



Supporting Northern Rural and Indigenous Teachers' Professional Learning

❖ What you need to know

Geographic isolation and lengthy period of time to travel pose challenges for teachers in northern rural Canadian communities to access professional learning opportunities.

❖ Why this research is important

This research addresses issues that arise in supporting the professional learning of teachers in remote communities. It shows how long term, ongoing collaborative action research that is supported by appropriate funding, is an effective professional learning approach.

❖ How this research was conducted

We conducted four focus groups of four to five northern rural Canadian teachers in each, asking open-ended questions about their experiences in collaborative action research over four years. Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers, who worked in kindergarten, grade one and Aboriginal Head Start classrooms, participated.

❖ What the researcher found

Through video-recording students' interactions, participating teachers gained a heightened awareness of the many social purposes for which students used language to communicate with their peers and to solve problems that arise in their play. Teachers found that having many years to build trusting relationships with researchers positively contributed to their learning. They appreciated researchers' frequent visits to their communities to meet and talk about the video data that teachers were gathering in their classrooms. In the process, teachers received specific positive feedback from university researchers about their teaching practices and gained a sense that their practices were supported by others who respected them and whom they respected.

❖ How this research can be used

Teachers in remote communities can work with university researchers on collaborative action research to examine issues of importance to them as rural teachers. It is important that action research relationships are built on respect, and a sense of reciprocity, as the research questions and methods provide information to support all action research team members' learning. The abundant evidence of teachers' learning provides a strong rationale for administrators who must devote significant resources to support collaborative action research in remote communities.

Keywords: rural teacher's learning, collaborative action research, Indigenous education

Publications based on the research

Peterson, S.S., McIntyre, L., & Glaes-Coutts, L. (2017). Collaborative action research in northern Canadian rural and indigenous schools: Learning about young children's oral language in play contexts. *Educational Action Research*, DOI: 10.1080/09650792.2017.1402686