Inquiry into Practice: Reaching Every Student Through Inclusive Curriculum

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EDITORIAL

Towards Inclusive Curriculum: Perspectives, Practices, and Possibilities

Carol Rolheiser, Mark Evans, and Mira Gambhir

"The perspectives of the contributing authors in this publication reinforce the idea that inclusive education is fundamentally education that is accessible, representative, informed, critical, and equity-minded."

In Ontario schools the characteristics, backgrounds, and hopes of students are extremely diverse. Students, their families, and society more broadly count on educators to be responsive to their differences and to ensure that schools are safe, equitable, and meaningful places of learning.

Inquiry into Practice: Reaching Every Student Through Inclusive Curriculum addresses some of the challenges that educators face as they try to identify barriers to equity and inclusion or try to implement some of the promising practices being developed to meet these challenges and create supportive learning environments. The aim of this publication is to increase understanding of different perspectives on inclusive curriculum, highlight a range of practices that teachers explore to enhance learning for all students, and illustrate how teacher education programs can better respond to learner diversity in today's educational context.

This publication builds on the professional learning series *Inquiry into Practice* initiated in 2002 through the Office of the Associate Dean, Initial Teacher Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. University instructors are invited to submit grant proposals for projects that link theory and practice, emphasize collaboration, and work directly with school and district teachers and leaders to address key educational issues and support the principles of OISE's Initial Teacher Education program. This series of publications is disseminated to schools,

community organizations, visiting international delegations, and the broader public and is shared through professional presentations and conferences. This initiative engages OISE faculty with partners from the educational field in research and action in the area of curriculum design, teacher development, and student engagement.

This particular publication in the series examines different perspectives, practices, and possibilities that Ontario teachers and teacher educators are exploring to enhance learning for all students, specifically through the design and enactment of equitable and inclusive curricula. The ideas complement Ontario's vision of inclusion in the school system, which is outlined in *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008) and *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b).

Responding effectively to the increasing diversity in Ontario schools is complicated and requires new ways of thinking about learning and teaching. High quality teacher education and curriculum development work increasingly involve more sophisticated, collaborative, inquiry-oriented approaches. Consequently, schools, communities, school districts, and universities need to work together to combine theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Furthermore, they must ensure that new understandings are applied within the specific circumstances of teachers' daily work.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

Worldwide trends in migration, rapid shifts in information technology, the expansion and deepening of a global economy, challenges of civic governance, and issues of poverty and inequitable living conditions have prompted discussion about the complexities of teaching and learning in the twenty-first century, from the local to the global. The application of principles of equity and inclusion within and across school systems has emerged as an area of global priority, and this work is being viewed as critical to improving student success, reducing gaps in student achievement, and helping students become informed, productive, and engaged citizens. This priority is reflected in recent educational studies and networks, such as the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) and the United Nation's Education for All Campaign. UNESCO has been unequivocal: An inclusive curriculum is fundamental to learning and achievement and is recognized internationally as critical to achieving high quality learning for all learners.

Issues of equity and inclusion have emerged as priority areas in Canadian education especially because diversity is fundamental to the fabric of society. Canada welcomes 225,000 newcomers each year, and our schools must be prepared to serve the diversity of learners represented by the 200 ethnic groups who call Canada home, the 20 percent of the population whose mother tongue is a language other than English or French, and the increasing number of minorities who move into rural areas and historically "homogeneous" communities (Statistics Canada 2007, 2008). At the same time, there is a growing recognition that diversity extends well beyond visible differences and that schools must also be prepared to serve diversity in its multiple forms and combinations—sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic context, religion, ability, body, heritage, image, and beliefs.

Nationally, provincially, and locally a variety of policies and practices support equity and inclusion. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (1982) enshrines the right for all to be equal "without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" (Article 15). The Ontario Human Rights Code contains a commitment to equity and inclusive education by means of various policies and programs. Other regulations and guidelines include the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.

FORMS OF ACTION IN CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS, AND DISTRICTS

In all provinces and territories of Canada, inclusive curriculum is becoming an area of high priority for K–12 public school education and an important component of teacher education programs for beginning and experienced teachers. Recently, curriculum policy, research, and reform initiatives demonstrate greater attention to inclusive curriculum. Teachers, policy makers, and researchers continue to work towards suitable and effective changes in curriculum design, in roles and practices of teachers, and in the design of teacher education programs.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2009a), for example, recently defined inclusive education as "education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected" (p. 90). Also, according to their guidelines, inclusive curriculum aims to "understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning" (p. 6). The guideline also points out that barriers may be related to one identity factor, such as gender, or a combination of factors, such as religion and gender.

The goals of an inclusive curriculum are also reflected in the priorities of different school districts. The Toronto District School Board's mission, for example, is

"to enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become responsible members of a democratic society" (TDSB, 2011). Across Ontario, a variety of guidelines, initiatives, and resources to support equity work have been developed. These include curriculum resource materials and websites that have proliferated to inform and guide teachers' work in relation to inclusive curriculum and instruction.

In support of teacher learning related to inclusive curriculum there is increased attention to teacher education programs for beginning and experienced teachers. At OISE, for example, this emphasis is grounded in one of the core program principles, and is also reflected in OISE programs, priorities, and policies. There is now wide recognition that teachers need to more clearly understand what is meant by diversity, which practices successfully deepen inclusive curriculum and instruction, and how diversity brings academic, social, and civic benefits to society. This knowledge base needs to be a part of their preparation and ongoing development.

WHAT THIS PUBLICATION HAS TO OFFER

Although the principles of equity and inclusion are now at the forefront of Canadian education, the contributing authors in this publication remind us that inclusive education cannot remain at the level of theoretical discourse. Rather, the goal is to have inclusive education become evident in teachers' practices and students' learning. The possibilities for inclusive education are described and discussed in the following three sections of this publication: first, 11 perspective papers on inclusive curriculum; second, 10 articles describing research projects; and third, a list of current resources to support inclusive curriculum practice.

For the perspectives papers each author contributed a "thought piece" related to inclusive curriculum today. These papers reflect their varied roles as educators and different areas of expertise. Some comment on the meaning of inclusive education and curriculum practice for today's schools and society; others focus on the implications for various stakeholders, especially students. Importantly, the authors also comment on several persistent, critical issues related to inclusive education, particularly issues they feel are neglected.

The 10 research projects profiled in this publication connect OISE instructors and teacher candidates with teachers, school administrators, and district personnel to focus on inclusive and equity-based practices. These projects explore a number of promising inclusive curriculum practices within elementary and secondary school classrooms. They show how institutions, programs, and practitioners can support learning for all students, particularly students who have been underserved. Seven projects focus on classroom practices for inclusive curriculum in subjects of math, science, social studies, and language arts. These projects include points of view on culturally responsive teaching practices, social justice education, the newcomer experience, and urban education. Three of the 10 projects involve larger, multifaceted initiatives that investigate certain aspects of inclusive curriculum over longer time periods. For example, they may focus on a specific age group, or building teacher capacity in a subject area, or a particular context such as urban inner-city education. Importantly, in these ten projects we see concrete examples of how students' identities have been validated, helping them feel connected to the curriculum and, consequently, increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

The third section provides resources for consideration by practitioners who want to explore different aspects of inclusive curriculum. This resource bank includes recent books, media, websites, and guides related to diversity, mostly within the Canadian context.

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Despite the range of inclusive curriculum policy initiatives and curriculum and resource development currently underway, this dimension of education is conceptually and contextually complex, involves uncertainty, and requires personal and political will, which complicates the implementation of inclusive education in classrooms and schools.

To achieve the goals of teaching and learning to include all aspects of diversity is not an easy task; there are many barriers. Many communities remain underserved, and the lack of true equity of opportunity and outcome remains a problem. Schools face many challenges, such as racism and intolerance based on stereotypes and biases. Because of the breadth and depth of learning goals associated with inclusive curriculum, a more sophisticated knowledge base and repertoire of teaching and learning practices are required. Teachers who try to work with the complexities of diversity and inclusion often have inadequate preparation, and they may also encounter the challenges of lack of time, funding, and age-appropriate resources.

Although the student population is diversifying in Canada, the teaching workforce does not adequately reflect this change. As in pluralistic countries such as Australia, England, India, and the United States, there is a divide between teachers' identities and those of their students. The challenge is not only to attract teachers who are able to respond to diversity but also to have a workforce that is representative of all sectors of society.

Looking to the future, we know that individual and collective actions within educational systems will be key to realizing a broader understanding of equitable and inclusive practices across the curriculum. Teachers and teacher educators will need to strengthen ways in which they can infuse themes such as intercultural understanding, anti-racist education, and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies into all components of their programs.

Through greater understanding, leadership, and advocacy, teacher candidates and experienced mentor teachers can be empowered to support change. Building institutional capacities through field partnerships and community programming is a step in the right direction. However, to achieve the goal of building inclusive and equitable practices, attention needs to be given to the multiple dimensions of teacher education programs. While a focus on curriculum factors will be critical, other dimensions of equity and inclusion will need to be considered as part of a more comprehensive strategy. Many dimensions—including institutional policies and programs, community relationships, professional learning, attracting and retaining a diverse teaching force—will also need to be taken into account.

The principles and practices of equity, inclusion, and social justice within and across school curricula are more relevant today than ever before. Students will continue to face pressures and issues that have individual, local, national, and global ramifications, and these affect the interconnected lives of students, teachers, schools, and communities. To achieve high levels of student success and nurture a deeper appreciation for human diversity, equity, and social justice, educators need to use effective and creative approaches to school curricula. As well, critical inquiry into contrasting perspectives and practices can enhance learning across all subjects and provide stimulating ideas for reflection. As editors of this publication we hope the perspectives, practices and resources described in this publication will encourage discussion and promote actions that support inclusive curriculum.

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Inclusive Education and Democratic Values

John P. Portelli

"Inclusive education" has become a popular catch phrase in education. Frequently, the term is used as a slogan for action and as a justification for a host of practices, some of which are contradictory to one another. It is crucial to clarify what inclusive education entails; otherwise, as educators, we may blindly act in ways that are contrary to our own beliefs. Clarification is also important because the term *inclusive education* has been used to support different, and sometimes opposing, philosophical and political positions. Today, no one would dare argue against inclusive education; yet the uses of the term are not the same.

The word *inclusive* may seem redundant, since education in its fullest and most meaningful sense should be inclusive rather than exclusive. By definition, education should mean being open to possibilities and a variety of perspectives. However, historically, education has been misused, and certain dominant educational views have not been inclusive. In fact, certain views have marginalized particular people on grounds such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, accents, and abilities. Unfortunately, such narrow conceptions of education still exist. For example, popular testing regimes based on narrow notions of literacy are widely used in North America and other Western countries. The primary and perhaps sole emphasis of these tests is on linear forms of literacy, to the disadvantage of other forms of literacy, such as poetic, dramatic, and oral. Given that such narrow views of education are still in operation, it makes pedagogical and ethical sense to argue for the importance of inclusive education.

One may rightly ask, inclusion of what? And unless one wants to argue that anything goes, this is a vital question to be addressed. To answer the question fairly one needs to consider several points. First, what characteristics are deemed the criteria for "normal" or "dominant"? Second, to what extent are those criteria of normal as inclusive as they could be on ethical and pedagogical grounds? Third,

what unintended biases could be contained within the dominant view? These are both educational and political questions that we cannot avoid as professionals.

According to the concept of deficit mentality, attributes seen as different from dominant norms are deemed less valuable and worthwhile. Deficit mentality does not consider a variety of factors and contexts; rather, it privileges certain norms—particularly white, middle-class norms. As a result, certain students, families, cultures, or contexts are blamed for failures. Blame does not fall on the problems that the system itself generates and reproduces, such as curricula, testing, conceptions and practice of leadership, and pedagogy. Students and their families then internalize these implied deficits and believe they can never change. Many examples from recent Western history show how the deficit mentality marginalized certain people and ways of life, and how the fight for racial and gender equality emerged as a result. On the other hand, it is critical not to romanticize particular students and their cultures, but to examine them according to more than one set of criteria. When only one set of criteria is used, others are excluded. The fact that they are excluded does not preclude that they are equally worthwhile.

Given that we proclaim democracy as a political and value system that is more ethically sound than other forms of political arrangements, our educational system should be consistent with the values that a democracy honours. As such, these values become the guiding principles for answering the above questions. In essence, the values identified with democracy include equity, rather than a one-size-fits-all mentality; critical and open discussions, rather than the silencing of people's views; social justice in the sense of fulfilling the needs of all, rather than the needs of a few; and the opening of possibilities, rather than an attitude of fatalism and deficit mentality.

Inclusive education needs to be based on the identified democratic values. The word *inclusivity* in

inclusive education is not an empty notion. Certain behaviours and attitudes that are contrary to the identified values must not be included in the concept and practice of inclusive education. As John Dewey noted a long time ago, open-mindedness is not the same as empty-mindedness. Inclusive education must not include authoritarian tendencies, bullying, fear of expression of thought and action, marginalization, standardization, or a one-size-fits-all mentality.

The nature and scope of inclusive education have to be guided by democratic values. To generate inclusive education according to democratic values, we need to be aware of false notions such as the conflation of equity with sameness, and the deficit mentality. Since I too fall into the traps of the deficit mentality, I use a series of reflective questions to evaluate my own practice. To further our understanding of inclusive education, I conclude with the following questions for consideration:

"In essence, the values identified with democracy include equity, rather than a one-size-fits-all mentality; critical and open discussions, rather than the silencing of people's views; social justice in the sense of fulfilling the needs of all, rather than the needs of a few; and the opening of possibilities, rather than an attitude of fatalism and deficit mentality."

Several common misconceptions associated with educational practices and policies hinder the implementation of inclusive education. The notion of equity is still conflated with one-size fits-all or standardization. Equity, however, is not identical to equality or sameness. Equity takes the contextual differences and needs into account and attempts to fulfill them all. Standardization is equally problematic, whether it is exhibited in evaluation practices, or curricula, or report cards. When standardization is then coupled with an emphasis on competition, narrow utility, and purely empirical evidence, the dangers of standardization multiply. These conditions continue to reproduce inequity, even if this is an unintended consequence.

Even though policy documents make reference to it, do we take equity seriously in our actions? Are we aware of the differences between sameness (or equality) and equity, which focuses on acknowledging and fulfilling different needs? Are we aware that standardization can in fact reproduce inequities? Can we really understand differences if we do not understand the contexts from which they arise? Can we fulfill the different needs of students if we do not understand and appreciate cultures, beliefs, and values that differ from the dominant neo-liberal ways of thinking and being in the world?

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A Human Right for All

Mary A. Samuel

It is important to remember that strategies, policies, and laws that deal with issues of equity and inclusion must speak to *all* students and *all* identities. A failure to recognize and act on this fact will continue to leave some students marginalized and also perpetuate an educational process that does not prepare students to be critical thinkers and socially just citizens of the twenty-first century.

The foundation for inclusive education exists in the human rights principles and values that are intrinsic to the lives and well-being of Canadian and Ontario citizens. Our system of human rights legislation is envied around the world, but many of us take for granted these rights and only think about them when some aspect of our personal human rights is threatened, or when someone or some group pushes for inclusion, and this nudges against our favoured traditions and practices.

As the meaning of inclusion evolves, human rights legislation as social law is evolving and becoming more inclusive. Yet, many educators, teachers, and administrators still set aside their own professional standards of practice, years of human rights law advancements, and internal board policies to take a pick-and-choose approach to whichever aspect of diversity or identity they want to "see reflected" in the curriculum.

The Ontario Ministry of Education's equity and inclusive education strategy (2009) carefully maps the legislative and policy context for inclusive education. It states clearly that inclusive education is "based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected" (p. 4). This provincial strategy establishes a set of guiding principles that challenges us as educators to see equity and

"We need to look deep, move out of our comfort zones, and recognize that an inclusive educational environment is a human right for all students."

Human rights legislation came about because certain individuals and groups fought for them, often at personal expense; they stood up to say they were not included because of race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability. They said, "That's not fair" or "I'm being discriminated against." Many advances in Canadian human rights were obtained because individuals who had in common the denial of their rights joined forces, and their collective efforts contributed to the development of the rights we enjoy today.

inclusion not only as a foundation of excellence but also as an opportunity to build on and enhance previous and existing initiatives. The intention is to demonstrate equity and inclusion throughout the educational system in ways that meet individual needs, identify and eliminate barriers, promote a sense of belonging, and involve the broad community.

For some educators, however, *all* refers to those students who share similar values, assumptions, and beliefs as their own. This perspective exists at both conscious and sub-conscious levels, and it poses barriers both individually, in teaching and assessment practices, and systemically, when values and practices become embedded in policy. The evidence exists in a legacy of studies that have examined barriers in education for marginalized or racialized groups. However, many persistent and critical issues around inclusive education present themselves when individual educators struggle with their own biases. The following list provides examples of questions and concerns related to identity and also barriers I've encountered while working with educators to create more inclusive environments.

● Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression: identities considered the last area of social acceptance. When gender roles go unchallenged and homophobia remains a significant barrier, how do we reflect and honour the increasing number of children who are entering school systems from same-sex households and students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ)?*

● Racism: a problem deemed to be addressed, but disturbing trends still exist due to a reluctance to do system-wide data collection. In a rush to be data-driven boards, can we not at least act on ample anecdotal evidence and accept racism as a valid barrier that still exists in our schools?

● Faith and religion: a reluctance to accommodate religious beliefs that are inconsistent with predominant Christian values. Students who try to exercise their right to accommodation in schools because of faith encounter barriers related to world events, fear, and ignorance. How can we be inclusive if we do not examine the values and practices that have grown out of Judeo-Christian beliefs?

● Classism: hidden and not-so-hidden poverty levels that continue to grow even within affluent Canadian cities. How do we respond to the needs of children from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and adjust curricula to ensure the costs of education do not pose additional barriers?

● Sexism: concerning the fight for the rights of women over the years. Considering current behaviour and language of students, and images in popular culture, how do we demonstrate what respect means around sex and gender?

● Ageism: considering teachers who are older than the students and have responsibility and authority over them. Do we recognize the voices of children as valid partners in the educational process?

● Ableism: a very broad identity. Who has special needs, and how do we provide an equitable environment that meets the needs of all students? We often focus on their physical and cognitive abilities, but increasingly we are challenged to recognize the stress and mental health issues affecting students.

Educators must realize the central problem for students in their classrooms: if a student's identity is outside the experience of the educator, that student's education has a strong possibility of being affected negatively by the values, assumptions, and expectations of that educator.

People who saw exclusion and denial and said this is not the Canada we want fought for the rights we are privileged to enjoy today. Are we prepared as educators to ensure that our own personal value system and biases do not add to the inequalities that our students experience? Are we prepared to challenge students and the parent communities with educational practices that will help prepare all students to think critically through a social justice lens?

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*At the time of publication, the acronym LGBTQ could be expanded to also include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, queer and two-spirited (LGBTTIQQ2S).

Faculties of education and boards of education are working to ensure that teachers have opportunities for professional learning regarding inclusive education and teaching in diverse communities. We share identity stories and personal experiences around exclusion. We develop culturally responsive instructional and assessment practices, and we use resources that reflect diversity. However, instead of waiting for the definitive story or resource, we need to recognize that we often "talk" inclusion but work against it at the same time. This happens because personal values, assumptions, and beliefs prevent us from extending inclusion to students who are different from us. We need to look deep, move out of our comfort zones, and recognize that an inclusive educational environment is a human right for all students. This message also extends to the parent community as a challenge to think about what is good not only for their own child but for all children and the future of Canadian society.

Inclusive education programming and policy are significant structural supports for achieving equity, but there can be no significant change until we examine and challenge some of our basic core beliefs around difference. We must recognize that if we wish to continue evolving as a democratic society, we must respect the human rights of all. In the words of Alice Walker (1989), "Keep in mind always the present you are constructing. It should be the future you want" (p. 238).

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A Cultural Production Approach to Anti-Oppressive Inclusion *Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández*

In his 1847 *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*, then Chief Superintendent of Schools, Reverend Edgerton Ryerson, made an impassioned argument to the Legislative Assembly for universal public schooling. Ryerson envisioned a system that would enforce a set of common values as a way to prepare all students "for their appropriate duties and employments of life" (p. 9). Ryerson envisioned an *inclusive* school system that would be "as broad as the population of the country" (p. 9). For Ryerson, "The branches of knowledge which it is essential that all should understand, should be provided *for all*, and taught to all; should be brought within the reach of the most needy, and forced upon the attention of the most careless" (p. 9).

Ryerson's words remind us that inclusion has always been central to the rationale for public schooling. Ryerson also

sorted and transformed into productive citizens that contribute to the economic growth of the nation—continues to undergird how schooling is structured and its overall purpose as an institution. The desire for uniformity and the imposition of particular values is most disturbingly evident in the Indian Residential Schools, the last of which closed only fifteen years ago. It is also evident in more innocuous and systemic practices, such as streaming, standardized testing, and other practices that promote homogeneity by means of sorting students into different categories and outcomes. The sorting and assimilative impulses of schools cannot be countered unless there is a deliberate and explicit redefinition of what we as educators mean by inclusion and how we understand the social and cultural value of diversity. This process of redefinition requires that educators recognize that the original aim—and thus the default outcome—of

"To be inclusive means to embrace difference as the central value to be encouraged and from which the production of culture begins, rather than as the central problem to be managed and through which culture becomes inert."

reminds us that, historically, schools have served what may appear as paradoxical goals. On the one hand, the goal of inclusion has been homogeneity, as schools were intended to impart "a character of uniformity as to fundamental principles pervading the whole: the whole based upon principles of Christianity" (p. 9). On the other hand, schools have served as a mechanism for sorting students into "their appropriate duties and employments of life" (p. 9). This paradox is resolved by the assumption that different outcomes are the result of discreet differences in students' characteristics, rather than differences that are produced by schools themselves.

Canada has changed a great deal over the last century and a half, yet public schools have changed very little, and the aims of assimilative inclusion and sorting remain embedded in their institutional structures. The same assembly line factory model that informed Ryerson's vision—in which children are seen as raw material to be

institutional schooling is to homogenize students: that is, to make them less, rather than more, diverse.

Canadian educators have reframed the idea of inclusion in relationship to the value of diversity primarily by embracing liberal multiculturalism. This is an important shift from the earlier view that the purpose of inclusion was to produce homogeneity. Instead, the ostensible purpose is to celebrate cultural diversity by encouraging cultural groups to retain their presumed core identity. Yet, inclusion based on liberal multiculturalism's conception of culture still obscures the role of schools in the production of unequal outcomes by blaming certain students—and their "culture"—for their failure to achieve. Liberal multiculturalism relies on the notion that individuals belong to singular and readily identifiable cultural groups that predetermine their behaviours, beliefs, and orientations toward institutions like schools, and thus their (in)ability to succeed.

A liberal multicultural approach to inclusion obscures the fact that schools continue to enforce dominant norms and values that persistently marginalize any form of difference that threatens the uniformity still required by the state. In this context, *diversity* becomes a euphemism to refer to individuals who appear to belong to some predefined and stable cultural category that is different from the "norm," even though these categories are defined through abstractions that reduce very diverse communities into flattened and monolithic stereotypes. Only an explicitly anti-oppressive understanding of inclusion, one that recognizes how social and cultural categories operate to manage and marginalize individuals deemed diverse, can ultimately underscore the value of cultural difference.

