Study of Learning in a Natural Environment
using an IPE Model

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HUMBER Research

INTRODUCTION

Current research in nature education emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach to student learning. This project provided opportunities for Humber students from the Early Childhood Education, Horticulture and Landscape Design, and Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant programs with the opportunity to engage in a hands-on, experiential nature education workshop series at the Centre for Urban Ecology and Humber Arboretum.

The course was evaluated using qualitative and quantitative measures to assess students' perceptions of learning in the natural environment and their knowledge and attitudes towards interprofessional learning.

METHODS

Students were recruited from 3 programs to participate in a 5 workshop series held at the CUE & Arboretum.

A total of 38 students signed up:
15 Early Childhood Education
11 OTA & PTA
12 Horticulture Technician Pre-Apprenticeship

The Interprofessional Education Survey Tool was administered at workshop 1 and again at workshop 5. Students were placed in interprofessional groups and assigned photography tasks at both workshops 1 and 4 which were used in the final workshop to create learning posters. Workshops focused on the various perspectives of each profession on issues of the disconnect between children, youth and nature. Each faculty modeled collaboration and content research on the issues and external community experts participated in a panel discussion. A group trip to Canada Blooms engaged students in practical applications of active engagement of stakeholders.

RESULTS

Student attendance was high, an average of 90% demonstrating high motivation to participate. All students completed one of the surveys, and 20 completed both as directed. Significant results were seen in student attitudes to interprofessional education. Preference to learn with students from different professions far exceeded learning with peers. A high percentage of students agreed that an IPE model better prepares them for work in their own profession. Greater confidence in students' ability to work with others in different professions improved significantly from workshop 1-5.

Students were fully engaged in their IPE groups during workshop 5. During poster presentations students worked together in collaborative groups. Student testimonials reinforced both increased appreciation for nature education as well as enjoyment of working together.

Students In IPE Groups Presenting Posters

Students In Action - Finding Groups

Students In Action - Sharing Motivation

CONCLUSIONS

Interprofessional Education generated positive outcomes in this collaborative teaching and learning model for nature education.

Students and faculty outcomes created new opportunities for learning, understanding and skill development. To authentically represent an issue to students, it is vital to use as close a model as possible in an environment that supports the learning outcomes. Therefore this leads to questions of how we present learning to students in interprofessional ways when appropriate. In order to model collaboration in industry and the community, boundaries need to be flexible outside of dedicated programs and schools. When faculty work across professions, the opportunity for creativity and learning is invaluable.

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