

Power and Curriculum: Engaging all Classroom Stakeholders in Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation

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Abstract: The paper explores the traditional power bases in an elementary classroom and reconceptualizes them in a way that promotes inclusion and the acknowledgement of both teachers' and students' rights within the classroom dynamic.

Key Words: Elementary education, democratic classroom, inclusion, power bases.

Teaching is a stressful and challenging endeavor. Changes to the classroom environment, the ways in which students and teachers interact, and a reconceptualization of curriculum implementation may all play an integral part when attempting to reduce teacher stress and redefine a teacher's role in the 21st century classroom.

A key objective of this paper is to encourage the establishment of a democratic classroom by providing teachers with strategies to reshape the roles that they and their students have assumed. It is recommended that all teachers, both those new to the profession and experienced professionals, become familiar with the strategies presented here. The measures and suggestions made in this paper, as well as the proposed changes in pedagogy, are not meant to condemn teachers, but are intended to help teachers view their roles in the classroom in a different light.

An examination of the traditional power bases held in a classroom will be disseminated and critiqued in order to formulate the tenets of a democratic classroom. It will be shown that altering a teacher's behaviour may be an effective approach to undertake in a modern and progressive classroom. The notion of a democratic classroom (i.e., the recognition of a child's and a teacher's rights in the classroom) will be discussed within the guiding parameters of Ontario's Provincial Code of Conduct. It is important to recognize that the developmental stage and age of students in the classroom (as well as the characteristics of students) must be considered when determining how a democratic classroom should be implemented. For example, the number and complexity of the choices presented to students will differ based on the student's grade level. Curriculum implementation strategies will be provided to encourage teachers to interact with students in a manner that will be mutually satisfying. How to make the transition from theory to practice and the positive effects the democratic classroom environment will have on a teacher's work are discussed. The rights of teachers and students will be reviewed along with providing suggestions for alleviating teacher burnout and appropriately managing teacher stress.

In addition, details regarding how to employ some of the suggested changes to the classroom environment are provided. A workshop instructor could provide the lesson ideas included here. It is recommended that teachers complete each of these lessons prior to them being introduced to their classes. Preparation for each lesson will help a teacher to identify the issues that must be addressed to ensure that each dimension is integrated. By anticipating

student responses and having predetermined the content that must be included, teachers will be in a better position to guide their students. Preparation will also allow the teacher to add to, or shape, student responses in order to meet the desired lesson objectives.

It is important to note that the strategies discussed in this paper need not be thrust upon teachers as a perceived additional work requirement. Instead the practices suggested should be modeled to teachers via an open format. The following will be a discussion of the various strategies that may assist to alleviate a teacher's feelings of incompetence and dissatisfaction;

this background information will be followed by a discussion of how to implement such changes in the classroom.

Establishing a Democratic Classroom

1. Traditional power bases in the classroom

1.1 Background. For centuries, schools have been marked by a basic and definable delineation between the powerful (i.e., teachers) and the powerless (i.e., students) (Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981). Students in a conventional classroom environment are encouraged to remain silent, obedient, and subservient. In the conventional classroom, the ability to control a child's behaviour was a key indicator of a successful teacher; maintaining rigid control in the classroom was viewed as an essential teaching skill (Connell, 1985; Giroux, 1985). In the time-honored classroom, control, and not authentic student learning, were given high priority (Giroux, 1985). The concept of power and control in the classroom may be conflicting concepts; broadly, the notion of power can be both a positive and a negative entity. Power provides the core concepts for redefining the nature of social control and its relationship to a classroom's structural dynamic.

Power sharing can help liberate teachers and students. Students must be given a *real* voice in what they learn and how they are going to embrace the curriculum provided to them. Encouraging student input helps pupils develop the skillset necessary for critical thought and eventual leadership (Giroux, 1993).