For instance, the concept of cultural production suggests that culture is constantly made and remade through contextually specific interactions that are largely dependent on the material and symbolic resources available. Cultural production seeks to embrace, rather than manage, cultural difference. While liberal multiculturalism demands stable definitions of cultural groups that are presumed to be homogenous and unchanging, a cultural production approach to inclusion rejects ready-made representations. It points to the ways in which students are constantly engaged in the production of their own cultural representations through expressive means, such as electronic media, music, dramatic play, fashion, and other forms of visual culture. Cultural production suggests an approach to schooling that is more akin to community and youth organizing, through which groups of youth and adult allies come together to produce creative self-representations.

Rather than viewing students as already *having* cultural characteristics that should be included in schools—whether to transform them through assimilation or to tolerate or celebrate them through multiculturalism—cultural production views both students and teachers as *makers* of culture; culture is a process rather than a variable to be managed. Understood this way, inclusion means that students are neither raw material nor a set of stereotypes already predefined. To be inclusive means to embrace difference as the central value to be encouraged and from which the production of culture begins, rather than as the central problem to be managed and through which culture becomes inert.

Of course, this approach presents a problem for an institution that demands predictability, manageability, and accountability. Without some sort of essential characteristic that can be used to differentiate between presumably distinct cultural groups, the state (through institutions like schools) can neither celebrate nor tolerate cultural difference. Inclusion becomes unmanageable. For this reason, cultural production embraces an explicitly anti-oppressive view of inclusion that might not only reveal but perhaps undermine the sorting role of schools.

Inclusive education is not a "thing-in-itself," as discussions about inclusion often tend to assume, but a strategy that seeks to address a set of circumstances. It does not, on its own, address inequality or compensate marginalized groups for a history of exclusions. Indeed, an inclusive curriculum without an anti-oppressive pedagogy ends up obscuring—and reproducing—the very dynamics of exclusion that otherwise characterize public schools. The concept of cultural production offers an approach to inclusion that exalts the cultural practices that bring communities to life and that honours the differences that can make contemporary schools into spaces for democratic participation and empowerment.

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The Promise of Disability *Tanya Titchkosky*

Inclusion—we include and, without question, this seems good. We include disability, and this seems especially good. Insofar as inclusion is taken as a self-evident good, the next question is, what does it mean to include?

Consider the shape that disability-inclusion takes in the language of everyday educational practice. It is said that we include students with "special needs," students with "exceptionalities," students with "challenges," and students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). It is also said that we include students with "disAbilities," "different abilities," and even students with "disabilities." Note that including disability today entails including students "with…" At the same time there is an ongoing search for more positive terms to refer to disability.

While no one has settled on a single positive term for disability, there is nonetheless a consistent and almost universally shared approach regarding how to refer to disabilities within the global educational milieu. This singular approach entails an intense use of the concept *with*. We include students who come "with" conditions. Although people hope to express these conditions in non-derogatory ways, disability is primarily imagined as a negative condition that accompanies a student in a distant way; a student comes with something, almost like an add-on to the generic version of person. While neither collapsing nor enhancing the relation between the person and their impairment, the use of the term *student with a disability* within contemporary education refers to students who happen to come with such conditions, but these conditions are understood as potentially negative.

continue to proliferate, disabled students, teachers, faculty, and staff are consistently included as people with conditions, and others hope that such difficulties, if not cured, can at least be worked and lived with.

Yet, *all* people come with conditions. In fact, to be a person is to be a bodied being; we live as embodied beings. To be embodied means to be conditioned by societal interpretations of bodily existence. As philosophical as this may sound, embodiment is a reality from which we cannot escape, except in death. While we all come with conditions, only some conditions are interpreted as the expected ones, and this has consequences for all people.

One noticeable consequence is that the structures of everyday life, including education, have built-in expected bodily conditions. The building in of expected bodily conditions is so common that it seems as if the human-made world was built by nature. Thus, some bodily conditions *are made* very easy to work with. Students, for example, come with the conditions of eyesight and hearing—conditions dependent upon light (reading texts) and sound (speaking)—for their engagement and inclusion in educational practice. With the assumed presence of conditions such as vision and hearing, it can seem as if there are no inclusive practices being undertaken by anyone, and it can even seem as though these conditions never influence educational experiences in unwanted ways. Included as taken-for-granted expectations, some conditions, such as sight and hearing, lose their status as conditions, and we cease to recognize

"Limits and possibilities are intimately intertwined, and it is this intertwining that grounds all human-made promises. Simply put, this means that just as vision and hearing do not always fulfill the promise of education, disability need not always be conceived as a barrier to education."

Equipped with the concept of *with*, we include: we educate students with—and occasionally hire faculty and staff with—disabilities. Some of us even work "with" our own impairment conditions, and people hope we will make use of our abilities and, in doing so, overcome that which may "dis" us. While acronyms and euphemisims

their part in *conditioning* experience. With some bodily conditions welcomed as valuable and expected, and thus not understood as conditions at all, the promise of education is thought to thrive.

Other conditions, however, seem to trouble the promise of education even before the student enters the classroom. Some conditions are neither expected nor welcomed and, if they show up, these conditions are expected to assume special spaces, or be engaged by special practices. This means that some students are included as those with unanticipated conditions that are not necessarily welcomed, but are certainly worrisome. What does it mean to be included as a student with unexpected, special, or unanticipated conditions? Some of us are included, but we are included as people with problem conditions, conditions that are taken for granted as barriers to the educational experience, and conditions that are not built in as an expected feature of the educational milieu. Thus, students with disabilities, for example, possess conditions that may seem not to come along with nor enhance the promise of education.

This means that education today includes at least two different versions of conditions that students come with when they enter an educational milieu. Some come with the expected bodily conditions and are often included as promises—such conditions are anticipated, welcomed, relied upon, and addressed through various pedagogic modalities. Others come with conditions and are included, but their inclusion is qualified in terms of special conditions, those that are not necessarily relied upon, or even anticipated, by various pedagogic modalities. In the face of these two differing conceptions of human conditions we sometimes act *as if* certain conditions can only be a barrier to education.

But, let us return to an inescapable reality: All of us come with conditions, and there is no such thing as conditions with promising possibilities without their accompanying limits, nor can there be a limit that does not have its promising possibilities. As dyslexic, for example, I have difficulties reading; yet these difficulties give rise to a variety of classroom practices, such as reading aloud or reading more than once and with differing intonations. This leads to more collective forms of reading. The experience of dyslexia brings the possibility of reading differently to the classroom, contemplating word order and significance, and

potentially experiencing in new ways not only words but also our collective relations with them. Moreover, even my reading miscues, mix-ups, and mistakes never fail to demonstrate the complex social character of reading as a complex communicative intersubjective act. Limits and possibilities are intimately intertwined, and it is this intertwining that grounds all human-made promises. Simply put, this means that just as vision and hearing do not always fulfill the promise of education, disability need not always be conceived as a barrier to education.

Given the reality of embodiment and the reality that every embodied condition contains both limits and possibilities, new promises for inclusive education arise. Now there can be an ongoing invitation to find less dichotomous and more interrelated ways to engage diverse bodily conditions and even blur the dividing line between possibility and limit. A direct way to do this is to find promise *in* disability, not despite it.

Finding promise in disability can take many different forms. Anticipating the inclusion of disability as possibility promises to change what classrooms "look like" for all embodied participants. Or, representing disability in diverse ways, as something other than a condition that comes with particular students, promises to include disability as a social, political, and historical subject. The emerging field of disability studies, moreover, entails the study of how disability is already included in educational and other environments and represents disability as a field of inquiry. Disability studies examines how disability is culturally organized as a rare or special condition even though it is truly impossible to live a life without some connection to disability; we are all embodied beings knotted together through intimate ties between limits and possibilities.

Inclusive educational practices today signal a time when people can become wary of a singular version of disability in our classrooms, a version that sees disability as always a problem and never a promise. Insofar as it is possible to treat current inclusive practices as a starting place for inquiry and not an end point, we can question who and what have been included, and how, and thus find promise *in* disability.

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Everything is Alive and Everyone is Related: Indigenous Inclusive Education

Jean-Paul Restoule

Boozhoo. Jean-Paul Restoule nintishinikaas. Wajask nitootem. Okikendawt mnissing nitoonci. Anishinaabe ndaaw.

This greeting and introduction in Anishinaabemowin, a.k.a. the Ojibwe language, tells a fellow Anishinaabe some key information. It communicates my name, my clan, my community, and my people. In about ten words I give a knowledgeable Anishinaabe much of what they need to know about who I am and where I come from. Anything else I say afterward can be contextualized by this standard introduction. This greeting communicates a series of relationships that grow ever wider, from the self, to the clan, to the community, to the nation. Extending beyond myself, I am related to all other humans and all living beings in Creation. This greeting embodies a fundamental tenet of Anishinaabe, and Aboriginal, worldviews: Everyone is related. A second tenet of Aboriginal worldviews is the idea that everything is alive or has spirit. These two principles form the foundation of indigenous education.

Indigenous education is also grounded in ethics that emerge from stories that guide our actions and words. The Anishinaabek tell the story of the Seven Grandfathers, or seven sacred teachings, where the ethics are often presented as follows:

> To cherish knowledge is to know **wisdom**.
> To know **love** is to know peace.
> To honour all of Creation is to have **respect**.
> **Bravery** is to face the foe with integrity.
> **Honesty** in facing a situation is to be brave.
> **Humility** is to know your self as a sacred part of Creation.
> **Truth** is to know all of these things (Benton–Banai, 1988).

From this perspective—acknowledging that everything is alive and everyone is related, knowing the path set out by the grandfather teachings, and embodying these ethics and principles in action—indigenous teaching and learning is inherently inclusive.

One example of inherent inclusiveness drawn from indigenous ways of group learning is the circle process. By meeting in circle, everyone can see everyone else (unlike in many classes where people sit in rows). Everyone's voice is sought, welcomed, and respected. There is a saying among the Onkwehonweh that in the circle everyone is of the same height. The circle acts to disrupt hierarchy and power imbalances. There is space and time for the most minoritized views to be expressed. All views in the circle are respected.

The time is right for all people to embrace the strengths and gifts of indigenous education. To begin this process, classrooms need to be more inclusive of Aboriginal people, who rarely see their true selves reflected in the curriculum, classrooms, pedagogy, teachers, and principals of their schools. The question is, How can educators make classrooms more inclusive to Aboriginal people who continue to lag behind the Canadian population in school achievement (Statistics Canada, 2008b)? Since education and achievement are key factors in determining one's health and employment status, it is vital to increase the likelihood of a positive educational experience for Aboriginal students. When Aboriginal learners see that they are valued, they will engage, participate, and contribute. If they cannot see their experiences reflected or valued, they will turn away, and the marginalization will continue.

Demographic shifts necessitate indigenous inclusion. The Aboriginal population is increasing nearly six times faster than the non–Aboriginal population and proportionately accounts for nearly four percent of Canada's enumerated population (Statistics Canada, 2008a). This demographic is also much younger. Nearly half the Aboriginal population is under 24 years of age, compared to 31 percent of the Canadian population at this age (Statistics Canada, 2008a). Our population is also increasingly urban and mobile, and many schools across the nation have Aboriginal students.

These students, however, are not always easily identifiable as Aboriginal people. Although visual stereotypes persist, more often than not a blue-eyed Cree or a blonde Mohawk will find a relevant moment to acknowledge his or her heritage.

The goals of inclusive, indigenous education cannot be achieved in isolation. Non-Aboriginal people need to understand our shared histories, perspectives, visions, and goals, and to participate in achieving them. This means it is important for non-Aboriginal teachers to learn, respect, and use indigenous perspectives in their classrooms.

their knowledge: say from whom they learned what they are sharing. Instead of asking whether they have the right to teach this material, they can reframe the question as, what is my responsibility?

The second concern of non-Aboriginal teachers, the fear of presenting material without being an expert, calls for an understanding that teachers do not have to be "the experts." Teachers often need to teach subjects they didn't major in at university; when they are expected to teach a certain subject in the curriculum they locate the information and resources to be able to teach it. The

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"In its most complete sense, indigenous education is inclusive education and makes possible the integration of all learners in relation to all life and in pursuit of full human development."

Some teachers who would otherwise be strong allies with Aboriginal people resist including indigenous perspectives and activities in classrooms for two reasons: fear of appropriation and lack of confidence. Both these concerns can be addressed through the fostering of relationships with Aboriginal people. By seeking and maintaining relationships with indigenous people and organizations, non-Aboriginal teachers can gain knowledge that will help them generate meaningful classroom activities and deepen friendships. Building such relationships defuses the appropriation issue because one is no longer speaking *for* but speaking *with*. These ally teachers can learn to acknowledge and state the sources of

process is different with indigenous knowledge and takes time to do it right. Learning has to be developed through relationships, not simply from information on the Internet. Teaching as a process is a never-ending spiral of learning, refining, learning, and refining.

Indigenous knowledge and Anishinaabek education is meant for everybody. Anishinaabek traditional teachings and stories reveal not only Anishinaabek culture but also the nature of life and human nature. In its most complete sense, indigenous education is inclusive education and makes possible the integration of all learners in relation to all life and in pursuit of full human development.

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Challenging Classism and Deficit Thinking in Our Schools *David Ast*

When it comes to issues of poverty and socioeconomic circumstances, students from low-income and working families have a higher risk of being pushed out of the educational system than do their more affluent counterparts. According to the 2006 Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Student Census, the proportion of Grade 9 students with six or fewer credits is five times higher for students with parents or guardians from low-income backgrounds than it is for students with parents or guardians from professional backgrounds (Brown & Sinay, 2008, p. 48). However, if educators believe that all students should have true *equity of outcome* then schools must provide all students with true *equity of access* and true *equity of opportunity*. An inclusive curriculum grounded in equity and social justice must be cultivated to challenge the structural inequities and barriers to access, opportunity, and outcome that students from low-income and working families face on a daily basis in our schools.

Often, when educators discuss the achievement gap for students from low-income families, they blame the students and their families for the students' lack of success: "What do you expect, their parents don't care about education"; "I don't think the kid even has any books at home"; or "The kid is just lazy like his parents, probably end up on welfare just like them" (Compton-Lilly, 2004). These myths about the "culture of poverty" and the lack of achievement they engender are based on deficit thinking. This paradigm asserts that "poor" people are to blame for their lot due to their deficiencies and inadequacies, which leads to the expectancy of failure for students from low-income and working families. However, Ruth Johnson (2002) challenges teachers and administrators to refute the misconception that children living in poverty, and from certain racialized groups, are "incapable of anything but low outcomes" (p. 11).

As educators we must confront class bias in our schools, our classrooms, and ourselves. Accepting a culture of poverty as an excuse for students' failure emanates from a *culture of classism*, which creates barriers to access, opportunity, and outcome (Gorski, 2008). The tendency to hide behind this culture of classism absolves educators of the responsibility for identifying and redressing the barriers to students within schools and classrooms, as well as from critiquing the origins and impacts of poverty. Instead of blaming the students, their families, and "*their* poverty" as the cause for "*their* own failure," educators must identify and challenge the classist institutional practices and power relations within our schools that maintain these historical inequities (Portelli et al., 2007). The gaps to access, opportunity, and outcome faced by students from low-income and working families can only be addressed once educators focus on the factors related to student success that we control and influence, rather than on those we do not.

One of the first steps in working towards equity and inclusion for all students is critical reflection and an interrogation of class privilege. As educators we need to challenge our implicit assumptions and examine our biases, stereotypes, and prejudices about poverty, class, and the students we teach. As well, to create the equities of access and opportunity that will lead to greater equity of outcome for students, this awareness needs to be put into action in schools and classrooms. These actions must address the inclusiveness of the curriculum, the responsiveness of the pedagogy, and the quality of the school environment. This means providing a culturally relevant and rigorous curriculum that engages students from low-income and working families and builds caring and respectful relationships among members of the school community. In addition, educators can engage students in an analysis of controversial and sensitive issues to provide them with opportunities to develop critical sociopolitical consciousness about how to address inequities they and others face (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007).

In order to mitigate the impact of poverty on students, teachers and administrators must also courageously address other systemic barriers within schools that limit access, opportunity, and outcome for students. Some actions that can be taken include subsidized field trips for students from low-income and working families; nutritious breakfast and lunch programs, in conjunction with local community agencies that focus on food security and low-income and working families. They demonstrate steps toward creating an inclusive school culture that respects, affirms, and validates all students and their life experiences. To redress the barriers to access, opportunity, and outcome for students from low-income and working families, there needs to be an explicit transformation of curriculum, pedagogy, and schooling towards equitable and inclusive practice. As the disparities between rich and poor within

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anti-poverty strategies; designated class time for students to access Internet and computer resources for research and writing; and programs and initiatives, such as community kitchens, that invite parents and guardians to see the school as a community centre and willing partner in addressing community needs. These concrete actions take into account the lived realities of students from society continue to grow, educators must stop trying to "fix" students from low-income backgrounds and instead challenge the classism and deficit thinking that perpetuate the socioeconomic gaps (Gorski, 2008, p. 35). As educators, we have a moral imperative to act to ensure all students, including those living in poverty, are engaged and successful; our failure is not an option.

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Homophobia, Transphobia, and Fat Phobia in Physical Education *Heather Sykes*

My thoughts about inclusive education stem from my involvement in teaching physical education at several levels: in teacher education programs and at the K–12 level. Many students in the Canadian educational system are marginalized in a variety of ways because they do not conform to taken-for-granted ideas about healthy or athletic bodies. In this paper I suggest ways that inclusive education does and does not adequately deal with three issues of discrimination in the context of physical education—these issues are homophobia, transphobia, and fat phobia.

Homophobia is an ongoing problem in physical education and school sports. This form of discrimination is based on the assumption that heterosexuality is normal. In physical education, homophobia gets played out in highly visual ways, especially in locker rooms and in movement spaces. Long-term approaches to including sexual-minority students require unlearning and letting go of heteronormative expectations and assumptions. Significant progress has been made by school systems across Ontario to deal with homophobia as a form of harassment and bullying; however, this only tackles part of the problem. Anti-discrimination and safe schools approaches need to be accompanied by deeper educational reforms; this means reforms directed towards lesbian and gay inclusion that benefit others besides white students only. Homophobia affects students of colour, disabled students, migrant and indigenous students, and others in very different ways. One solution does not fit all. Inclusive education needs to challenge what is called homo-nationalism, which tends to include respectable, middle-class, and white sexual minority students in the postcolonial context of Canadian education.

Transphobia and cisgender privilege are other problems rarely addressed in inclusive education. Broadly defined, transphobia refers to discrimination or harassment towards people on the basis of their transgender, transsexual, or non-normative gender identity or gender expression. A cisgender person is someone who experiences congruence between the sex she or he was assigned at birth and his or her gender identity.

Despite some growing awareness about gender identity and expression within education, it is still difficult in most schools for a teacher or student to be transgender or do one's gender differently. In most physical education contexts it is still very rare, if not impossible, for students to decide about, develop, and live their transgender subjectivities. Once the limitations of binary gender—of being male or female—are recognized, many aspects of gender need to be reconsidered and re-evaluated. This implicates all individuals and discourses, particularly those that have not paid attention to the privileges associated with doing gender normally. Thus, inclusive education requires teachers and students to examine cisgender privilege. Being cisgendered brings with it many unearned benefits, just as white privilege and male privilege do, and these privileges need to be identified and challenged by inclusive education.

To challenge cisgender privilege and transphobia requires questioning the value placed on masculine ways of moving, acknowledging the arbitrariness of organizing students' bodies and teaching approaches according to two gender categories only, and creating gender-neutral locker rooms and gymnasia as spaces for bodily privacy and sensitivity.

Fat phobia is another problem in physical education that needs to be addressed by inclusive education. In my recent research project, many students reported how difficult it was to develop positive fat subjectivities in physical education classes. They described how weighing and measuring practices function to humiliate and discipline fat bodies. The fact that fat phobia is racialized often reinforces the social limits imposed on expressing one's sex and gender identities. Students resist fat phobia in physical

education by either avoiding or sometimes excelling in particular physical activities (Sykes & McPhail, 2007). Current policies, such as Daily Physical Activity (DPA), designed to increase physical activity levels often contribute to fat phobia in schools by reinforcing, albeit unintentionally, discrimination on the basis of body size. Researchers working within the domain of critical obesity studies have identified how physical activity initiatives are frequently based on the erroneous assumption that weight loss leads to increased health. Weight-loss approaches to physical activity are limited and misguided, since being fat does not mean a person is unfit or unhealthy. However, these approaches receive high levels of health science funding, which actually compounds the problem. Critical physical educators now suggest it is more important to develop fat-positive fitness and activity spaces in schools than to promote physical activity that aims to reduce obesity or that is designed to get students to lose weight.

address fat phobia as a form of discrimination. One notable example is a teacher's manual by Rice and Russel (2002) that contains activities dealing with body-related discrimination against students who are fat or thin. It also deals with body image and eating disorders as equity issues that are experienced differently by students according to their race, gender, ability, and social class.

The exclusion experienced by lesbian, gay, transgendered, and overweight or fat students during physical education classes stems from commonsense ideas about being healthy, normal, and athletic. These commonsense ideas about the body take a long time to form and can be traced back to underlying, often unquestioned, racist, nationalist, and scientific discourses. This is where critical studies in sport sociology, curriculum theory, and health sciences can provide helpful ways to tackle the seemingly intractable problems of inclusion and exclusion in schools. So that no student experiences discrimination on the basis of body shape or size, the Ontario Ministry

"From my perspective, inclusive education means understanding, and then challenging, how racialized discourses of sexism, gender, and bodily discrimination get played out in schools and physical education classes."

Inclusive education in physical education needs to address fat phobia by drawing on sociocultural and feminist perspectives about body size, rather than the dominant, neo-liberal discourse about the so-called childhood obesity epidemic. Inclusive educators need to become more proactive in challenging fat phobia in physical education. This will involve unpacking the questionable scientific claims and media rhetoric about an obesity epidemic. In practical terms this means that educators need to develop a critical literacy about the "commonsense" rhetoric of an obesity epidemic and then use this literacy to adapt existing curriculum resources and policies. There are very few K-12 curriculum materials about physical activity or healthy living that

of Education should approach fat phobia as an equity issue and incorporate body-based discrimination into existing K-12 equity policies. The policy development process must draw on sociocultural as well as medical research about body size. Because issues of discrimination such as homophobia, transphobia, and fat phobia are not experienced in isolation, curricular material and policies must take an equity or intersectional approach. The Ontario Ministry of Education needs to develop teacher resources, a curriculum support team, and a policy framework that prevents body-size discrimination and does not reinforce the moral panic about the so-called obesity epidemic. The Daily Physical Activity policy needs to be revised to make schools fat-positive and safe spaces

for students of all sizes, where physical activity is not, implicitly or explicitly, linked to "decreasing obesity" or "losing weight." Thus, from my perspective, inclusive education means understanding, and then challenging, how racialized discourses of sexism, gender, and bodily discrimination get played out in schools and physical education classes. Putting inclusive education into practice for physical education means helping teachers and students learn how these discourses work, and then doing the hard work of unlearning the forms of white supremacy, cisgender, and body-size privilege that get produced in schools, physical activity, and sport.

Thus, the challenge facing inclusive education at the level of teacher preparation in physical education is how to enable students and teachers to recognize these intersecting forms of discrimination and then go on to develop different body politics. A long-term goal for teacher education is to question and understand why many teachers and students from dominant groups become lodged in, and only a few become dislodged from, their normative subject positions of whiteness, fitness, healthy citizenship, and straightness.

