taiwan

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Abstract

The project is motivated by Taiwan's huge gap of educational levels between the aborigines and the Hans. The low achievement of aboriginal students lies in factors related to problems in finance, health, and cultural difference, which contribute to their sense of self-deprecation.

The purpose of the project is to provide early intervention and prevention services to 50 aboriginal students in grades 10 to 12, who are at risk for school failure, financial difficulties, Hepatitis Type B, sanitary problems, and alcohol-related incidents. The services will be provided through the collaborative teamwork of school faculty, parent volunteers, and peers, and will be offered during lunch breaks and instructional activities. Through the efforts of collaborative teamwork, the strategies within the 1-year plan are designed to reconstruct the aboriginal students' self-esteem and self-confidence in positive and healthy learning environments. Accordingly, the aboriginal students are able to achieve the expected behavioral modification and enhance their motivation for academic success, as the basis of pursuing higher-level education. Expected outcomes in the project are improved academics, better school attendance rates and the refinement of knowledge and skills about health protection to improve health conditions.

Introduction

Educators in Taiwan are seldom educated during pre-service training or in-service practice on how to solve the problem of the huge gap in educational levels between the aborigines, whose ancestors are indigenous tribes in Taiwan, and the Hans, whose ancestors have gradually immigrated there since centuries ago. When looking at the recent record of 71.1% of the general population completing higher education (Population Census, 2001), we cannot ignore the number of less than 1% of aborigines obtaining education beyond the secondary school level (Cohen, 2005). However, even though national policy makers and educational experts continuously voice serious concerns on the topic, none of them is able to successfully pinpoint the problem and reach a solution. Additionally, the false ethnic images and stereotypes of laziness, dependence, and filth, are worsening the conditions and complicating the process of resolving the issue.

Background and Overview of the Issue

The proposed project, “No Aboriginal Students Left Behind,” is a collaborative partnership between school administrators and educators regarding six main areas for recommendation.

Topic 1: Staff professional development on aboriginal issues

Topic 2: Adapting classroom tests and varied assessment tools for aboriginal students

Topic 3: Academic assistance of aboriginal students from adult and peer tutors

Topic 4: Aborigine students’ cultural identification

Topic 5: Intensive health education for disease prevention

Topic 6: Financial support to aborigine students

The Fifth High School is located in a community with a large population of high socioeconomic status in Taipei. Owing to its geographical advantage, the school can easily gain financial support from successful businessmen in the community and attract not only merit students from neighborhood districts, but also aboriginal students from other cities or counties whose parents expect them to have higher academic achievement. Also, on account of the school's increasing reputation for the National Entrance Exam, more than enough excellent teachers are excited about investing in academic arenas here. They believe their efforts can pay off in personal satisfaction with student success in nationwide entrance exams. Unfortunately, under their orientation of high profit business management in academic performance, many of the staff, especially those who are thought to be the excellent coaches in the academic arena, might frequently lose sight of the dark corners, where poor aboriginal students are waiting to be assisted. Even if a few colleagues complain to me, they have identified the many problems facing aboriginal students. However, they lack related knowledge and sufficient skills to get to the solutions. Simultaneously, teachers are not allowed to set aside any time or energy to brainstorm how to meet the special needs of aboriginal students because their priority is to achieve the higher achievement of average and above-average students, most of whom are Hans.

Understanding the Dimensions of the Problem

For centuries in Taiwan, many efforts have been invested in developing aboriginal culture to balance ethnic prosperity. The government has designed a series of annual ceremonies and activities to establish aborigines' positive images. Nationwide charities have regularly sent volunteers to aborigines' residences in the mountains to inquire about their needs for life quality, along with constant donations from the public with an attempt to relieve their financial difficulties. However, these efforts still cannot address their true needs. The root lies in three unsolvable cyclical problems: poverty, school over-focus on academic achievement, and social prejudice. In order to put a human face on the multi-faceted problem facing aboriginal students, I present this case study.

Case Study

I have taught an aboriginal student named A-Wei, a 12th grader, for two years. A-Wei has continuously encountered underlying, cyclical frustrations during my instruction: poor family, school failure, and self-deprecation, all of which inhibit him from active learning for future academic success. Actually, his life was totally different prior to his middle school days. He completed his elementary schooling in his home school, situated in a mountainous area. Though born out of a low-income family, he never felt tortured by financial inadequacy because almost every aboriginal family there had the same situation. Because he lacked this problem, learning at home was one of the most valuable times in his life. After winning

several championships in speech contests, and being awarded the School Merit Finalist at the graduation ceremony, he graduated from the elementary school proudly. On the mountain, he immersed himself in carefree days, playing with his companions in the wilderness and occasionally hunting in the forest. Even now, whenever he mentions those glorious days, his depression and pessimism vanish for a time, and are immediately replaced by a look of self-pride. However, at the suggestion of his uncle, he determined to take on the challenge of the outside world.

Unfortunately, his miserable days unfolded soon after he began his schooling in a metropolitan middle school. He failed on account of the overwhelmingly diverse culture, which deflated his confidence. He experienced difficulties with his different method of communication, which brought about unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings in classroom activities. He tried his best to explain himself, but most often kept silent, because he did not know how to communicate effectively with his teachers and peers. Part of his failure was also due to the poor financial support from his parents, which was so minimal that he worried every minute if he could survive and afford the costly life of the metropolis—Taipei.

Since that rough start, he has continued to fail. He has regularly encountered many difficulties arising from financial cutbacks and insufficient resources, which are mainly caused by his parents' discontinuous jobs. In fact, his parents are jobless most of the time,

except for the harvest time in summer, which is when they can work in the plantations, and earn the meager pay to barely support the family. Currently, the only bread-winner in his family is his mother, who works temporarily as a part-time janitor. Whenever I attempt to discuss his academic performance with him, he repeatedly resists the topic. Most frequently, he inquires how to survive with such miserable resources. He is tired of his life with no money and no accomplishments that he can sense. Moreover, he is a carrier of Hepatitis Type B, and therefore feels exhausted the next morning if he stays up late to study the night before. When I hear his complaints, I often lose my temper, reprimanding him, "Excuses! All these excuses!" When this happens, I have to stop the meeting because I am afraid that my anger will overflow to the whole city. However, after cooling down, I feel very sorry for him, and decide to listen to him more.

