

**A Pedagogy of Caring Leads to Reciprocal Relationships, Engagement, and Emotional
Well-Being in Education**

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Abstract

This paper is set in the context of my educational experience in the Masters of Education program and as an educator. I was born into the upper middle class, am a Caucasian woman, and am part of the privileged culture, which has greatly influenced my social location and identity. My education experience comes from working as a teacher in Elementary and Middle schools. I hear comments from my colleagues like, “I am not my student’s friend” and “If they are scared of you, you are doing something right.” even though they deeply care about their students. There is a gap in knowledge on how to create a reciprocal caring relationship that needs to be filled. Teachers are burning out, and students don’t feel cared for. If education were based on caring, students would be more engaged in their learning and have better mental health (Noddings, 2005). I have found that connecting with students on a deeper level makes students enjoy coming to school and want to learn. The experience we want to create and what the students experience is vastly different. Research shows that only one-third of students feel like an adult at school cares for them. This statistic is unacceptable and embodies the need to switch to a pedagogy of caring. If tangible steps down this path are taken, students can increase their capacity to care in all aspects of their life, their drive to learn, and their mental health. A pedagogy of caring is also a tangible way for educators to work towards reconciliation and meet some of the calls to action for Indigenous youth.

Keywords: pedagogy of caring, Nel Noddings, education, achievement, well-being

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Chapter One: Introduction

My Social Location

I began to think about my social location and how it affects my worldview in the M.Ed. Diversity course, and this section outlines my realizations from that class. My social location and identity have had an overwhelming influence on my life, education, and how I think about a pedagogy of caring. My race, social class, gender and culture, to name a few, greatly influence my life and the opportunities that I have. Understanding the effects of my social location and identity is vital in understanding and celebrating others. As Peggy McIntosh (1990) describes, I have an invisible knapsack of special provisions. I was not aware of the power and privilege I received for my social location until early adulthood. Looking back at my life, I consistently saw myself represented in media, role models such as teachers, and the community. I never questioned my sense of belonging. It hurts me to know many children do not feel this way, and it is something I work towards mending with a pedagogy of caring.

My social class provided me with many opportunities in life. I was raised in an upper-middle-class family and benefitted from this emotionally, socially and educationally. My gender is where I uncover the most disadvantages while examining my social position. Throughout my life, small put-downs and limitations have been placed on me, which have affected my worldview. I identify as heterosexual, and my gender expression matches my gender identity and biological sex. Again, this social location puts me in the dominant societal group and makes my life easier. Geographically, I am from a small northern town in British Columbia. While I would not describe my community as having high diversity, the Indigenous population is the largest

minority group, followed by Indo-Canadians. I was part of the dominant group in my location and had the privilege of never being forced to think about racism while growing up.

I will continue to reflect on how my life and others are influenced by systemic advantages and disadvantages to encourage inclusivity and a caring environment.

Developing My Interest in this Topic

A culmination of learning experiences in my M.Ed. program led to my interest in curating better relationships in schools through a pedagogy of caring. In Philosophy and History of Education, I read Nel Noddings' (2005) book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*. As I was reading her philosophy, it deeply resonated with me because it felt like her book was describing my beliefs and outlining how I could put them into practice. Nel Noddings values loving relations over money and power, nurturing the capacity to care, and respecting one's interests, which align closely with my values. The Diversity course helped to open my eyes to who the school system is made for and how there are many places we fall short in providing equitable education. Providing a caring, safe environment became more important to me after this learning. School is not a safe place for everyone like it was for me.

Each course in the program provided me with a different perspective on how I can provide a caring community. I thoroughly enjoyed an elective that I took called *Learning Through Play*. It helped me understand how I can follow students' interests and create an enjoyable learning environment that respects their funds of knowledge. Giving learners this space and respect is one way to show I care. Through my Leadership course, I learned how to contribute towards a positive school culture for teachers and students. Before this class, I did not see myself, a new teacher, as a leader in the school. After, I saw how I could contribute as a transformational leader, especially regarding a caring philosophy.