Students are rarely included in the shaping of their education. The educational process has typically focused on imparting knowledge on students instead of working *with* students. Provincial policy makers, curriculum designers and teachers who shape and implement the curriculum fail to consult with those who are on the receiving end of it (Kohn, 1993). By expanding the power bases in the classroom and critically reexamining the ingrained roles players assume, teachers will be in a better position to engage students (Giroux et al., 1981). Adopting such a mindset may provide teachers with the foundation required for establishing a democratic learning environment. The following section examines the tenets of a democratic classroom.

1.2 Theory into practice. Establishing and facilitating the democratic process early in the school year is imperative. Letting students know on the first day of school that they will be involved in establishing, modeling, and nurturing classroom expectations allows students to sense the importance of such an endeavor. Involving student helps them to feel respected in that they see that their opinions will matter (Kohn, 1993).

There may be reluctance from some students to engage in this process. This hesitation may reflect how students are conditioned to see themselves regarding their "place" in the classroom. However, once the students are assured that the dynamic being established will be acted upon, they will begin to feel free to express. Students may take some time to adapt and may test their limits; however, the teacher, ultimately, is responsible for guiding students and

setting limits on what is acceptable. The teacher is the eventual decision maker, but decisions should be based on a process where students' interests are valued and incorporated.

A democratic classroom is one in which students have a voice in their learning and where teachers acknowledge the interests of the students. By providing students with a say and respecting their thoughts, teachers help encourage students to value the democratic process.

The desire to promote responsible citizenship in students is imbedded throughout Ontario's curriculum (e.g., courses in Social Studies, Healthy Living, Adopting and Implementing Positive and Appropriate Conflict Resolution Strategies, etc.). Schools are more than institutions that foster and broaden a child's intellectual capacity; schools are at the core of helping to develop caring individuals who are capable of making sound choices and solving problems in a fair and equitable manner (Kohn, 1993). How then can schools and teachers expect children to act and behave responsibly if we do not acknowledge their worth and give them real responsibility? Children learn how to make responsible choices by making meaningful decisions, not by simply following a teacher's unyielding instructions (Kohn, 1993). Students

are less likely to comply with a classroom or school rule when they have had little or no say in its

establishment (Kohn, 1993). The behavioural expectations for students must reflect the needs of the students themselves.

1.3 Key points for teachers. Students can share power in the classroom by being encouraged to take an active role in the establishment of behavioural guidelines. The language used in these expectations must be those of the students. The agreed upon behavioural guidelines must be articulated and shared by posting them in the classroom and on school walls. Once students feel that their thoughts are appreciated, they may be less likely to challenge a set of expectations thrust upon them.

2. Implementation

2.1 Responsibilities/accountability lesson. This lesson should take place in early September, if possible, and should require approximately 70 minutes. Initially, teachers should define *with* students what the terms "responsibility" and "accountability" mean to them. Teachers should brainstorm meaningful examples of the people who are responsible and accountable in society and who provide essential services for Canadians (police, ambulance, fire department personnel etc.). It is important to guide students throughout the discussion and to record their thoughts. At this point, display the agreed upon definitions of what accountability means and how being a responsible and accountable person is an integral facet of citizenship in Canada.

Next, break students into equal groups and provide each group with chart paper and markers. It is advisable that the classroom teacher designate group membership in order to ensure that ability levels are mixed and that group cohesion is optimal. Explain to students that they must fill in their chart paper under the following headings: Parental Responsibility/Accountability, a Student's Responsibility/Accountability, a Principal's Responsibility/Accountability, and a Teacher's Responsibility/Accountability. Have groups designate a recorder and a group speaker. Inform students that they will have between 20-30 minutes to discuss and record their answers (additional time may be given according to student needs). It is important for the instructor to circulate around the classroom to ensure that students are on task and to address any questions that may arise. Stopping the class periodically and sharing group

responses reinforces positive group work and may give other groups the prompts they require to finish the task.