One event that I can never forget is that one time he didn't even have a penny to take a bus, so he had to walk home alone for 40 minutes. The incident made me sad for a long time. These low-functioning learning circumstances, either in his apartment or in his home in the mountains, offer sufficient reasons for his lagging behind his classmates. In the apartment, he has no one to ask for help. In his home, his parents are illiterate! Low academic performance explains his resistance to whole-week learning and contributes to his frequent absences. For example, A-Wei tended to miss many Monday classes because he preferred to have a longer weekend. Consequently, the high rate of absenteeism contributed to his deficient peer

interactions. Thus, the problem becomes more complicated and the solution harder to find.

As for his self-deprecation, his grief and misfortune are absolutely beyond my description and beyond our comprehension. During a meeting, he complained to me about a frustrating experience in his middle school. Initially, he had a “honeymoon” period of good relationships with his peers. Gradually, he sensed his peers had left him alone one by one; however, he really couldn’t understand why. Some time later, his classroom teacher advised he pay more attention to his sanitary habits, such as taking a daily bath or changing his uniform. Suddenly, he realized what the problem was, but it was too late to mend. His peers had developed an image of him as a filthy kid. He told me sadly that he was traumatized by the event until he left that school. He did not mean to look filthy, but it was related to his family background. In the mountain areas, on account of chilly weather and poor sanitary conditions, his family normally did not take a bath every day, unless the weather that day was extremely hot. This was not a unique habit but a universal cultural one for people living there. He just said to me repeatedly, “My teacher should have told me earlier.”

Poverty, Short of Financial Assistance

High unemployment rates, low economic status, and a disadvantageous educational background are three issues that are mutually reinforced in a vicious cycle that keeps aborigines imprisoned at the bottom of the social ladder (Graham, 1999). Low economic status results in low-paid jobs or unemployment. Low-paid jobs or unemployment then leads

to lack of sufficient funds for aboriginal students to pay for their textbooks, and room and board, which deprives them of opportunities to advance their educational levels. Even with financial aid from the government, the help apparently falls short of the demands. After all, quite a number of disadvantaged aborigines are sharing the limited resources. As described in the article, "To Save the Poor," edited in Asiaweek 2001, the woes of Taiwan's aborigines seem to be very dramatic. Ah Hsiung, a construction worker along with his wife and his sister, described, "I heard of work on the grapevine or wait around under bridges for contractors to come recruiting, but it is now hard to find work for more than 15 days a month since foreign laborers were allowed" (Asiaweek). Actually, five years ago, a state-owned enterprise, RSEA Engineering Corporation, hired foreign workers and laid off 1500 Aborigine workers, and salaries were cut from NT\$45,000 to NT\$21,000 (United Daily News, 13 April 1999).

Another important aspect of aborigines is the setup of the household. The ratio of female householders in aborigines is 42.5%, much higher than the 33.4% of overall households. The highest ratio overall in single-parent households is 65.9%, but the ratio of female householders in aborigines is higher. Save for higher divorce rates and the rate of losing spouses, children are mostly in their mothers' custody, which is related to the matriarchal ethnic culture (Women Web, 2002). However, aborigine women suffer from dual discriminations of both gender and ethnicity, which are only compounded by differences in language and culture, and a long history of misunderstanding and social neglect. Therefore,

their salaries are even lower than male aborigines.

Social Prejudice

Under the influence of pseudoscientific assertions, some people assume the anguish of the aboriginal communities and the school failure of aboriginal students are caused by their limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation for learning, and immoral behaviors (Davidson, 1980). From my real-classroom practice, those sophistries are continuously fermenting in the school community. In fact, diverse dialects and cultures resulting in deficient communication were mistaken for learning and language disabilities (Kavale & Mostert, 2004; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2004). Also, social prejudice that wrongly manipulates the institutionalized ethnic images within the school -- laziness, dependence, and filth -- explains aborigines' deficit for learning motivation and why the students may turn their depression into immoral behaviors, such as adolescent sexual behavior and alcohol-driving abuse (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 1992), which account for their low achievements and repeated school failure (Folds, 1987). Scientifically speaking, it is the school's overemphasis on academic achievement that leads to an ignorance of aborigines' failure, creating a disadvantageous, unhealthy environment for aboriginal students' psychological development. Schools fail to provide aboriginal students with positive and healthy educational settings, ignoring their cultural differences, their diverse ethnic backgrounds, and their emotions when they confront frustrations (Antone, 2003). Meanwhile, school educators also have to account

for the institutionalized bias. When commenting on the low academic performance of aboriginal students, some educators frequently fall into an erroneous concept that the students are not dumb, but lazy and reluctant for high-level thinking and independent learning, and wrongly attribute their failure to congenital weaknesses.

Health Problems

In a typical aboriginal community of southern Taiwan, there was a 69.5% prevalence of areca/betel quid chewing, oral submucous fibrosis and leukoplakia in a study of 312 aborigines of 20 years of age or older. Although the areca/betel quid in Taiwan does not contain any tobacco, a significant correlation was still identified between areca/betel quid chewing and oral mucosal lesions (Yang & Lee & Tung & Shieh, 2001). Also, the many risk factors for alcohol dependence in Taiwan aborigines include: being male, having relatively little education, being involved in a problem marriage, being a laborer, being part of a couple with a drinking problem, and having a family history of alcoholism. The risk factors for alcohol abuse are much the same as those of alcohol dependence, with the addition of being from an ethnic subgroup (Hwu & Yeh & Wang, 1991). A study to investigate the relationship of the HLA phenotype and outcomes of the hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection in two ethnic groups of Taiwan, Han Chinese and Taiwanese aborigines, indicated there is a larger chronically infected group among Taiwanese aborigines than in the Han population (Wu et al, 2004). Consequently, in order to reduce the infection rate, health education is significantly

essential to Taiwanese aborigines.

