

Aulajaaqtut

Jurisdiction: Nunavut

Contact: Cathy McGregor

Level: K-12

Theme: Curriculum Materials

Description of Practice:

Aulajaaqtut is one of four curriculum strands that will extend from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in Nunavut. The strand has been developed in English for grades 10 to 12 and will be developed in Inuktitut from kindergarten to grade 9. Currently, only Aulajaaqtut 10-11-12 have been implemented.

In grades 10 to 12, there is a focus on Inuit values, setting personal goals related to values, developing and nurturing healthy relationships, and recognizing the issues related to overall personal wellness. The curriculum creates a critical understanding of Inuit identity, social history, the impact of colonialism on the Inuit, and the contribution of Inuit to northern exploration and development. Throughout the curriculum there is a focus on leadership within the context of Inuit culture. At each level, there is a practicum which involves students in self-directed projects with younger children, the community and the global village.

At the secondary level, Aulajaaqtut is offered in five modules plus the practicum module at each level. Each module requires a minimum of 25 instructional hours. The practicum is done outside of school hours and students are encouraged to seek a mentor from the community to assist in the development and implementation of their practicum. Schools are requested to teach the program over an entire school year and to ensure that it is taught by a long-time northern teacher. If the teacher were an Inuk, there would be more opportunity for in-depth discussion and reflection in Inuktitut.

In grade 11, schools are required to offer four of the six Aulajaaqtut 11 modules, one of which must be the practicum. Apart from this four-module requirement in grade 11, Aulajaaqtut remains an elective course. Schools choosing to offer Aulajaaqtut 10 or 12, however, must offer all six modules at each level.

Background:

The impact of European contact has been beneficial to Inuit in some ways and detrimental in others. Elders and parents gave up traditional child-rearing and family practices in deference to Western practices. Inuit moved from small, independent, mobile family camp groups to settle in communities governed by an external political system. The Inuit language and culture was also undervalued causing a social upheaval and crisis of identity at both the group and individual level. There are health and well-being issues such as high suicide rates, substance abuse and medical issues such as diabetes that are also being experienced.

The goal of the program is to create an awareness of the issues related to both personal and community wellness, as well as to lead students to become agents of change within their community and abroad.

Development:

In the mid-nineties, two teachers collaborated on the development of the first Aulajaaqtut course and materials. It dealt with two broad topics, the literacy of self and the literacy of community. The course was piloted in grade 10 across what is now Nunavut. Feedback from both teachers and students was consistently positive and enthusiastic. The main criticism was that the course was too heavy for one year of study.

With the creation of Nunavut, the existing Aulajaaqtut course was revised and extended over the three senior secondary years of schooling. The grade 11 materials remain closest to the original course and were written first to replace an Alberta course that was being revised. The remaining materials reflect the information gathered from many meetings, particularly with Elders, that have been held since the inception of the Curriculum and School Services Division. The final grade 12 modules were completed in 2007.

Evidence:

We have received positive feedback from Nunavut secondary school teachers and students that this is a unique and beneficial course. Several Inuit instructors at Nunavut Arctic College are using Aulajaaqtut materials in their college courses.

Over the past year, consultation with universities across Canada has determined that Aulajaaqtut meets the social sciences/humanities/arts entrance requirement for 25 universities. This acceptance by so many universities indicates to all that this course is as academic in nature as it is personally relevant in practice. Most teachers of Aulajaaqtut, both Inuit and non-Inuit, are very enthusiastic. Students are completing impressive practicum projects which are gaining the attention of their community.

Adaptability:

This curriculum is based on the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles. It incorporates teaching and assessment strategies based not only on how Inuit learn but also on current research in other jurisdictions. If people have a strong commitment to grounding their youth in the values of their culture, dealing frankly with social issues, teaching history with a critical focus, and providing youth with the opportunity to demonstrate leadership, they would create a curriculum similar to Aulajaaqtut.

Further information:

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