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Inclusive Education Inside and Outside Ontario Schools *Kelly Hayes*

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) recognizes that Ontario society is characterized by individual and systemic discrimination against particular groups. Within this context, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures that result in equality for all. At ETFO, equity initiatives are designed to provide teachers and educational workers with the necessary knowledge and tools to be able to effectively challenge discrimination.

ETFO has a variety of ongoing programs and projects that focus on achieving equality and equity.

- **Leaders for Tomorrow**, a year-long, multi-faceted leadership program for women from designated groups, including aboriginal, racialized, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender

- **… and still we rise**, a women's annual three-day leadership conference focusing on social justice issues

- **The Energy for Change**, a women's annual equity conference, focusing in 2011 on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)* and transsexual issues

- **The Canadian Aboriginal Festival Education Day**, an annual event, which includes providing teachers with Native Studies classroom curriculum materials, such as the 2010 Métis curriculum

- **Social Justice Begins With Me**, a comprehensive literature-based curriculum-support document for kindergarten to Grade 8, which focuses on such issues as racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and ableism

Inclusive education is about achieving equality in classrooms and communities. It can be summed up in a simple phrase and powerful action: validate who children are. The action of validating a child involves acknowledging, celebrating, and embracing who the child is, which includes the child's race, gender, class, sexuality, family dimensions, country of origin, ability or disability, and religion. It also involves providing a learning environment where all children see themselves reflected in a positive light.

The 2008 Ontario Ministry of Education equity and inclusive education strategy provides policy support that both strengthens equity and inclusion in the classroom and requires educators to implement appropriate practices to achieve these goals. The strategy provides not only policy support but also resource support that can become a powerful tool for achieving inclusive schools.

Classism, for example, is one issue that continues to be underaddressed in classrooms and schools. Classism carries the assumption that an individual chooses their socioeconomic status, and this perpetuates the myth that socioeconomic status is a choice. This false notion ignores external and internal factors such as history, inequity, systematic oppression, and Canadian socioeconomic realities. A related social misconception is that class or socioeconomic status is the result of how hard a person works. In other words, poverty is attributed to a lack of individual effort.

According to Flessa & McAdie (2007),

> When educators articulate a more comprehensive version of what it means to work with communities in poverty, we accomplish something quite significant: we take a stand against the sometimes overwhelming public discourse that blames poor people for their poverty and that excuses unacceptable degrees of educational inequality. (p.61)

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*At the time of publication, the acronym LGBTQ could be expanded to also include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, queer and two-spirited (LGBTTIQQ2S).

"It is fundamental that teachers have agency to make change inside and outside schools."

Race, gender, and disability have a further connection to class. For example, "poverty rates for children in Aboriginal, racialized, new immigrant, and lone mother-led families are at least double the average rate" (Campaign 2000, 2007).

Schools have a long history of providing breakfast programs and clothing exchanges, supporting food banks, donating to Christmas hampers, and subsidizing school trips. However well-intentioned and necessary these programs are, such band-aid solutions do not alleviate the systemic issues of poverty and classism in Canada. And they will not bring equality to Ontario students. In fact, since the inception of breakfast programs and food banks, poverty has risen. Food bank use in Ontario increased by 14 percent between 2001 and 2007 (Toronto & York Region Labour Council, 2008). Since 2007, given the economic downturn and sweeping job loss in recent years, the increased use of food banks is staggering. The Ontario Hunger Report 2009, released by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, indicates that the increase was 11 percent in 2008 and 19 percent in 2009.

In relation to poverty and classism in Ontario, ETFO has taken a lead to promote awareness and change and, in the process, inclusive education. In 2006 the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat of Ontario approached ETFO and asked us to lead an initiative to support teachers and schools regarding poverty and education. The intiative was developed based on a literature review commissioned to help ETFO understand the complexities of the issues as well as the impact of poverty on education. One recurring theme in the literature was the importance of addressing the biases that educators sometimes bring to their work with students who live in poverty. All components of ETFO's initiative included a focus on addressing the stereotypes that educators hold. Following are some features and examples of ETFO's poverty-focused projects:

- partnership with Roseneath Theatre to tour the play, *Danny, King of the Basement*, across Ontario for two years, bringing the play to a number of schools and faculties of education;

- support for certain schools identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education as those likely composed of students living in challenging circumstances, including release-time for teachers to explore the issues raised by the play and to develop year-long school projects;

- financial support for certain schools to identify and address professional development and educational needs related to poverty in their school;

- community resource poster, listing resources in the areas of health, food, housing, education, and recreation, and distributed to every public elementary school in Ontario, as well as various community hubs, such as recreation centres and child care centres;

- after-school workshops, such as Beyond the Breakfast Program, to help teachers identify issues of poverty;

- a four-part workshop for teams of teachers and school administrators to probe issues of poverty and to develop actions related to their specific school contexts;

- an award-winning[i] documentary DVD entitled "One in Six," created to generate awareness and discussion, and featuring the voices of groups traditionally affected by poverty, including Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, single-mothers, and people with disabilities; and

- a province-wide symposium convened for teachers and researchers to help consolidate a range of research and projects.

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[i] CINE Golden Eagle Award, in the documentary category at Philadelphia Film Festival, selected for screening at the International Film Festival of South Africa.

These projects have had an impact in every part of the province, in every district school board, in hundreds of schools, and for innumerable teachers and students. As a result of these projects, ETFO has observed the strength in our schools and communities and the commitment of Ontario educators to help all students thrive and learn.

Concerning the specific issues of poverty and class, what happens in our classrooms is only part of the solution. More attention to social policy more broadly (e.g., health care, child care, employment insurance reform, housing, and wages) needs to be part of the broader strategy. For example, the Ontario government took steps to increase the minimum wage after a lengthy freeze. However, even after the 2010 increase in Ontario's minimum wage to $10.25, a family of four in Toronto requires after-tax disposable income of $57,400 (and so must earn an hourly wage of $16.60) just to meet what is defined as a minimal, socially acceptable standard of living (Mackenzie & Stanford, 2008). Although the ETFO poverty projects have impacted many schools, teachers, and students, we recognize that it is also necessary for educators to be active outside their schools. Educators need to be part of the broader work of communities and cities in trying to bring about a more equitable society, including efforts related to living wage and affordable housing.

The roles of educators and organizations in validating children are fundamental to inclusive education, because this helps students see themselves as integral and active in their education. As well, it is fundamental that teachers have agency to make change inside and outside schools.

Kelly Hayes is the coordinator of Equity and Women's Services for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).

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Easier Said than Done: Taking Religious and Cultural Dimensions Seriously *Sarfaroz Niyozov*

Students' religious and cultural backgrounds are of particular importance to the theory and practice of inclusive education. Poor performance, disengagement, and drop out are often linked to educators' and schools' inattention to students' cultural and religious backgrounds and identities (Gérin-Lajoe, 2008).

While there is growing consensus on including students' cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds in public school curricula, there are few insights on how to do that. While some educators tend to separate religion from culture, or even juxtapose the two, this practice has become increasingly problematic when dealing with students whose culture and religion are deeply intertwined (such as Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Tibetans). According to my recent research, students like to talk about religion, and some teachers bring religious and cultural issues to their classes despite discouragement to do so, and they believe their students are mature and sufficiently aware to discuss religions and sensitive issues.

To include a religious dimension in the public school curriculum is, however, not a simple "let's just do it" matter. Teachers and educational stakeholders, as well as parents and community leaders, need to take part in a candid debate concerning the complexity, purpose, pedagogy, motives, and implications of including this educational dimension. Both Canadian and comparative international research on this topic points to some key challenges related to the inclusion of students' diverse cultural and religious backgrounds in school curricula. Following are key concerns related to this debate.

Need to deal with multiplicity and plurality
Students in today's classrooms represent not only a variety of religions and cultures but also different perspectives within similar religions and cultures. However, some boards of education, publishing houses, and textbook authors project their particular denominational views as the true culture and religion. Thus, other interpretations and perspectives are excluded, and certain fixed, static, and idealized versions of religious cultures and histories are mainly provided (Panjwani, 2005). Such an approach could gloss over the inequalities and discriminations against the internal and external "other" along ethnic, gender, denominational, and racial lines. According to one teacher, students bring their own personal and familial cultures to the classroom, a "micro-culture" that might be unlike or even contrary to their macro-culture as defined by communalist religious leaders and politicians. And for him, a teacher's engagement of religious cultures should start at this personal level. Teachers may be unaware of this diversity, or they may be directed into seeing micro-cultures as a diversion from the "authentic" culture or religion. However, they may ask: When one teaches about Islam, or a Muslim culture and history, whose version or interpretation is one presenting or promoting? What does it take to provide an inclusive curriculum for a class of 25 students that may consist of six religious cultures with 10 subcultures?

Need to recognize complexity and sensitivity
As highly complex and sensitive phenomena, cultures and religions are also connected to students' emotions and political sensibilities, which are often transnational. Canadian and British Muslim students, for example, may be concerned more about issues in the Muslim world than in Canada. Their views may not be aligned with those of the media or academia. For example, the dominant discourse in Canada projects the Taliban as a terrorist/anti-stability force. Meanwhile, individuals in Afghanistan and Canada may consider the Taliban as a nationalist and anti-colonial force dressed in a religious discourse. Similarly, while some media and scholarship continue to connect Islam to violence and a rejection of Western progress and modernity, many Muslims project it as religion of peace, reason, and progress. What do non-Muslim students think about Muslims and Islam? Are there curriculum materials that handle this complexity?

How can teachers raise issues without being superficial, biased, or one-sided, and without further alienating or propping up their Muslim students?

Need to prepare and have systemic support
Many teachers say they are unprepared both conceptually and pedagogically to deal with Islamic aspects. During their undergraduate courses they are rarely exposed to non-Western histories, cultures, and religions, except in specialized departments and programs. Religious studies programs, including Islamic studies, need to take a more critical and comparative approach. Initial teacher and in-service programs fall short of equipping teachers to address controversial issues. Teachers are swamped with conflicting views about topics of interest in the media and

engagement with Canada's history and what it means to be Canadian is given little attention.

Problem of focusing on the negative
At times, researchers, community activists, and politicians fall into overemphasizing what schools and teachers are *not* doing for their students from minority backgrounds. This deficit view leads to teachers' and schools' resentment and resistance, because they have been doing their best. The positive examples should be acknowledged and built upon. Many teachers have high expectations of their Muslim students; find them respectful, hardworking, and bright; encourage them to present their views and defend them; include their histories and cultures; learn from them and use these students as resources; and

"Students in today's classrooms represent not only a variety of religions and cultures but also different perspectives within similar religions and cultures."

on the Internet, aside from their daily work and life challenges. Primary and secondary school teachers have tried or would like to teach about international events (e.g., Israel–Palestine conflict, 9/11, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the war in Afghanistan) and domestic topics (e.g., Omar Khadr, Aqsa Parvez, false detainments, Islamophobia, and gender equity), but they lack explicit support from almost all stakeholders. Yet, avoiding these and other issues in school might be perilous to the students and society. Muslim youth occasionally cite outside-school brainwashing about these and other international and domestic events as reasons for how and why they become alienated or radicalized.

Need to consider inclusion as a priority
Currently, economic priorities define education, leaving little room for cultural, historical, and religious topics to be explored in their complexity. Ironically, history and social studies—where students' cultures, religions, and histories could be dealt with—are not considered high priority subjects among parents and students in terms of their future aspirations. Pointedly, even serious

accommodate for diet and prayer (Collet, 2007; Niyozov, 2010; Sarroub, 2005). Without such balanced portrayal, teachers and schools won't take research and policy seriously.

Reasons for including cultural and religious dimensions
Discussion about the purpose of including students' cultures, religions, and histories is still underdeveloped, general, and politically correct. Some important reasons are often stated: affirming students' identity, enhancing their self-esteem, providing cultural relevance and responsiveness, reducing drop out and alienation, and replacing Eurocentrism. As educators, we need to examine each of these claims. One teacher engages students in finding how common human themes and issues are dealt with in different ways by using examples from *One Thousand and One Nights*, from Indian literature, and from stories by Naguib Mahfuz. Further, he asks, Is the purpose of including students' cultures, religions, and histories to fossilize and harden our students into back-home cultures, making them more Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or orthodox, or to develop a new Canadian identity for the twenty-first century?

As educators we need to ask: Are we to make our students' feel only good and happy about their cultures, or are we to engage in critical conversations where similar critical standards are applied to all religious and cultures? Why do we scrutinize multiculturalism, liberalism, capitalism, and communism, but we are discouraged to examine religions? Why do we rightly critique Western cultures and societies in terms of racism, inequalities, and discrimination but not apply the same critique to countries and cultures where our students come from? Why do we care so much about students' back-home cultures and identities and pay much less attention to what it means to be Canadian? Is education simply a businesslike meeting of clients' needs as in a marketplace, or is it about developing students' critical, and creative thinking and abilities to independently and knowledgeably solve problems and make decisions?

Summary

In this article, I highlighted challenges of inclusion, focusing largely on Muslim and Islam. Obviously, our schools are populated with other communities with similar and different legitimate aspirations. The way forward for inclusion cannot be ad hoc or simply a politically convenient approach. We need to listen to our teachers and provide material, institutional, and intellectual support and professional development. Any engagement of this kind must be critical, pluralist, comparative, and educationally focused, as well as give consideration to the interests of students, all of whom live in a time of tremendous complexity, multiplicity, and unpredictability.

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Curriculum Access for Students with Reading Difficulties

Rhonda Martinussen and Todd Cunningham

Akbar is a nine-year-old male student in fourth grade who has lived in Canada all his life, and English is the predominant language spoken at home. He has been diagnosed with a reading disability. Although Akbar has strong oral language skills and average intellectual ability, he reads slowly and effortfully, struggles with spelling, and produces little written work.

According to Loreman, Lupart, McGhie-Richmond, and Barber (2008), "Inclusion acknowledges all forms of difference as having value, including cultural, racial, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic circumstances. Children with exceptionalities, however, are one group who are at the forefront of the inclusion movement" (p. 78). Our discussion on inclusive education focuses on curriculum access from the perspective of children and youth with reading disabilities.

instruction designed to increase their reading proficiency. These students often need to develop skills in multiple domains of reading (e.g., word recognition and reading fluency) and writing (e.g., composition skills). Intervention programs for students with reading disabilities should include instructional practices that have been found to be effective for students with learning disabilities (Fletcher, Fuchs, Lyon, & Barnes, 2007). In addition, to foster appropriate growth in ability, the interventions need to be delivered with an intensity

"We believe that it is important to create a learning environment for students with reading disabilities that promotes their acquisition of core literacy skills and facilitates their ability to access the curriculum."

Students with reading difficulties are a heterogeneous group with varied strengths and needs. Some students exhibit strengths in oral language skills, such as listening comprehension, and marked weaknesses in word reading accuracy, fluency, and reading comprehension. Students with reading difficulties may not be able to read and understand content-area texts. Thus, their lack of proficiency in reading may constrain their ability to access the curriculum and demonstrate progress in grade-level curriculum expectations (Edyburn, 2007; Kennedy & Deshler, 2010).

To increase the likelihood that these students are able to meet curriculum expectations, a two-pronged approach can be used (Kennedy & Deshler, 2010). First, students with reading disabilities should be provided with targeted

level—in terms of duration and frequency of delivery, for example—that matches the needs of the child (Fletcher et al., 2007).

Although evidence-based interventions are a key component of an educational program for children with reading disabilities, it is also important to provide these students with appropriate accommodations. Accommodations for students with reading disabilities should reduce the barriers to learning that are associated with poor word- or text-level skills and also utilize students' strengths to circumvent their reading difficulties. These accommodations should facilitate students' ability to access curriculum content and demonstrate progress in grade-level curriculum expectations.

Assistive technology (AT) provides a common accommodation for students with reading disabilities. It is "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities" (Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 (P.L.), pp. 100–407). For students with reading difficulties, text-to-speech (TTS) programs are one of the most widely used assistive technologies. TTS programs convert text on the computer into audible speech. This technology, therefore, circumvents decoding and fluency weaknesses and allows students to access the text content. Although research on AT for students with reading disabilities is not extensive, recent findings suggest that TTS programs may be helpful. For example, Maurer (2007) reported that providing students with reading difficulties with TTS to support their classroom activities had a positive effect on students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, and science and social studies grades. We and others (Edyburn, 2007; Kennedy & Deshler, 2010) believe that there is a strong need for further research on ways to best integrate various types of technology into the instructional programs of students with reading difficulties.

In conclusion, we believe that it is important to create a learning environment for students with reading disabilities that promotes their acquisition of core literacy skills and facilitates their ability to access the curriculum. In the case of Akbar who was introduced at the beginning of this commentary, his educational program can include various accommodations, such as assistive technologies. Akbar will likely need instruction regarding how to integrate the accommodations into his everyday learning. In addition, it will be important to monitor the extent to which the accommodations provided to Akbar meet his needs. Finally, a targeted intervention program that incorporates evidence-based instructional practices can be implemented to increase Akbar's word recognition, reading fluency, and written expression skills (Fletcher et al., 2007). Again, his response to the intervention program should be monitored carefully. Both approaches have the potential to improve Akbar's ability to access the curriculum and demonstrate success in school.

Rhonda Martinussen is an assistant professor of special education and adaptive instruction at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study at OISE. Her research interests include the relationship between reading and writing difficulties and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms, and also factors associated with listening and reading comprehension skills in youth with and without a diagnosis of ADHD.

Todd Cunningham is a postdoctoral fellow in the psychology department at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at the University of Toronto. His research and teaching focuses on the integration of assistive technology and learning strategies for children with learning disabilities.

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Towards Transformative Change: Inclusion of Missing Voices   *Karen Murray*

What is inclusive education? This term takes on many facets, narratives, and designs in my current role as the William Waters Teacher-in-Residence in urban education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The purpose of this position is to deepen excellence in teaching and learning within OISE's academic institution and in classrooms, schools, and community organizations. In this context, the definition of *inclusive education* has a broad meaning, and its educational foundations include the pedagogy of equity, diversity, social justice, and culturally responsive and relevant curricula.

Each of these educational foundations constantly reminds me of the diverse understandings, perspectives, and locations that individuals bring with them when they engage in the work of inclusive education. As a result, to nurture transformative change in the teaching practices of teacher candidates, their instructors, and educators in the field, I must always remember that everyone is not starting on the same page. I must also clarify the purpose of this work: specifically, to make a difference in the lives of children by understanding that inclusive education directly connects to student achievement, student learning, student engagement, and closing the achievement gap. As educators, we often overlook that we do not meet the needs of all learners, especially learners who represent racialized groups: that is, groups who experience social inequities on the basis of their racial background, colour, or ethnicity. Therefore, the danger of using the term inclusive education in isolation, without drawing clear connections to the teaching and learning process, is that students' needs for academic success may not be met.

The most consistent dimension of the multi-faceted dialogue on inclusive education is that educators become involved in self-reflection to unpack their own biases. The intent of this process is self-interrogation in relation to the work we do with our students. By looking at our own

biases, prejudices, and beliefs, we begin to question what we really know about our students' lives. Having a deep understanding of our students' life experiences is vital because an educator's cultural understanding directly affects what is taught and how students learn. As Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) remind us, "in a culturally responsive classroom, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement" (p. 64).

Therefore, narratives that focus on the role of curriculum are integral to deepening our collective understanding of inclusive education. Dialogue on the Eurocentric lens of the Ontario curriculum is an important aspect. Without this discussion, the assumption is that the curriculum is addressing the needs of all learners. As I work with teacher candidates in my social studies course at OISE, I work through this inquiry: How can we address the curriculum so that it provides multiple entry points for students whose voices are often left out of the learning process? I ask them to critically examine the components of the social studies, history, and geography curricula to understand how they can construct and develop effective, engaging lessons and units. Topics such as culturally responsive and relevant teaching, critical literacy, cross-curricular connections, and awareness of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teachings form the basis of the content in the course I teach. To transform the way I approach the teaching of these content areas, I begin with the goal of including social justice perspectives. The culminating group assignment requires teacher candidates to develop a cross-curricular unit plan that embeds the components of culturally relevant teaching into the social studies curriculum. Teacher candidates are required to link the Ontario literacy expectations, identify one component of content area, and think about the voices that are left out of the curriculum examples

provided. Their task is to investigate these "missing voices" and then indicate how they would introduce these voices and perspectives to their own students.

To assist teacher candidates as they begin looking at the curriculum in this way, I model the process. The first lesson is a jigsaw activity that provides an opportunity to unpack, explore, and examine the various curriculum documents. For example, we take a close look at the curriculum document for Grade 1-6 social studies and Grade 7-8 history and geography. The teacher candidates follow guiding questions: What examples are used? What narratives are told and from whose perspective? What voice and story might be missing? We specifically use the Grade 6 social studies curriculum, Heritage and Citizenship: First Nation Peoples and European Explorers, to make these questions come to life. We discuss how this resource only looks at and names European explorers. Consequently, I introduce the picture book *Mathieu Da Costa* (Sadu, 2009), about a black explorer who sailed from France. We then discuss other missing perspectives and begin to frame this story of colonization from the voices of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. By articulating and naming the

missing voices and, at the same time, identifying critical questions that can lead to enduring understandings, teacher candidates can learn how to begin to make their lessons culturally responsive and relevant.

This type of example provides a good entry point for dialogue with other instructors. It allows us to discuss how to make inclusive education practical for teacher candidates. By taking examples of my own work and using these as tools for discussion with instructors, I engage in critical dialogue on how to make inclusive education relevant. The Teacher-in-Residence position requires taking on the responsibility of a change agent, but I also recognize the importance of honouring all narratives. When I engage in this form of inquiry, I keep foremost in mind the realization that a change in practice takes time, and I need to honour where individuals are on their continuum of learning. I need to validate their thinking while actively and critically engaging them in considering how to take the next steps in developing social action and social justice work in classrooms and schools. It's my hope that we go on to challenge ourselves to engage in this crucial work of inclusive education.

"By articulating and naming the missing voices and, at the same time, identifying critical questions that can lead to enduring understandings, teacher candidates can learn how to begin to make their lessons culturally responsive and relevant."

Karen Murray is the first William Waters Teacher-In-Residence in the Centre for Urban Schooling and the Initial Teacher Education program at OISE. She is responsible for supporting the teaching and learning of teacher candidates and providing professional development opportunities related to issues of equity and social justice.