Self-deprecation

In our diploma-emphasizing society, we get easier access to more and better opportunities in the workforce if we have a higher educational degree and a more prestigious academic diploma. However, due to much lower academic performance, most of the aborigines in Taiwan are fighting a losing battle for better career pursuit. Therefore, on the principle of equally-shared social resources, the government has coordinated with national prominent entrepreneurs to offer jobs for aborigines, and the legislature has revised laws to increase their welfare to help meet their financial needs.

Ironically, the more the external charity has poured in, the more the negative ethnic images have been institutionalized. The images characterized as laziness, dependence, and filth have been institutionalized in Taiwanese culture and typically weakened the motivation of aboriginal adolescents to strive for academic achievement and to improve peer relations with the Hans. They believe they never can succeed regardless of the efforts they make to get rid of the curses on their lives. Gradually, a feeling of powerlessness locks up aborigines' minds, rendering them voiceless (Flores & Cousin & Diaz, 1998). They feel frustrated, unmotivated, and any promising future is like a pie in the sky. They prefer to confine themselves to the mountains, going through their lives in the wildness and fields, rather than confronting their competitors in the urban areas. Many previous experiences have taught them that aborigines

seldom achieve success, academically or socially.

Some derived problems, such as the issues of adolescent pregnancy (Tsai & Wong, 2003), alcohol-related incidents (Hunter et al, 2004), sanitary conditions, and epidemic prevention, are persistently torturing the aboriginal communities and challenging policy makers to solve them. Many of the factors for aboriginal students' problems in school mentioned previously become aggravated and intensify, finally leading to the students' failure in school. The termination of their schooling forces them to yield to a very poorly paid job for survival. As a consequence, in most aboriginal adolescents' minds, a self-constructed sense of deprecation resulting from a series of frustrations and unpleasant experiences at this stage commonly imprisons their willingness to learn and discourages their struggle for better lives.

Recommendations

Linking all the facets to one main subject, I suggest high school is the best place to help restore the aboriginal students' self-confidence and remodel their images. Adolescent schooling, according to my accumulated experience from teaching practice, is critical to human development in career pursuit and significant to the construction of life values based on a certain degree of mental maturity at the age of puberty. Also, it's a transitional period for behavioral change and a turning point for adjustment of personal belief.

The comprehensive intervention program, which I propose in this paper, includes 6 areas of recommendations: staff professional development on aboriginal issues, adapting classroom

tests and varied assessment tools for aboriginal students, academic assistance of aboriginal students from adult and peer tutors, aborigine students' cultural identification, intensive health education for disease prevention, and financial support to aborigine students. Each recommendation is grounded in a theoretical base and includes objectives, activities, and program assessment.

Staff Professional Development on Aboriginal Issues

In terms of educational equity, and in order to narrow a major achievement gap that has been identified for the minority, some scholars indicated that aboriginal students' academic performance was considerably improved with an intervention program that used professional development of teachers to modify instructional practices in additional literacy instruction (Phillips et al, 2004). Singham, in 2003, also pointed out that a long-term professional development on the studies about minority cultures encouraged educators to enhance expectations toward minority students. Furthermore, it modifies learning areas to fit the needs of underrepresented minorities, so that the minority students were highly motivated to improve their academic performance. Also, through professional development, educators had better understanding of issues related to minority students' cultural background, social racism toward them, and their resistance to making progress. Based on in-depth comprehension of their cultures, educators helped students identify their problems and find their own way to solve the problems (Johannesen et al, 2003).

In addition, through the process of professional development, aboriginal students obtain practical academic support. Educators who find community resources and coordinate the efforts from volunteer tutors to give aboriginal students academic assistance maximize aboriginal learning in positive and healthy educational settings (Cardenas & Chahin, 1999). Similarly, curriculum designers who consider aboriginal students' cultural differences and diverse ethnic backgrounds when arranging lesson plans and achievement assessments efficiently motivate aboriginal students to achieve academic goals (Hammeken, 2000). Special educators who teach aboriginal students how to timely channel their emotions and appropriately respond to their feelings alleviate their frustration from low academic performance (Rea, 2002). In addition, if all the faculty members hold positive attitudes toward aboriginal students' learning, emphasizing their strengths instead of their weaknesses; then aboriginal students' self-esteem and self-confidence will be greatly enhanced (Zhai & Scheer, 2004).

Objective

High school teachers will increase their awareness of aboriginal students' situations and difficulties through the processes of professional development and simultaneous assistance in accelerating aboriginal students' adaptation to diverse learning environments.

Activities

Since the project "No Aboriginal Students Left Behind" involves the whole school

community to contribute their efforts to, it necessitates community-based collaboration and high-functioning communication.

The principal invites outside facilitators or mentors, such as university teacher educators or researchers of the National Academy of Aboriginal Affairs, to give a lecture at the first faculty meeting on the topic of Aboriginal History and Cultures, focusing the discussion topic on the uniqueness of aboriginal customs and lifestyles and their differences from those of the Hans.

Also on the first professional day, the principal arranges for two or three teachers to share their experiences with aboriginal students and leaves the topic open for discussion at the end of the meeting in order to create an in-depth understanding of the difficulties facing aboriginal students. With the purpose of mobilizing school-wide forces to restructure school culture and empower teachers so that they will have real change in values and beliefs instead of resistance to the reform, two or three influential educators volunteer to initiate tasks for aboriginal-related programs and formulate the Aboriginal Support Committee. As a facilitator, the principal actively participates in the conferences of the Aboriginal Support Committee, inquires after their needs, and expresses full support of their decisions. After the needs inquiry, the principal makes a proposal for grants to meet the expenditure of the program. Then, with the establishment of their workshop, the core leaders of the Aboriginal Support Committee engage their associates in their group activities and topic discussion. Under the framework of professional development, educators identify with the predicaments of aboriginal students.

