

Action Proposal Assignment

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Promoting effective learning in a multi-grade classroom

Multi-grade classrooms are commonly used structural organization approaches in schools across the world. The majority of the teacher preparation programs do not have a robust multi-grade classroom experience in their training. Therefore, teachers who are used to single grade classrooms have a difficult time teaching in multi-grade classrooms. This proposal will look at ways in which schools with multi-grade classrooms can promote effective teaching.

Msimanga (2017) and Proehl et al., (2013) define a multigrade classroom as two to five different grades learning in one classroom under one teacher. In concurrence with Roberts (1999) Proehl et al., (2013) goes on to explain the reason behind the prevalence of multi-grade classrooms. Sparsely populated communities and rural areas are faced with a challenge of declining or low enrolments. Msimanga (2019) explains further that, at times, lack of physical resources calls for the formation of multigrades classrooms. In urban areas, multi-grade classrooms are used as an administrative device to consolidate school staffing following the governmental educational fund cuts.

In 2016, Marilyne Boon of the Canadian Television Network news reported from Newfoundland and Labrador that 20% of the students across Canada were taught in 135 multi-grade classrooms in 70 schools. Adventist schools also use the consolidation of classrooms as a strategy to sustain schools with declining enrollment. I have taught in two small, two teachers schools so far in British Columbia and in both cases, it has been due to declining enrolment.

In agreement with Roberts (1999) and Proehl et al., (2013) Marilyne continued to report that teachers who find themselves in these classrooms need certain skills and behaviours because coordinating activities can be more difficult. Teachers experiences from single grade teacher

preparation programs to multigrade classrooms have revealed the need for training in the integration of subjects, use of different grouping practices as well as monitoring student progress in multi-grade classrooms. According to Proehl et al., (2013) teachers express their opposition to multigrade classrooms being dumped on their laps on the first day of school without previous exposure or knowledge. This leaves them without time to plan the curriculum for covering material of up to five grades, grading and record keeping of student work. There is no time for professional development, evaluating teaching strategies or reflecting on their success.

Despite the problem faced by the teachers in multi-grade schools, Roberts (1999) agrees with Proehl et al., (2013) in that there is a plethora of advantages to multi-grade classrooms. Mixed age interactions have been found to promote leadership skills, independence and social skills. Older students deepen their understanding of the concepts as they help younger students. Younger student learn vocabulary more rapidly and are introduced earlier to more advanced problem-solving skills. The peer tutoring that happens in multi-grade classrooms have been found to produce academic improvement for older and younger students. Roberts (1999) argues that tutors show increased self confidence and an improved attitude toward school. More over, the stigma of repetition is removed and the drop out rate is reduced. Student education is enhanced as teachers continue to see and focus on each student as an individual with different needs.

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