

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES

**ECUR 898.3 (01) RE/PRESENTING FAMILIES IN SCHOOLS
Summer, 2010**

Monday, July 19th through Saturday, July 24th 9 a.m. – noon
Thursday, July 22nd 6 – 9 p.m.
Monday, July 26th through Friday, July 30th 9 a.m. - noon
Tuesday, July 27th 6 - 9 p.m.
Room 2001, Education Building

Enrolment Limit: 20

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As teachers, we must be concerned with, and work to better understand, the families of the children we teach. In order to educate the whole child, we have to be part of a community of learners that includes the family of that child. When we understand that, then we can begin to work at developing educational programs that do not deny what those closest to the child have to offer. We can develop the climate in our classrooms that embraces parents rather than shuns them.

(Brock, in Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010, p. 142)

Course Description

Representations of families exist everywhere – in literature and media, in our lived experiences of family and stories of others’ experiences, in curriculum documents and subject matter materials. Course members will explore dominant social, cultural and institutional narratives about families which underpin these representations and consider the influence they have on curriculum-making and decision-making in schools. Through interrogating course readings alongside experiences with families, course members will work to interrupt their living out of these dominant narratives as they discover ways to use knowledge that resides in families to co-construct educational experiences for children.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to enhance teachers’ understanding of discourses and representations of families and the influence of these representations on curriculum-making in schools. It is further

designed to challenge teachers to rethink and remake their curricular practices in light of this new found understanding. In this course, teachers will:

- gain a depth of experience in family contexts.
- understand that each family has unique knowledge, culture, rhythm and context.
- learn ways to respond to the social and learning needs of First Nations and Métis students, as well as students from a variety of other cultures, including immigrant and refugee populations, within a culturally-affirming and family and community-based approach to education.
- explore the practical implications of racism, privilege, oppression and poverty in educational settings.
- develop a sound philosophy regarding the knowledge that resides in families; learn the benefits for students, families, communities, and staff in schools of using parent/family knowledge in decisions regarding teaching and learning; enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to translate this philosophy into practice.
- re-conceptualize the schooling of children in the context of family and community; learn ways as an educator to step out of the school into the community.

Course Readings

Required Readings:

Allen, J., Fabregas, V., Hankens, K. H., Hull, G., Labbo, L., Lawson, H. S., et al. (2002). Pholks lore: Learning from photographs, families, and children. *Language Arts*, 79(4), 312.

Cowhey, M. (2006). *black ants and buddhists*. Portland, Main: Stenhouse Publishers.

Giovacco-Johnson, T. (2009). Portraits of partnership: The hopes and dreams project. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37, 127-135.

Kauffman, R. & Briski, Z. (2005). *Born into brothels* [Documentary]. United States: Think Film Company Inc.

Miller Marsh, M. & Turner-Vorbeck, T. (2010) (Eds.) *(Mis)understanding families: Learning from real families in our schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pushor, D. (2009, May). The situation of parents in the curricular commonplaces: A place of equal rank? *LEARNing Landscapes*, 2, (2), 139-154.

Shah, S.P. (2005, Spring). *Born into saving brothel children*. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from: <http://www.samarmagazine.org/archive/article.php?id=190>

Sharpe, P.L. (April 30, 2005). "Born into Brothels" stars the good fairy, really, not the kids. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from: http://whirledview.typepad.com/whirledview/2005/04/born_into_broth_1.html

Turner-Vorbeck, T. & Miller Marsh, M. (2008). (Eds.) *Other kinds of families: Embracing diversity in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wikipedia. (n.d.) *Born into brothels*. Retrieved on March 22, 2010 from:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_into_Brothels

Selected Readings:

Carpenter, L. & emerald, e. (2009). *Stories from the margin: Mothering a child with ADHD or ASD*. Teneriffe: Post Pressed.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L.C. & Amanti, C. (2005). (Eds.) *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Reggio Children.(2000). *Reggio Tutta: A guide to the city by the children*. Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children srl.

Saskatchewan Learning. (2004). *Building communities of hope: Effective practices for meeting the diverse learning needs of children and youth. Community schools policy and conceptual framework. Revised 2004*. Regina, SK: Author.

Shimoni, R. & Baxter, J. (2005). *Working with families: Perspectives for early childhood professionals*. Toronto: Pearson.

Proposed Class Schedule

Class 1: What is “family”?