Also, they reach consensus through the process of topic discussion and make commitments to tailor their instruction for appropriate placement of aboriginal students in inclusive education.

To fulfill the requirements of addressing the learning needs of all students, educators need to think critically, analyze and reflect on a range of issues, including teaching strategies, curricular issues and the general learning environment for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In this regard, four key concepts are essential to incorporate into the domain of multicultural education through the workshop research: content integration, empowering school culture, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy (Banks, 1999). First, teachers take the accountability to use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to teach students to know, to care, and to act toward encounters of cultural diversity (Banks, 1999). Second, interactions of the staff and students on ethnic and racial issues generate the motivation to modify basic underlying assumptions for the restructure of school culture; and furthermore empower students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (Short & Greer, 2002). Third, content area teachers modify their teaching methods, learning materials and assessment tools in alignment with the characteristics of ethnic students for accommodation (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). Fourth, based on the perspective of equity pedagogy, teachers employ various teaching styles in consistency with a wide range of heterogeneous learning models to facilitate academic achievement of students with diverse backgrounds (Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Endowed with caring and positive learning

environments, aboriginal students can have equal opportunities to engage in academic arenas to compete with their peers – the Hans.

Program Assessment

The data to assess the program are focused to collect from pre- and post-survey about the effectiveness of the workshop. The Aboriginal Support Committee administers the first survey to the staff members on the first professional day (Appendix A). The purposes are to evaluate the extent to which the school community understands aboriginal students and the degree to which the professional development will impact their knowledge and strategies for instructing aboriginal students. Then, the analyzed data are used to design a pattern for professional development. Based on the gathered information in the opinion poll, the 6-month workshop unfolds to advance teachers' understandings and strategies for the services of providing aboriginal students with positive learning environments. At the end of the professional development, the Aboriginal Support Committee administers the second survey to the participants to evaluate the program effectiveness (Appendix B).

Adapting Classroom Tests and Varied Assessment Tools for Aboriginal Students

The national educational policy, with its focuses on the dominant theme of raising achievement standards in the Entrance Examination, has pressured educators, nation-wide, to use most of their assessments for instructional effectiveness on tests in order to fulfill the commitments they made to students, parents, and the school administration. However, due to

the inherent bias in tests, evaluation types normally highlight aboriginal students' weaknesses, instead of strengths (Abrams & Others, 1980). On the basis of testing aboriginal students fairly and with a certain degree of accuracy, and also with the principle of ensuring that test results can objectively reflect the aboriginal students' knowledge and skills rather than emphasizing their disabilities, educators need to modify classroom tests and adopt a variety of assessment tools to address the specific needs of the ethnic group (Biller, 2002).

Objective

Teachers will adapt classroom tests and varied assessment tools for aboriginal students

Activities

Adapting classroom tests.

Subject teachers and special educators gather together to discuss the feasibility of modified classroom tests. The special educators serving as consultants to the standards of modified assessments provide information and criteria for test modification and exemplify how to edit a modified test to extend the subject teachers' knowledge for application. For fear of increasing the burden on subject teachers, the items and contents of general period tests can be tailored before the testing for the use of aboriginal students. For instance, on the top of each item is the example to demonstrate how to answer questions. Second, teachers interpret each testing item as clearly as possible so that aboriginal students will not be overwhelmed by the complicated, intimidating explanations that could undermine their abilities for problem

solving. Finally, the contents of tests also need to be modified into something by which aboriginal students can present their academic growth to the maximum (Appendix C).

Another way is the preparation of a study guide, telling aboriginal students what to study for the test (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). The strengths of this strategy lie in assisting students to focus their studying on the most critical areas and enable them to be in good readiness for the test. With this approach, students increase their confidence in getting access to high academic achievement.

Other options offered to teachers for aboriginal students' adaptation to standardized testing are to teach them test-taking skills and test-taking strategies (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). The test-taking skills include those for studying for tests, taking objective tests, and writing essay tests. Educators make good use of the quiet time to instruct aboriginal students in the strategies of taking varied tests and the differentiation of goals among varied tests for strategy application. English classes offer a good example of how this strategy can be used.

Vocabulary tests are frequently administered once a week; so English teachers can chunk the new words into several parts for memorization. Teachers can help aboriginal students by discussing their common errors with them and by using the textbook and class notes as the main sources for the test questions. Further aid may be provided in the form of a study buddy, who ensures that the aboriginal student has understood main concepts discussed in class.

Writing essays is the most challenging job for aboriginal students. Constructed on diverse

cultures and language learning, thinking processes between the aboriginals and the Hans have different impacts on their problem solving. Therefore, on condition that aboriginal students' expressions do not obscure their meanings, teachers can be flexible about their grading on essay tests.

Taking alternatives to assess aboriginal students' academic growth.

The issue of a widening achievement gap between aboriginal and Han students consistently plagues the whole educational community and renders educators unable to respond. As mentioned previously, the unsolved problem is attributed to the phenomenon that educators in Taiwan focus too much on test results instead of tracing the roots of underlying problems occurring within the instructional process. They would believe in the interpretations of test scores rather than explore how much progress they have made in the learning processes of their students. Therefore, teachers need to take some alternatives to evaluate aboriginal students' academic growth, such as the assessments of notes taking, portfolio, and oral presentations. According to my two decades of teaching experience, the students who cannot get high scores on tests would love to be assessed in another way. If teachers can set standards on grading notes taken during the instructional course, students will be highly motivated to make efforts to elaborate note taking on class lectures. Simultaneously, the elaboration work necessitates their full attention and engagement in classroom activities. The continuous occurrence of involvement in the instruction accelerates their improvement not only in

academic performance but also in their positive attitudes toward learning. In addition, portfolio-based assessment is an efficient way to construct aboriginal students' self-esteem and self-confidence. The use of a portfolio mainly focuses on presenting students' growth instead of demonstrating their abilities. Moreover, based on the process of self-reflection, aboriginal students can make internal changes in their values and beliefs and furthermore formulate their self-concepts. From my observation during professional practice, many aboriginal students have an inborn talent for singing and love to sing due to their inherent good voices. Consequently, oral presentation should be a good training to stimulate their potential for linguistic intelligence in spite of their deficiency in the dominant Han language. In terms of the concern for their lifelong development, teachers are responsible for providing them with opportunities to demonstrate and develop their strengths. To meet their special needs, teachers can integrate the use of oral presentation in their assessment programs. During the process of evaluation, the sporadic use of their first language should be acceptable.

