

Unlocking the Potential of Aboriginal Students

Viewing Guide

The following are suggestions to facilitate reflection, discussions and plans for action among educators at all levels of our education system.

BEFORE VIEWING THE WEBCAST:

Prior to viewing, consider the following questions:

- What expectations do I have for Aboriginal students?
- How does the classroom program address and reflect the cultural context, experiences and learning styles of these students?
- Which strategies are effective in actively engaging Aboriginal students?
- How do we ensure that the strategies are inclusive, relevant and holistic?
- How does the curriculum ensure, invite and provide for relevant learning for Aboriginal students?
- In what ways do school/community connections and partnerships enhance Aboriginal student experiences?
- How do we ensure that *'no doors are closed'* for Aboriginal students as they make successful future educational choices?

DURING THE VIEWING:

While viewing consider:

- Strategies that may be useful:
- Strategies to explore further:
- Resources to investigate:
- Factors that impact on your personal and professional context
 - What will I continue to do?
 - What will I stop doing?
 - What will I change?

POST VIEWING:

After viewing the webcast, think about the following questions and activities as you reflect on the issues that have been raised during the viewing. These questions are intended to stimulate discussion, reflection and lead to action.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What am I already doing that was validated in this presentation?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What made me uncomfortable? Why?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What obstacles may contribute to undermining efforts to improve the education of Aboriginal students?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the key strategies in this webcast that may prove effective in overcoming these obstacles?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What strategies can I effect immediately (short-term) and which can I work towards (long-term)?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What resources would I like to access?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would I like to know more about?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did I learn that I did not know before?	

Quotable Quotes:

To extend your discussion:

The following quotations represent the experts' current thinking on the topic of improving Aboriginal student achievement. They align with some of the key messages and themes shared by webcast participants. They are intended to be used as a springboard for professional dialogue. It is through dialogue and reflection that insights will emerge to facilitate and foster new learnings on this very important topic.

<p><i>"Given the symbolic importance of the knowledge systems that permeate educational content and processes, Aboriginal language and literacy programs are essential to the development of Aboriginal nations and the Canadian state."</i> (Hebert in Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise, 2000)</p>
<p><i>"The time has come to move beyond the influences of linguistics and of technical approaches to language curriculum and to embrace more holistic, experiential, communicative, and multidimensional approaches."</i> (Hebert in Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise, 2000)</p>
<p><i>"There is no inherent contradiction in studying the importance of Louis Riel in Prairie history and mastering geometry. What community leaders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal need to do is encourage learning that embodies both Aboriginal culture and the core academic skills and knowledge that contemporary society requires."</i>(Richards, 2006)</p>
<p><i>Increasing success rates for Aboriginal students is one of Canada's most pressing educational challenges. As the acquisition of literacy skills is fundamental to student achievement, it is important to build our knowledge base about what works in K-12 literacy and language instruction in Aboriginal settings."</i> (Raham, 2004)</p>
<p><i>"It was noted that learning problems appeared to emerge when children [Aboriginal] entered school fluent in neither their own language or English."</i> (Raham, 2004)</p>
<p><i>"Without better research and data, we won't know where we are, where we want to go, and if we are getting there."</i> (Henchey, 2005)</p>
<p><i>"This means that the school must have a culture or ethos that values Aboriginal culture, that includes Aboriginal ideas, languages and rituals in its curriculum, and one that recognizes different ways of learning in its practices."</i> (Henchey, 2005)</p>
<p><i>"There are certain distinctive features of what may be called an "Aboriginal culture of learning" but our understanding and appreciation of this culture may need to be deepened and extended."</i> (Moving Forward, 2005)</p>
<p><i>"We believe that Aboriginal parents and Aboriginal communities must have the opportunity to implement their vision of education. ... It is vital that Aboriginal parents and families be able to become involved, articulating and shaping the education they want for their children."</i> (RCAP, 1996, pp. 442 – 443)</p>
<p><i>"For Aboriginal people, first languages and culture are crucial components in the transformative learning process."</i> (Hebert in Aboriginal Education: Fulfilling the Promise, 2000)</p>

Please forward any comments, input and insights to:

Cauleen Stanley
Student Achievement Officer
Literacy & Numeracy Secretariat
cauleen.stanley@edu.gov.on.ca