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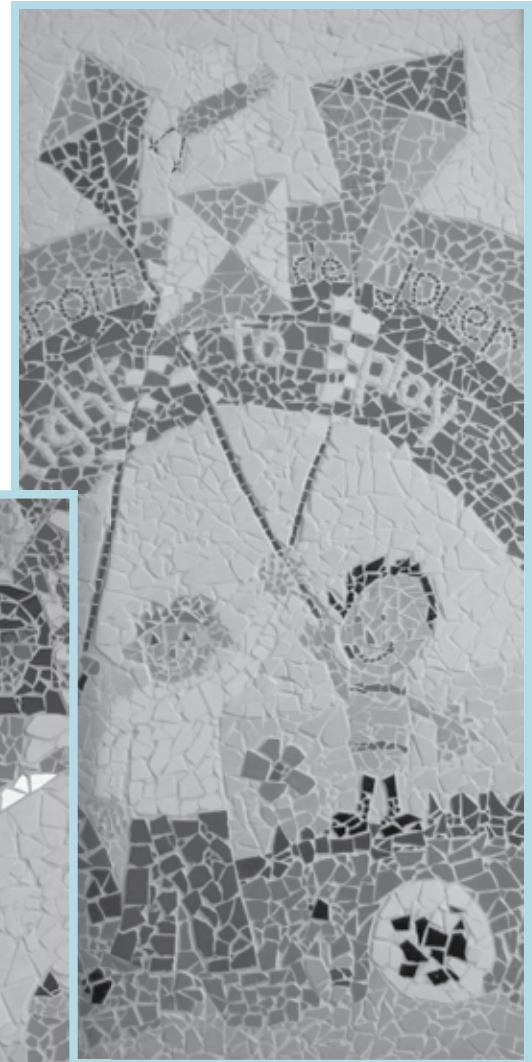
"Building a Community"
Textiles
Glen Park Public School

"Painting Who We Are"
Painting
Carleton Village Junior and Senior Public School

"The Freedom Quilt"
Textile
Glen Park Public School

"Connections to the Earth"
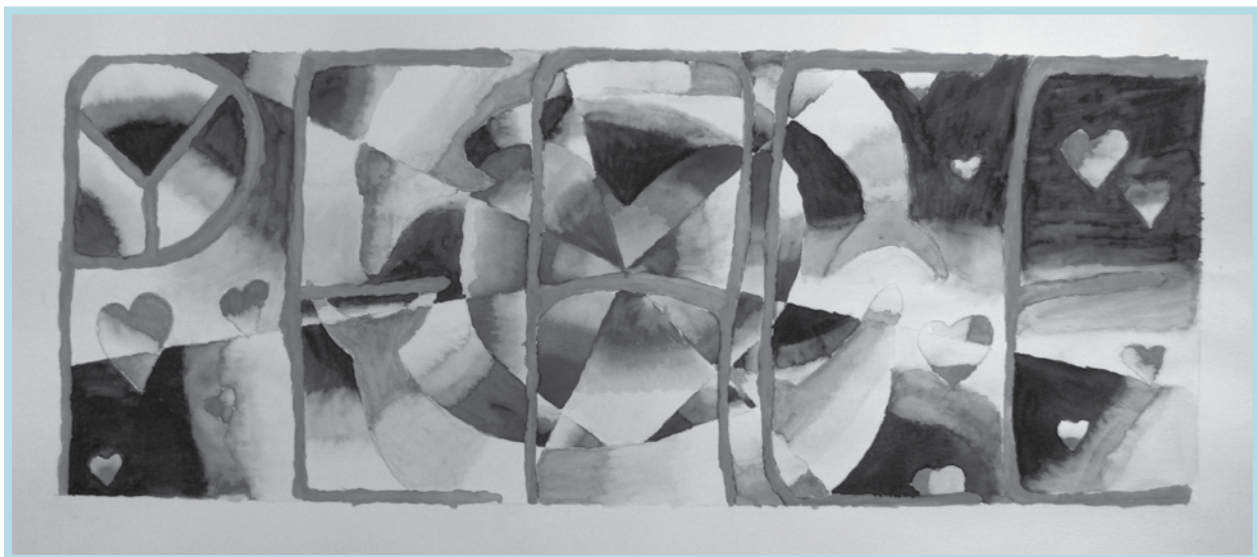Pencil Drawing
Glen Park Public School
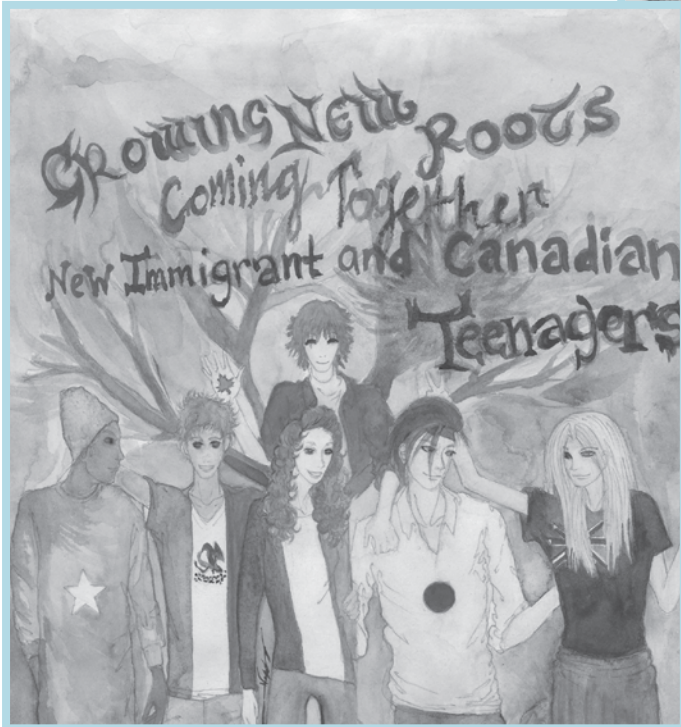
"Growing New Roots"
Mixed Media
William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute

"Abstracts of Ourselves"
Marker on Metal
Heartlake Secondary School

"Abstracts of Ourselves"
Watercolour
Heartlake Secondary School

Our living

Our black heritage,
Our black culture.
Our black living.

The drum, the amazing drum.
The rhythms of the great land.
The rhythms of the heart beat.

Africa,
Africa,
Africa.

Not a country, but a continent.
Not a country but a nation,
not a country but a creation of greatness.

Our cloth, each representing strength, pride and freedom.
Yellow, orange, green, purple, and black.
We look back sitting in the sun,
growing our fruits, smiling, because we love who we are.

We love our skins,
We love our kins,
we love our beautiful curvy bodies,
shaped as an hour glass.

Our black heritage.
Our black culture.
Our black living.

Nancy Asante
February 28, 2011
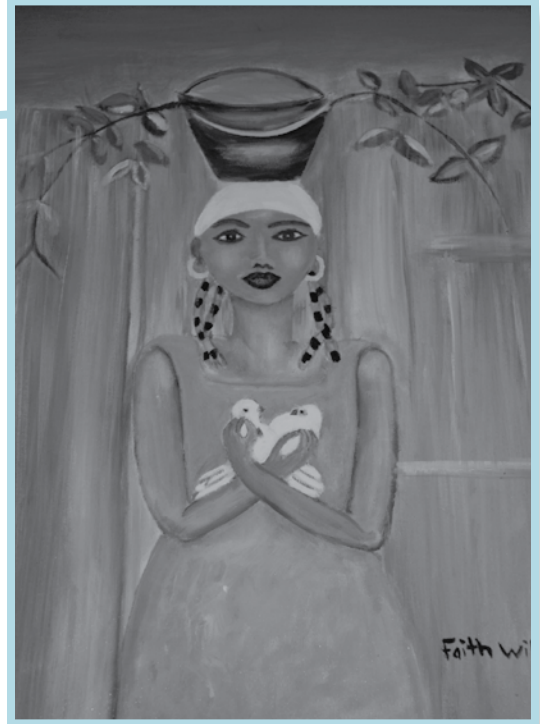
"Inclusive Schools Project"
Painting
Carleton Village Junior and
Senior Public School

"Celebrating Our Heritage"
Poetry
Fletcher's Meadow Secondary School

"Celebrating Our Unique Identity"
Hand Project
The Laboratory School, Dr. Eric Jackman Insitute of Child Study

"We All Belong": Early-Years' Literacy Development and Social Inclusion

Janette Pelletier, Elizabeth Morley, and Richard Messina

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Peel District School Board

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

ABSTRACT

This project examined young students' understanding of social inclusion through a literacy-based photograph book project. The children and their families used disposable cameras to document personal stories of their neighbourhoods, favourite animals, toys, activities, and things that children dream about. The research team, in collaboration with Apple Canada, produced individual family photograph books with the title "We All Belong." Each book cover had the title and a photograph of the child who created the book. The books were exchanged among children across eight schools. Each student chose a book from an array of 23 book covers and then explained why they chose that book. Children most often chose books based on objects they liked or on a perceived personal connection to the child on the cover. During a vocabulary teaching intervention some students were taught words related to social inclusion: *inclusion, diversity, respect, acceptance*, and *understanding*. The results of this intervention show that these children made significant gains in their understanding of *diversity*, and there were positive yet quixotic findings related to the word *inclusion*. The intervention resulted in only moderate, not significant, short-term literacy gains, a finding that may be attributable to the brevity of the intervention and to the significant initial differences among the schools. A key finding of this study was coming to understand the value of real-life stories as an important component of an inclusive curriculum and of intentional instruction in broadening interest in others.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

The broad purpose of this study was to explore young students' understanding of diversity and inclusion, and to use interventions to extend that understanding. Specifically, the research focused on attributes that children attend to and are interested in knowing about other children: in this case, the attributes that mattered for them when they were making choices about books they wanted to read. This area of inquiry, specifically, young children's understanding of the concept of social inclusion, is underrepresented in the research literature.

This project builds on evidence-based approaches to curriculum development and on teaching practices based at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study (Jackman ICS), OISE. One important background study was a Peel Region family literacy project that successfully used personalized photograph books to foster language and literacy development (Pelletier, Hipfner-Boucher, & Doyle, 2010). For this project, Eastman-Kodak donated disposable cameras to families in the program. Children were assisted by their parents to take photographs of things, people, and places in their own environments that began with each letter of the alphabet. Kodak produced individualized "ABC" books for each child. The books were then used in the program to help parents learn about the importance of letter-sound knowledge and about the simple daily letter-sound activities that could be done at home with the books. Children who participated in the book-making project made significantly greater gains in alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness than children in a control group.

A second study, conducted by one of our graduate students in the MA program at Jackman ICS, showed that children make choices for play materials, such as puppets, based on physical attributes. Junior and senior kindergarten children who were participating in a study of full-day early learning took part in interviews with the researchers using finger puppets. The interview was designed to capture children's experiences in kindergarten by asking them to tell about their day. The methodology of having the researcher's puppet interview the child's puppet capitalized on the use of play to engage children in discussion of their kindergarten "scripts" (Pelletier, 1998; 1999). In Mehta's study, which was part of our

larger project, children were asked to choose from among a set of six racially and ethnically diverse finger puppets, one puppet for themselves and one for the researcher. Mehta showed that kindergarten children of all ethnicities more often chose the white-skinned, blond, and blue-eyed puppets, although not universally. The finding was stronger for girls. However, children consistently chose puppets that represented their own gender. Mehta's puppet task findings are consistent with previously published research (Corenblum, 1996; Kircher & Furby, 1972; Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, & Griffiths, 2005; Olson, Larson, Farrell, & Richards, 1981).

These two background studies, one on the use of individualized photograph books and the other on children's preferences for particular ethnicities in the puppet interview task, provided the framework for the research questions and the methodology of the present study. The following key research questions guided this research project:

- Can the experience of sharing personal stories within socioeconomically and ethnoculturally diverse populations of very young children foster a sense of social inclusion and, in turn, aspects of literacy development?

- Is sharing family stories using photograph books within and across classrooms effective in increasing children's and adults' understanding of the many ways that we all belong?

- Will a focus on "inclusion" vocabulary during the book sharing increase children's understanding of social inclusion language?

One hundred and eighty-seven children from junior kindergarten through Grade 1, and across a wide sociodemographic range of public and private schools, participated in a family photograph book-making project. Six participating schools were located in the Region of Peel, a large suburban community west of Toronto. Four of the Peel Region schools are in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, and two are in the Peel District School Board. Two of the participating schools were associated with the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study: the

Jackman ICS Laboratory School, serving children from nursery to Grade 6 and Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab School Authority, where Jackman ICS houses a unique "reverse" integrated kindergarten program. At Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab School Authority, typically developing kindergarten children are integrated with children who have special needs in the area of physical mobility.

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

Stage one: Initiating research plan and book protocol

Team members came together to develop a research plan. We decided to build on the success of the Peel Region family literacy project that involved the creation of family photograph books that were used to foster home literacy practices and children's reading. We wanted to extend that methodology to help children pay attention to the issues of diversity, social inclusion, and acceptance through the use of personalized family photograph books.

We invited junior–kindergarten through Grade 1 students to participate in the research by sending information and consent letters home to their parents. The parents of 187 children consented to the research (95 boys, 92 girls). The age range of the children was 3 years 11 months to 7 years 9 months, as well as two older children who completed only some of the research tasks. Each participating child was given a disposable camera and a book protocol outlining what photograph to take for each page. The book protocol included open–ended statements such as "This is something I see every day on my way to school. It is _____." (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Photograph Book Protocol

Child's Name _____ _____ School _____ Teacher _____
Using the camera provided, please take photographs relevant to the following sentences. Please then complete the rest of the sentence/page in the right column.
PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND THE CAMERA.

Photograph Number	Description of Photograph
Photo # 1 [photo of child]	Here I am. My name is _____. [first name]
Photo # 2 [photo of family]	Here is my family. [Write 'immediate' family members' relation to child and name in order from left to right. Example: My mother-Pat, my stepfather-John, my brother-Doug and my sister-Nancy] _____.
Photo # 3 [photo of pet/s or favourite animal]	Here is/are my pet/s. [Write type of pet/s and name. Example, This is my dog, Spud]. If no pets, then: This is my favourite animal with a photo. I would name her _____.
Photo # 4 [photo of toy/game]	Here is my favourite toy/game. It is called _____. I like it because_____.
Photo # 5 [photo of favourite neighbourhood place]	This is a favourite place in my neighbourhood. It is _____ [name it]. It is a place where I like to _____.
Photo # 6 [photo of a building such as store, restaurant]	This is _____. [name] It is where we buy_____ _____[example, groceries, food, pizza, things for our home, ice cream etc.]
Photo # 7 [photo of something seen every day on way to school]	This is something I see every day on my way to school. It is _____. [name it or describe it]
Photo # 8 [photo of favourite thing to do at home]	My favourite thing to do at home is _____.
Photo # 9 [photo of bed]	Here is my bed. When I go to sleep I like to dream about _____.
Photo # 10 [photo something proud of]	I am proud of this. It is _____.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show examples of two photographs from one child's book.

Figure 2. My Favourite Toy

This is my favourite toy. It is called Lego. I like it because you can make guys up, and if it breaks you can put it together again.

Figure 3. My Favourite Place

This is a favourite place in my neighbourhood. It is the park.

Stage two: Selection of social inclusion terms

The researchers selected a number of social inclusion terms based on a list generated by teachers at the Laboratory School, and they developed a teaching protocol for introducing and discussing these terms with the children using the family photograph books. The teachers used a developmental perspective to select inclusion terms that they felt would be both important for children to understand and that had potential for developmentally appropriate interventions. The following terms were discussed, and a shared definition was established for use by all the researchers:

"We All Belong" vocabulary

Inclusion
- everyone feels belonging
- everyone feels equally part of group
- welcoming all people

Diversity
- seeing differences in people and places
- differences are special
- we benefit from diversity
- we can be different and be the same in some ways

Respect
- recognition of other people's choices as a right
- regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of others

Acceptance
- willingness to like people for who they are
- all people can be themselves and feel welcome

Understanding
- knowing that we are different and the same
- relating to someone else's choices and thinking (perspective taking)
- wanting to know about what other people think and do

After developing a teaching protocol for introducing and discussing these terms with the children using the family photograph books, the research team visited the classrooms of the participating students and worked with each child individually on one or two occasions. The purpose of the visits was to conduct a set of research tasks that measure literacy development and to administer a number of literacy measures to each student. These measures included the standardized

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III (Dunn & Dunn, 1997); the Test of Early Reading Ability-III (Reid, Hresko & Hammill, 2001); and the Test of Phonological Awareness (Torgeson & Bryant, 1994). Literacy measures also included a fables task (Pelletier, unpublished) and a narrative story-retelling task involving story characters' thinking as depicted in thought bubbles (Pelletier & Astington, 2004). Children were told a story based on a wordless picture book and then asked two inference questions involving a life lesson they had learned. Children then retold the story, and their use of metacognitive language was counted.

Stage three: Teaching intervention and vocabulary measures

We used the family photograph books in a teaching intervention that targeted the inclusion vocabulary and drew children's attention to their own and other children's stories. Children were divided into a book study group (n=128) and a control group (n=59). The book study group received their books and participated in the vocabulary teaching intervention. The control group received their books but did not participate in the intervention. Children in the book study group were withdrawn from their classes in small groups of four to six children with two female researchers. The first researcher asked the children individually to look at a panel of eight book covers, which included a photograph of the child who created the book; to choose the one book they would most like to read; and to state why. On that first day, the children were given their own books to look at, while one researcher drew their attention to similarities and differences among all the children's books, including other children's families, favourite animals, neighbourhoods, toys, and what they dream about. On another day, the children in the book study group received books belonging to children from other schools, and the researchers invited the children to discuss what they noticed about the other children, including their families, neighbourhoods, toys, and dreams. Children practised saying the inclusion words in the context of the pages they were viewing. The researcher and children talked about each page of the books on each teaching day—with the child's own book and with the book of another child. The inclusion vocabulary was reinforced and repeated throughout the small group time. Following the second teaching intervention day, children participated in the follow-up research measures: the book choice, the inclusion vocabulary, the fables, and the story-retelling tasks. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4. MA CSE Researcher with Book Study Group

"This finding leads us to want to learn more about the value of real-life stories as an important component of an inclusive curriculum. In addition, following the teaching intervention, the increasing complexity of the children's reasons for the book choices suggests the value of intentional instruction in broadening students' interests in others."

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection took place during the winter and spring terms of 2010. Researchers visited each classroom to interview each participant. No child refused to participate; however, a few children did not complete all the tasks. The vocabulary, early reading, fables, and storytelling tasks averaged 30 minutes per child. On two other days, the researchers returned to the school and visited the children in small groups to carry out the teaching intervention with the books. After completion of the post-teaching assessments in the book study groups, the control group children received their books to take home.

School differences in vocabulary and reading

We began the analyses by comparing the vocabulary and reading performance of children across the eight schools. Statistical analyses revealed a significant difference in vocabulary levels, with some schools performing in the above-average range and other schools performing below average or within the average range. Children at the Jackman ICS Laboratory School (mean score 115) and Jackman ICS Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab School Authority (mean score 111) were in the above-average range in vocabulary, and children in the Peel Region schools were more varied in their vocabulary level. Peel schools that have a high population of English language learners (ELLs), had lower vocabulary scores (range 93–95), and Peel schools with fewer ELL children had average vocabulary scores (range 100–106).

We also carried out analyses to examine differences in reading, writing, and story comprehension. At the outset, and across the grades, there were standard reading score differences among the control and book study schools. The book study group on average had higher reading scores than the control group. Results of the fables task show that children in the book study group made greater gains in comprehension, as measured by their responses to the moral-of-the-story question.

Similarly, children in the book study group made greater gains in the story-retelling task, specifically in their use of metacognitive verbs. However, neither the fables task nor the storytelling task resulted in

significant differences in literacy skills such as letter or word reading, or comprehension. Thus, we might conclude that the intervention did not have a significant impact on literacy development within the short timeframe of the study. However, the fables and storytelling tasks did contribute to important elements of inclusive curriculum, such as understanding others. Our ongoing study with the Jackman ICS children will employ the "We All Belong" books to build on children's social and metacognitive understanding by continuing to learn about others.

Book choices: Which books and why?

For the book-choice task, we recorded children's responses in terms of the number on the book cover they chose (there were eight options on each poster). Most children chose books based on factors such as the colour or pattern of a child's shirt ("I like the duck," "I have that shirt"), a toy or object that appeared in the photograph or, to our surprise, the numeral that appeared beside the child's photograph! ("because four is my favourite number," "because I am five years old"). Interestingly, children's responses to the book choice after the teaching intervention were more complex. For example, children made comments about having read another child's book ("because I read about him," "because his is a great book," "because I like it, and Ava [friend] had it too"). Following the teaching intervention, children also commented more specifically that they were making their choices because they could learn about another child ("because I want to know what she does"; "because I never met him, and my friend has that toy"; "because I don't know her"; "because she's different"). They also commented on a personal connection with that child ("I like her and I like where she is. I like that she is on the end of the slide"; "because she has pierced ears, and I'm waiting to have pierced ears"; "because it's an A, and my name has an A"; "'cause I like her. She's in her pajamas, and I can see her cute stuffy. And she gets her own computer! No fair!").

To determine if certain children's books would be chosen more often than other books made by children, the researchers had selected books based on criteria in the literature that were reported to be salient to young

children: gender, race, clothing, hair, glasses, and facial expression of emotion (Mehta, 2010). Results showed that a few children's books were indeed chosen more often than others. By carefully selecting book covers for each panel, we ensured that the children could not choose a book cover belonging to themselves or to a friend at the school.

A close examination of children's stated reasons for their book choice showed that it was more common for children to choose their books based on factors that were unrelated to socioeconomic and ethnocultural difference. This was true both before and after they had participated in the teaching interventions. Since all the participants had made a family photograph book about themselves they knew that each book was about a real person not about a fictional character or a toy figure. They used objects and life experiences—either familiar or of high interest—to make their book choice, rather than showing cultural similarities and differences. This finding leads us to want to learn more about the value of real-life stories as an important component of an inclusive curriculum. In addition, following the teaching intervention, the increasing complexity of the children's reasons for the book choices suggests the value of intentional instruction in broadening students' interests in others. Table 1 shows the top four book choices and descriptions of the children on the covers.