As I have developed my interest in caring pedagogies, I have experienced many transformational learning experiences. I have discovered the importance of caring for myself the hard way so I can better serve my students. I taught grade one for the first time during the pandemic at an urban school. It required lots of prep, I was isolated from my friends and family, and I was not feeling well mentally for the first time in my life. Incidentally, it was the most challenging year I have had in terms of student behaviour and lack of connection with the students. They were lovely children, but I could not form my side of the reciprocal relationship as I usually do because I was not doing well. This experience showed me the importance of including myself in a pedagogy of caring, and not just students. I have also found how challenging it is to implement a pedagogy of caring in practice. While it sounds theoretically clear, putting it into practice is another hurdle. Each year, I improve in creating a caring culture, but I know I fall short. Statistics show that a large demographic of children do not feel cared for, even when teachers like myself are doing their best. Learning this shocked me and made me question why and how this was happening. My desire to learn more about pedagogies based on caring was solidified as I tried to answer these questions and reach all learners.

Significance of the Topic

In a school setting, instilling a pedagogy of caring would impact teachers and students in a meaningful way. Teachers are burning out, and students do not feel cared for. If education were based on caring, students would be more engaged in their learning and have better mental health. If tangible steps are taken towards a pedagogy of caring, students and teachers can increase their capacity to care in many aspects of their life, their drive to learn, and their mental health. In the broader context, students' families will be more connected to the school, which further benefits the system. Looking into the future, a pedagogy of caring will shift the type of citizens our

school system produces for the better. Being able to form connections will benefit students in all aspects of their lives long after they leave the walls of our schools.

Argument

I argue that caring relationships are not being curated in schools and that a pedagogy of caring should be implemented. While most teachers value caring relationships, there is a divide between the experience educators strive to create and the student's perception of the school culture (Noddings, 2005). Unfortunately, many students feel like no adults care about them at school, yet most teachers want students to feel cared for. Dr. Brokenleg (2017) claims that many youths have no bonds to significant adults, which leads them to search for belonging in unhealthy ways. He calls on schools to create new "tribes" for learners, which can be done through a pedagogy of caring (Brokenleg). Through the literature review, the benefits a pedagogy of caring can have are explored. Engagement, emotional well-being, and meeting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action can all be aided by implementing this approach. Chapter three discusses tangible ways teachers can use a pedagogy of caring to fill the gap between teachers' intended and experienced school culture. The implications of a caring pedagogy for students and teachers are robust, and it is integral that these strategies are implemented in schools.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Divide Between the Intended and Experienced School Culture

Most teachers want their students to feel cared for and be able to form their own caring relationships, but this is not what always happens. Teachers and students need a new approach that is going to support the formation of caring relationships. Nel Noddings' (2005) book *The Challenge to Care in Schools* describes the importance of nurturing the capacity to care in

education. Currently, this is a severely lacking skill. In a survey of girl scouts, only one-third of students felt cared for by their teacher (Noddings). Nel Noddings' philosophy would help mend the divide between the intended and experienced school culture.

Engagement and Achievement

Educators in my school are constantly striving to increase engagement and achievement in their students. Nel Noddings (2005) critiques liberal education because it draws on limited human capacities, is too general, and does not prepare learners for specific occupations. Many students are not mastering coursework because "they do not care" (Noddings, p. 35). When students care about their learning, they will be more engaged and have higher achievement. Having caring relationships enables students' needs to be met and leads to success (Barrow, 2015). That is why Noddings explains at length the importance of caring relations. When teachers show students that they care by respecting their interests, students will have higher buy-in. This allows students to see themselves in their learning and make meaningful connections. Teachers can use their teaching knowledge, paired with an increased focus on caring teaching strategies, to create an environment that "promotes inclusion and equitable outcomes for all students" (Moen et al., 2020, p. 1015). When students care about academics, higher achievement and better mental health will follow (Almroth et al., 2021).