Program Assessment

The task for evaluating the outcomes of the program is accomplished by using checklists to examine the quality of the modified periodical tests and administering a questionnaire to inquire about the appropriateness of alternate assessment tools. The checklist is designed to evaluate subject teachers, special educators, and test designers themselves (Appendix D). Then, the questionnaire is administered to aboriginal students to investigate if the assessment

alternatives virtually fit their specific needs (appendix E).

Academic Assistance of Aboriginal Students from Teacher, Adult, and Peer Tutors

In order to have no aboriginal students left behind their Han peers and to concurrently establish the harmonious relationships between the Hans and the aboriginals for the long-term development of society, educators should consciously prioritize the task of narrowing the achievement gap for overall academic success among diverse ethnicities. Moreover, our history has told us the sustained stability of a country is determined by ethnic integration. Ethnic integration is oriented from equally shared social resources. Based on the equity of educational opportunities and the principle of including every student, some measures should be taken whenever supplementary instruction is necessary.

As far as aboriginal students are concerned, unfavorable academic conditions owing to inherent barriers from languages and cultures frequently lead them to failure in competition with the Hans in academic arenas. Therefore, it is the duty of teachers in subject areas to get the disadvantageous group out of the adversity. However, to avoid a waste of human resources and to increase task efficiency, homeroom teachers assume the responsibility to hold a conference of subject teachers for needs inquiry and to coordinate the support effort involved in the implementation.

Objective

Aboriginal students increase academic achievement with additional tutoring from peers,

parent volunteers, and subject teachers (Wiener, 2004 ; Wrigley, 2000).

Activities

First, homeroom teachers educate the class that collaborative teamwork for achieving their goals not only benefits tutored peers with lower performance but also peer tutors themselves. During the process of peer tutoring, the tutored can refine their knowledge and enhance their own learning interest in a more relaxing environment. At the same time, the peer tutors can also get a clear understanding because they have to arrange their ideas to be well organized for their peers. As a result, they already have a thorough review while organizing their sessions. Most important of all, peer relations are promoted congruently. Second, homeroom teachers evaluate which grouping is preferable to the whole class by using teaching strategies and analyzing learning areas under the framework of student-centered instruction. Possible groupings include: same or different academic levels, and a combination of the two for different sessions. Additionally, the literature has pointed out that volunteer tutoring helps ethnic groups identify cultural differences through individualized assistance, improving the tutored students' skills in communication and literacy. It also alleviates ethnic students' anxiety toward diverse cultures, enhances their possibility for academic success, and helps in-service educators with individualized instruction to fit the needs of ethnic students (Cardenas & Chahin, 1999). In this regard, homeroom teachers write their class parents a letter for an appeal of academic assistance. Then, a meeting between subject teachers and parent

volunteers is held for a detailed discussion about the extent and the ways in which the volunteer tutors get involved in the instructional assistance. Also, subject teachers take turns using the quiet time of 40 minutes before the first class to provide aboriginal students with additional instruction in different content areas.

Program Assessment

The program will be evaluated based on the data gathered from aboriginal students' periodical test scores and yearly GPA. The purpose is not only to help aboriginal students fill the achievement gap but also to provide subject teachers with the opportunity for a better understanding of the real learning difficulties facing the aboriginal students.

Aborigine Students' Cultural Identification

According to the school archive, aboriginal students are commonly vulnerable and have low morale of their performance due to their lives, void of cultural identification. A sense of inferiority embedded in their attitudes toward learning and schooling frequently inhibits them from the pursuit of self-excellence. High sensitivity to frustrations in social relationships normally holds them in their self-constructed confinement. Therefore, with no outlets for their emotions or reconstruction of their cultural identification, any efforts to improve their academic achievement will be futile. As for the programs to enhance aboriginal students' self-esteem and confidence, the Aboriginal Support Committee appeals to school-wide forces with the assistance of community members. However, due to understaffed counseling services

within the school, homeroom teachers are supposed to offer the services in channeling out aboriginal students' emotions.

Objective

Aboriginal students will increase their self-esteem and self-confidence and further improve their school attendance (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2004).

Activities

Providing outlets for aboriginal students' emotions.

Homeroom teachers meet with aboriginal students once a week at lunch breaks until the condition is improved. At the start of the meeting, homeroom teachers would rather be listeners empathetically and sympathetically so that they can hear aboriginal students' real voice as the basis of finding appropriate intervention to fit their specific needs. In addition, they need to be aware of the appropriateness of the meeting room. The teachers' office is not an ideal place, where not only is the issue of privacy challenged but also communication might be interrupted. Particularly, the meeting schedule should be fixed but with the length of the talk flexible, depending on students' willingness and emotional responses.

Programs innovated to enhance aboriginal students' self-esteem and confidence.

