CHILDHOOD ANXIETY
INTEGRATED ADAPTATION PROJECT
ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

“It is not uncommon for children to have fears and insecurities or for young children to cling to their parents when in new situations or around new people. As children grow older and enter school situations, it is also quite common for them to feel nervous about exams or giving class presentations. When physical and/or emotional symptoms become difficult to manage, or a child’s ability to function in a variety of situations like school, extra curricular activities, friendships, etc. becomes compromised, then your child may be suffering from a childhood anxiety disorder.”

Source: www.anxietycanada.ca
ANXIETY STATISTICS

• 1 in 10 Canadians is affected by an anxiety disorder.
• Adults may suffer from one of six disorders: Post-traumatic stress, obsessive-compulsive, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, panic, and specific phobias.
• Children may suffer from one of seven disorders. Six that also affect adults, with the addition of separation anxiety.
• People with anxiety disorders often suffer from more than one and may also experience depression, eating disorders and/or substance abuse simultaneously.
• Anxiety disorders are caused by a combination of biological factors, brain function, and personal circumstance. Social and economic factors may increase the incidence of anxiety.

Sources: www.anxietycanada.ca, www.hc-sc.gc.ca,
GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by excessive worry about a number of different everyday things like social activities, school performance, extra curricular activities and home life. The worry is very distressing to the child and is perceived as uncontrollable which results in a constant need for reassurance from others.

Source: www.anxietycanada.ca
LEARNING PROFILES & CHALLENGES

Fear of needles
Disturbing Thoughts
Fear of flying
Fears of being alone
Health worries
Worry about the future

Dealing with divorce
Perfectionism
Tolerating uncertainty
Test anxiety
Peer pressure
Making friends
Social Anxiety
Fear of public speaking

Source: www.youth.anxietybc.com
<table>
<thead>
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<th>ANXIETY AFFECTS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH</th>
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<td>Panic attacks</td>
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<td>Drinking to deal with social anxiety</td>
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<td>Difficulty concentrating</td>
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Sources: [www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com), [www.youth.anxietybc.com](http://www.youth.anxietybc.com)
SUPPORTING ANXIOUS STUDENTS

- Support
- Healthy diet
- Exercise
- Stress management

- Meditation & relaxation
- Restful sleep
- Communication

Source: www.cmha.ca

Strategies for Feelings of Excessive Worry, Fear or Stress

- Validate the student’s feelings and understand that his/her worries/fears are real to him/her
- Teach and model appropriate responses to stress
- Teach specific steps the student can take to relax (i.e. taking deep breaths, tensing muscles and then relaxing muscles, etc.)
- Allow the student to have a small object (such as stress ball) in his/her pocket that would be appropriate to use during class time and would not disturb others
- Allow choices in order to help the student feel more in control
- Minimize the emphasis on competition

- Allow the student to engage in calming activities, such as silent reading or listening to music, when worried or stressed
- Reduce unnecessary stress within school/classroom environment
- Where feasible, avoid bringing up topics that are sensitive to the student such as recent loss, parents’ divorce, incarceration, etc.
- Identify individual (i.e. school counselor, social worker, school nurse, etc.) the student may talk to and provide built-in opportunities during the school day for student to talk with this person

Source: www.studentsfirstproject.org
EXISTING INVISIBLE ADAPTATIONS & STRATEGY

- F.R.I.E.N.D.S. – Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Turtle Time
- Multidimensional implementation strategies
- Multidimensional assessment strategies
- Literacy circles – one-on-one support and assessment
- Farewell poem
ATTEMPTED & PROPOSED INVISIBLE ADAPTATIONS & STRATEGIES

February Practicum
- Individual interviews
- Relationship building
- Review and collaborate on class expectations

April/May Practicum
- Continue with sponsor teacher practices
- Continue to make relationship building a focus
- Allow students to fidget, draw during lessons
- Design lessons that focus on physical movement
- Introduce dance breaks between instructional times
- Create a journal system for direct conversation about mental health/state of learning.
- Include more instruction and implementation self- and peer-assessment
REFLECTION

Research into the behaviours of two of my students has led to greater understanding of their actions in the classroom. Learning about the signs and symptoms of anxiety has supported my interaction with several of the students in my class and will ultimately help build strong relationships with each student. Due to the nature of my practicum experience, the implementation of strategies for anxiety exactly the same as the strategies that I used to get to know all the students in my class. Through one-on-one interviews I was able to get a sense of each students’ home life, their interests and where they felt their strengths and weaknesses are in the classroom. This insight provided more meaning than I could have ever achieved through a “getting to know you” lesson. In the next practicum I will continue to build a strong relationship with each students to promote respect, cooperation and collaboration in the classroom. In my career as an educator, this research has outlined the importance of building relationships with each of my students to determine how I will best support them. This project has also identified a wealth of resources for dealing with children with anxiety, mental illness (including depression), behavioural needs and broad learning disabilities.
REFERENCES