Table 1. Top Four Book Choices

Book Number	Description of Child and Context on Book Cover
10 (girl)	Child with dark skin, not smiling in any pictures (but hard to see face), wearing pink and white long-sleeved shirt, holding helmet; small home in dark background
6 (girl)	Caucasian child with open-mouthed wide smile, close up and bright, wearing blue top and matching headband
8 (girl)	Biracial child with dark skin, wearing bright yellow top and helmet, sitting on bike in front of white garage door; suburban neighbourhood background
17 (boy)	Caucasian child (brightly lit), smiling, wearing red "Canada" t-shirt and holding stuffed animal

Children's learning of inclusion vocabulary

Each of the inclusion vocabulary terms (*inclusion, diversity, respect, acceptance, understanding*) was taught both implicitly through natural discussion about the children's family photograph books and explicitly through a standard teaching script. For example, while children were looking at the books, we explicitly asked, "Can you show us how your family is different from this family?" We gave the children time to reflect and then said, "Diversity means that we can be the same in some ways and different in other ways, but we all still belong." We then asked children to give more examples of diversity using their books. Results showed that at the pretest children understood the terms *diversity* and *inclusion* less than the terms *understanding* and *respect*. In other words, the participants had the most to learn about the terms *diversity* and *inclusion*. Targeted teaching of these terms in conjunction with the use of their own family photograph books significantly increased their knowledge of these terms. This suggests the importance of explicit, intentional instruction of social inclusion concepts as well as the importance of teachers knowing which words children know and need to know in order to discuss diversity and inclusion. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show that children in the book study group made significantly greater gains than the control group in their comprehension of inclusion and diversity.
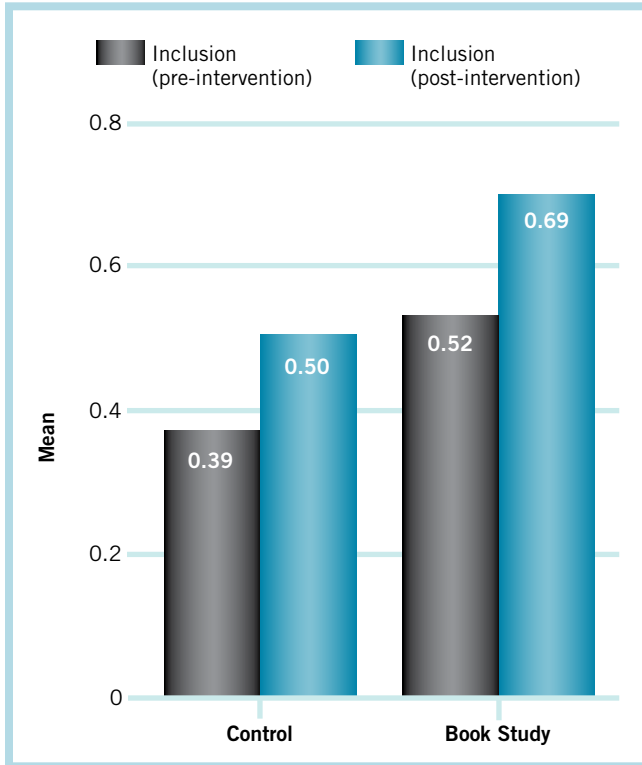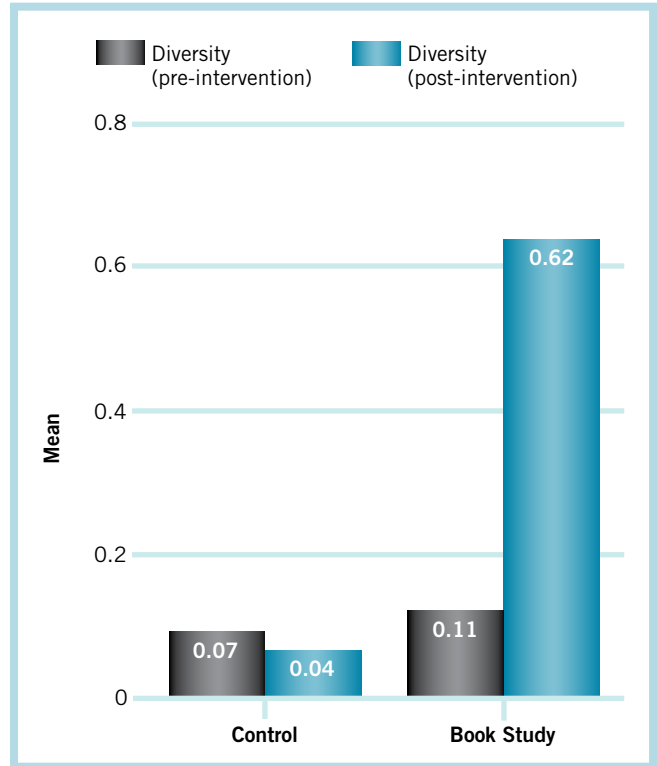
Figure 5. Comprehension of Inclusion

Figure 6. Comprehension of Diversity

A unique finding emerged while studying the integrated kindergarten program. When we carried out a cross-school comparison, we observed an unusual pattern for the word *inclusion*. The children who were part of the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab School Authority school community, which is based on the integration of children with and without special needs, had a significantly stronger understanding of inclusion in the pretest than those at any other school. Yet, surprisingly, while all other schools showed an increase in understanding of inclusion through the intervention, the integrated kindergarten program showed a decrease. This suggested to us that the children's very deep but specific understanding of inclusion in their setting had been confounded by the intervention, suggesting a much broader definition of *inclusion*.

Figure 7 shows the comparison among the sites that participated in the intervention. This finding related to the word *inclusion* may indicate the importance of explicit instruction and the need to be aware of the breadth of that instruction when considering inclusion, specifically, the background knowledge of the students.

Figure 7. Comparison of Understandings of Inclusion
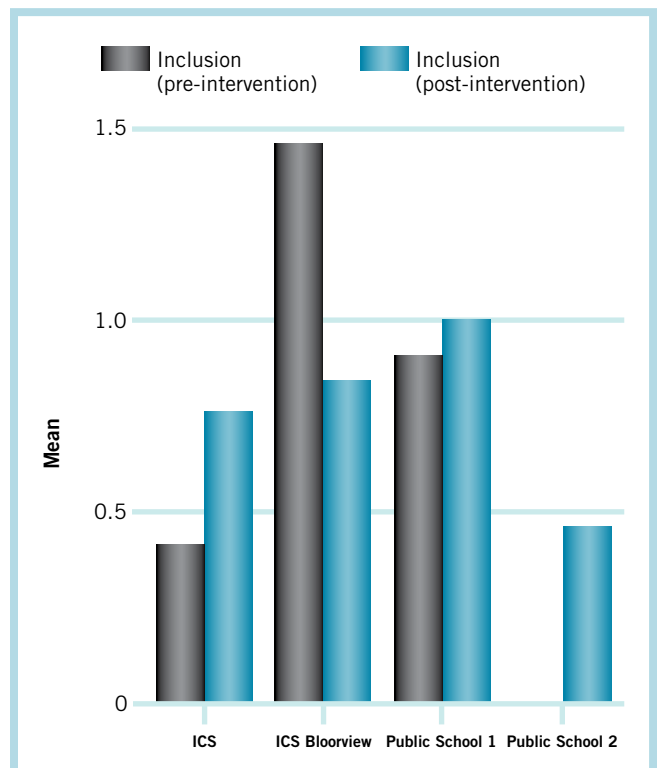
IMPACT

As a result of this research project we recognize the importance of further study using personal family photograph books in a guided format in classrooms. We believe that these books are exemplary in providing inclusive curriculum for young school children.

Two main challenges arose during this research that may have affected the overall results of the study. The first was the brevity of the intervention period. The research team felt that a longer intervention would have afforded more developmentally appropriate learning and even stronger results. The second challenge resulted from the significant initial differences among the schools. The book study schools began with higher average reading scores than the control schools, and this may have affected some findings on the literacy gains.

"This suggests the importance of explicit, intentional instruction of social inclusion concepts as well as the importance of teachers knowing which words children know and need to know in order to discuss diversity and inclusion."

IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The creation of the "We All Belong" storybooks presents an opportunity to explore whether reading books about and made by young children in classrooms can better foster awareness about diversity in its many forms. As the storybooks reflect a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, family structure, living environments, and other sociodemographic factors, the books present a rich source for discussion and exploration. By incorporating these storybooks into the curriculum to read at storytime as a class, or as a springboard from which to pursue children's questions, comments, and ideas about the children in the books, teachers will be able to develop activities that are directly focused on students' questions and points of view. Specifically, classroom teachers and school administrators can learn from these findings that the concept of diversity and inclusion can be taught even to very young children and that shared real-life stories may broaden children's openness to one another.

NEXT STEPS

The work is continuing in the Jackman ICS Laboratory School with the early–years teachers who are using the "We All Belong" books to facilitate children's understanding of social inclusion. We will examine the lasting effects of the book intervention through ongoing research with a particular focus on children's preconceived ideas of the child author who created a photograph book.

A team of teachers is working on Phase 2 of this research study. This will include a longitudinal analysis of the lasting literacy effects of the vocabulary teaching intervention. Because the intervention period in this project was short, there were no statistically significant differences in literacy growth between the control and book study groups, particularly because of the initial vocabulary and reading advantage of the book study participants. So it will be important to study long-term impacts. A longitudinal analysis will allow us to examine literacy growth from pretest; this mitigates the issue of different starting points. Phase 2 will also include testing of the practical applications of this research, which could not be undertaken within the scope of this research study.

In addition, the following steps are in view:

- The study will be extended to three-year-olds in the Jackman ICS nursery to explore what these children notice about other children.

- The five- and six-year-olds at Jackman ICS will continue to use the books to explore how and why they form their impression of others. A particular area of interest is whether children of these ages have learned to conceal their prejudices.

- Senior kindergarten and Grade 1 children at Jackman ICS will be invited to write a story that features the child in the book they choose. This will enable researchers to focus on attributes that are salient to five- and six-year-olds.

- We have created a research practicum for teacher candidates in OISE's MA program to work with practising teachers to extend this research.

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Student Engagement and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This project examined the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in diverse English studies classes. Two secondary school teachers of English critically examined their teaching practice and explored ways of making their pedagogy more inclusive of diverse students. The teachers implemented teaching approaches that helped their students attain high levels of academic success and engagement, build cross-cultural understanding, and raise their critical consciousness. The teachers also considered the impact of CRP on their professional learning. An outcome of the project was the identification of teaching strategies that are effective in developing critical literacy in English studies classrooms.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy calls for teaching practices that support learning environments where all students feel engaged and empowered (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Given that all students in secondary schools take English courses, these classrooms present many possibilities for modelling how to create success for diverse students and for developing students' critical literacy skills. Critical literacy skills enable students to deconstruct and critique the texts they read, and empower them to create their own critical texts (Morrell, 2005). This process involves examining the relationship between language, literacy, culture, and power; at the same time the necessary skills are developed to facilitate academic achievement. The teaching of English offers opportunities for teachers to engage in cross-cultural dialogue and bring the lived experiences and realities of diverse students into the classroom.

Educational research has shown that culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is an effective way to meet the academic and social needs of diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Irvine & Armento, 2001). It is

a teaching approach that uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective (Gay, 2000). Ladson–Billings (1995a) outlined three principles of CRP. First, students must experience academic success in intellectual growth and the production of knowledge. Second, students must develop cultural competence as a vehicle for learning and see their identities and cultures as strengths. Third, students must develop a critical and sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. Given these principles of CRP, this project addressed the following research questions:

- How does culturally relevant pedagogy nurture student learning, engagement and achievement in diverse English classes?

- How do culturally relevant practices inform teachers' professional learning?

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

Stage one: Introduction

In the initial stages of organizing the research project, I discussed with the teachers their desire to explore ways of connecting with an increasingly diverse student population in their English classes. The school where the research was conducted is very diverse and located in one of Canada's fastest growing communities. Both teachers wanted to find ways to increase student engagement and make the English curriculum more responsive to, and inclusive of, the diverse student population. They were interested in examining new instructional approaches and really liked the idea of having time to collaborate during this project. To increase the teachers' understanding of CRP, the project started by reviewing educational research on culturally relevant teaching practices. These included "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" (Ladson–Billings, 1995a), "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching" (Gay, 2002), and "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" (Ladson–Billings, 1995b).

Stage two: Selecting a research approach

I selected a research approach to fit with the teachers' daily routines and to create space for collaboration and sharing. Collaborative action research (Sagor, 2005) was suited to the project because it provides a supportive network, facilitates the integration of theory and practice, and places teachers at the centre of the research process.

Stage three: Inquiry group meetings

I met with the teachers on a regular basis to discuss and share teaching strategies and their experiences in implementing CRP. These inquiry group meetings became an important part of the project and took place six times. The teachers also met by themselves twice. The inquiry group meetings provided an opportunity for me to ask probing questions and for the teachers to deconstruct their pedagogical approaches, challenges, and surprises. We also read and discussed various articles on CRP as part of our professional learning. During the inquiry group meetings the teachers reflected on the professional impact of this work, and they also carried out written reflections at the end of the project.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data for the project included teacher lesson plans and instructional strategies, notes from inquiry group meetings, classroom observations, and journal entries. Data were collected from September 2009 to June 2010 in a Grade 12 writers' craft class and in two Grade 9 applied classes. Based on the data collected, the teachers' instructional strategies were grouped into three categories using the CRP framework outlined by Ladson–Billings (1995a): (a) academic achievement, (b) cross-cultural understanding, and (c) critical

consciousness. Although these categories were used for organizing and analyzing the data, they are not mutually exclusive.

Academic achievement

To the teachers in the study, academic achievement includes not only students' grades but also their interest in the material being taught and their overall engagement during class. To achieve such goals the teachers created activities that included and valued the knowledge and experiences of the students, challenged them to think outside of their comfort zones, and nurtured them through the learning process. In one Grade 9 English class of striving learners who were predominantly boys, the teacher selected an alternative text for the novel study to encourage their interest in reading. Instead of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliette*, the teacher selected *Romiette and Julio* by Sharon Draper. This book about a young Hispanic boy and a young Black girl falling in love addresses issues such as interracial relationships, gang violence, belonging, identity, bullying, and acceptance. The teacher coupled various forms of differentiated instruction with culturally relevant approaches, such as flexible ability groupings, guided-reading strategies, graphic organizers, diverse ways to access the text, authentic forms of assessment, and inclusion of students' life experiences. This high interest novel kept students engaged and deeply involved in thematic discussions.

The impact of the text was also reflected in the students' improved level of performance in both oral and written assessments, which was facilitated in cooperative groupings. Students were assigned chapters of the novel to read, and then they prepared responses to assigned questions. They first shared their responses in small groups and then with the class as a whole. During this student-led dialogue, student responses were assessed both by the teacher and peers. The teacher noted the students' increased participation, improvement in grades, and enhanced critical thinking skills, and most importantly, they became active participants in their own learning.

The second Grade 9 English class read *Shabanu Daughter of the Wind*, a 1989 novel by Suzanne Fisher Staples. The book is narrated by a young girl who lives in the Cholistan Desert of Pakistan, and it centres on

her coming into adulthood. During the study of the novel the teacher used additional student-centred approaches, including *probable passage* (Beers, 2003), *anticipation guides*, and *literature circles*. These strategies were intended to assist students in making predictions about the text, unearth some of the myths and stereotypes that they hold, and develop effective critical thinking skills. In the literature circles students discussed some of the challenging concepts in the novel, such as the role of women, arranged marriages, challenges of adolescence, and family relationships. The students' interest in the cultural context of the book was reflected in their overall achievement in the course. As the teacher noted, "Their work reflected a keen understanding of the elements of literature, as they were able to use their imagination to create literary pieces that reflected a different culture." She also noted, "They asked more questions in class and were more eager to volunteer answers." Their grades improved overall. All students passed the course and most students achieved levels 3 and 4. Most significantly, the striving students produced a higher calibre of work than they normally produced. South Asian students also responded to the validation of seeing themselves in the curriculum. One student commented,

> *Shabanu* is about a Muslim girl who fights the hardships from her religion and culture to keep her inner freedom and happiness intact…. Being a Muslim and a Pakistani myself, it felt really great to read this book in the English curriculum … for me the concepts were easy to understand.

Another student wrote,

> At first I was not really interested in reading the book because I am also a Muslim girl and from Pakistan…. I was pleased to see other students in my class that were not from the same religion or country research and get more information about it…. I hope that the school continues to do this but not just with Islam and Pakistani, but with other religions and countries around the world, so everyone gets to see how different things and people are around the world.

To engage in culturally relevant teaching, a caring approach is essential. The teachers demanded academic rigour while maintaining a caring classroom environment where students felt encouraged to speak

out and share their ideas. They guided students to establish classroom expectations for behaviour and structured routines. One of the teachers used her own resources to create a classroom library, increasing students' access to rich and diverse literature. Both teachers made themselves available before and after school to assist students who needed help with reading and coursework.

Cross-cultural understanding

Teachers are constantly challenged on ways to move away from a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum. This is particularly true in English classes where there is a predominance of Eurocentric "canonical" texts. This project modelled the use of alternative texts such as *Shabanu Daughter of the Wind* to teach students about other cultures without "romantizing," "othering," and essentializing. For example, in discussions with students around the topic of arranged marriages, the teacher did not reinforce stereotypes, but focused on challenges facing young women approaching adulthood. In discussing racialized communities and how their cultures are represented, teachers are encouraged not only to focus on how these are represented but also to avoid focusing on the "traditional," "religious," and "patriarchal," as these characteristics are not unique to any one group (Sharma, 2008).

Discussions in the class enabled students who were not South Asians to gain a deeper and respectful understanding of South Asian culture, and the South Asian students felt a sense of pride. The teacher noted the following:

> The greatest area of impact was on the South Asian students. They became empowered and felt valued as they shared knowledge of their culture. They were able to clarify issues for students where there were misconceptions and became resource persons throughout the study of the unit. For the White and Black students a new set of knowledge was created, and they were eager to learn about other cultures.

Critical consciousness

In this project the teachers engaged in critical literacy through the use of alternative texts, developed lessons in which students critically examined the issues, discussed controversial topics, critiqued social inequities, and engaged in different forms of writing. In the Grade 12 writers' craft class the teacher introduced a unit on performance poetry (spoken-word) for the first time. The performance poetry was written by urban youths of colour in a South Los Angeles urban classroom (Camangian, 2008). The teacher used the "windows and mirrors" approach (McIntosh & Style, 1997) to challenge the stereotypes and the racial and class biases of the students. This approach helps students examine their experiences and stretch themselves beyond their own viewpoints and experiences. The teacher introduced the unit by asking students to use a KWL Chart to record what they know (K), what they want to know (W), and what they have learned (L). After reading the poems the students revisited the K column and examined the views they had held. In their L column they wrote some of the new knowledge they had gained. At the start of the unit, some students expressed discomfort with the graphic and vivid nature and content of the poems. The teacher created a space where the students felt comfortable expressing their feelings by (a) establishing mutual agreements for discussions, (b) exploring areas of personal concern, (c) using think–pair–share to discuss ideas in small groups, and (d) sharing experiences and personal reflections in larger groups only when students felt comfortable.

The teacher created the following conceptual model to guide the students through the unit (see Figure 1).

"In this project the teachers engaged in critical literacy through the use of alternative texts, developed lessons in which students critically examined the issues, discussed controversial topics, critiqued social inequities, and engaged in different forms of writing."

During the summative assessment, students created their own poetry and recorded their reflections about the activity. One student noted, "Engaging with the performance poetry of the urban youths allowed me to re-examine my preconceived notions about inner-city youths and raised my level of consciousness." Another student wrote,

Most of the students came into the school not liking English at all and felt it was useless, but once they got to explore a new aspect of it [spoken-word], they found something in it they enjoyed…. Spoken-word provokes a deeper critical analysis…. there aren't any limits to the characters' experiences…. Listening to all of the different perspectives, it gave me a lot of insights for the future and taught me new ways of analyzing literature.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Deconstructing Performance Poetry

1. **Deconstructing:** Examine the position of the author, students' own biases and assumptions. Examine areas of disagreements and agreements.

2. **Reviewing:** Discuss themes and social issues that are presented in the work. Reflect on these perspectives relative to standards of poetic analysis.

3. **Critiquing:** Examine reactions to the author's point of view. Critique against social realities of their own and the author.

4. **Collaborating:** Share ideas with other students in collaborative groups.

5. **Expressing Creatively:** Create poetry reflective of their own realities.

6. **Performing:** Perform spoken-word poetry.

7. **Reflecting:** Reflect on the process using writing journals.

8. **Sharing:** Share insights, difficulties, and learning.

IMPACT

The English studies teachers in this project reflected on their teaching practice and modelled strategies for inclusion and engagement to meet the needs of diverse learners. The teachers had opportunities to inquire critically about their pedagogy. One teacher wrote,

The more I think about this research the more I think about power relations in institutions such as schools and how intimidated some kids are by the dominant culture. Some teachers complain that they cannot engage the kids, complain that the kids do not make eye contact, that they are sullen and disrespectful…. They do not understand the kids or make any effort to get to know them … it is important to understand that some of these kids cannot function and negotiate in the classroom…. They are intimidated by the dominant culture of the teacher and sometimes mask this by inappropriate behaviour.

This project used specific culturally relevant teaching approaches that support students' academic success and build cross-cultural understanding and critical consciousness. The approach and results of this research can assist other English teachers to integrate culturally relevant teaching strategies in their practice. The teachers felt inspired by the success and engagement of the students. One noted in her reflection,

When I saw the students' work I was overwhelmed … they let me in … they learned things about themselves that they were not aware of…. There was self-discovery… I gained a lot of inspiration from them … it is like nurturing a plant and watching it grow.

CHALLENGES

The greatest areas of challenge for the teachers were time and departmental commitments. Culturally relevant pedagogy involves teaching approaches that are authentic and take more time to prepare. The teachers found that it took time to plan new lessons, incorporate new learning resources, and research areas with which they were unfamiliar. Both participants were associate teachers who hosted OISE teacher candidates. The teacher candidates benefited from seeing the CRP strategies implemented, but it was difficult for the teachers to participate in the research and mentor their teacher candidates at the same time. There were also time constraints for a participant who was the head of the English department and sat on various school committees. Both teachers worked in large English departments, and this sometimes made collaboration challenging. There were also challenges in making department-wide change in the use of the canonical texts that are privileged in many English departments across Ontario.

IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This project can contribute to ongoing research on culturally relevant pedagogy, and it demonstrates ways that CRP can be embedded in teachers' everyday practices. It also addresses the effectiveness of CRP in multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial classrooms. The project has helped to develop stronger working relationships among OISE's Initial Teacher Education program and the teachers, and their partnership board and the school. This research will inform teacher educators on ways to build praxis with their teacher candidates and provide support for associate teachers. It points to the need for teachers and teacher candidates to be guided in processes of inquiry and reflection that allow them to examine their biases and assumptions and come to an understanding that teaching is not neutral (Morrell, 2005). It also allows them to recognize what in their own practices and belief systems they must unlearn and learn.

The project highlights the need for teachers to go beyond their comfort zone and learn about other cultures in non-stereotypical ways to be able to assist their students. This is the reason why CRP and other equity pedagogies cannot be an ad-hoc approach but must be embedded in the overall planning and organization of courses. In this way teachers can fill in gaps in their knowledge while drawing on community and collegial support.

The strategies used by the teachers in this project to make their English curriculum more inclusive and culturally relevant offer practical approaches for other English teachers. These include practical ideas related to engaging students in developing cross-cultural understanding, breaking down stereotypes, and seeing diversity as an asset in the classroom. Teachers can begin a journey of culturally relevant teaching in ways that suit their own teaching realities, trying a few activities at the start. For example, they can actively seek out genres they have not yet tried, such as Canadian spoken-word artists. What is important on this journey is a mindset that values diversity, combined with a conscious effort and desire to challenge existing norms and power relations in schools and in teaching.

"The strategies used by the teachers in this project to make their English curriculum more inclusive and culturally relevant offer practical approaches for other English teachers. These include practical ideas related to engaging students in developing cross-cultural understanding, breaking down stereotypes, and seeing diversity as an asset in the classroom."

NEXT STEPS

Student engagement increases when students see themselves in the curriculum through texts and other activities. The teachers in this project benefited professionally from the collaborative action research and felt empowered to try new strategies in their classrooms. Most importantly, they gained a much better understanding of what it means to be a culturally relevant teacher, and they defined areas that they want to explore for further growth and professional development. The teachers have also committed to building a resource bank of alternative texts and resources that can be used across the secondary English curriculum.

A key question has emerged: How do we sustain this type of teaching practice? We have learned that it is important for teachers to have a group of "critical friends" with whom they can share ideas and collaborate. It was extremely important for the teachers in this project to try out new strategies in a collaborative forum. Thus, to embed equity and diversity in their practice, teachers, particularly new teachers, need to be mentored and supported.