The principal networks with the community heavyweights for the acquisition of community resources as the supporting forces for programs in the school, also inviting the community members specialized in aboriginal cultures to lead aboriginal students or any student

interested in aboriginal cultures for aboriginal studies. The community-based innovation not only provides aboriginal students with a stimulant for their cultural exploration but also motivate Han students to study and conduct research in diverse cultures for the implementation of global education. Simultaneously, with the recruiting of the community members to get involved in the activities to let them have better understanding of aboriginal cultures, social awareness will be promoted and social prejudice reduced among the general public. In that case, aboriginal students' self-esteem and self-confidence will be greatly enhanced. Moreover, school-wide class rescheduling in alignment with the integration of one-week thematic teaching on aboriginal issues into the modified curriculum provides the school faculty with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with aboriginal life and customs and figure out some strategies to facilitate aboriginal students for positive attitudes toward learning and rebuild their confidence and beliefs in higher achievement. Finally, by the end of year-round schooling, the school celebration party will end up with aboriginal programs performed by aboriginal students. At the point, their low morale will definitely be boosted to a great degree.

Program Assessment

Concerning the evaluation of aboriginal students' self-esteem and self-confidence, multiple assessment tools are designed to integrate into the examination task: questionnaires, teachers' working journals, oral inquiry, classroom studies, and aboriginal students' documentation and

self-report. The questionnaires can be retrieved online, such as the psychological test on self-esteem from <http://www.psychtests.com/cgi-bin/tests/transfer.cgi>, which provides toll-free online testing and results interpretation (Appendix F). The teachers' working journal will have a detailed account of events that happened and teachers' reflection during the process of interactions with aboriginal students. Oral inquiry and communication with aboriginal students about their perspectives towards the program development will assist teachers to strike the balance of discrepancies between theoretical and actual practice, reconstructing their beliefs and insights to refine their strategies of collaborating with aboriginal students. Heterogeneous data gathered from observations, collected documents, and interviews with aboriginal students and their peers will help teachers recognize aboriginal students' school attendance and modify their own skills for accommodation. Moreover, the process of interviews not only invokes aboriginal students' reflection and recount of their predicaments, furthermore evolving themselves into independent problem solvers. It also draws their peers' attention to learn how to care for people around them. Additionally, aboriginal students' self-reports about the program implementation help identify the influence of the program.

Intensive Health Education for Disease Prevention

As mentioned above, health problems complicate the task of finding the resolution to improve aboriginal students' situations. Accident (alcohol intoxication and vehicle accident),

oral cancer, and hepatitis are prioritized for immediate resolution. Therefore, from the perspective of individualized education to meet the needs of all students, it is advisable to develop health education for aboriginal students to refine their knowledge and skills in dealing with the threatening diseases, which orient from the risk factors -- hepatitis B virus, alcohol, and betel nut. According to research studies, mortality among aborigines due to liver and oral cancer was statistically significantly higher than expected (Ko & Others, 1994). As a consequence, education about Pathogenesis and clinical course of hepatitis and oral cancer prevention cannot be ignored. According to Chen's medical report in 2004, health assistance is specifically essential to aboriginal students. Adolescent development has been negatively influenced by modern social changes, including changes in Taiwanese family structure, economic structure, media, food marketing, fast food influences, and lack of knowledge about primary prevention of disease. Adolescents, particularly aborigines, need health promotion education to help them adopt healthy behaviors that will last into adulthood (Chen, 2004). Therefore, in terms of the urgency of finding resolutions to the increasing problems, school nurses are assumed to be the right program designers and instructors for the issues of aboriginal students' health education.

Objective

Aboriginal students will strengthen the notions about health care and disease prevention

Activities

The school nurse is recommended to collaborate with special educators in solving the problem. Concerning the effects of alcoholism, aboriginal students are expected to learn about the impact of heavy consumption of alcohol on a regular basis.

Likewise, betel nut users put themselves at a high risk for oral cancer because the nuts induce chromosomal abnormalities. Therefore, the school nurse recruits peer volunteers to perform a skit, demonstrate how chewing betel nut quid is associated with aggressive oral cancers, and advocate for health campaigns necessary to discourage betel nut quid use in aboriginal cultures. By means of the process of self-reflection about the influence of betel nuts on the daily lives of their tribe members and the severe damage of betel nuts to their family's health, a change in the values and beliefs of aboriginal students can really occur.

Program Assessment

After the instruction in health related content areas about the cause and effect of oral and liver cancer and related diseases, the school nurse proposes a celebration party so that aboriginal students can be provided with an opportunity for self-assessment and also to demonstrate the knowledge they acquired from the program. The type of celebration to identify the integral aspects of knowledge about disease prevention to show the aboriginal students' academic growth over time can be negotiated by the school nurse and aboriginal students. Various activities could include: jeopardy games, role-play, portfolio exhibition, and seminars. In addition to the participation of the faculty in the celebration, the parents of

aboriginal students might be the most cordially invited. The purpose for this invitation is that the parents can sense the efforts the whole school community contributes to improving their children's health, which makes the parents generate trust in the school and develop positive attitudes towards their children's education. Similarly, participation in the celebration allows the parents to pay more attention not only to their children's health but also to their own. Indirectly, the aboriginal parents get increased awareness of health issues. More importantly, the whole community is able to identify aboriginal students' specific needs merging with health problems and no longer to ascribe their school failure to distorted ethnic images -- laziness and dependence.

Financial Support to Aborigine Students

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF), a nationally registered non-profit organization devoted to excellence and providing the educational tools necessary for aboriginal youth to achieve brighter futures, has established a fund of more than \$ 2 million each year to provide financial assistance for aboriginal education. Also, a meeting of the Board of Trustees held in Queen's University in March of 2001 contended more attention should be given to aboriginal students regarding financial assistance, since the gathered data indicated that, in 1996, 15% of financial assistance was need-based and 85% was merit-based. In contrast, in 2001, 15% was merit-based and 85% was need-based (Meeting Minutes, March 2/3, 2001). Actually, Abraham Maslow in 1943 stated that hierarchy of human needs, which

he often presented as a pyramid, defined self-actualization at the top as the highest of those needs and physiological needs, which are necessary for survival, as the base of the pyramid. Once the physiological needs fit, an individual can concentrate on the second layer, the need for safety and security. The third layer is the need for love and belonging, followed by the need for esteem. Finally, self-actualization forms the acme of the pyramid. Accordingly, motivated by the intention to foster aboriginal students' future success, school administration prioritizes financial support to help them meet the cost of living expenses.

