



## Summary: Kathleen Kryza – Honouring ALL students: Building Community in the Differentiated Classroom

Hawker-Brownlow Conference May 21, 2011

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Kathleen Kryza has worked for over 20 years in a variety of educational backgrounds – special needs, gifted education, alternative education in juvenile prisons, and multicultural settings. She is an international coach, consultant, and trainer and is very practical in her application of learning. You can find out more about her and her work at <http://www.kathleenkryza.com/> and <http://www.inspiringlearners.com/> where Kathleen and her team have a wide range of downloadable resources.

The following is my summary of Kathleen’s material and my impressions (and additional footnotes) of what I found valuable and useful. More information is available at [www.intuyuconsulting.com.au](http://www.intuyuconsulting.com.au).

### NOTES

- **Brain needs safety:** When a brain feels threatened in any way it restricts the ability of the brain to learn.<sup>1</sup> This makes it important to build relationships and create safety in a class environment. Kathleen had the participants do an M&M activity with the intention of building relationships. She placed a range of different coloured M&Ms on each table and each person chose 3 different coloured M&Ms. The idea was that each colour represents a different personal aspect that the person had to share about. This started to create relationships between the people in each group. Mark Collard’s activities (pointed to in a previous Kathleen Kryza notes) are also useful for this.
- **Importance of Building Community:** The brain and human beings are social<sup>2</sup>. If we empower students (not help them) then it is less work for teachers and the students have control over their own learning and become responsible. It also leads to less rule violations because relationships will give a more engaging environment and give a teacher MORE TIME (a big complaint amongst teachers).
- **4 Keys to Building Community**
  - **Establishing solid routines, procedures, and roles:** this keeps the class running smoothly
  - **Respect is the Foundation:** everyone is honoured
  - **Relationship is at the Heart:** every one experiences being cared for
  - **Responsibility is the Ultimate Goal:** everyone has a part to play and experiences THEY MATTER.

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<sup>1</sup> Neuro-scientific research that shows that “perceived threats”, whether they are real or not, triggers the “reptilian” part of the brain (flight or fight) and thus limits the ability of the brain to learn which is more centred in the neocortex part of the brain. Our brains are constantly scanning for threats so it is critical to create a safe environment. In younger students, the pre-frontal cortex is not fully developed and thus the ability to re-frame threats and re-frame their perceptions is not fully developed yet. Thus one job of a teacher is to develop the students’ ability to perceive and interpret their world in a way that is logical and gives them responsible actions.

<sup>2</sup> See David Brooks TED talk [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david\\_brooks\\_the\\_social\\_animal.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david_brooks_the_social_animal.html)



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EMPOWERING LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

- **Community is created by**
  - Communicating and creating a safe place to learn
  - Honouring the unique qualities, differences and diversity of each person
  - Establishing a message for the classroom learning
- **Honouring:** finding something special about every student and convincing them of that to raise aspiration to become a viable community member.<sup>3</sup>
- **To create community need to first know some things about your students**
  - Who they are as people and learners (learning styles)?
  - What is their readiness to learn in each area?
  - What are their personal interests?
  - What is their learning profile?
  - See [www.inspiringlearners.com](http://www.inspiringlearners.com) for sample templates for these
- **Managing Data**
  - Teachers need to have the data on each student at their fingertips
    - Work habits, learning profiles and strengths, learning challenges, what to honour particularly
    - Can support this by having 4x6 cards with individual data which the students fill in (covering personal interests, class goals, why they are here, multiple intelligences, preferred learning environment, etc)
  - Teachers need to INTENTIONALLY gather data about students as learners
  - Teachers need to TRANSPARANTLY teach students to know who they are as learners
  - Knowing the student's multiple intelligence data allows teachers to create classes with different activities that allows kids to feel smart and addresses their strengths.<sup>4</sup>
- **“Students don't care what we know until they know we care”**
  - We can change the way students see themselves
- **Need Routines and Procedures**
  - Allows students to feel successful
  - Supports student independence
  - Engages them in decision making
  - Holds together a differentiated classroom
  - Establishes
    - How classes begin
    - How to get and put away materials
    - How students keep records of their work
    - How to move around the class in acceptable ways
    - How to use time wisely

<sup>3</sup> See David Logan and Tribal Leadership. [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david\\_logan\\_on\\_tribal\\_leadership.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/david_logan_on_tribal_leadership.html)  
This is a shifting the tribal level concept.

