

PDK Research Series, 2011-12

The Brain: the Heart of Cooperative Learning;

This was the second in our ongoing research series. There were over 40 participants, mainly OISE and York U faculty students on December 6, 2011 at OISE. Our guest presenter was Jim Craigen, an international specialist. He began by sharing the research using a power point with embedded video. Jim talked about cooperative group learning as a form of structured peer interactions, and that it is grounded in team building. Brain-based research is driven by technology and the field of molecular biology and MRI and others types of electronic emission and resonance. He used structured activities (think pair share, rally table, mix freeze pair, stand and deliver) that modeled cooperative group structures and explained their importance in the classroom. Some of his messages:

- Engagement declines in student learning from grades 5 through grade 12
- By 2019 –the 41, 000 computers will match the complexity and capacity of the human brain
- Brain interface - accessible technology –cars, home security, SMART phones
- Cortex –thinking part, the limbic –the social system and the brain stem –automatic responses
- Brain-compatible classrooms require us to pay attention to:
 - Emotional security – team building supports emotional security and it reduces bullying – emotion is grounded in the amygdala –emotional culture can ground and support learning
 - Enriched environment – well-stimulated brain, requires environmental complexity – can contribute 25% increase in the number of brain connections – neural plasticity
 - Elaborate rehearsal – sensory memory – working memory – need rehearsal (processing of information) to the long range memory system – use co-operative group structure – rote rehearsal and

PHOTO'S FROM THE RESEARCH SERIES



Participants who attended all 3 sessions received a certificate to include in their portfolios.

PDK International

PDK International held its annual conference in Baltimore Feb. 16 and 17 with a parallel; Future Educators of America (high school and college students planning to be teachers) conference held nearby.

A variety of sessions and speakers including a last minute address by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan explored aspects of education. I got a firsthand perspective on some of the complexities and issues in American education.

I represented our chapter at the conference. We had a special sharing session look at how successful chapters are effectively working to improve their ability to service the educational community. As the only international chapter represented at the conference I found the issues we faced were common. These included:

- being of service to a new generation of teachers
- the possibilities and perils of online communication
- the importance of having noticeable footprint both in the universities and in the local school districts

Our experiences contributed to the discussion and I gained some ideas for continued growth that we can explore in future. One understanding was that we all thought that communication should be both online and face-to-face. Another common thought was that while e-newsletters have many advantages, there is still a place for hard copy.

I also gained ideas about assessment and curriculum standards which may find their way into our 2012-13 research series.

The Future Educator's conference had an inspirational address by America Ferrera, best known for her portrayal of Betty Suarez in the hit comedy "Ugly Betty". Her personal story growing up Latina in Los Angeles and her work for Save the Children inspired me and the audience of more than 1000 current and future educators.



Thank you John for representing the chapter at the PDK International conference in Baltimore.

As well, we appreciate that you have initiated and organized our Research Series for the past seven years. We look forward another innovative series in 2012-13.