

Cultural Diversity Capstone Paper

Reid Shiland

EDU-390

Dr. Mike Taylor, Ph.D

Introduction

Although options were slightly more limited due to the unprecedented times we are experiencing, I could still find opportunities that allowed me to complete my allotted time and experience new things. The first half of my time was devoted to Main Street Summit 2020, where a handful of presenters addressed the topic of diversity. The conference had a large group of speakers which ranged from issues of business to that of education. With such, I was able to choose which presentations I would attend. While it was an online conference this year, all the speakers did terrific jobs and adapted to the change. For this two-day experience, it started with an opening speech from Governor Doug Burgum, where he laid out the agenda of the day and talked about the characteristics of Summit 2020. The first seminar I attended was The Main Street Student Advisory Committee, which had a handful of students present to talk about resilience, empowering the youth, and being present in their communities. Mentioned often were the difficulties that have begun to arise with COVID-19 and how it affected the communities. The next second educational Livestream that I joined was Culture Connection: A Community Committed to Your Cause. This one spoke and taught us how to build and keep a connected team and share a common vision and cause. On the second day, I attended The Intersection of Higher Ed and Main Street, which has four different speakers. Here they spoke about the importance of higher education, specifically community college. Each of the speakers emphasized how pursuing education, whether vocational or educational, is very important and beneficial. And the final speaker I watched from Summit was Moment of Mindfulness with Jeffon Seely, yet that did

not pertain to this course. However, it was a good experience and was a nice change from the other presenters; it allowed me to see what other things were offered within this seminar.

The other half of my hours were spent at Legacy High School and the Bismarck Public Schools (BPS), where three students worked at the coffee shop. For around an hour in the mornings, I would be in one of the Legacy resource rooms, with students who had Emotional Disturbances (EDs), myself and two students would drive to the Bismarck Public Schools building. One student would do work in the library, while the other would go to the coffee shop. Two other students from Century would be there present at that time. Staff from the building would send in coffee orders, and the students would make them, deliver the order, and correctly collect the money. My tasks in the resource room were to help any students who needed assistance, whether with their school work or being allowed to go out of the classroom. However, at BPS, I would stay with one particular student I was assigned to, I would assist her with the tasks when needed. We would also deliver the coffees together to ensure that she completed the task correctly and came back once finished. This capstone paper will explain how my experiences between the two shaped my time and relate to each section within this paper.

Demographics

For Main Street Summit, speakers' demographics were relatively all similar; most speakers were 35-60-year-olds who resided in North Dakota. Some of the presenters had a more extensive following and were well known in their topics. All of the older presenters had attended a form of higher education, particularly their field of study. However, there was one session, The Main Street Advisory Committee, which was mainly compiled from students attending different

colleges in North Dakota. This group's goal, and why they had younger members, was to inspire and empower the youth. The committee felt that the more youthful their members were, the better their message would get across.

For my time between both of the Bismarck school sites, there was a much larger disparity between the demographics. First, we will look at the classroom; the classroom ranged from freshmen in high school to seniors. All students in this particular classroom had an IEP and were classified to have EDs or on the verge of such. Each student had their desk, some of the students had their instructional aides, while other aides floated around to assist any of them. On average, there would be four boys and three girls in the room consistently. For the majority of the time I was there, the students rarely interacted with one another. They were either doing school work, avoiding or refusing to do such, or interacting with the teachers. Often there was a little commotion in the room and rarely negative attitudes towards the staff. Looking at BPS, the ratio was cut down substantially. One sophomore girl was 16 years old, and a junior who was 17; these are the two that I interacted mostly with. Once at Hughes, the junior would go work in the library while I took the sophomore to the coffee shop. There were two Century students in the shop, one girl with Down Syndrome and a boy with Autism. The student I was with more so struggles emotionally and is often more receptive to myself or the other adults.

Environmental Adaptations

Main Street Summit offered a few adaptations for the individuals present to use, ensuring that we learned and retained the material better. The first would be a chatbox, where we could ask questions or make comments, as we, the spectators, were not on camera, so the presenters never saw us. The comment section made sure that we had a voice since we could not be

physically present at the conference. Additionally, a few weeks afterward, Main Street Summit uploaded the recorded sessions onto the Boomset platform. This allowed all the people in attendance to review the sessions; they will continue to be available for one year. The final enhancement was that of a synopsis of the session, allowing the audience to know what material or the topic would be about. Below that would be a list of the speakers, so the audience could understand who they were. The Summit conference did not offer many adaptations, but the ones they did could benefit the individuals attending.