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Growing New Roots: Coming Together—New Immigrant and Canadian Teenagers

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PROJECT PARTNERS

William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute, Toronto District School Board: Helene Green, Principal

Ten ESL drama class students in Grades 10 to 12, who are English language learners (ELLs)

Ten Canadian-born students in Grades 10 to 12, who are native speakers (NSs) of English

ABSTRACT

Over the period of a year, ten English language learners (ELLs) and ten Canadian-born native speakers (NSs) of English in a Toronto high school engaged in activities aimed at raising their awareness about the barriers that exist between the two peer groups, building trust through team building, and later writing, rehearsing, and having their narratives about personal challenges with the other peer group filmed. The students' collaboration was documented through observations, journals, and interviews. The final product was a DVD entitled *Growing New Roots: Coming Together—New Immigrant and Canadian Teenagers*. In this DVD, students identify the following factors: a. barriers that often exist between ELLs and NSs; b. strategies for self-help to overcome these obstacles; c. strategies for peers to help break down barriers; and d. ways that adults, including parents, teachers, or administrators, can empower students to prevail over these challenges. With the continuous growth in the number of immigrant students integrated in Ontario schools, the results of this project and the recommendations of its participants need to be given close attention.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

The context for this research project includes the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the secondary school William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute. According to Statistics Canada (2007), of the little over a million immigrants who arrived in Canada from 2001 to 2006, Ontario was home to 52.3 percent of these immigrants. More specifically, Toronto welcomed the majority of these newcomers. It is reported that "one third are under the age of 19, and three-quarters from countries where English is not the first language" (People for Education, 2008, p. 20). In the TDSB, 53 percent of the students have a language other than English as their first language.

William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute has a range of programs including an advanced placement program, a program for gifted students, and a wide variety of co-curricular programs. Of the 1100 students, approximately 65 percent speak English as an additional language, and 20 percent were born outside of Canada and have been living in Canada for less than five years: 9 percent have been in Canada for two years or less, and 11 percent have been in Canada for three to four years (Toronto District School Board, 2009b).

The timetabling for English language learners (ELLs) is somewhat integrated with that of native speakers of English (NSs). Lower and intermediate ELLs are provided with separate ESL classes about 60 percent of the time. The more advanced ELLs have about 20 percent of their schedule filled with ESL classes; the rest of their schedule is with NSs in regular classes. An informal survey completed in the fall of 2008 shows that ELLs of all levels often encounter barriers to their participation when they are in mainstream classes. In addition, one study reveals a "disconnect" between ELLs and NSs when there is limited integration between the two groups (Soto Gordon, 2010).

The co-curricular activities that are specific to ESL students at William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute are the ESL Ambassadors' Club and the ESL Drama Club. The ESL Ambassadors' Club welcomes new students to the school by pairing them with a student who shares their first language. The ESL Drama Club has been a part of the school for the last four years and has produced two videos outlining the ESL students' experiences as new immigrants.

Research on communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) has informed this project and helped us understand the data collected. In particular, we discovered that ELLs benefited from interaction with Canadian-born peers within the safe environment of the Drama Club, which acted as a community of practice for these students. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the importance of ELLs playing "participatory roles in expert performances of all knowledge skills, including language" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004, p. 341). The related construct of legitimate peripheral participation is relevant to this study because it helps us understand the role of interaction between ELLs and NSs in the formation and development of their identity in the classroom and school communities.

This research project had three aims:

- to uncover the nature of the relationships between teenaged ELLs and their NS peers in a secondary school context (the class and the school as a whole), particularly in regard to their participation and identity formation and development;

- to examine the impact of the collaborative DVD project on ELLs and NS students as co-participants; and

- to better understand the nature of interactions between ELLs and NSs at their school by making connections to the community of practice conceptual framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

The project participants included 10 English language learners and 10 Canadian-born native speakers of English in Grades 10 to 12. The ELLs were members of the ESL Drama Club who showed an interest in talking about their challenges with integration. After both groups of participants were determined, the teacher met with each group several times. They explored their sense of belonging and shared their experiences, as well as talked about the barriers and challenges they faced in relating to each other in the classroom and at school. After a few months, the two

groups began meeting together. During four meetings the ELL and NS participants were encouraged to become acquainted and build trust. Over time, they formed a community with the common purpose of creating a DVD in which they would share their experiences, self-help strategies, and suggestions for peer, teacher, and parent support. A detailed description of the stages of the project can be found on the ESL Infusion website at **eslinfusion.oise.utoronto.ca**.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A qualitative/interpretive approach was best suited to explore the relationship of ELLs and NS students as it pertains to their interaction in the classroom and school. The stages of the project were documented. The teacher kept a journal with her plans and related notes. The students also kept journals where they responded to questions at various stages in the process. There were also individual and focus group interviews with some ELL and NS participants.

Barriers to interaction

A list of barriers to interaction in the classroom and school between ELLs and their NS peers emerged from the data. Both groups agreed that language acted as a barrier. ELLs and NSs saw ELLs' lack of proficiency in English as a barrier. One ELL said, "I was afraid to make grammar mistakes, I couldn't talk, and I felt very isolated." However, NSs spoke of their ELL peers' use of another language in class or school as another significant barrier.

> The two girls took charge, and when we tried to put in our ideas they wouldn't listen to us, and they would speak in a different language and act as though they were talking down to us because we couldn't understand what they were saying. That was one issue in that group. (NS)

The need to complete tasks or assignments in groups or play on a sports team that brought together ELLs and NSs proved to be challenging for both groups for a variety of reasons.

> I didn't have a group, so I asked the teacher to put me in a group and he did. I could tell though that the group didn't really want me to be there because they thought I wasn't going to contribute ... it made me feel really lonely and shy, and that made it even worse to be by myself. (ELL)

Feelings of exclusion were experienced by both groups and identified as an important barrier to interaction between them. One ELL said, "I felt like a ghost because I was there, but nobody saw me. No one actually cared." One NS said, "Sometimes, the ELLs will group together and start talking in their native tongue. I realize that it is just easier for them to communicate that way, but I can't help but feel a bit left out."

Finally, the ELL group cited their initial lack of familiarity with school culture as another impediment to interaction with their peers: "Everything from the hallways to the teachers looked very different to me."

Self-help strategies

The ELLs and NSs indicated that they could help themselves in the classroom by engaging other people when faced with challenges. NSs expressed parallel views and said they should take the initiative to engage peers and be more accepting and inclusive in their interactions with ELLs. A few ELLs and NSs indicated that anticipating challenges as well as looking for alternative means of communication, such as athletic activities, might empower students to overcome barriers. Table 1 summarizes the self-help strategies participants suggested at different stages throughout the project.

Table 1. Overcoming Barriers: Self-help Strategies

Perspectives of ELLs on Self-help Strategies to Interact with NSs	Perspectives of NSs on Self-help Strategies to Interact with ELLs
Classroom • work harder • imagine presentations are with only ELLs—this alleviates fear • communicate with NSs in order to find a shared goal • imagine there is no language difference **School** • be less shy • attempt conversation with NSs • approach NSs with a group of ELL friends • social networking via email is less intimidating than speaking face-to-face • be positive • imagine all people are the same	**Classroom** • tap into strengths of group members—imagining connections with work • request accommodations • ask opinions of others • envision ways to help increase ELL confidence through conversation and outside of group work time to help create an inclusive environment **School** • approach someone one-to-one or only a few people rather than a group of people • imagine how the ELL might feel • recall past experiences which are similar to experiences of ELLs

Suggested strategies for peers

ELLs indicated that NSs could help by engaging them when faced with barriers. Likewise, NSs called on ELLs to be tolerant and to engage them when faced with difficulties. NSs emphasized that they wanted ELLs to reach out to them. Table 2 summarizes participants' strategies for improving interaction between ELLs and NSs.

Table 2. Overcoming Barriers: Peer-support Strategies

Perspectives of ELLs	Perspectives of NSs
Support from NSs ELLs stated that NSs could help them with challenges they faced; they propose the following strategies: **Classroom** • trust ELLs with the work • empower ELLs to lead the group • treat ELLs like NSs—give ELLs freedom to work independently, then edit work with them • reach out to ELLs to be in their group • be direct with ELLs about need to correct work—"don't do it behind their back" • ask ELLs for their opinion **School** • invite ELLs to participate on a team • reach out to ELLs to include them in a group • greet ELLs in the hallways and be friendly • have food parties • have a club with ELLs and NSs as ambassadors	**Support from ELLs** NSs suggested that ELLs could help build bridges with NSs; they propose the following strategies: **Classroom** • show enthusiasm toward school work • be open about academic ability; this builds trust **School** • introduce other ELLs to NSs • use a safe one-on-one basis to communicate

Suggested strategies for educators and parents

ELLs indicated that teachers could offer support by engaging students and adopting inclusive processes for forming groups. In the school community, ELLs stated that both parents and teachers could help them face challenges by being reassuring. As with the classroom, NSs called on parents and teachers to promote acceptance and inclusion of all students in order to reduce barriers between ELLs and NSs in the school community. The most striking comment made by both groups reflects their belief that teachers should act as a bridge between the ELLs and NSs (see Table 3).

Table 3. Overcoming Barriers: Support from Educators and Others

Perspectives of ELLs	Perspectives of NSs

Support from educators
ELLs believe that teachers can help them overcome the challenges they face in interacting with NSs; they suggest the following strategies:
 	
Classroom
• provide accommodations
  • remove time pressure—extra time may help NSs to empower ELLs
  • have small group discussions instead of presentations in front of the whole class
• adopt inclusive processes for grouping students
  • place people who don't know each other in groups
  • do not force students to pick groups
  • include both ELLs and NSs in groups
  • check in with ELLs—give one-to-one time
 	
School
• keep class quiet during morning announcements so that everyone can hear about co-curricular activities
• be welcoming by approaching ELLs to offer support for co-curricular involvement
• greet students in the hallways
• show kind body language—make eye contact, be less formal
• provide venues for ELLs to mix with NSs, such as the one during this project
• stress importance of multiculturalism
• promote school-wide projects
	Support from educators
	NSs point out that teachers could support both ELLs and NSs in their interactions with each other; they suggest the following strategies:
	
	Classroom
	• provide accommodations for ELLs
	• group work
	  • create groups which prevent the exclusion of ELLs
	  • design groups based on student strengths
	  • assign daily logs describing participation to give students feedback on their progress
	
	School
	• reassure ELLs through conversation—one-to-one attention
	• encourage the sharing of food from different parts of the world
	• introduce ELLs to reliable, kind NS students
	• understand the connection between what goes on in the classroom and the school more broadly

Support from parents ELLs offer a few suggestions so their parents can support them in their integration in the classroom and school community: **Classroom** • check in with ELLs about their classroom experiences—one-to-one time • communicate with teachers **School** • encourage ELLs to meet other people beyond their cultural group • remind ELLs of family goals • encourage children to reconnect with interests in the new country	**Support from educators and administrators** NSs strongly recommend that educators adopt the following strategies to nurture the relationship between ELLs and NSs: **Classroom** • have specialized programs for ELLs within the regular classroom • provide accommodations so the grades of ELLs reflect their abilities and not their language skills • ensure that NSs are reminded about communication and inclusiveness **School** • introduce ELLs to NSs—build connections • identify NSs who have empathy for immigrants • monitor relationships • encourage discussion on inclusion

We are not that different!

At the end of the project, students were asked what they had learned as a result of taking part in this collaborative project. Following are responses by two students, one ELL and one NS. Their words capture the message of all the participants.

> The first thing that I realized is that the native speakers have very similar problems. It's not that big of a difference between us even though there are problems. (ELL)

> Working on the DVD project has definitely made me more aware of some of the issues happening in and around the school. It has showed me that I'm not the only one experiencing these challenges and that native English speakers and English language learners encounter some of the same challenges. I feel like I am more aware of some of my actions that fuelled the separation between ELLs and NSs, and I now make more of an effort to change that…. Listening to the stories of some of the other students has also given me perspective on the different situations that I encounter. Before, I would make many assumptions and that led to bad communication between myself and my ELL peers. However, now, I realize that my assumptions were wrong and that the ELLs could just feel shy or uncomfortable with Western customs. (NS)

Connection to communities of practice conceptual framework

The Communities of Practice conceptual framework was useful in making sense of the data collected. The two groups of students shared stories in which they experienced sometimes being an "insider" and sometimes being an "outsider," showing us that both ELLs and NSs need to be proactive in working toward meaningful interaction with each other. At one time or another, each participant had felt like they were on the periphery and needed the help of an insider to move toward the centre. The participants provided many examples from their lives at school, highlighting the need for educators and parents to play the role of expert in modelling inclusive attitudes and behaviours, while promoting and facilitating interaction between ELLs and NSs.

IMPACT

Although the DVD produced is useful for pre-service and in-service teachers in expanding their understanding of the issues and experiences of ELLs and NSs as they attempt to interact, it was the students involved in this project who benefited most. Seeing the project move from idea to product gave these students a sense of what is possible and helped them feel confident about their ability to interact with each other and begin to contribute to Canadian society in important ways. The following excerpts show how participation in this project affected both ELLs and NSs.

Perspectives of English language learners

> I felt and thought differently on native students, because when you get to know a person beyond "hi" and "bye," suddenly all the anti, judgmental thoughts are going away.

> We had different activities with the native-speakers that encouraged me to learn about the Canadian culture. This process gave me more confidence to get involved and meet new and other people. It showed me that it is possible to get out from the "ESL bubble"…. This experience helped me to understand that native speakers are willing to be friends with newcomers. Before, I was afraid of starting a conversation with other students other than ESL students, but now, I am not afraid to express myself.

Perspectives of Canadian-born native speakers of English

> Overall, I have felt a lot more comfortable approaching English language learners and having a conversation with them.

> It was a good experience to have to meet new people and talk to them about anything. It taught me that we are all very similar as well as unique. I've really earned an understanding as to why English language learners appear to be defensive when I first meet them. I have many English language learners that I am good friends with. At the beginning though, I thought most of them were just not talkative and ignorant in nature. I never knew that for some it is a very big difference coming to a new country.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Although the number of resources to support English language learners has increased dramatically in the past 10 years as a result of the growing number of newcomer youth in English-speaking immigrant-receiving countries, there is still a need for context-specific resources that include narratives and strategies adapted to the Canadian school system and teacher preparation institutions.

In fact, by making *The Growing New Roots: Coming Together—New Immigrant and Canadian Teenagers* available online at the ESL Infusion website, teacher educators, teachers candidates, and practising teachers can access both the video clips and resource guides easily for use in group professional development sessions or for their own use.

Viewing the *Growing New Roots: Coming Together —New Immigrant and Canadian Teenagers* DVD at the beginning of a course, or as part of a professional learning session, is an effective way to show teachers the need to develop skills and acquire knowledge to be able to support ELLs on their complex journey though school in their new country. At the same time, teachers can learn about how to ensure that Canadian-born students' needs are also being addressed. The personal stories of the ELLs and their NS peers, written and performed for an audience of practising teachers and future teachers, act as a powerful call to action for teachers.

"The two groups of students shared stories in which they experienced sometimes being an "insider" and sometimes being an "outsider," showing us that both ELLs and NSs need to be proactive in working toward meaningful interaction with each other. At one time or another, each participant had felt like they were on the periphery and needed the help of an insider to move toward the centre."

NEXT STEPS AND NEW QUESTIONS

As ELLs and Canadian-born teens are very diverse, it is important to continue to work collaboratively with them to develop new multimedia resources that allow for their many stories to be heard by educators. Our experience in the production of this DVD has been that every ELL and NS who participated benefited from their involvement in the project. In addition, we discovered how important it is to give students a voice in terms of expressing their needs and explaining what teaching strategies are most effective for them. In future productions, we would like to explore particular themes raised by students. These include dealing with discrimination of various kinds at school and beyond and getting ready for the transition from high school to post-secondary education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Towards Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching of Mathematics

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PROJECT PARTNERS

Five teachers from an inner-city elementary school, Grades 1 through 5

Four OISE teacher candidates from the Inner City cohort

ABSTRACT

Teacher learning related to the teaching of mathematics in a culturally relevant and responsive way was investigated across various professional development (PD) contexts. The research team examined which of the PD ideas teachers took up and what contradictions teachers faced across multiple PD contexts. This study focused on four major PD efforts in which five teachers participated during one year. Ethnographic methods of participant observation, document collection, and interviews were used, and three main ideas were identified: (a) the importance of developing awareness of students and their communities, (b) teaching strategies to scaffold students' development of mathematical proficiency, and (c) strategies for structuring student-driven, inquiry-based learning for mathematics. A significant research finding indicates that multiple contexts of professional learning presented contradictory messages. Thus, the teachers took up some ideas and left others behind, and they sometimes took up ideas that served conflicting goals of education. An outcome of this study indicates that future studies of teacher PD should focus on the teachers' perspectives and on the role of individual PD programs within the broader context of multiple professional learning situations.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Recent research on teacher professional development (PD) emphasizes the importance of ongoing PD that supports the development of a school or professional community (Westheimer, 2008); that engages with artifacts of practice from teachers' classrooms (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg, & Pittman, 2008); and that focuses on helping teachers inquire into the details of teaching and learning, rather than training them in a particular approach (Sherin, 2007). These recommendations are even more critical for PD that deals directly with potentially sensitive issues around equity and social justice. For a group of teachers to seriously engage with these issues, there needs to be some level of trust, long-term commitment, and a willingness to accept that there may not be quick fixes or easy answers (Foote, 2010).

Although many studies focus on both the implementation and the impact of the PD, the project team could not locate studies that considered any one PD program as just one of many contexts of teachers' professional learning. Since many teachers participate in multiple PD efforts during a single school year, we cannot consider individual PD programs as separate from the rest of the teachers' responsibilities. Consequently, we partnered with a local elementary school to collaboratively develop capacity for teaching mathematics in a culturally relevant and responsive way, and we investigated all the various forms of professional development at their school. We considered teachers' opportunities to learn in and across all of the various PD contexts, and we asked the following questions: What ideas do teachers take up as they participate in multiple contexts of professional learning? What contradictions do they face in these multiple contexts? This report outlines the major PD efforts that the teachers participated in during the year and describes what teachers learned from their efforts.

"Since many teachers participate in multiple PD efforts during a single school year, we cannot consider individual PD programs as separate from the rest of the teachers' responsibilities."

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

During this research two university instructors and a doctoral candidate collaborated with teachers from an inner-city elementary school. Prior to this project, the research team had been involved with the school for a one-year PD pilot project that we called the Radical Math Study Group. We had worked with teachers once a month to develop and implement inquiry projects in which they investigated equity issues in their mathematics classrooms. We had planned to continue the study group for one more year, but the teachers asked us to support them by becoming involved in two additional PD efforts: a seminar they were attending that focused on culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP), and their Ontario Ministry of Education mandated Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways (T-LCP) model. During the year we attended many of the PD sessions and worked to support teacher learning informally. The details of these PD efforts will be reported under data analysis.

The particular elementary school had been identified as serving a high-needs population in an inner-city context. The school served approximately 450 students, with at least 30 languages represented among the students' families. Five teachers, from Grades 1 through 5, volunteered to work with us. We attended and video recorded many of their PD sessions at various locations, and conducted interviews with the teachers.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study drew on ethnographic methods of participant observation, document collection, and interviews. Over the year, we participated in as many PD sessions as we could (for a total of 18 sessions in four different PD efforts), and documented these sessions through video recordings or field notes. We visited each participating teacher's classroom 12 to 14 times between October and May. We also conducted three interviews with each teacher (at the beginning, middle, and end of the year) to learn more about how they conceptualized equity in their classrooms and how they felt their PD supported their learning. We reviewed field notes and documents to ascertain the major goals of each PD context and the major activities for teachers.

This report will focus on two types of data: the data on the PD efforts themselves, and the teacher interviews. We draw primarily on a set of interview questions that elicited teachers' reflections on each of the different PD efforts and also on what they learned through their participation. For the teachers' descriptions of what they had learned, the relevant sections from the interview were transcribed. We first collected all comments related to teachers' perspectives on a single PD effort into a single group; we then looked across groups to search for themes—the similarities and differences in the ways the teachers talked about the various PD efforts. We selected statements that highlighted the most common assertions teachers made about what they had learned in the PD.

Focal PD sessions

In this section, we present brief descriptions of the four major PD efforts that teachers participated in during the year of the study. We focus on the goals and the major activities of each PD to set the context for the teachers' comments about what they had learned.

CRRP Seminar series and Participatory Action Research

Teachers in our study were part of a larger group of 30 teachers from six schools who participated in the Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) Seminar series. They attended sessions that took place approximately once a month for a total of eight sessions. The CRRP Seminar series was designed to provide a forum to examine participants' social identities, to raise awareness of power imbalances in schools and society (e.g., racial dynamics in student access to learning opportunities), and to create and implement culturally relevant curriculum and resources that reflect the lived experiences of students in the school.

The CRRP Seminar series also included a full day of training in Participatory Action Research (PAR) as well as three half-day follow-up sessions to support the school's PAR projects. The guiding principle of PAR is that the people most affected by an issue should be involved directly in the design and process of the research. Teachers were charged with collaborating with their students or school communities to develop a research project on an important community issue. The initial training introduced the PAR process and included a brainstorming session to discuss areas of concern at schools. Three follow-up PD sessions included (a) a three-hour meeting with all PAR participants to share their initial work with students, (b) a three-hour meeting with the PAR facilitator to review how the project was evolving in their schools, and (c) a final three-hour meeting with other school groups to share each school's PAR projects.

The teachers in our study focused on issues around recess and introduced PAR through a social mapping activity in which students "mapped" recess to indicate areas where they enjoyed playing and where they did not. This initial activity allowed students to express their concerns about recess at the same time as they were developing mathematical concepts such as measurement and visual spatial awareness. Students identified areas of the playground that they didn't enter because they didn't feel safe, or because those areas were seen as belonging to a particular grade level. They also measured areas of the playground using standard and non-standard measurement as a starting point to explore concepts of perimeter and area. Teachers embedded PAR further in their data management lessons by having students conduct surveys and create graphs based on their issues of concern about recess.

JUMP math

The JUMP math program is based on the belief that every student is capable of learning mathematics and of reaching high levels of mathematical proficiency through an abundance of practice and praise. The JUMP approach breaks mathematical concepts into manageable steps that children practise and master before going on to the next step of a lesson. Lessons are delivered to the whole class in a highly interactive way, with the teacher illustrating examples of a procedure or concept. The teacher then provides incremental challenges and encouragement to build student confidence through small successes and to develop mathematical understanding. JUMP provides lessons for educators that focus on procedural and conceptual learning concurrently and that build in opportunities for students to practise with many similar questions.

The workshops included (a) two lunchtime sessions which provided an overview of the JUMP philosophy and a series of examples of teaching using the JUMP method; (b) one after-school workshop, where the founder of JUMP demonstrated how mathematical concepts could be broken down into a series of small, sequential steps; and (c) an opportunity to observe JUMP's founder teach students in four separate classrooms in the school.

Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study

The teachers who participated in this project attended a half-day PD session at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study (Jackman ICS), a laboratory school affiliated with OISE. The PD focused on Jackman ICS's inquiry-based philosophy of teaching and learning, centred on mathematics. The teachers toured the school, spending the morning visiting classrooms and observing inquiry-based teaching in action. They had opportunity to speak with classroom teachers, to clarify pedagogical choices teachers made, and to examine student work and other artifacts of practice.

Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways (T-LCP) [1]

The T-LCP process is an Ontario ministry-mandated process in which school staff examine the school's Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) standardized data; they focus on areas of growth and choose specific expectations from the curriculum, with the goal to improve overall student and school performance in those curriculum areas. The T-LCP model is designed as a professional learning community and involves three or four meetings per term for each grade-level group of teachers.