- notions of family
- “good” mother/”good” father
- dominant narratives of families
- portrayal of families in literature and media

Class 2: Telling and unpacking our own family stories

- narrative writing
- Where I’m From poems
- word images
- artifacts

Class 3: Interrogating family stories

- beliefs and assumptions
- bias and stereotypes
- othering

Class 4: Explicit, null and hidden curriculum of families

- formal and informal curriculum

- considering the total school experience
- planned and unplanned outcomes

Class 5: Viewing *Born into Brothels*

- examining the discourse of family in the film
- examining the Zani's beliefs and assumptions
- examining the explicit, null and hidden curriculum of "Kids with Cameras"

Class 6: Learning Photo/Voice

- as a methodology
- as a way of knowing families

Class 7: Participation in a Sweatlodge

- elder teachings
- First Nations view of children/family
- as a way of knowing more of First Nations culture

Class 8: Exploring Formal Curriculum Documents and Resources

- curricular aims, goals, objectives, foundational principles
- specific curricula/units of study
- resource materials
- children's literature

Class 9: Rethinking Practice

- identifying specific practices
- interrogating them through the lenses of explicit, null and hidden curriculum
- re-imagining/re-planning these practices

Class 10: Poverty Workshop

- participation in a poverty workshop facilitated and debriefed by the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition

Class 11: Seeing Families as Strength-Based

- parent knowledge
- funds of knowledge
- cultural knowledge
- other kinds of families

Class 12: Toward a "curriculum of family"

- considering what is needed in teacher education (content and process) to prepare teachers to work with families and to engage in curriculum-making alongside them

Class 13: Photo/Voice Displays and Discussion

- synthesizing key ideas from the course
- "So what?" "Now what?"

Course Assignments

To arrive at a final mark, students must attend and participate in classes, and complete the course requirements as outlined in this syllabus. Descriptors provided by the College of Graduate Studies and Research will be used to assess the nature of your work (<http://www.usask.ca/calendar/gradstudies/additional/grading/>).

Photo/Voice Project (30%)

The curriculum of photo/voice is the photographic images of daily life as depicted by family members. In our context, it will involve course members:

- selecting a family, different from their own, with whom to work and learn in relationship
- providing a camera for parents and perhaps other family members, so they can record images of aspects of their home and community which they deem important,
- talking with them about their photographs so they can share their knowledge, perspectives, and understandings with you,
- creating with them a form of presentation of the photo/voice, which includes both images and voice (e.g. photo album with text, photo display with text, iMovie, Powerpoint, installation)
- sharing the photo/voice in a class exhibition
- interrogating the process and product of the photo/voice projects in relation to how family and community contexts can inform their understanding of curriculum and schooling.

The photo/voice projects will provide an opportunity for course members to see families, homes, and communities through the eyes of family members – rather than through their own eyes as outsiders looking in.

For more information on photovoice, please visit www.photovoice.com.

To view a photovoice project done locally, *Looking Out/Looking In: Women, Poverty, and Public Policy*, please visit http://www.pwhce.ca/program_poverty_photovoice.htm

Rethinking Curriculum-Making (30%)

Course members will examine a recent experience of curriculum-making within their own practice, in relation to notions of family and curriculum implicitly and explicitly being lived out within it. Such experiences could include:

- a planned unit of study, inquiry focus, theme or big idea
- their selection of children's literature
- activities to get to know students at the beginning of a new school year
- their use of curricular resources.

In light of course readings, discussions, and activities, course members will interrogate this curriculum experience, attending to family structures depicted, discourses of families, un/conscious beliefs and assumptions, biases, stereotypes, and taken-for-grantedness. They will then reconsider and re-imagine/re-plan the experience in a way that opens spaces for families to be viewed and positioned in ways that are complex, multiple, knowing, visible and present.

Reading Responses (40%)

1. *Family stories/stories of families*
2. *Explicit, null and hidden curriculum in relation to families*
3. *Other kinds of families*
4. *Knowledge that resides in families*

For each of the above four course topics, class members will:

- do a quick write prior to the readings/experiences to detail what they presently believe, feel, know and understand about the topic
- after their readings/experiences, they will write a five page synthesis that details their growth in understanding about this topic
 - how have their beliefs been shaped/influenced/challenged/affirmed
 - what greater knowledge/understanding/skill do they now have to translate these beliefs into practice in family and school contexts
 - what have their most significant learnings been and why

This is intended to be an honest account of course members' personal and professional growth and their shifts in thinking and identity as teachers. The purpose of the responses is to examine the philosophical, theoretical and pedagogical concepts presented in the readings in relation to their contextual, practical and personal understandings of families and schools.