Some institutions may disagree with this claim and put their focus on increasing student success in other ways. In Japan, Fernandez & Yoshida (2004) explain how professional development through teacher collaboration has a positive effect on student success. Although, a caring pedagogy sets a foundation where teachers and students can thrive in many areas, including but not limited to teacher collaboration and student success. The following section explores how a caring pedagogy can support the emotional well-being of teachers and students.

Emotional Well-Being of Teachers and Students

Schools need leadership to use caring philosophies to focus on mental well-being, which is more important than ever due to the coronavirus. It has been challenging to navigate the heightened need as a classroom leader. Children have been dealing with the pandemic's effects for a long time, which leads to chronic stress (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). This affects them mentally and physically. I have observed the toll it has taken on the children in my class, which is why well-being is an integral goal of mine more than ever before. The children respond to the safe space and have more caring relationships and academic success. It is essential that students feel that they are cared for and that the relationship is reciprocal (Noddings, 2012). Children will be more able to participate in self-care when educators engage with and model these activities (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). So, teacher well-being is just as important as student well-being.

If teachers are stressed and burnt out, they will not be able to function or create positive change effectively (Leithwood, 2007). Sometimes in school initiatives, the missing piece of the puzzle is taking care of the teachers' mental health. The pandemic has been stressful for educators, which depletes their capacity for growth. If the goal is to create a culture based on caring, the staff's mental health needs to be addressed first. The need for a solid foundation of emotional well-being is a necessary step to creating an optimally functioning school community. Hawthorn's studies have shown that productivity will rise if employees' mental state is nurtured (Uddin & Hossain, 2015). So, not only with a pedagogy based on caring benefit students' well-being, but it is also integral for teachers.

Teachers Need for a Pedagogy of Caring

A pedagogy of caring can influence how the education system is structured and how teachers navigate that system. A high level of teacher autonomy will need to be in place because

they are close to the children and see their needs. Policymakers are so far away from the actual learners, and it is challenging to have caring relations from a distance (Noddings, 2005).

Students should stay with the same teacher for multiple years. This can create stability and a sense of belonging, one of people's greatest needs. In this stable setting, educators will be set up for success to show students they care and teach them how to have caring relations themselves.

A safe learning space and the freedom to follow one's interests would create a more mentally healthy and caring society. Noddings' philosophy influences humanity to move to a more pluralistic culture where teachers do not have to make all their students learn the same content to do their job well. Not only are teachers in need of a caring pedagogy, but the need from students is even greater.

Students Need for a Pedagogy of Caring

Students need a pedagogy of caring in order to have the capacity to complete reciprocal relationships. Caring for self, people close and distant, ideas, and the environment are critical and should be developed through education (Noddings, 2005). Noddings calls for fifty percent of education to be focused on caring. The curriculum needs to reflect what is truly important. She challenges the reader to alter how we think about success. More money and power should not be the goal; loving relations, wisdom and happiness are much more worthy of students' time. Noddings highlights six ways educators can start in schools to create loving and competent people. If this program were implemented, it would significantly affect students' school experience.

Noddings' philosophies will cause a drastic overhaul of the curriculum and the type of citizens it creates. Currently, teachers provide choice but within the narrow parameters of liberal education. The curriculum lacks technical skills and real-world experience that could connect

students to their learning. Forcing material on people is something that Nodding (2005) questions the morality of. However, it is something that happens in almost all classes every day. Education in Canada is focused on numeracy and literacy when it could be following students' interests. If Nodding's philosophies were implemented, all the students unengaged in numeracy and literacy could ignite their love for learning under a curriculum organized by "themes of care" (Noddings, p. 70).

