**Focus Question Responses**

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**Focus Question #1 Using your notes from reading, lecture and using your own educational experiences to date, how did you see teachers honouring different ways of knowing and doing in the classroom? In what ways did teachers build a sense of community in the classroom? In what ways can teachers build hospitable and invitational educational environments and relationships with all students?**

A common question I have found myself asking lately is “how can students benefit more through my teachings?”. Nick Forsberg my EPE 100 teacher keeps saying to us students “I hope you have more questions then answers”. That statement has really made me start questioning the ways I approach life, in and outside of the classroom. Fatima’s lecture has made me question my experiences, and learning beliefs even more.

My first “I believe” statement is “I believe that learning never ends”. Teachers need to be able to learn from students on a daily basis, as they learn from you. Building relationships with students is a key component for success in teaching. As you build relationships with students, I believe that it is important to get to know every single one of your students, and build relationships with them. Each person learns a different way. If you just teach one way all the time, certain students will not benefit from your teaching. It also can turn students off, and once you lose students it is hard for them to get locked back in.

Unlocking untapped potential is a huge point in student success. As teachers, it should be a goal were students are not afraid to come to you with questions and concerns. From personal experience, I thrived in a teaching environment, where everyone learns from everyone. Classrooms with an open, indiscriminatory, and sense of comradery between all students and teachers, makes the learning environment a positive one. When new students from different countries come to your classroom, welcoming their cultures and believes is huge. If we do not except people or students for who we are, students will not accept us as the teachers we are.

**Topic #2 Describe and draw a sketch of what your classrooms looked like as you went through the grades. How did your classroom space indicate power relationships in your classrooms? Did the space in your classrooms provide you with opportunities to engage with all students in your classrooms? How did this space make you feel? What could teachers do to make classroom spaces more relational?**

Throughout my experiences in school, I have become pretty accustomed to sitting in a desk all day, doing work from a textbook and taking boring notes. This is not the best way for students to reach their full potential. Each student has their own unique way of learning, and as teachers it is our responsibility to teach to meet every student’s educational needs. Most of the classes I have been in consisted of the teacher, teaching up front, while every other student was in rows. This creates a sense of separation and cause a sense of diversion amongst the students.

When classes have seating plans or classes are spread out in rows, it takes away from the class. Human interaction is a huge part of each person’s daily life. Interaction between students and students, or teachers and students, is a huge part of creating a fun inclusive learning environment. Without this interaction it gives the teacher all the power in the classroom. Some teachers demand to be respected, but they do not respect their students. These students then do not ask for extra help, do not try their best, and even fear from interaction with the teacher. This does not create a fun learning environment; however, it creates separation amongst the students and the teacher. This is a recipe for failure. As teachers it is our goal to teach to every single students’ strength, not just some of them, each and every one of them.

My Social 30 class, was one of my favourite classes. The desks were arranged in a circle, with the teacher teaching from the middle of the circle. This created a unique learning environment, where students who would normally never interact with one another could learn together. This created a learning environment of inclusion. Each student could express beliefs, values and their own unique way of learning. I always looked forward to the class, because I never knew what would happen, or what we would learn. The students shared the same amount of power that the teacher had, and it ended up being a positive experience for everyone involved. This class also created a sense of comradery amongst the whole class where you would not feel judged or made fun of for asking questions, or having certain beliefs.

**Topic Question #4 Based on your own experiences, what you are learning in the course, and what you have found out about the independent school that you are researching, how does the school, their classrooms and teachers honour inclusive practices? How is your school community honouring equal representation, equity, and human rights for all students (including sexual and gender diversity) within their schools and communities?**

Schools within Regina I believe are not creating an inclusive environment within the schools. As Professor Cory Haggen discussed in his lecture; inclusion means including everyone. That is the problem with schools today. A great example is a program such as the FIAP program. I attended Martin Collegiate and there is a FIAP program at the school. During my four years I never had any interaction with any of those students. It gives you a sense of privileged based off the fact that somebody has determined that these students are not fit enough to be in a regular classroom like everyone else. Inclusion also means opportunity for all involved just because somebody has a disability, speaks a different language or has a different sexuality, it does not mean they have a problem. As teachers it is our goal to teach to benefit of the entire class. If we separated students based off of these factors, we are not teaching for success. The world does not separate people, classrooms should not be an exception.

My whole perspective on life continues to change throughout my experience in this class. Inclusion is definitely a topic that I have realized is a major problem within schools today. During the independent school project, it really opened my eyes to the impact these schools can have on students. Mother Thresa school is working on lowering the number of poverties amongst unprivileged youth in inner city homes. This gives students opportunities that they would not get at a normal school. These opportunities are a huge part in the successes and growth of students for the future. This is such a small example of inclusion that impacts many lives. Could you imagine if public schools or catholic schools within Regina made it more inclusive for all? I believe this would benefit all parties involved, and help create a society where everyone feels welcomed, and we can put our differences aside and work hand in hand to make the world a better place!