Once students have completed their charts, the class should regroup as a whole. Divide the blackboard into sections according to the four groups (i.e., parents, students, principal, and teacher) that will be discussed. At this stage in the lesson, have each group share their responses while recording them on the blackboard; discussing points as they arise will help students understand the concepts being covered. Four students should be assigned the task of recording blackboard answers on Bristol board, which will be placed upon the classroom walls upon the lesson's completion. It is also useful to designate a student (age permitting) to type/record (on a classroom computer) student responses for a note that will go to school administration and to each child's home; this will ensure parents and administrators are aware of the importance of the lesson and the group responsibilities that have been agreed upon.

An important next step would be to develop a Responsibilities/Accountability Contract that all parties can sign, acknowledge and support. It is important for teachers to use this Responsibility/Accountability Chart/Contract in a positive, proactive manner. Highlighting what students have done positively, versus negatively, is imperative. An example might shape itself this way.... "I do appreciate how Tim has....this demonstrates how responsible and accountable he is...well done Tim." Encouraging students to alert their teacher when someone is no longer modeling responsible or accountable behaviour is important. It is imperative that teachers model how they wish students to inform others of the breach of agreed upon behaviours and how to address potential differences in an agreeable and socially acceptable manner.

2.2 Rules and guidelines. Along with nurturing responsibility and accountability, teachers will also want to implement a lesson to establish rules and expectations for both students and teachers. The previous lesson plan on responsibility/accountability can be duplicated. Including student thoughts when establishing classroom behavioural expectations allows students to understand

and internalize guidelines that they have developed, collectively, as a cohesive unit. Teachers must be sure to guide students and record 6 or 7 appropriate classroom behavioural guidelines. Again, share the classroom guidelines with administration and parents via a note home (or any other means that the classroom teacher has designated as a way of keeping the lines of communication open and transparent between faculty and parents/guardians). The student, parent/guardian, teacher, and administrative team can sign an additional Behavioural Contract so that all stakeholders are aware of the behavioural expectations students have established. Again, the classroom teacher must be sure to highlight what a student is doing that is in accordance with the guidelines established versus what the student(s) are doing that is not.

It may take time and practice for students, and the teacher, to feel comfortable addressing agreed upon responsibilities and rules in a positive manner. It is important that all involved accept that any benefits will not be immediate and that it will take time to implement the proposed plan. Consistency, patience, and dedication to the process are required.

Having students understand their roles and the behavioural expectations in place will be beneficial for all. Ideally, students will interact in a more appropriate manner and teachers will begin to feel more satisfied and competent if their students are following rules and treating others with respect. As noted, job satisfaction and competence were issues related to abuse by teachers. This step toward providing a more inclusive classroom may help foster positive teacher-student interactions. Along with taking ownership over classroom guidelines, students must also be aware of their rights and their teachers' rights. A discussion of rights, as well as a method to implement a lesson on student and teachers rights, is provided next.

3 Students' Rights – Teachers' Rights

It is important for teachers and students in Ontario to understand their rights and the rights of others in the classroom. Having knowledge of rights will help establish a responsible educational setting in which all parties are equally respected (Apple, 1975). Stakeholders must be aware that teachers have the right to be treated with respect and dignity and students must be provided with a safe environment in which to learn (Apple, 1975).

Each child in Ontario receives a school agenda. Within the agenda is a section devoted to Ontario's Provincial Code of Conduct (Ministry of Education, 2001). The Code of Conduct covers a child's rights, a teacher's rights, behavioural expectations for students, and criteria under which students will be suspended or expelled from school. Teachers must know and embrace the rights that students have. It is also important that children, parents/guardians, and teachers are aware of the rights that teachers have. It must be impressed upon teachers, students, and parents/guardians that teachers have the right to instruct in a learning environment that is safe, and that conflict should be addressed in an appropriate manner. Just as a student's rights must be ensured, it is vital that a teacher's rights also be protected.