In my other field experience, the adaptations that I interacted with were extensive, while others I also noticed were quite plentiful. In the classroom at Legacy, as stated earlier in the paper, all the students had a large amount of space from one another. This allowed for less distraction and conversing of the students. There is also an additional four rooms where the students can go into where they can either be alone or just away from the general population within the special education section. Students had access to three special education teachers, and on average, three aides to ask for assistance or clarification on their work. Students could either do their work electronically, on the school Chromebooks or have a paper copy. Dependent on the student's IEP meeting decisions, there was a chance that the student was not allowed to use technology; this was the case for two students. At BPS, the adaptations were slightly less, as the students were chosen to work at either the library or the coffee shop. They were selected based on whether they would complete the task and eventually get paid for their work done at the job site. The coffee shop is placed in an unused science classroom, which is large enough for five people to be behind the "counter." This allows for the students working in the coffee shop to work simultaneously while ensuring they have their personal space. There are also two

Chromebooks in the coffee shop, allowing both students to hold each other accountable for seeing incoming orders.

All of the settings fostered a sense of wanting to ensure that all who entered were comfortable and able to complete the task at hand. Whether it was online or in the school setting, the students could get clarity and feel satisfied with what was assigned to them. Mainly at the Bismarck Schools, there was a clear desire for the students to feel safe and do things that they enjoy while guaranteeing that they complete the assigned work.

Instructional Adaptations

Starting again with Summit, I feel that the instructional adaptations were directed at the audience, as the speakers could add in things for us. Many presentations had either slideshows or photos in addition to their speeches. I found this helpful to keep attentive to the session and appreciate the actual footage of the instances that were referenced to. It was able to give us a better idea of what the speakers did or worked on. As stated above, being able to go back and watch the sessions as many times as needed is a helpful feature.

At Legacy, particular students were given their schedules on a board, while others had individual aides. For particular students, dependent upon their IEPs, had limited classwork/school load, all was determined off of what they could do. I was not given much clarity on this but was made aware of such. The particular student I would help with only took English at the high school; often, I would write to her after telling me the correct answer. This made her workload more doable, and she would stay on task better. Once at BPS, the adaptations were relatively minimal, as they want the coffee shop to prepare the students for outside jobs. Honestly, the most significant adaptation was having someone, an aide, to ensure that they

complete the tasks. However, we were able to guide them; an instruction book was present for the students to use for coffee recipes. In the early days with my student, I would give her step by step assistance, holding the measuring cup, or pulling out the ingredients. However, as time progressed, I gave less assistance, wanting her to become less dependent on me and more confident in her skills. Which she was able to do successfully, but I was always there to clarify any questions. The other students in the coffee shop require a bit more assistance, and their aides are more hands-on with their students. Regardless, the students are given the help they need to ensure that they correctly do the job but are expected to keep to the standard of correctly doing the drinks and keeping up with the orders.

Successful Interventions Beyond the Parameters

Summit used many of North Dakota's community groups to put on the two-day conference; it called more outside resources to enter into and commit to making Summit as successful as it was. The coffee shop is an offered opportunity for particular students. There needs to be a commitment from BPS to allow the student to come into the building and run such a job site. Both Legacy and the students are very fortunate to have such an opportunity, as the students who work such jobs at Hughes gain valuable life skills.

Information Connection

Having the opportunity to work with a rather unenthusiastic student about school work, and in the beginning, the coffee shop was a bit problematic. Finding ways to make the student engaged and interested in the topics can be difficult. However, once a relationship was developed with the student, she became more receptive to helping her with school work. One part of the

Department of Education's Mission Statement is taking responsibility for student learning.¹ Quickly I found myself doing such. I wanted to see her succeed and enjoy coming to school. As we could get more familiar with the coffee shop and what is requested of her, I depended more on her doing it solo. My goal was to make her take responsibility for her work, become prideful in what she could accomplish, and progressively that has happened. Until directly looking at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards, I realized this also aligned with Advanced Preparation Standard 5.² The student was expected to meet professional expectations while creating a positive and productive work environment. This is a needed skill for the coffee shop and future jobs, as that is the point of her working in the coffee shop.