Objective

Aboriginal students will be able to pay their basic expenses.

Activities

In order to provide financial support to the needy students, the Aboriginal Support Committee asks each teacher to identify students who qualify for the assistance and to determine a monthly stipend for individuals.

Homeroom teachers collect historical records and data of the students who meet the criteria for financial support. The information includes records from interviews with the students and their peers to explore the extent to which they need financial aid. Additionally, the teachers have telephone interviews or pay visits to the students' parents to confirm their financial conditions, then select and organize the gathered information into required documents as a formal report submitted to the Disciplinary Office for evaluation. Once applications are

accepted, the teachers inform the students' parents of the monthly financial support.

Program Assessment

The data for program assessment will include homeroom teachers' observable records from oral inquiry about aboriginal students' financial situations after the aboriginal students receive the stipends. Through the process of program implementation, homeroom teachers are able to have in-depth investigation for aboriginal students' life background, which formulates their knowledge base for future interactive communication with aboriginal students.

The Process to Evaluate the Plan

The program development will be scheduled during the year-round schooling. The charts below indicate the plan evaluation on outcomes and unintended side effects.

The Chart for Evaluating Outcomes

Action steps	People responsible	Instrument	Timeline
Administer pre- and post-survey to evaluate staff professional development on aboriginal issues	The Aboriginal Support Committee	Questionnaires	September, 2005; January, 2006
Administer checklists and questionnaires to evaluate	Subject teachers, Special educators	Checklists, Questionnaires	After periodical tests through the

adapted classroom tests and varied assessment tools for aboriginal students			one-year implementation
Gather data from aboriginal students' periodical test scores and yearly GPA to evaluate academic assistance of aboriginal students from adult and peer tutors	School administrators	Tutored students' test scores and GPA	January, 2006; June, 2006
Use multiple assessment tools to evaluate aborigine students' cultural identification and school attendance	Special educators, Homeroom teachers	Questionnaires, teachers' working journals, oral inquiry, classroom studies, and aboriginal students' documentation and self-report	Bi-monthly online psychological tests and ongoing data gathering from other sources through the implementation
Hold a celebration party for	School nurse	Activity items	December, 2005

<p>participant students to demonstrate what they have learned and meanwhile evaluate the effectiveness of intensive health education for disease prevention</p>		<p>integrated in the celebration party: jeopardy games, role-play, portfolio exhibition, and seminars</p>	
<p>Implement the monthly financial support to aborigine students</p>	<p>The Aboriginal Support Committee, Homeroom teachers</p>	<p>Observable records from oral inquiry</p>	<p>One-month ongoing research in October, 2005</p>

The Chart for Evaluating Side Effects

<p>What topics are covered, and how much time is spent on each? To what extent does the program need to be revised?</p>	<p>We need to know what we are doing to meet the goals. We need to tailor the content, adjust the difficulty level of modified tests and increase adult or peer</p>	<p>What each teacher covers, what our program guides say, and what student participants respond.</p>	<p>In January, each content teacher will be asked to list topics and time allocations for each content area this year, and brainstorm for the topics needed to modify.</p>
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	volunteering to meet aboriginal students' special needs for fear that the evolved problems might make them reject learning.		
What methods and materials are used for each topic, and how good are they?	We need to analyze our instruction to identify targets for improvement.	What each educator uses; teachers' judgments of strengths and weaknesses of methods and materials.	In January, each content educator will also be asked to list methods and materials for each topic and to evaluate each. From this list, a sample of materials will be collected and analyzed.
Who will take charge of weekend school for intensive IEP? How will	We need to use human resources wisely under the situation of limited	What subject teachers say; what student participants respond to.	After identifying the student recommended for intensive IEP in April, a second survey is

aboriginal students with part-time jobs on weekends attend summer school for supplementary instruction?	supporting forces. We need to understand the extent to which supplementary instruction on weekends has influence on aboriginal students' daily lives in order to avoid unexpected antipathy to the academic assistance.		administered to gather teachers' and student participants' perspectives on the weekend school plan and suggestions for implementation, especially paying more attention to the responses from the students with part-time jobs on weekends.
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Conclusion

Analyzed from the multiple tiers of the problem facing aboriginal students, the project might be a good challenge to the whole community due to its complexity and intimidation. However, for the sake of resolving the plaguing matter once and for all, it's really time for school administrators and educators to assume their responsibility to improve the situation of aboriginal students. Through the staff development, strategies are tailored to improve aboriginal students' educational quality, enhance their self-confidence, and activate their

motivation for academic success to further meet the community expectations (Teglasi & Cohn & Meshbesher, 2004). After all, aborigines can't live on social welfare for the rest of their lives. They need to be empowered to build a foundation for a better life. Additionally, mercy based on pity and sympathy oriented from the fallacies of positivism not only deepens ethnic discrimination but also deteriorates into ethnic disharmony arising from a sense of contempt (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2002). Just as the concern addressed by several educational experts and professors during a nationwide educational conference in 2002, educators are expected to understand comprehensively and strategically demonstrate the implication of a Chinese proverb in their varied lesson plans: familiarizing students with the techniques to fish rather than providing them with fish to eat.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will only take you a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. There are no right or any answers we suppose them to be. Instead, this questionnaire will help us recognize what topics will be involved in our forthcoming workshop. From your personal perspective:

1. Have you ever taught aboriginal students?

Yes.

No.

2. What is your impression about aboriginal students?

3. What do you think about academic performance of aboriginal students?

Above – average or average (Please skip to 5.)