It should be mandatory that teachers know the rights that children have in the classroom and the rights they have. Principals must make certain that the Provincial Code of Conduct is understood (via a talk with staff and a proposed school assembly) and consistently followed by all school employees and students in order to ensure that the rights of all stakeholders are respected. The core concept of Ontario's Code of Conduct is for all to work, learn, and teach in a secure environment (Lee, 2006). To ensure that the goals of the Code of Conduct are understood, teachers should discuss with students what behaviours necessitate such an environment.

3.1 Key Points. There are a number of ways in which a discussion of rights can be initiated. Including advocacy group participation in the classroom and highlighting historical documents that delineate rights and responsibilities is a suggested first step. Public groups such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) provide schools with classroom visits and discussions that help students know their rights as Canadian citizens. Inviting such groups for assemblies would be invaluable and would help students avoid victimization (McEachern 2008). Learning opportunities such as these will help stakeholders be aware that students and teachers have clearly defined rights in Ontario.

As mentioned, all students in Ontario must be familiar with the expectations outlined in the Provincial Code of Conduct (Ministry of Education, 2001). An assembly sharing the concepts embedded in the code is necessary. Students must understand that there are consequences (not punishments) for their misbehaviors and that clearly defined consequences are in place. To ensure that a school is a safe and respectful place, the rights and responsibilities of teachers and students must be recognized; a lack of consistency for the standards in place may impact a teacher's job satisfaction and feelings of competence.

Rights, responsibilities, and the Code of Conduct must be upheld. A lack of administrative support may be an important factor in understanding why some teachers abuse. If teachers feel there is a lack of administrative support, they may resort to unacceptable methods for dealing with problematic student behaviours. Inconsistency, or a failure to implement the Provincial Code of Conduct, may erode a teacher's confidence and satisfaction; teachers need to trust that they can elicit assistance from school administration. Too often teachers and administrators fail to enforce the guidelines outlined in the Code of Conduct because they do not want to appear to be weak classroom managers, or school administrators (Leithwood, 2006). Therefore, administrators *must* implement the outlined consequences, as stipulated in the Code of Conduct. Consistency, as well as fairness and equity, must be in place

for all students. Teachers must be assured that they will receive the administrative support when they require it. A lesson on rights is presented next.

3.2 Implementation. An effective manner in which all participants are given an opportunity to articulate their thoughts regarding rights is to have an open discussion with students. Creating a Rights Chart is a strategy that can be used by teachers to encourage dialogue. To complete a Rights Chart, students are encouraged to share what they believe to be their rights as students in Ontario. A teacher's primary responsibility here is to facilitate the discussion and to record student responses. Once a list has been completed, the students then must consider what rights a teacher may have in a classroom. Giving students the opportunity to think about rights is an effective way for them to establish a collective voice. It is important that a Rights Chart be posted, shared with administrators, and provided to parents/guardians. Parents must be aware that *all* stakeholders in the classroom have rights as well as clearly defined responsibilities. A similar method for teaching students their rights and the rights of others can be undertaken.

3.3 Your rights/my rights. This lesson is divided into two smaller lessons; the first lesson focuses on the rights of the child and the second focuses on the rights of the teacher. Overall, this lesson will require approximately 60 minutes of instructional time. It is important to present the rights of the child first as this will allow students to grasp the concept of their own rights, which in turn encourages them to take the perspective of the others. Nurturing perspective taking will help students understand the rights that teachers have.

3.4 Rights of students. To start this lesson, ask students what they think the phrase "a person's rights," means; guide students as some may struggle to understand what rights might entail. For example, pose to the class questions such as, "Can a person go through your knapsack and take your lunch, why or why not?" "Can a person walk in to your house and take your television set, why or why not?" "Can a police officer stop you on the street and go through your belongings, why or why not?" Teachers must guide the discussion and be prepared to assist with rights that may be less obvious to students. Next, ask students what they believe a person's rights in Canada are? After a brief discussion, pose the questions, "Do children/students have rights?" and "What do you think a child's rights are, and why?" and record students' answers.