<sup>4</sup> See Julie Atkins Learning By Design Website. <http://www.learning-by-design.com/>



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- What students should be doing at a given time
  - How students figure out where they should be
  - How to get help when the teacher is not available
  - How the class will end and what they are responsible for
  
- **Differentiated Classrooms is a safe, disciplined learning environment of routines and procedures**
  
- **Tips for Effective Routines**
  - **Connected openings:** openings should connect the day’s class work and have students tap prior knowledge. Can use probing questions, free writing, quotes, visuals/pictures.
  - **Resources for Independence:** visual reminders of procedures, expectations and definitions
  - **Format of resources should vary:** wall charts, overheads, notebooks, other students
  - **Process for discussions and sharing should hold students accountable:** e.g. “Celeste you select the next person”, “Jason, what do you think about what Harry just said”, “in your own words, what did you hear Muhummad just say?”, etc.
  - **Visual Cues:** reminders for where students are to put work, steps at a work station, how to record work, how to signal understanding (e.g. traffic lights), etc
  - **Anchor Activities:** keeping students actively engaged when you aren’t providing direct instruction.
    - Start with general learning activities
    - Increasing meaning – implement a few activities that connect to a unit you are teaching
    - Involving students – be open to class input for learning activities or ideas
  
- **Grouping for success**
  - People need to be taught how to work successfully in groups
  - Need to assign roles and ensure students have a plan and task
  - Students define what group success looks and sounds like, then they self-assess on their criteria
  - If students are “hurting” or not supporting their group they may get “fired”

Group Expectations	Date	Date	Date	Date
On task?				
Cooperating?				
Sharing Information?				
Doing Your Job?				

Can put smiley faces, stars, rate 1-5, etc

- **Training grouping – the glue is detailed structures and routines**
  - Clarify expectations
  - Keep students on task
  - Materials and time management
  - Responsibility empowers



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- Everyone has jobs
  - Core group with jobs
  - Class meetings
    - Establish class norms (kids chose to be here)
    - Rules are written as “do this” NOT “don’t do this”
    - Sign names to the class norms document
    - Establish what expectations are of the teacher
  - Discuss issues that stop students from feeling safe and learning
  - Classroom responsibilities (jobs in class)
  - Self-assessment
- **Initially all of the routines and procedures take time to set up but once they are established they make a **PROFOUND** difference**
- Building Community
- Graphing student data to share (have the students graph themselves)
  - Have students create collages about how they learn
  - Set goals – “time to shine but know when to grow”
  - Have class “experts” – set up students to “see 3 before me” ... that is, see 3 other students before they go to the teacher
  - Communicate learning needs
  - Have conversations that constantly builds a community (e.g. when doing science can say ... “Ok scientists, here is where we are going today”, or in English, “Ok Poets ...”). Language creates the world<sup>5</sup>.
  - Use expert analogies (“Doctor doesn’t use a one-size-fits-all model when looking after you when you are sick. If one person has the flu and another a broken leg, the doctor would never give the same solution. So there isn’t one solution for all of you”)

## ENDNOTE

- Kathleen has a range of templates and materials on her website ([www.inspiringlearners.com](http://www.inspiringlearners.com)) that support this summary.

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<sup>5</sup> See Peter Johnston’s book “Choice Words”, <http://www.amazon.com/Choice-Words-Peter-H-Johnston/dp/1571103899>