I would be eager to add more of Nodding's philosophy to my school district. Many teachers talk about the struggle to engage students. This can be partly attributed to education's narrow scope and the fact that most material is forced onto all children. If learners could follow their interests and be taught to care, as Nodding (2005) describes, engagement would rise steeply. Instead of controlling all aspects of education, we should "accept students' legitimate aims and desires" (Noddings, p. 152). The school system has many stressors like assessments, budget cuts, and staffing shortages. If the district adopted a philosophy of caring, the administration could combat the detrimental effects these have on the caring relationships of students. Also, it would lead to a culture where caring for yourself was encouraged because "everything we care about is caught up in concerns about self" (Noddings, p. 74). Due to the rise of technology, many more of our caring relations are from a distance. Moral disengagement is more common when interacting from afar, and creating a reciprocal caring relationship is challenging. Focusing on Noddings' philosophy would help learners create meaningful relationships in the new age of technology, be engaged, take care of their mental well-being, and could lead to meeting some of the TRC's calls to action.

Meeting TRC's Calls to Action With Caring

I look at the TRC's calls to action that implicate education practitioners and think about how they could be met through a pedagogy of caring. Education is vital to reconciliation and is referred to many times in the document (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Developing a capacity to care is critical because it influences the emotional well-being of students, including Indigenous learners. Students need a caring adult in their life because “children need loving, committed, and consistent adults around them if they are to bloom fully” (Brokenleg, 2014, p. 13). Along with parents, teachers are important adults in the lives of many children. Schools have fallen short when it comes to their Indigenous population and creating caring relationships. Action 62 i., “Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement” (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015, p. 7), profoundly stood out to me. It brings light to the need for a curriculum that educates society about Aboriginal Peoples' history. Unfortunately, past and present institutional practices make it very challenging for First Nation people by systemically marginalizing or pathologizing difference, which needs to change with the implementation of an inclusive curriculum that celebrates diversity (Guo, 2012). For teachers to celebrate diversity, they need to know about students and their culture, which is one of the key elements in creating caring relationships (Moen et al., 2020). Educators need to create a meaningful learning environment and show they care by honouring the teachings and knowledge within Indigenous communities (Oskineegish, 2015).

The TRC's call to action number 63 iii. inspires me as an educator (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Imagine how our society would value diversity if teachers "built student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect" (Truth and Reconciliation, p. 7) as stated in the call to action 63 iii.. In response, teachers need to integrate

equitable representation into day-to-day classroom activities to work towards intercultural understanding. This lends itself to another key element of creating caring relationships. It includes implementing caring teaching strategies in daily lessons, so students have the capacity for intercultural understanding and empathy (Moen et al., 2020).

Noddings Compared to Other Influential Philosophers

Noddings looks at education differently from ancient and medieval philosophers like Descartes and Aristotle but is more similar to early education philosophers in the modern age. While early philosophers may value different subject matter, aspects could still be useful while following a curriculum based on caring. Socrates placed value on liberal education but also on pursuing wisdom (Noddings, 2005). Pursuing wisdom would teach children "powerful methods of investigation," (Noddings, p. 178) which would benefit students following their interests under Noddings' model. She disagreed with Descartes throughout her book. While both strive for better relations, Descartes thinks care can be created through knowledge. Noddings states there "is no recipe-like method for establishing relations of trust and care." (Noddings, p. 114). Caring requires cultivation and time, and acquiring knowledge happens best within caring relations. Similar to Descartes, Aristotle believed education should be intellectual and cultivate rationality, as cited by Gutek (2015). Although, he did write about friendship, a caring relation (Noddings, 2005). Aristotle thought friends should want positive things for one another for the other person's sake. He also noted that friendship could be genuine or more superficial, just like how Noddings describes that you can have a relation, but it is more meaningful when there is reciprocated caring (Gutek, 2015). While specific points can be related, the underlying themes between early philosophers and Noddings are very different.