At this point, introduce the United Nations Charter of Rights for Children. Provide a copy for each pair of students. Teachers can now guide students through a shared and modeled reading exercise. As students read from the Charter, record key points of the Charter on the blackboard and discuss the central points to ensure that students understand. Ask students if they are surprised that there is a Charter of Rights for *all* children around the world? Why are they surprised? Ask students if they believe it is important to have a Charter of Rights for Children. At this point, probe into the idea regarding what may, or should happen, if a child's rights are violated at home, on the playground, or in the classroom? Guide students in a discussion of who a student could talk to if their rights are violated, how they could go about getting help if they needed it, and who they, specifically, could talk to. In addition, discuss with students what they could do if a student or a teacher in the school was violating their or their peers' rights and be sure to record student ideas. Stress the belief that these problems can be resolved in a positive manner. Ask students what resolving problems in a positive manner means and what this may look like by guiding them in a discussion of how they have resolved problems in a positive manner in the past.

It is important to reinforce, revisit, and to nurture these points regarding rights throughout the year by focusing on how students are respecting the rights of one another.

Display the United Nations Charter on the walls of the classroom and also introduce, throughout the year, literature, films, and other materials that may nurture the concepts covered.

3.5 Rights of teachers. Review some of the points that were raised in the previous lesson regarding a child's rights and then ask students if they believe teachers have rights. Brainstorm with students what a teacher's rights may be. Display, within the classroom, the rights of teachers (as determined by the students) adjacent to where the student's rights are posted. Students will see the similarities in the rights of students and teachers; it is compelling to see students make the connection that they share many of the same rights that teachers do. Teachers must highlight, in a positive manner, when students are mindful of a teacher's rights.

As part of a democratic classroom, it is important to have all participants know their rights (McEachern, 2008); a discussion of rights must include both those of the student and the teacher. By understanding and appreciating specific roles, responsibilities, accountability, and rights, teachers are beginning to establish classrooms based on the pillars of democracy. The next stage in developing a democratic classroom is to elicit student involvement in curriculum planning and assessment.

4 Curriculum Implementation

In traditional classrooms, curriculum is selected and implemented by the teacher; however, democratic classrooms allow students a say in what and how they learn. A democratic classroom includes not only what teachers think is important to include in each unit of study, but also the questions, concerns, and interests that students may have about themselves and their world.

In such a model, students shed their roles as receptacles into which teachers impart knowledge; instead, students begin to make connections with lesson content in which they have helped formulate.

Knowledge and course content takes on new meaning for students and teachers when it is connected to something that is serious and relatable to real-life problems and issues that students may face (Apple, 1995). Rather than being lists of concepts, facts, and skills that students regurgitate for testing, knowledge becomes something that is connected to the lives of the students and the people around them. Students learn that knowledge makes a difference in their lives (Apple, 1995) and that power, information, and application of what is meaningful are of paramount importance. Curriculum implementation includes involving students in understanding the curriculum that is going to be used and selecting relevant and meaningful topics for students to study. These important points are discussed below.

4.1 Understanding and selecting curriculum. If students are involved in selecting curriculum content, they will become invested in their learning. It is important that students and teachers engage in collaborative planning and decision-making that respond to the concerns and interests of both student and teacher (Apple, 1995). Giving students input into what they learn acknowledges their experiences (Connell, 1985). The first stage of curriculum implementation is to guide students through the curriculum. Once students are aware of the boundaries within which decisions regarding curriculum will be made, they are in a position to negotiate their own interests within the content. Students who have knowledge of grade mandated learning requirements are in a better position to select dimensions of the curriculum that would be most interesting and relevant to them.