Using a Backwards Design Template to develop common curricular content, teachers outlined the Essential Question for the unit and the Enduring Understanding that they expected the students to gain. They then designed the culminating activity and a set of six or eight subtasks they could use to teach the skills required for the culminating activity, as well as a pre-assessment, mid-assessment and post-assessment activity. During the term, grade-level teachers gathered to examine evidence of student growth, obtained by means of a scoring rubric that assigns an achievement-level score to student work. The goal of this PD was to generate professional dialogue, to develop common language among teachers for the assessment of student work, and to focus on curriculum development to improve student achievement.

"While individual forms of PD may have been of high quality, the multiplier effect for the teachers was contradictory. Teachers were not supported in making sense of the differences in the PD they were being offered."

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[1] The T-LCP was inspired by the work of Carmel Crevola, Peter Hill, and Michael Fullan in their book *Breakthrough,* particularly the idea that classroom practice can be organized in a "practical, precise and highly personalized manner with the outcome being increased student achievement" (Hine & Maika, 2008, p. 16).

FINDINGS

The research findings discussed below correspond to the two underlying questions for this project: What ideas do teachers take up from their experiences in multiple PD contexts, and what contradictions do they experience between multiple PD contexts?

Ideas taken up by teachers

Through analysis, we identified three main themes that reflect the ideas that teachers had taken up from their experiences in the multiple forms of PD: (a) the importance of developing awareness of students and their communities; (b) teaching strategies to scaffold students' development of mathematical proficiency; and (c) strategies for structuring student-driven, inquiry-based learning for mathematics.

Importance of becoming aware of students and their community

The main message teachers gleaned from the CRRP Seminar Series was the importance not only of seeing students as coming from diverse families and communities but also of building relationships with students and communities. One teacher said, "I think it [CRRP] helps your teaching because it makes you more aware of the kid that you've got in front of you, makes you more aware of the issues that they're dealing with." Another teacher explained how she began to view students as individuals coming with unique background experiences: "CRRP … has definitely opened my eyes with students that have different perspectives and where they're coming from … so kind of seeing kids with their families before seeing them as your students." Both quotes exemplify the teachers' awareness of students' lives outside of school and the importance of considering the diversity of their classrooms. However, as one teacher pointed out, there was little concrete connection to actual teaching practices, especially for mathematics; so teachers struggled to manifest these ideas in their mathematics teaching.

Teaching strategies to scaffold students' development of mathematical proficiency

Another key idea taken up by teachers was the importance of scaffolding in mathematics teaching. Teachers described JUMP PD as an important support

in helping them do this. For example, some teachers in this study described JUMP as providing a way to reach students who struggled in mathematics. One teacher described JUMP as "allowing them [the students] to begin at maybe two grades below on the scale or concept and to work their way towards their grade level, and there's advance pages for them to go beyond as well." This teacher also said that JUMP could free up the students from the excessive writing that can occur if a mathematics program relies solely on a textbook. Teachers reported that JUMP was most effective when they used the teacher guides provided with the program; this is because JUMP "gives you three or four different ways that you can teach" math concepts, and the JUMP approach "weaves strands of math that are usually taught as separate units." The teachers also reported that the opportunity to observe a skilled teacher in action with their students was an effective form of PD.

One of the messages that teachers took up from JUMP was the importance of practice for students in learning mathematics. For one teacher, the message was that "the brain can learn just about anything if you work hard enough at it." Another teacher argued that the amount of practice afforded by JUMP helped her students develop mathematical skills, which helped them feel more confident in math, and "our discussions were richer because they had more practice." Thus, teachers came to believe that a foundation of computational fluency enriched students' abilities to participate in mathematical discussions.

While teachers praised the JUMP approach and the PD that helped them learn it, they did not uncritically take up all of the ideas associated with this approach. For example, although teachers reported appreciating JUMP's efforts to minimize student writing, they felt that an emphasis on writing down only the answer limited students from drawing pictures, adding information, or making their thinking visible to the teacher. Teachers also reported using some JUMP units, such as fractions, but not others, such as long division. In this way, rather than JUMP being the focus of their mathematics program, it became a component of the teachers' varied toolkit of mathematics teaching ideas and approaches.

Strategies for student-driven, inquiry-based learning

One of the major ideas that teachers took up from PAR and Jackman ICS was the importance of building on students' interests, ideas, and issues in order to design engaging learning environments. One teacher's conceptualization of equity was directly related to the student-driven, inquiry-based principles of PAR: "Equity would be to have the children doing a large part of creating the direction" for their mathematics coursework, and she expressed a preference for having "the focus come from them [students] instead of me." Other teachers voiced similar thoughts and argued that PAR was powerful because it allowed students to express their interests and to work towards positive change at the school.

Although the Jackman ICS PD session was not explicitly focused on issues of equity, teachers commented on the similarities between the PAR approach and an inquiry-based approach that capitalizes on student interests. They also commented on the significance of having models of this type of instruction. They noted the importance of building on student interests and argued that as a result, students were more deeply engaged in classroom activities and exhibited higher level thinking.

Contradictions between multiple PD contexts

In our observations of the varied examples of PD, and in our interviews with the teachers, we found that the multiple contexts of professional learning presented contradictory messages. In the work of teaching, contradictions are perhaps inevitable because teachers struggle to achieve competing goals that are at times incommensurable. For example, the teachers spoke often of the tension between designing instruction based on student interests and needs and the requirement to meet standardized curriculum expectations. Such competing goals of education were taken up differently in the different PD efforts, resulting in the contradictions that we discuss here.

Even within a single type of PD, the teachers sometimes displayed contradictory responses. A teacher could describe the same idea as both positive and negative. For example, in regard to the Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways (T-LCP) model, one teacher expressed concern that teachers were "so limited" because they had to use the same themes, tasks, and assessments as all teachers in their grade-level group. On the other hand, the same teacher later commented positively on the way the T-LCP helped everyone to develop a "commonality of language" and how "moderated marking helps in our planning together." Thus, although the T-LCP PD was mandatory for teachers to follow, their contradictory responses meant that they did not carry the T-LCP process further than required.

When we examined the ideas that teachers enthusiastically took up across the various PD efforts, we encountered further contradictions. Teachers uniformly reported wanting to build inquiry-based classroom activities based on student interests, as they had seen in the PAR and Jackman ICS PD. However, because they had to do the same activities as all the other teachers, they found that the T-LCP prevented them from following their students' interests. Further, teachers expressed high levels of enthusiasm for JUMP, even though JUMP was not designed to be student driven, and this meant following a set schedule of activities.

These contradictions were also evident in our classroom observations. For example, we found some teachers dividing their 50-minute mathematics period into two distinct approaches to teaching: a teacher-directed JUMP approach for the first 20 minutes of a lesson, followed by an inquiry-based PAR approach for the remaining 30 minutes. In the interviews, teachers could express support for seeing students as autonomous and individual: "Like seeing them more as complete individuals that need some guidance to shine and not trying to make them all the same." Yet in the same breath, they could describe how difficult it was to address students' individual needs. For example, one teacher who taught in a split-grade classroom described how she assessed her students: "I'm giving them a quick geometry test with faces, vertices and points….And I have the same test for everybody because I didn't have the time to go and find a Grade 3 test." Thus, we observed evidence of the contradictions between various forms of PD, both in what teachers said about their practice and what they had learned, and also in what they did in their classroom teaching.

"For principals and school boards anxious to support teachers' professional learning, and for teachers who are struggling to make sense of multiple PD contexts, we suggest capitalizing on the PD contradictions and discussing them explicitly. Either independently or as a school community, practitioners can debate and discuss the contradictions that they face, in hopes of resolving them or lessening the distance between what they learn in the PD setting and what they practise in their classrooms."

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

In this study, we focused on the complexity of teachers' professional learning related to implementing equitable and effective pedagogy within an inner-city elementary school's mathematics classes. While this school and these teachers might have been unusual in the sheer volume of PD made available to them, it is certainly the case that countless teachers face similar situations. They participate in the various forms of PD made available to them at the school, the board, professional associations, conferences, university courses, and so on. Although most research studies of PD have considered only single forms of PD and investigated the hallmarks of effective PD, we have considered the role that multiple forms of PD may play in a particular teacher's professional life. While individual forms of PD may have been of high quality, the multiplier effect for the teachers was contradictory. Teachers were not supported in making sense of the differences in the PD they were being offered.

This finding raises questions about the importance of coherence across the PD programs in which teachers participated. The teachers themselves did not complain to us about a lack of coherence in their PD. Instead, they took up some ideas and left others behind, sometimes taking up ideas that served conflicting goals of education. We suggest that future studies of teacher PD should focus on the broader context of teacher learning across the school year. This type of research is necessary not only to understand how to implement effective and high-quality PD as an integral part of teachers' professional lives but also to support teachers in making sense of contradicting perspectives and practices.

For principals and school boards anxious to support teachers' professional learning, and for teachers who are struggling to make sense of multiple PD contexts, we suggest capitalizing on the PD contradictions and discussing them explicitly. Either independently or as a school community, practitioners can debate and discuss the contradictions that they face, in hopes of resolving them or lessening the distance between what they learn in the PD setting and what they practise in their classrooms.

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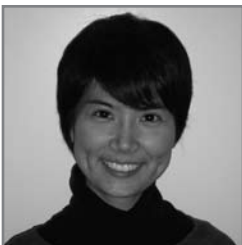
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One Book, Two Books, Pink Books, Blue Books: Gender Issues for Primary Learners

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ABSTRACT

Teaching for social justice and delving deeply into the issues that are relevant to students' lives can support learning in a profound way (Kohl, 2001). When children explore practical ways to make a positive impact in the world they live, they see firsthand the critical importance of being respectful, open-minded, and understanding of individual differences. During this project, *One Book, Two Books, Pink Books, Blue Books*, university researchers and teachers collaborated in planning units of study based on clustering expectations and teaching the "big ideas" of inclusion and gender equity. Data were collected regarding Grade 2 students' understanding of gender identity and stereotypes, and the results indicate that their views of gender behaviour stereotypes were broadened. The children revealed increased acceptance of individual differences, particularly for atypical gender behaviours. They began to identify themselves as critical thinkers and, in some cases, activists, which cultivated a stronger community within their classroom.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Driftwood Public School is located in the northeast quadrant of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Its population includes 500 students representing over 30 different language groups. Most students are from East India, Caribbean, Somalia, Vietnam, and China. Driftwood is considered a high-needs school according to the TDSB's Learning Opportunities Index (LOI).

This project involved an associate teacher from Driftwood Public School, her Grade 2 class of 20 students, a teacher candidate from OISE, and OISE researchers. All participants worked and learned together to construct new understandings and knowledge about gender equity. The lessons developed during this project used a diverse collection of rich literature and media texts to examine the conceptualization of gender identity and its implications for teaching young children. The associate teacher and the teacher candidate worked in partnership with the two research coordinators to create a social justice curriculum focused on gender issues.

The goals of this project were to plant seeds of understanding among the children and to help them explore practical ways to make a positive impact in the world they live by being respectful, open-minded, and understanding of individual differences. Lamb, Bigler, Liben, and Green (2009) explain that "children's internalization of the notion that they can and should express support in public for their peers' rights to engage in non-traditional behaviour can create a climate of tolerance for individual differences in gender role behavior" (p. 379).

The following questions guided this research project:

- What books are examples of effective children's literature that can support and deepen young children's knowledge and understanding of gender equity?

- What classroom strategies are effective in enabling students to consider gender stereotypes, to share their responses, and to respect the views of others?

- How can we effectively support students in the primary division to critically examine unfair,

everyday issues pertaining to gender, make informed decisions, empathize, and engage in social action?

The research coordinators were committed to using literature and response strategies to help students work towards an understanding of social justice issues. During an initial meeting, the associate teacher said she wanted to narrow the topic of social justice to gender equity. Her class consisted mostly of boys, and her instruction incorporated many male-friendly instructional techniques. She said, "I have a high number of boys in my class. They're more tactile, more kinesthetic, and very interested in getting up, doing hands-on activities, and coming back to regroup; so there's a lot of short bursts of activity throughout the instructional day." The boys in her class were not as engaged in reading activities as were the girls. Therefore, to support the closing of the gender achievement gap, her major goal was to better understand her male students' literacy needs: "I really want to explore rich literature and different books for my boys so they can be interested and more engaged in reading." She also explained that her students had some very strong beliefs, and she wanted to broaden their understanding of gender identities. She said,

> I found that the students' responses to gender questions were constricted and stereotypical. When they were asked if they enjoyed being a boy or a girl, the boys said it's good to be boys because they had more fun, you could drive fast cars, play football, and one boy said he could be a policeman.... Whereas the girls noted that they liked being girls because they get to wear dresses, wear makeup, and do the cooking.

As a result of the initial meeting, we developed the project goals collaboratively. We sought to investigate research-based curriculum and classroom practices that could advance effective gender equity teaching and learning by ensuring high expectations for all learners. To accomplish this aim, we drew from the works of Kohl (2001), Banks (1995), and Ladson-Billings (1995) the following principles for equity infusion work in classrooms:

- Grounded in the lives of students
- Critical

- Participatory and experiential
- Hopeful, joyful, kind, and visionary
- Activist oriented

- Academically rigorous for all students
- Culturally and linguistically sensitive

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

The stages of the inquiry project involved meetings and interviews with the associate teacher and the teacher candidate, as well as observations of lessons. Following is an outline of the steps taken during this project.

- Initial meeting with associate teacher and teacher candidate to discuss project goals, proposed research methods, and partnership initiatives. Research focus was narrowed to examine effective gender equity teaching and learning.

- Pre-interview with the associate teacher and teacher candidate. Assumptions were shared about equity infusion and gender issues within the Grade 2 class, and the next steps were planned.

- Lesson #1: What is Sexism? Larry Swartz presented children's literature samples. Students responded through oral discussion and wrote their own definition of sexism.

- Lesson #2: Gender Stereotyping in Literature. Rita Paul read aloud *Princess Smartypants*. Students responded through positive problem solving.

- Lesson #3: Gender and Occupations. Rajvi Panchal showed print media images. Students considered gender stereotypes and occupations, and they responded through illustrations and raised critical questions.

- Lesson #4: Challenging Gender Stereotypes. Mary Reid presented the class with a description of

a student. Students made inferences as to whether the character was a boy or girl. She read aloud *Oliver Button is a Sissy.* Students responded through empathetic role-playing.

- Lesson #5: Gender Stereotypes in the Media. Mary Reid presented YouTube videos. Students recorded their observations of the different gender behaviour in the media clips through graphic organizers, and they raised critical questions.

- Lesson #6: Introducing Graphic Novels. Larry Swartz read aloud *Pinky Boo* and discussed whether boys or girls would like this graphic text. Students examined critical questions.

- Independent reading of graphic texts. Students maintained a tracking sheet of texts they had selected for independent reading and their responses to the texts. The class re-examined the students' definitions of *sexism*.

- Student voices videotape "Gender Choices in Reading." David Booth interviewed students about their gender choices in reading, and their responses were videotaped.

- Post-interview with the associate teacher and teacher candidate. Challenges faced in this gender equity unit were discussed, assumptions affirmed, and goals set for future directions.

"The students talked about gender roles and occupations and raised important concepts about having both genders represented in various jobs. They worked positively in mixed-gender groups and produced positive messages about accepting non-traditional gender careers."

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Each stage of the project provided data samples. These included transcripts of the pre- and post-interviews, reflection journals by the associate teacher and teacher candidate, transcripts of student discussions in class, student work samples, and video footage of one-on-one interviews that captured each student's voice about gender issues. We identified the themes from the data at different stages of the project. The following sections reflect students' thinking and attitudes at the beginning, middle, and end of the project.

Attitudes at beginning of the project

At the outset, many students held traditional concepts of gender roles or some ingrained notions of stereotypical gender roles. For example, Figure 1 demonstrates students' responses to the questions, what can boys do and what can girls do? Overall, students' responses associated boys' activities with action-oriented and aggressive behaviour, such as sports, driving fast cars, and getting into fights. On the other hand, girls' activities generally focused on domestic matters, nurturance and vanity, such as cooking, cleaning, babysitting, and wearing makeup. Hence, these work samples illustrate gender behaviour stereotypes held by the children.

Other data also revealed peer pressure to adhere to gender stereotypes. Following is an excerpt from a transcribed discussion among students about who can play with dolls.

> **Male Student A:** No! If a boy plays with girls' dolls then they [others] will think he dresses like a girl.
> **Male Student B:** If a boy plays with a girl's doll and a girl sees him, he might be embarrassed. That's not good.
> **Male Student C:** Others will laugh at him.
> **Male Student A:** And some girls play with boy dolls.
> **Female Student:** My baby brother plays with girls' dolls.
> **Larry:** Is that okay?
> **Female Student**: Yes [shouts]
> **Male Student B**: If the boy is babies, it's okay because they don't know.
> **Female Student:** Yeah, babies don't know anything, so it's okay.

The above conversation provided evidence of the children's attempts to influence their classmate's gender attitudes and behaviours toward stereotypes—that is, boys should not play with dolls.

Midpoint changes

As the lessons were implemented daily during the teacher candidate's practicum, changes were observed in the students' understanding of gender equity issues. Specifically, the children began to identify gender issues and articulate how to challenge insensitive comments and actions. The teacher candidate's journal included a reflection on students' increasing awareness of gender identity, gender stereotypicality, and pressures to conform to gender norms.

> The children are becoming more empathetic and sensitive to gender issues. In today's class, the boys agreed that it's okay to play with toys like dolls, skipping ropes, and dress up. They said that they wouldn't laugh if they saw their male friends playing with such toys. More importantly, the class expressed if they saw others making fun of people because of their toys, they would tell them to stop—that's unkind.

Figure 1. Initial Assessment of Student Gender Notions

End-of-unit changes

By the end of the unit, the Grade 2 students had gained an understanding of fairness in terms of gender equity. Figure 2 demonstrates work samples of students' culminating reflections. Most of their responses reveal a development of empathy and sensitivity, as students wrote about accepting gender atypical behaviours. Data collected from the teacher candidate's reflection journal also revealed how children engaged in positive problem solving and collective decision making over gender issues. For example, the following journal excerpt focuses the students' responses to a culminating lesson about gender and occupation: "The students talked about gender roles and occupations and raised important concepts about having both genders represented in various jobs. They worked positively in mixed-gender groups and produced positive messages about accepting non-traditional gender careers." Hence, students showed they were beginning to understand questions of gender diversity across the workforce.

The following excerpt reveals how students became more cognizant of gender inclusivity and language choices. When discussing the Canadian national anthem and the line "In all thy son's command," students responded with their advice to the government about whether to change the wording to include both sons and daughters.

Male Student A: Daughters may not fit in the line; it might be harder to sing. Why are we thinking of changing it now, because we've had it [sons] for centuries?
Male Student B: They should change it to children.
Male Student C: Because there are woman and girls in Canada. There are not only sons. That's why [we should] change it.
Male Student A: Yeah–change it to children; so all boys and girls are in the song.

A central theme of this project was the explicit teaching and learning that challenges a strict adherence to traditional gender roles and critically questions stereotypic beliefs. As a result of the deliberate teaching strategies used during this project, students experienced gender issues firsthand, and they developed greater empathy, sensitivity, and awareness of gender inequities.

Figure 2. Students' Final Reflections on Sexism

A.
I think sexist means it's not fair. A person is sexist when a boy can't play with a doll.

B.
I think Sexist mean's that a boy can't Play With girl toy's and a girl can't Play with boy's toy's And I think that sexist means not sensetive.

C.
I think SEXIST means a girl is not stronger than the boy but the girl is strong
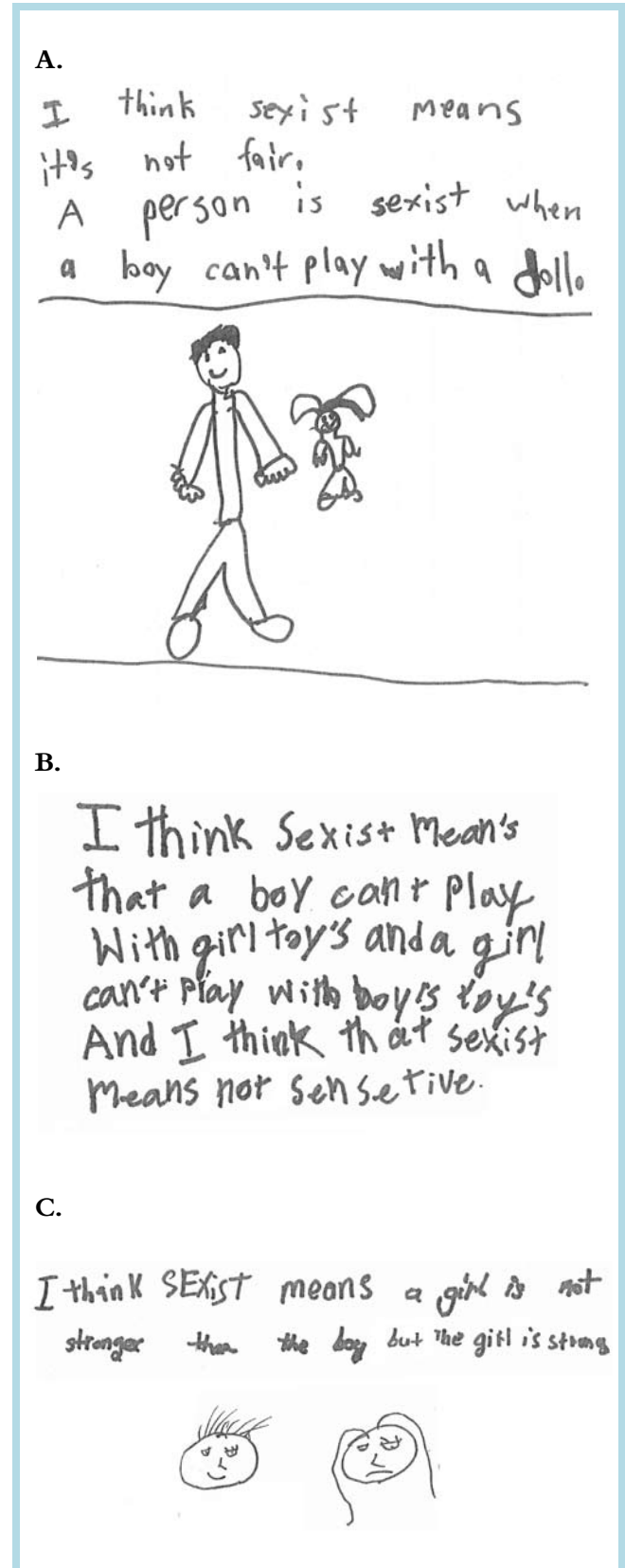
IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

This project provided opportunity for primary students in a Grade 2 classroom to gain insight into gender equity issues. By introducing children's literature and media texts, and inviting them to respond through discussion, drama, writing and art, the project team introduced students to the concepts of sexism and gender stereotyping. Throughout the inquiry, students' responses demonstrated a growing depth of understanding of a particular aspect of social justice, diversity, and equity. At different stages of the project, students had opportunity to reflect and consider boys' views of girls and girls' views of boys. During a final data collection activity, each student was interviewed and videotaped, in response to two key questions: How different do you think boys and girls are in their book choices? How do you choose the books you read? The data from this activity provided evidence that the boys and girls in this classroom became more aware of gender equity issues than they were at earlier stages of the project. Each student was able to articulate a personal belief and, by the end of the project, seemed better prepared to challenge gender stereotypes. In this way the project's goals were achieved for the

researchers, the associate teacher, and the teacher candidate involved in the inquiry.