When Noddings is compared to modern philosophers like Montessori, there are many more significant similarities. A large part of Montessori's curriculum is life skills, which touches on many aspects of caring (Montessori & Gutek, 2004). These include caring for self, others, and the environment. Other early childhood educators like Pestalozzi and Froebel have similar outlooks on caring. Why has this only been a focus for young children? This is where Noddings fills the gap and explains why caring should be a focus all through education to create healthy, competent and happy citizens.

Summary

In the literature, there was a lot of support for instilling a caring pedagogy in schools to mend the gap between teachers' intended and perceived caring. Developing a school based on care can increase the engagement and achievement of all learners. In addition, it sets up teachers for success, so they can better care for and educate students. A caring pedagogy is also a way that the education system can work towards meeting the TRC's calls to action and work towards reconciliation. Nel Noddings (2005) differs from thinkers that came much before her but has commonalities with more modern early childhood educators. Although, Noddings shows how a caring pedagogy can be implemented throughout education, not just for young learners. The next chapter dives further into how a caring pedagogy can be practically implemented in a school setting.

Chapter Three: Increasing Capacity to Care

How to Connect Students to School

A caring pedagogy can mend the gap between teachers caring and students feeling cared for. When trying to connect students to school, there are two main factors. First, there needs to be a strong relationship between the teacher and student that is built through reflecting on

environmental factors, learning about students personally, and doing small caring acts. Next, students' relationship-building capacity needs to be nurtured. This process starts by developing a relationship with self and expands outwards. Connecting students to school is integral in filling the gap between teachers' intended and experienced school culture.

Student Teacher Relationships

Building relationships with students is one of the most important aspects of a caring pedagogy. When findings show that only one-third of students felt cared for by their teacher, tangible steps need to be taken (Nel Noddings, 2005). First, teachers can reflect on the environmental factors that help build relationships (Larsson, 2020). In my practice as a primary school teacher, I focus on creating an inclusive, safe space in September. Students love to share about themselves, so I surround many activities around the theme of self. This makes students feel like their funds of knowledge are valued, and I also get to start learning about them as individuals. Then, I remember something they have shared and strike up a conversation. One year, I had a student who loved cats, so I asked her about her cats and showed her a funny video of mine. This was the beginning of our connection that continued to build throughout the year. Sadly, this student had previous behavioural challenges, but her self-regulating ability increased tremendously because she felt safe and connected to me. As I show in my literature review, having a connection with students is key to their success (Barrow, 2015).

I also like to create a safe, inclusive space by encouraging my Kindergarten students to think of us as a big class family. We take care of our class family, be kind to them, and realize we all need different things at different times, which is okay. I model caring for them, and then they reciprocate it to their friends and me. I often help children with deep breathing exercises, and I will never forget the day I turned the corner and saw a five-year-old helping a peer through

the exercises. Showing kindness is another key way that I create a safe space. I find that even just using a kind tone with children can go a long way. Sometimes, the classroom can be challenging when needs are high, and you feel overwhelmed. In these challenging moments, I let my students know I need a few minutes for a break and then I will be ready to help them again. They always understand, and it models that they can do this also. This is one way I can always be kind, avoid a harsh tone, and build my relationships. When I run into past students, what I hear most is that they liked that I did not yell. This small act of kindness sticks with them for years and is crucial in creating good relationships.

Also shown in my literature review, learning about students personally and doing small caring acts for students are two ways teachers can ensure learners know their teacher cares about them (Larsson, 2020). Many teachers know about their students, but it is essential to show them. There are fun ways you can do this, like giving them a nickname linked to an interest, asking them about how their game/concert went or linking what you discover into their learning. Taking the time to do this builds on your reciprocal caring relationship enabling students' needs to be met and leads to success (Barrow, 2015). That is why Noddings explains at length the importance of caring relations (Noddings, 2005). Once, when I taught middle school, two of my student's hockey was being streamed on YouTube, and I played some of it for the class. I did not think much of it, just that it would be a nice break for the students, so I was surprised when I received thank-you emails from the hockey players' parents and the children the next day. This is a perfect example of how showing interest in students personally and doing a small caring act can impact relationships.

