Theory 1: Genius Hour

- A movement that allows students to explore their passions and encourages creativity in the classroom
- Provides a choice in what students learn during a set period of time during school
- Compilation of student passion, having a purpose and having time to learn and create
- Students need to plan their time accordingly, keep track of their progress overtime, and have a final presentation based on their passion
- Originated from the famous search-engine, Google, where employees spent 20% of their time on special project of their choosing
- Teacher provides set amount of time for students to work on passion projects, and students work on project over course of time learning more about their specified area of interest
- Teacher is also responsible for facilitating student projects, ensuring they are on task, and can provide assistance/resources where applicable

Connections:

- During my practicum last year, I had the opportunity to supervise and work with some Genius Hour projects in my grade 6 class. My AT brought in other "experts" to help the students with their projects (piano teacher, coding specialist, etc.) and I was helping some students with basketball skills. We worked for 1 hour every week for 8 weeks, leading up to the final project presentations in the spring. This was something all of the grade 5 and 6 students did, and the whole school (and parents) came to the presentations in the gymnasium. It was awesome to see the creativity put into these passion projects, and to see how deeply the students cared about their end products.
- In connection to the 21st Century Competencies document, the province is committed to help every child and student achieve success and well-being, and I saw this being done first hand with the Genius Hour projects.

Theory 2: Theories of Motivation

- One theory of motivation pertains to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which is a 5-tier model that describes human needs
- Level 1: physiological needs, level 2: safety needs, level 3: love and belonging, level 4: esteem, and level 5: self-actualization
- Individuals must satisfy the lower level needs before progressing to the higher level growth needs, where they also experience an increase in motivation
- Once at the top of the hierarchy, students realize potential, and self-fulfilled and are actively seeking personal growth and peak experiences

Connections:

- In relation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I noticed in my practicum last year that a lot of the students were not meeting those lower levels of the hierarchy, and were not motivated on a daily basis in school. A lot of students in my class would come to school without lunch and wearing the same clothes as the day before. Since these basic needs were not being met, I found my students were not engaged in the lessons because they were tired, hungry, etc. and they significantly lacked motivation.
- Bandura's theory on self-efficacy relates to motivation because he found that students who believe they were capable were more likely to use self-regulation strategies and persevere through difficult tasks (Tollefson, 2000). When students are motivated to complete the work they are doing because they have a sense of autonomy (self-regulation), they feel they are in control of their learning, and are therefore more inclined to do their best.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivation theory that contributes greatly to student success, as indicated in the article by Freitas and Leonard (2011). We know that when basic needs are met of students, it allows students to grow and pursue things that matter to them.

Similarities:

- The link in motivation between the 2 theories discussed is clear. When students were more interested in their work and felt some sort of autonomy in choosing their topic, they were more motivated to achieve their goals and succeed. Of course in relation to Maslow's theory, the basic needs of some students not being met was a challenge they

had to overcome in order to achieve success in their Genius Hour project. I think when my AT stepped up and initiated those important conversations with the students regarding their well-being, and would bring in some oranges for them, the students really appreciated that and were then able to put forth their best work and wanted to impress their teacher with their work, showing their full potential.

Image:

This is a picture from the Genius Hour Sharing Fair from my practicum last year. This image illustrates my beliefs in teaching because I can see the passion pouring out of each student. You can tell that the folks who are there to learn what the students did, really care about them and want everyone to do their best. I hope that one day in my classroom, I can direct my teaching to accommodate the interests of my students so that they are engaged and motivated to reach their full potential. I also love this image because each student took responsibility for their own learning, which is something that I firmly believe in as a teacher. I want my students to feel comfortable in sharing their work, and pursuing their passions in and outside of school.

Resources

EduGains (2016). 21st Century Competencies: Foundation Document for Discussion.
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