4.2 Evaluation. The issue of student assessment often confounds educators. Teachers must determine how well a student is demonstrating their knowledge of the content for each

unit of study. A democratic classroom allows students to be involved in determining how they will be evaluated and how best they can demonstrate their knowledge. As part of the evaluation process, it is important to involve students in the discussion of why they are learning specific material and how such learning is going to be evaluated (Kohn, 1993). In this paradigm, students in the classroom help determine the assessment criteria upon which to evaluate their work (Kohn, 1993). This is not to say that students will write their own tests, it merely suggests that students have a say in how best they feel they can demonstrate what they have learned. For example, instead of administering a multiple-choice assessment, students may prefer to write a short story that incorporates concepts learned to demonstrate their knowledge and ability to apply the information; others may prefer to develop a website that incorporates their understanding. As long as students are able to show that they have met curriculum requirements, the methods through which they demonstrate their knowledge may be negotiable.

4.3 Key points for teachers. By sharing power in the classroom, redefining the roles students and teachers have played, and rethinking tried assessment measures may appear to require a leap in faith and a change in pedagogy; however, this need not be the case. Having meaningful dialogue with students may be an important step when establishing a democratic classroom.

Careful planning of any introductory lesson is of the utmost importance, as this will set the tone for the classroom. By actively involving students, a unit of study becomes “theirs,” (i.e., “ours,” “my art piece,” and “my drama suggestion”) versus a series of tasks forced upon them. Like students, teachers who are told material to cover, how to cover it, when to cover it, and how to evaluate it, lose enthusiasm for their work (Kohn, 1993).

5 Implementation. Introduce a curriculum document to the group; the Grade 6 Social Studies/Aboriginal Canadians unit will be used as an example. Before dispersing the curriculum, let students know that they will have a hand in the creation of the unit, the activities used, and how their work will be assessed. It is important to stress that it would be almost impossible to cover all of the curriculum highlights and that it is important that the class complete 6 or 7 highlights well versus doing the majority of them poorly. Hand out the required curriculum documents to each pair of students and lead them through a guided, modeled, and shared reading opportunity. Remind students that as they read along, to put up their hand and share their work ideas with the class. Stress the need, as the teacher, for students to try to generate ideas that can be addressed in math, geography, physical education, art, drama, reading, and writing. Record ideas as they are generated by capturing them under the specific subject areas; for example, mark each suggestion as an art idea, a writing idea, a math connection, a drama dimension. Encouraging students to share their cross-curricular lesson ideas validates their thoughts and helps students make important connections to their work. Dividing the blackboard into curricular sections is advisable in order to record student-generated ideas. Be certain to record the student’s name beside his or her idea as this motivates students to get involved in generating activities. As the lesson continues, solicit from students what they think would be considered applicable critical thinking questions for a written paper and pencil summative assessment piece; record these ideas and build upon them. Once students’ ideas have been shared, it is advisable to have those students who introduced a specific idea assist in preparing *their* lesson (i.e., art preparation, leading a drama idea, introducing a writing piece). If a student has suggested an applicable written assessment question, be sure that their name goes beside the specific question: for example, Jamal’s Question: “How are Aboriginal and European Cultures alike?” “How are

they different?” Explain with pictures and with words. An additional idea would be to place a suggestion box in the classroom in order to collect further student ideas and suggestions.

The unit of study implementation scheme adheres to the principles of *The Backward Design of Unit Preparation* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The Backward Design starts with culminating/summative tasks and assessment pieces before formally beginning a unit. This gives a unit of study a direction. The unit becomes “our unit of study.” By rethinking what is taught, how it is taught, and how learning is assessed, students may feel greater ownership of what they learn. Teachers may feel more competent and satisfied with their jobs when their students are learning with enthusiasm.

6 Summary

Effective teaching focuses on the importance of providing learning and growth opportunities for students that are designed to engage students (Friesen, 2009). The result in this shift is a deeper commitment by students to explore and internalize their ideas and for them to establish meaningful connections to their work. Involving students in curriculum decisions is a significant step when ensuring that enduring and authentic understanding take place (Friesen, 2009).