Supporting Students in Relationship Building

Creating strong relationships with your students is the first step in helping them build their own relationships. Modelling caring acts is an excellent way for them to learn to care for themselves and others. Since the coronavirus, students have been more stressed than ever (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). Engaging in activities to combat this stress will be easier for students when educators engage with and model these activities. Nel Noddings (2005) breaks down many types of relationships we can explicitly teach and discuss with students. Before even discussing building relationships with people, having a relationship with yourself is crucial. This can be explored through many identity, self-esteem, and social-emotional lessons. This provides a solid foundation for building relationships with others. Although, having a philosophy of care goes further than this. Students' relationships with distant others, animals, the earth, and knowledge should also be nurtured.

Meeting the Calls to Action

Building student-teacher relationships and students caring capacity are both key to meeting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Teachers can show Indigenous Learners they care by intertwining Aboriginal Peoples' knowledge into the curriculum. This must be done meaningfully and is an excellent opportunity for place-based learning. Learning about local Indigenous People is an important way to connect to place and have students feel connected and represented in their learning.

The call to action number 63 iii. is about building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect can be met by nurturing relationships between students (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Specifically, this can be done by creating opportunities for students to share about themselves and celebrating their differences. Also,

teaching students about equity versus equality can positively affect their level of empathy. When teaching kindergarten, I found that many students would be upset if a student got a learning tool that they did not. Due to limited resources, it is not always possible for me to provide all students with the same thing. So, I had a discussion with them about if one person had a cut should I give them a band-aid or everyone a band-aid? They laughed and thought I was being silly, but it immediately helped them understand why everyone does not need the same things, and that is normal. Including Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum in a meaningful way, allowing students to share about themselves, and explicitly teaching empathy are all part of a caring pedagogy and help teachers meet the TRC's calls to action.

Caring for Yourself

Not only is it essential to care for yourself to model it for students, but it also increases teachers' relationship-building capacity. If teachers are stressed and burnt out, they will be unable to connect and build relationships effectively (Leithwood, 2007). During the pandemic, I did not care for myself, which negatively affected my relationship with learners. While it was a hard time for many educators, I appreciate that it drove me to set some self-care boundaries for myself. The first step for educators is to set a limit on their workday. While we all want outstanding and engaging activities, there needs to be a balance between work and personal life. Prioritizing relationships in your life is key to happiness. This can be with a friend, partner, community organization, or all of the above. Something else that can be helpful is taking a break instead of working through the lunch hour. Educators do not expect students to work all day without a break, so why do we expect that of ourselves? Set yourself up for success, just like you would for your students, and take a break. Taking time to care for yourself in one way or another is an important pillar of implementing a pedagogy of care.

Summary

Strong teacher and student relationships are vital when increasing the capacity to care in a classroom. By implementing a caring pedagogy in schools, students will know they are cared about by their teacher and will have the capacity to care themselves. They can be built with tools as simple as kindness and showing that we have learned about our students (Larsson, 2020). To further connect students to school, their relationship with self and others must be explicitly taught and developed. Keeping these goals at heart will help teachers respond appropriately to the calls to action. Most importantly, because everything else relies on this, teachers must show care for themselves to implement a caring pedagogy and build relationships effectively (Leithwood, 2007). If these ideas are put into action, students will know that their teachers care about them and will have the capacity to reciprocate care in relationships.

Chapter Four: Conclusion**Summary**

As I came to understand how my social location affected my worldview, the need I saw for a caring pedagogy increased. Throughout my life, I have benefitted due to my race, social class, and culture, and it gave me a sense of belonging in school. Unfortunately, not all people are born into this privilege, and a pedagogy of caring is needed to connect these learners to school with caring relationships. When implementing a caring pedagogy, it is crucial to be aware of systemic advantages and disadvantages that can hinder the positive environment teachers are trying to create. While I have always aimed to create a safe learning environment, I did not become interested in a pedagogy of caring until I read Nel Noddings' (2005) book during the Master of Education program. Now, I can pull pieces from many of my master's classes to support my implementation of a caring pedagogy.