Main Street Summit was able to connect to one umbrella standard, ICSI.2.S1: Create a safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environment in which diversities are valued³. With the plethora of speakers and different sessions, there was plenty of opportunities for everyone in attendance to find something beneficial. The speakers all came from different walks of life but could connect themselves to the conference and offer a new perspective to their topic. It was an excellent learning opportunity for me and being exposed to different forums, which related to cultural diversity in ways that I had not anticipated. Looking back to it now, I feel as though Summit's overarching theme, specific to the sessions I watched, was the title of the closing keynote, *Creating a Thriving Community: The Power of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. I see this connecting to what I strive for as a future educator and the Education Department here at UMary.

¹ Department of Education Mission Statement, EDU 390 Syllabus

² Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Preparation Standard

³ CEC Initial Specialty Sets, ICSI.2.S1

Conclusion

Not only did Summit give me a new experience, but so did working with the student(s) at Legacy and BPS. Summit gave me insight into North Dakota, along with connecting things to resilience and the need for cultural connection. I can see a particular issue prevalent in society that I may not have prior acknowledge, thanks to Summit. Along with the academic knowledge and experience of being in the school setting, both gave me great insight into different diversity levels. Summit looked more towards cultural diversity or occupational diversity, specifically of older ages. While my other field experienced leaned towards the variety of students, based on their needs and requirements. Both experiences taught me different things, yet interconnected at the same time. Summit gave me knowledge regarding coworkers and the bigger picture, my community. Things like being engaged, regardless of wanting to do it or not. Giving back to the community is essential and will provide a ripple effect, such as inspiring others. Working with the student gave me knowledge on preparing myself for the classroom, being open-minded to offering many adaptations, and ensuring that my students succeed. While yes, it may be taxing; watching students succeed is much more important to me as an educator. Overall, both gave me wonderful experiences and opened my eyes to what can be done and how it is essential to make sure everyone is involved regardless of anything. Inclusion can only bring us forwards, not backward, so we should do it for the sake of those who could be left behind.

Appendix

Boomset Virtual Platform | virtual.boomset.com/session/106814/213503 | Paused

Main Street Summit 2020 | Reid Shiland

Wednesday, October 7 from 11:20 AM to 1:00 PM
LIVE

Chat

The Intersection of Higher Ed and Main Street

A wide array of high priority occupations require two years or less of college, and can occur from remote locations. Those who enter into

Send a message

Boomset Virtual Platform | virtual.boomset.com/sessions/106814 | Paused

Main Street Summit 2020 | Reid Shiland

The Future of Rural Economic Development in ND	Tuesday, October 6 from 11:00 AM to 12:45 PM	Add
The Rise of Remote Work: A New Program for North Dakota Businesses	Tuesday, October 6 from 11:00 AM to 12:45 PM	Add
Arts Partnerships Build Resilient Communities	Tuesday, October 6 from 11:00 AM to 12:45 PM	You're registered Remove
Business Philanthropy for Resilient Communities	Tuesday, October 6 from 11:00 AM to 12:45 PM	You're registered Remove
What Makes Us Resilient? Guest Appearance from Jessie Veeder	Tuesday, October 6 from 11:45 AM to 12:55 PM	Add
Keynote from Develop This! Podcast: Bouncing Back - The Path Forward	Tuesday, October 6 from 12:00 PM to 1:45 PM	You're registered Remove
Yoga Break with Transitions Yoga Studio	Tuesday, October 6 from 12:45 PM to 2:00 PM	Add
Planning for Resilient Communities	Tuesday, October 6 from 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM	Add
Culture Connection: A Community Committed to Your Cause	Tuesday, October 6 from 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM	You're registered Remove
Building a "Cultureshed"	Tuesday, October 6 from 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM	You're registered Remove
Podcasting Live with Develop This!	Tuesday, October 6 from 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM	Add
Blue Zones: A Collaborative Vision for Wellbeing	Tuesday, October 6 from 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM	Add



I did not feel as though it was appropriate to take photos of the student(s), along with the classrooms always having a student or two in it. Hence the reason I have chosen this internet photo, but this is the building with the coffee shop and library in it that we go to.

References

Council for Exceptional Children Advanced Preparation Standard.

CEC Initial Specialty Sets, ICSI.2.S1.

Department Oof Education Mission Statement. EDU 390 Syllabus