Below – average

4. What do you think causes low academic performance of aboriginal students?

5. Thank you very much for your response. What is your opinion about setting up a workshop for aboriginal issues?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

6. Suggestion:

For cross-validation from future questionnaires about the effectiveness of the ongoing

workshop without names, please put your 6-digit birthday (mm/dd/yy): _____

Appendix B

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will only take you a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. There are no right or any answers we suppose them to be. Instead, this questionnaire will help us recognize the effectiveness of the workshop. From your personal perspective:

1. What is your impression about aboriginal students currently?

2. What do you think about academic performance of aboriginal students currently?

Above – average or average (Please skip to 5.)

Below – average

3. What do you think causes low academic performance of aboriginal students?

4. What do you think of the differences between the aboriginal and the Han students?

5. Thank you very much for your response.

6. Suggestion:

For cross-comparison without names, please put your 6-digit birthday (mm/dd/yy): _____

Appendix C

Modified test

I. Vocabulary:

Eg. _____ A good student should take r_____y for his behaviors.

Modified into: (Please choose the most appropriate option for the question)

_____ A good student should take (A. ready B. responsibility C. respiratory
D. repository) for his behaviors.

II. Translation:

Eg. 自助旅行前，務必把每個細節列入考慮。

Modified into: (Please fill in the blanks to make a complete sentence)

自助旅行前，務必把每個細節列入考慮。

Before the _____, be sure to _____ each item _____.

III. Cloze Test

Eg. Making a ___1.____ difference in the lives of our children while they are in school is the challenge at hand for all teachers. “Seeing the success that the children are having gives me more ___2.____ to continue” was another of the many comments that several of the teachers reiterated.

1. (A. weird B. no C. positive D. antipathetic)

2. (A. commotion B. annoyance C. smugness D. confidence)

Modified into: (Please base the content to pick up an appropriate answer)

Making a positive difference in the lives of our children while they are in school is the challenge at hand for all teachers. “Seeing the success that the children are having gives me more confidence to continue” was another of the many comments that several of the teachers reiterated.

1. In the paragraph, who would like to see the children succeed?

A. Parents B. Peer buddies C. Teachers D. Children themselves

Appendix D

Checklists

Please “check” (✓) the items the assessment have involved in the test paper.

- ___ 1. The assessment format is familiar to aboriginal students.
- ___ 2. Subject teachers provide aboriginal students with an appropriate study guide before the test.
- ___ 3. Without lowering standards, the test contents are able to evaluate aboriginal students’ growth with validity.
- ___ 4. The assessment system has effectively reduced the impact of cultural and language bias against aboriginal students.
- ___ 5. The test gives extended testing time.
- ___ 6. The test provides a flexible way to grading.
- ___ 7. Aboriginal students understand which part to improve for their advancement after taking the test.
- ___ 8. The assessment system helps subject teachers to diagnose aboriginal students’ academic needs.
- ___ 9. The test modification facilitates subject teachers to adjust instructional activities for aboriginal students.
- ___ 10. The test results are able to predict aboriginal students’ future academic success.

Appendix E

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will only take you a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. There are no right or any answers we suppose them to be. Instead, this questionnaire will help us recognize the effectiveness of the alternative assessment tools.

From your personal perspective:

1. Do the varied assessment tools -- notes taking, portfolio, and oral presentation -- help you to demonstrate competence? Why? Why not?

2. Which of the assessment tools do you think is most able to assess your abilities? Why?

3. Which item of assessment do you think teachers are supposed to add or remove? Why?

(1) I think teachers ADD _____ because _____

(2) I think teachers REMOVE _____ because _____

4. Thank you for your response.

5. Other suggestions:

For cross-validation from other sources without names, please put your 6-digit birthday

(mm/dd/yy): _____

Appendix F (Download from <http://www.psychtests.com/cgi-bin/tests/transfer.cgi>)

Questionnaire

This questionnaire will only take you a few minutes. We appreciate you filling it out honestly as it is anonymous. There are no right or any answers we suppose them to be. Instead, this questionnaire is to help identify self-exploration. The following are your perspectives.

1. In social situations, I have something interesting to say.

- Almost never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Quite often
- Most of the time

2. Most people around me seem to be better off than I am.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3. I like being myself and accept myself the way I am.

- Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

4. I mess up everything I touch.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

5. When I see a good opportunity, I recognize it and seize it.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

6. People respect and like only those who are good looking, smart, witty, talented or rich.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

7. To me, success is not imperative. The important thing is to try and do my best.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

8. I deserve to be loved and respected.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

9. Unlike others, I really have to go out of my way to make and keep a friend.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

10. If someone ever falls in love with me, I better do my best to prove worthy, because it may well never happen to me again.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

11. Being myself is a guarantee that people will dislike me.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

12. I am not sure I have done a good job unless someone else points it out.

Almost never true

Rarely true

Sometimes true

Quite often true

Most of the time true

13. I am afraid of being rejected by my friends.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

14. If I don't do as well as others, it means that I am an inferior person.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

15. I could disappear from the surface of the earth, and nobody would notice.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

16. A partial failure is as bad as a complete failure.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

17. In case of need, I know people who care enough about me to offer their help.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

18. I feel worthless and futile.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

19. I feel I can make mistakes without losing the love or respect of others.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

20. I let those who care about me down.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

21. If I can't do something well, there is no point in doing it at all.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

22. I will never amount to anything significant.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

23. I don't need other people's approval in order to be happy and satisfied with myself.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

24. I have what it takes to socialize with other people.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

25. I think I am a failure.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

26. Someone that stands up to me or disagrees with me may still very well like and respect me.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

27. By ignoring a problem, you can make it go away.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

28. I see myself as someone special and worthy of other people's attention and affection.

Almost never

Rarely

Sometimes

Quite often

Most of the time

29. How I feel about myself is more important than others' opinions of me.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

30. I will never be as capable as I should be.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Somewhat agree

Agree

Strongly agree

For cross-validation from other sources without names, please put your 6-digit birthday

(mm/dd/yy): _____