Students and teachers must fully understand their roles and responsibilities in a classroom. Students’ rights and a teacher’s rights in the classroom must become an integral part of the school dynamic. All parties involved must realize their overlapping accountability to one another. Embracing the tenets of responsibility and accountability must be initiated early on in the year and nurtured continuously. Administrative corroboration plays an important role when supporting students and teachers so that students’ and a teachers’ rights are protected. For example, administrators can intervene when an issue of a right violation is brought to their attention. Giving students an opportunity to shape the activities they engage in allows them to feel connected to their learning. Teachers can map out activities for students that reflect their varied interests. Sharing responsibility, accountability, and the planning of curriculum related subject matter is an attempt to rethink the roles that students and teachers have played in the traditional classroom. Realizing that students have a right to have their thoughts and opinions validated may provide the necessary vehicle for positive change in the student-teacher dynamic. Bringing parents, teachers, students and administrators together with a common vision and shared responsibility is an integral dimension of collaborative education; teacher accountability is at the heart of this movement (Canada, 2006).

The discussion, sharing, and shaping of lessons by all classroom participants is empowering. This investment in time, and a teacher’s willingness to share power in the classroom, may pay immediate dividends; giving students a voice when determining behavioural guidelines, course content, lesson delivery, and assessment may benefit all educators. A discussion of the effects of the democratic classroom is presented next.

6.1 Effects of the democratic classroom

Teachers and students benefit from a democratic classroom. The result of including student interests when planning and implementing lessons may be a more harmonious, cohesive classroom unit with all participants moving in a predetermined, agreed upon, and mutually fulfilling direction.

Teachers may feel more competent and satisfied when students show interest and enthusiasm for their work. Students who are invested in their learning are likely to be more focused and interested in tasks and thus less likely to misbehave. A teacher is more likely to feel competent, confident, and satisfied with their job when students are enthused. By

reshaping the power dynamic in the classroom, there is likely to be an improvement in the overall health of the classroom.

7 Summary. The ways in which schools are structured may require a shift in pedagogy. Teaching students how to be responsible may be accomplished by implementing teaching strategies that embrace student ideas regarding course content and evaluation, which ensures that students' voices are heard and valued. Ideally, the result would be reflected in a student's greater sense of commitment to themselves, their fellow students, and the classroom teacher. Sharing power in the classroom and its inherent advantages may improve a student and teacher's interactions. Additionally, having all school participants aware of their rights and that these rights are articulated, shared, and become public knowledge is a foundational principle that should be impressed upon all. Teachers and students need assurances that their rights will not be infringed upon and that there are consistent behavioural expectations for both; not protecting rights likely contributes to unacceptable levels of stress for both teachers and students. Workshops of this nature have proven to be invaluable for staff development, cohesion and a better sense of morale between colleagues and students (Burnard & Yaxley, 2000). Staff members need to know that there is a place and a forum to discuss the difficulties they are having in the classroom in a non-judgmental environment in which teacher's dialogue and share their concerns and the success strategies they have been able to implement. A collective "shared brain," is initiated through dialogue and contributes positively to a teacher's sense of job satisfaction and competence (Burnard & Yaxley, 2000). The most effective schools are the ones that bring the many problems associated with classroom management into sharp focus with all staff contributing, listening, and empathizing with one another (Burnard & Yaxley, 2000).

Reexamining stereotypical roles and dispersing power in the classroom may help students and teachers see themselves in a new and mutually beneficial manner. Training both pre-service and veteran teachers to work collaboratively with students, managing the many issues that may negatively affect teachers, and soliciting support from school administration could be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, on-line workshops and information sessions could be provided or small group sessions that focus on training teacher mentors could be initiated.

A number of strategies to implement a democratic classroom have been provided. Teachers can use these to help students understand the responsibilities of those in the school setting. In addition, details on how to assist students in taking ownership in the units of study to be addressed through the school year are included. Ultimately, the goal of including students in the decision-making process is to encourage a fair, equitable, and healthy classroom and school.

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