Instilling a pedagogy of caring would have a school-wide impact. The research in my literature review shows that if students felt cared for, they would be more engaged and have better mental health. As a result, the type of citizens leaving the school system would be healthier and more capable of forming caring relationships. The significance of a caring pedagogy is vast and outlined further in chapter 1. By implementing a caring pedagogy in schools, students will know they are cared about by their teacher and will have the capacity to care themselves.

If educators want to make this change, they need to follow the importance of caring pointed out in chapter two, the literature review. Statistics show that only one-third of students feel cared for by their teachers (Noddings, 2005). Students' engagement, achievement and emotional well-being benefit from a caring pedagogy, where their needs are met through caring relationships to help them succeed (Barrow, 2015). Teachers can show students that they care by respecting their interests and making the learning meaningful, which results in higher achievement (Noddings; Almroth et al., 2021). Emotional well-being is of great concern, especially after the chronic stress from the pandemic (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). When students are in a safe classroom with many connections, they will be more able to care for themselves (Noddings, 2005). When trusted teachers model this behaviour, students will be guided to participate in self-care too (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). How to increase the capacity to care is discussed further in chapter 3.

Therefore, a caring pedagogy is also vital for educators so they have the capacity to model healthy behaviours for students and avoid burnout. Schools need to take care of teachers' mental health, especially if administrators want new initiatives to be successful. When initiating the implementation of a caring pedagogy in a school, it should start with the teachers. Studies

have shown that productivity will rise if employees' mental state is nurtured (Uddin & Hossain, 2015). Additionally, developing a capacity to care is critical to reconciliation and meeting the calls to action (Truth and Reconciliation, 2015).

After reviewing the research, it is clear that a caring pedagogy can help mend the gap between the type of culture teachers try to create and what students perceive in practice. First, students need to feel connected to the school through relationships with their teachers and by having their relationship-building skills nurtured. A student-teacher relationship can be developed through environmental factors like creating a safe space to share about themselves and be appreciated for who they are (Larsson, 2020). I have seen this benefit students and increase their self-regulating ability, as I showed in chapter 3. Also, encouraging students to think of the class as a big class family that is kind and takes care of one another can help build a safe space. I model these behaviours, and I quickly start to see students take the initiative and build positive relationships with each other. Lastly, teachers can intentionally learn about students and do small, caring acts. Noddings (2005) shares at length the importance of creating caring relationships, and using small things you have learned about students in caring acts is a very effective way to build relationships. The literature, including Noddings, supports the importance of building relationships with students for engagement and well-being. Having this model of a strong connection with a teacher will then help students transfer care to themselves, their peers, the earth and much more.

If teachers take the time to examine how their social location affects their worldview and the students in their class, their perceived need for a pedagogy of care will increase. As their curiosity grows, the literature will support the benefits for students and teachers. When putting this knowledge into practice, this paper has many practical steps to support them. Implementing

a pedagogy of care in schools will ensure that students know they are cared about by their teacher, and caring relationships will be plentiful.

Implications

The implications of this paper are vast, from the life of one student to society as a whole. If a caring pedagogy were effectively implemented, a diverse student population would feel safe and connected to school. This would be a tangible way for educators to work towards reconciliation and meet some of the calls to action for Indigenous youth. Not only would this improve the school experience for Indigenous children, but it would also help shape citizens who respect and appreciate cultural differences. Also, the overall achievement of students would increase, and attendance would improve due to better mental health. While the rewards for students are monumental, teachers would also benefit. Staff retention would increase from decreased burnout. If teachers care about themselves, they will be more capable of caring for their colleagues, which could lead to beneficial mentoring and collaboration. The implications are endless and are only limited by the amount we can learn to care for ourselves and the world around us.

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