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RELATIONAL ARTS-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING PEDAGOGY: ENGAGING BODY, MIND, & SOUL

Gerard Bellefeuille

Child and Youth Care, MacEwan University, Edmonton, Canada

bellefeuilleg@macewan.ca

Abstract

Relational pedagogy is an educational approach that emphasizes the importance of meaningful human connections among teachers and students, viewing these relationships as the primary tool for cognitive and emotional growth (Sidorkin, 2002; Bovill, 2020; Bellefeuille et al., 2024). It seeks to humanize education by moving away from strict, content-focused instruction and conventional evaluation techniques, such as multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, true/false questions, and written exams, toward more engaging, holistic learning experiences. Environment, prioritizing collaboration, open dialogue and mutual trust between educators and learners (Aspelin, 2010, 2021; Pearce & Down, 2011).

In practice, learning becomes a shared and interactive process rather than a one-way transfer of information, encouraging empathy, active participation, and mutual respect. It is an approach where educators design a learning environment to help students feel safe, supported, and connected enough to take risks, ask complex questions, and embrace mistakes without fear of judgment and failure. Instruction is focused on nurturing the whole student—addressing their emotional, social, and cognitive development. It recognizes students not as simply vessels to be

filled with information, but dynamic individuals who thrive when their voices, identities, and well-being are prioritized (Hickey & Riddle, 2022). Consequently, student well-being is valued alongside academic achievement, and assessment practices often include portfolios, reflective activities, discussions, and project-based tasks that emphasize understanding, growth, and meaningful engagement with learning (Bellefeuille et al., 2024). In this sense, relational pedagogy is an intentional approach to education that uses ethical principles to inspire inclusive, active, and collaborative classroom environments. It centers on a deep commitment to equity, social pluralism, and diversity, ensuring that teaching practices directly encourage high levels of student participation and shared engagement (Hickey & Riddle, 2022).

Relational Pedagogy and CYC Education: Because the Child and Youth Care (CYC) profession is fundamentally rooted in establishing meaningful connections with children, youth, families, and communities, a relational pedagogical framework serves as an intuitive cornerstone for CYC education. This interactive oral and multimedia PowerPoint presentation shares applied teaching strategies and innovative assessments from a 2025 educational primer, demonstrating how to bring relational learning directly into the classroom.

Keywords:

Relational Pedagogy, Student Well-being, Collaborative Learning, Inclusive Education, Child and Youth Care (CYC) Education