As a result of this project, the Grade 2 students' views about gender behaviour stereotypes were broadened. The students expressed acceptance of individual differences, particularly for gender atypical behaviours. They began to identify themselves as critical thinkers, and some as activists, which cultivated a stronger community within their classroom.

As with any research, several challenges emerged as the research project unfolded. Since each member of the project team had a different intention and vision of what they wanted to accomplish, it was important over time for each one of us to articulate our beliefs, explain strategies, and consider effective practices to ensure that our goals were met. Although the strength of this initiative was based on collaboration, it was challenging to ensure the collaboration worked effectively and all research participants could be involved in a balanced and meaningful way.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

During the project, students experienced gender equity concepts firsthand by participating in learning experiences that encouraged critical questioning, empathetic role-playing, collective decision making, positive problem solving, conflict resolution, and responding to rich, challenging literature. Following is a description of seven classroom approaches that were implemented in this study and can be used in future to promote student learning in gender equity issues.

1. Give students a sheet of labels with the name of an occupation at the bottom (e.g., dentist, singer, lawyer, nurse, hairdresser). Explain to the students that they are going to create illustrations for a picture book about occupations. Once students complete the illustration, survey the class to determine which jobs have been depicted as male, which as female. Then have the students discuss which genders are most likely associated with each occupation.

2. Display a variety of advertisements that appear in magazines or newspapers. Have the students discuss the following questions: Do they think the advertisements support or break a stereotype? What are some of the positive features of the ad? How would the advertisement be different if the genders were switched? Is the choice of gender appropriate for the product?

3. Ask students to view the following Public Service Announcements (PSA) created by the Concerned Children's Advertisers of Health Canada:
   We are Girls?
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0EkQv4BmUM&NR=1
   What's Your Thing?
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vs4zkcBX-mA
   Discuss the purpose of each PSA. Promote discussion about how our surroundings might influence how boys and girls think they should behave, look, and feel. The PSAs give a strong

message that only you can decide who you should be, and you should be happy to pursue the goals you desire. Discuss who is the intended audience for each PSA—which one is for girls, and which one is for boys, and why? What are the differences and similarities between the two PSAs? Encourage students to feel confident about their ability to do anything they desire, and not be pressured to conform to gender stereotypical roles.

4. Divide the students into single-sex groups of three or four. Give each group a sheet of chart paper to brainstorm all the things they like about being a girl or boy (e.g., things they are good at or admire). Have the groups list the things that they admire about the opposite gender. Once completed, the two mixed-gender groups can meet to compare lists. Consider whether the items on the list are true for all, most, or some boys or girls?

5. Have the teacher read aloud a picture book that challenges the gender stereotypes. Discuss the following questions with the students: Does this book tell the truth of all, most, or some boys or girls? What problem did the character have? If the character in this book were to become a member of the class, how might he or she be treated?

6. Provide students with sentence stems such as the following to complete independently: A good thing about being my gender is…. A difficult thing about being my gender is…. It's all right for boys but not for girls to… It's all right for girls but not boys to…. Sexism means…. Once completed students can share their responses and discuss whether these things are true for all, most, or some boys or girls.

7. Provide the class with the following description of a student: Ask the children to close their eyes and visualize what this student might look like. Then have the children write on a post-it note whether they think this student is a boy named Frank or a girl named Kayla. Graph their post-it note responses on a chart paper.

During this inquiry project, the students produced the following graph as a result of this activity: Figure 4. Frank and Kayla.

Examine the results of the graph and talk about why most of the class thought this student was a boy. Discuss the concept of gender stereotypes. Challenge students to think if the other gender could demonstrate these behaviours too.

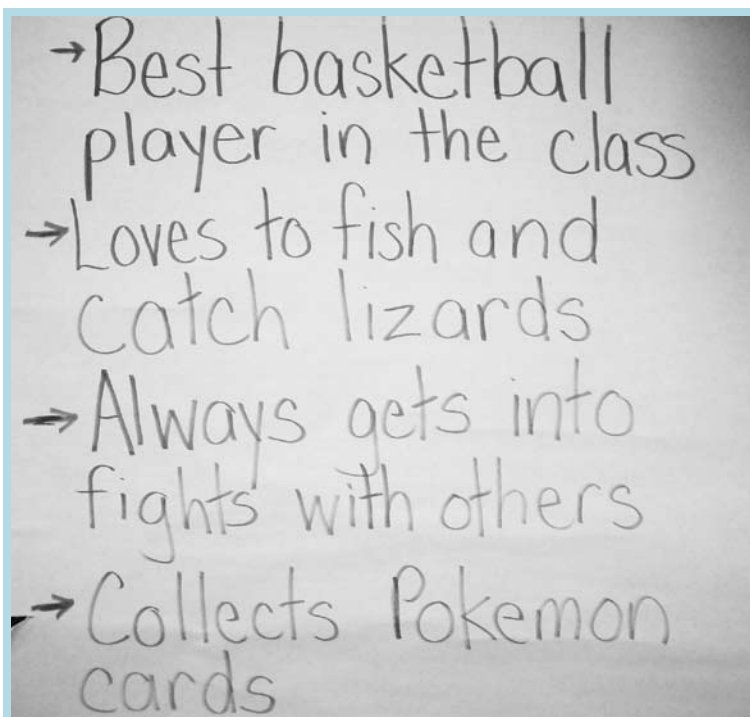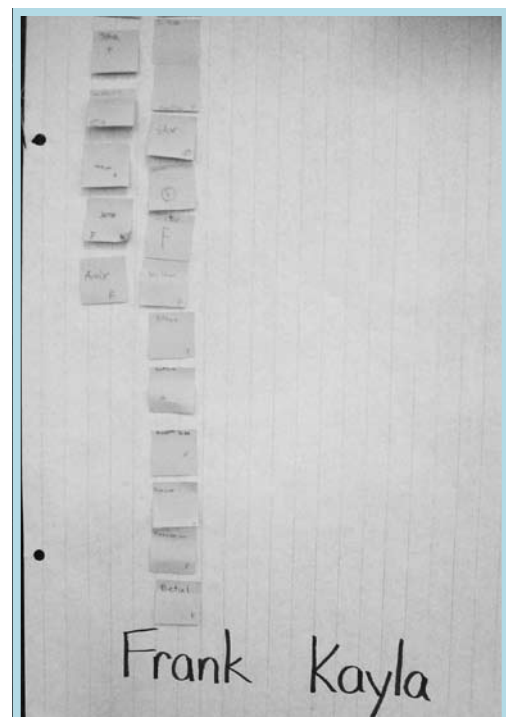**Figure 3: Description of a Student**

Figure 4. Frank and Kayla

IMPLICATIONS

This project provided an opportunity for educators to consider issues related to social justice, equity, and diversity with young students. As researchers, we recognized the importance of explicitly teaching a particular aspect of equity in order to build awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of differences.

At the end of the project, the associate teacher articulated how rewarding it was to pay attention to her students' voices as they considered gender identity. She definitely wants her future program in the primary division to include the approaches developed in this unit.

> This was a good beginning. I think we opened students' eyes to understanding individual differences. I think it's important to be critical of the literature I choose to offer the boys and the girls. This research helped me to understand that it's important to have kids share their views, respond to what others say, and question assumptions about gender behaviours.

She recognized a need to spend more time and provide a range of responses, particularly in visual arts and drama. These subject areas helped the children to share their thinking and to learn collaboratively about gender equity.

The teacher candidate valued her participation in the research and noted how important it was to introduce young students to issues connected to social justice, equity, and diversity. She will definitely use some of the resources and strategies that she experienced during this project in her own future work in classrooms.

> I was glad to be part of this project. I was able to put into practice issues that we were learning about in our program. This was an authentic experience for me. I would definitely teach about gender issues in the primary grades.

"A central theme of this project was the explicit teaching and learning that challenges a strict adherence to traditional gender roles and critically questions stereotypic beliefs. As a result of the deliberate teaching strategies used during this project, students experienced gender issues firsthand, and they developed greater empathy, sensitivity, and awareness of gender inequities."

NEXT STEPS

A deliberate exploration of gender equity confirmed the need to implement a variety of strategies to introduce literature, have meaningful discussions, and offer opportunities to respond through writing and visual arts so that students can work towards an understanding of these complex issues. Gender equity teaching through the use of children's literature, media, and graphic readers proved to successfully engage the students and is recommended for future practice. The topic of gender equity will continue to be integrated across the OISE Initial Teacher Education program. Samples from this project of the literature used, the data collected, and the research reflections

will be presented to other initial teacher education instructors and in workshops for educators throughout Ontario. The results of this project have been presented at OISE's equity conference in October 2010, the provincial "Reading for the Love of It" conference in February 2011, and they will be presented at the 2011 conference of the International Reading Association in Orlando, Florida. The video entitled *One Book, Two Books, Pink Books, Blue Books* that documents the students' voices about gender equity issues will be screened at future language arts conferences and professional development sessions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Teaching Mathematics with a Social Justice Focus

Beverly Caswell, Leslie Stewart Rose, and Deena Douara

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PROJECT PARTNERS

32 primary/junior teacher candidates from the Inner City cohort, 2009–10

Toronto District School Board associate teachers affiliated with OISE's Inner City cohort

ABSTRACT

This research project documented the experiences of teacher candidates as they designed and team-taught mathematics lessons with a social justice focus. The purpose of this project was to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to explore social justice issues in the context of teaching mathematical concepts. The research included 32 primary/junior teacher candidates from OISE's Inner City cohort. Participants also included associate teachers from Inner City cohort partner schools in the Toronto District School Board. Research data comprised artifacts associated with the course assignment (lesson plans, reflective writing, video recordings) and interview transcripts. Data analysis focused on the project's impact on teacher candidates' development of instructional strategies and pedagogical choices in teaching mathematics with a social justice focus. Teacher candidates reported feeling more confident in teaching mathematics and described increased levels of engagement in mathematics among students who were traditionally unengaged during mathematics lessons.

"Through collaborative curriculum writing, observation of teaching by their peers, and shared reflection on the curriculum implementation, teacher candidates saw their own work improve."

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Mathematics can be seen as a *gatekeeper* subject that provides a "passport" to gain entry into practices that enjoy a different status in the wider society (De Abreau & Cline, 2007). Mathematical proficiency, then, is an equity issue, and equitable access to mathematics learning is critical for all students, especially those marginalized by the school system. However, mathematics is a curriculum area in which many teacher candidates feel unprepared to teach. Teachers have to do a kind of mathematical work that involves what Deborah Ball refers to as "an uncanny kind of unpacking of mathematics that is not needed or even desirable in settings other than teaching. Many of the everyday tasks of teaching are distinctive to this special work" (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008, p. 400). Preparing teacher candidates to teach mathematics in inner-city contexts is therefore a complex task.

Mathematics teacher educators engage with the challenges of developing teacher candidates' pedagogical as well as mathematical content knowledge. The aim of this research project was to strengthen teacher candidates' confidence in planning and delivering inclusive and accessible mathematics lessons, to enable them to form a critical approach to knowledge, and to overcome models of deficit thinking. In this way, the research aimed to inform the development of OISE's mathematics education curriculum; the goal was to increase understanding of teacher candidates' journeys of learning to teach mathematics with a social justice focus. At the same time, the underlying purpose of the project was to inspire teachers to change the content of the curriculum as a means to provide access to mathematical concepts and skills for elementary school students who are typically underserved by the educational system.

The following questions guided the project:

- What pedagogical choices do teacher candidates make and what instructional strategies do they use to develop mathematics curriculum with a social justice focus?

- What are the experiences of teacher candidates as they engage with the elements of a social justice mathematics assignment in their practicum settings?

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

This cohort of teacher candidates had a special emphasis on inner-city schools, issues of social justice, equity, anti-oppression, and poverty. Central to the mathematics course, and also the context for this research project, was an assignment called "Exploring Issues of Social Justice through Mathematics."[1] The project built on a Japanese Lesson Study approach to develop a social justice mathematics framework that incorporated principles of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical education.

In the first stage of the research, the course instructor modelled lesson design, demonstration lessons, and interactive simulations, which helped teacher candidates begin to think about how to change the content of the curriculum as a way to provide multiple entry points into mathematics for elementary school students. While designing a mathematics lesson plan is a fairly standard teacher education process, this assignment used a Japanese Lesson Study[2] approach to focus not only on specific mathematical concepts to teach but also on a social justice issue.

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[1] Course and assignment designed by Caswell.
[2] Japanese Lesson Study is a professional development process used to examine and improve the practice of mathematics teaching. The focus is on student thinking and preconceptions related to specific mathematics concepts. Teachers work collaboratively to design activities and lessons that reveal student thinking and give students access to these concepts. Lessons are implemented in the classroom with other teachers present to make observations, which are then discussed professionally during a debrief session. The purpose of these "research lessons" (Lewis, 2009) is to gain a deeper understanding of how students learn and thus how teachers can teach mathematics more effectively.

Data from an initial questionnaire about attitudes toward teaching mathematics showed that over half the teacher candidates reported a negative relationship with mathematics and felt uncomfortable about teaching the subject.

In the second stage of the project, groups of three to five teacher candidates, who were placed in Toronto District School Board Inner City cohort schools for their teaching practica, consulted and collaborated with colleagues and their associate teachers. Their aim was to develop lessons that (a) took into account the identities, lives, and knowledge of the students in their practicum classrooms (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005); (b) focused on the co-construction of mathematical knowledge through inquiry; and (c) used mathematical concepts and skills to raise students' awareness of power dynamics in society and to engage students in social justice work (Gutstein, 2006).

In the third stage, teacher candidates team-taught the lessons in their practicum classrooms. Each

lesson implementation was video recorded. In the fourth stage, teacher candidates asked their associate teachers for feedback. Embedded in the assignment was the opportunity and expectation for teacher candidates to make careful observations of student thinking and to examine student work as evidence for learning. They produced structured written reflections on the process and outcome of their lessons and commented on (a) the collaborative process of lesson preparation, (b) their response to the cultural and academic needs of their students, and (c) how they balanced the mathematical content and social justice issue.

Finally, teacher candidates prepared formal presentations, which were then shared during their regularly scheduled mathematics class at OISE. Further, teacher candidates were invited to present their work to an audience of over 30 associate teachers, as well as principals and instructional leaders as part of the Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy Seminar Series hosted by the Centre of Urban Schooling at OISE.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The participants in this research were 32 primary/junior teacher candidates in the Inner City cohort, a program that is committed to addressing the needs and challenges of inner-city students, schools and families. Of these 32, ten were selected for interviews based on a representative sample of classroom levels in which the lesson was taught and a representation of a range of diversity. Five associate teachers from partner schools in the Toronto District School Board were also interviewed. The research data included artifacts associated with the course assignment (lesson plans, reflective writing, video recordings) as well as transcripts of formal interviews conducted with 10 teacher candidates and five associate teachers. Data analysis focused on the teacher candidates' instructional strategies and pedagogical choices that they identified as helping to create access to mathematics for the students in their practicum settings. Three key strategies were identified.

Use of real-life mathematics problems linked to issues of inequity

One aim of the mathematics lesson was to make the concept of inequity based on power relationships an explicit part of the curriculum.[3] A teacher candidate linked her observations of increased student engagement with the social justice mathematics lesson to her theories about motivation. She noticed that when there was a reason for the students to learn mathematics, as opposed to "you just need to know it," they seemed more curious and interested: "If there is actually something behind it, it's more engaging."

Another teacher candidate made the curriculum relevant by "taking it outside the textbook." She said, "it doesn't have to be just about numbers [and] equations, and I think bringing real life into it makes it easier for the children to understand. You can bring in things that

[3] This is one of Cochran-Smith's (2004) six principles of teaching for social justice.

are relevant for them, to have them make more sense of it." Teacher candidates made curriculum decisions to use mathematics to understand social studies topics. For example, during a study of the electoral process in a Grade 5 classroom, teacher candidates introduced students to the Ontario Budget to examine issues around provincial spending and to read, represent, compare, and order large numbers (a key expectation for number sense and numeration in the mathematics curriculum for that grade level). In another example, students compared spending on recreation to money needed for education, food, clean drinking water, etc. Teacher candidates recognized that real-life curriculum gave students opportunities to express learning in a variety of ways, including artistic means such as creating a rap, a dance, a poster, or a role-playing scenario. One teacher candidate said, "Even students who were not usually engaged with math were very engaged, and also I think [this is] because there was a bit of an artistic design element."

Connect mathematics to students' lived experiences

Teacher candidates included pedagogical choices that built the curriculum on the lived experiences and knowledge of their students (e.g., knowledge based on a variety of worldviews). For example, teacher candidates built on Grade 3 students' knowledge of their community to design a mathematics lesson where students created three-dimensional geometric figures to contribute ideas for the city's plan to revitalize their community. In another example, the mathematics lesson[4] integrated geometry (e.g., use of the coordinate system), measurement (area), and beginning algebra to examine land claim issues that students were familiar with from their home countries. Teacher candidates recognized that when "students had space to reflect their worldviews" they brought in "important aspects of community and culture."

Use inquiry-based learning models and emphasize social learning

The teacher candidates wanted to move away from using only teacher-centred pedagogies that they had experienced in their own schooling. They were interested in developing principles of inquiry-based knowledge construction from a social justice perspective (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Excited by the social learning they observed among their students, one teacher candidate reported, "Everybody really wanted to share and … all the kids were very comfortable, and then they sort of fed off each others' ideas."

According to one teacher candidate, pedagogical choices can be acts of social justice. She suggested that social justice means "really knowing your students and knowing what they are interested in, where they're coming from so you can build on their experiences." To her, this emphasis was different from having the sole focus on meeting curriculum expectations. Teacher candidates began to see the power of student-driven curriculum development: "What was important to the students … it was their ideas, their concerns … it was their voices being heard in the project, as opposed to ours." Table 1 provides examples of mathematics learning in relation to social justice learning.

"The results of the research project show that the social justice mathematics assignment became a catalyst for building teacher candidates' confidence in teaching."

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[4] This lesson was adapted from *Maththatmatters* by David Stocker (2006, 2008), CCPA Education Project.

Table 1. Exploring Issues of Social Justice Through Mathematics

Social Justice Focus	Mathematics Curriculum Expectations
Examining inequitable distribution of world resources (through simulations)	• Number sense and numeration • Grade 5: Solve problems involving the multiplication and division of multi-digit whole numbers, and involving the addition and subtraction of decimal numbers to hundredths, using a variety of strategies • Grade 3: Subtraction with regrouping; graphing world resources
Designing a safe and equitable playground: "Mapping recess"	• Measurement, geometry, and spatial sense • Identify different types of quadrilaterals • Record and represent measurements of length in a variety of ways • Estimate, measure, and record the distance around objects, using non-standard units (Grade 2)
Food equity: Where does our food come from? (based on *A Handful of Seeds* by M. Hughes)	• Data management
Water consumption and conservation	• Data management and measurement • Measuring and recording capacity and volume
Fair trade: Where does our clothing come from?	• Data management: graphing and mapping
Provincial spending	• Build a model to represent a number pattern presented in a table of values • Read, interpret, and draw conclusions from primary data and from secondary data presented in charts, tables, and graphs
Cultural contributions to mathematics	• Geometry and symmetry in Islamic art, for example
Global trading simulation	• Number sense and numeration • Mathematical processes: problem solving, reasoning, reflecting, connecting, and communicating
Environmental issues: Ecological footprint, recycling	• Performing calculations, graphing results
Maps of the world: Changing perspectives	• Geometry and spatial awareness
Community revitalization	• Three-dimensional geometry
Micro-credit and community development (based on *A Basket of Bangles: How a business begins* by Ginger Howard, the story of Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank)	• Examine currency from a variety of countries • Grade 5: Read and write money amounts to $1000 • Calculate interest rates on loans, payment schedules, experiment with business models

IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MATHEMATICS ASSIGNMENT

As a result of this project teacher candidates experienced seven important impacts of the mathematics assignment. These included increasing students' mathematical proficiency through student engagement and developing high expectations. As well, they developed confidence in their mathematics teaching, which increased teacher efficacy and awareness of a new vision of mathematics learning by engaging in a social justice curriculum and collaborative professional inquiry.

Student engagement

Teacher candidates reflected and theorized on students' increased levels of motivation and engagement in the mathematics lessons. Discussed less, but evident, was the idea that promoting diversity (i.e., multiple representations and perspectives) is an act of social justice. A teacher candidate described her perception of students' investment in the lesson when she noticed that "all the students were on task, they were all fully engaged, even the AT [associate teacher] commented on that, and the groupings worked out well, so that every student was participating." Teacher candidates discussed how providing multiple entry points into the lesson increased student engagement.

> They really liked it, they were very engaged, they were really excited. We gave them the two-minute warning and they [said], "No, we want more time."

Teacher candidates named many instructional strategies and pedagogical choices as reasons for increased engagement: play-based learning, inquiry-based learning, integrating multiple curriculum areas, learning outside the classroom (in the playground, outside the school, and in school hallways), and making mathematics relevant.

High quality work

Teacher candidates remarked on the extra time it took to work collaboratively to create lessons, but they also recognized that the multiple perspectives brought to the activity increased the quality of the lessons they prepared. Through collaborative curriculum writing, observation of teaching by their peers, and shared reflection on the curriculum implementation, teacher candidates saw their own work improve.

Confidence in teaching mathematics

Data from the initial questionnaire showed that over half the teacher candidates reported a negative relationship with mathematics and felt uncomfortable about teaching it. The results of the research project show that the social justice mathematics assignment became a catalyst for building teacher candidates' confidence in teaching mathematics. Even a teacher candidate who said she was already comfortable with teaching mathematics reported,

> I was not very comfortable to start off … what am I going to get them to do in Grade 1 that's going to revolve around equity? But by doing this lesson, by sharing our ideas, and by working like four heads together, I saw how you can … step out of that box…. It was successful. So right away, that being your first experience, you are tempted to try it again and again.

Efficacy and agency

Teacher candidates often cited that the social justice mathematics assignment was a turning point in developing their teaching identity. Many claimed it was the first time they "really felt like a teacher." Several reasons underlay their claims to greater efficacy: (a) having a new relationship with curriculum expectations, (b) working outside the associate teacher's math program, and (c) finding a "crack in the curriculum to do social justice work."

Although they linked independence with greater teacher efficacy, the teacher candidates recognized the important role of the associate teacher. They consistently reported that associate teachers were "open," "supportive," "attentive," and their consulting role was key to the success of their mathematics teaching. One teacher candidate reported, "It was very helpful when the associate teacher just gave me all ownership and helped with the setting of the desks and stuff and gave me ideas, and said, 'If you need resources, here are the resources,' but basically gave us full reign of it." Another teacher candidate reported that the associate teacher supported the group by "giving us the time to do it…. It made a big difference because we were able to explore the students' ideas. Teacher candidates also appreciated when the associate teacher "stepped back to give us the room to experiment with the lesson."

New vision of mathematics learning

Teacher candidates had opportunities to revise their vision about learning mathematics, even what counts as mathematics learning. One teacher candidate opened a discussion with the comment, "Are we really learning math? It is so engrained in my psyche that learning math is doing worksheets. It's hard to let go!" Another described the importance of thinking about "math as a tool for other learning, rather than the object of learning."

Curriculum implementation challenges

Teacher candidates became aware of both the rewards and challenges of putting into practice a mathematics curriculum oriented towards social justice. They recognized tensions that arose because of the pressure of preparing students for standardized testing. They felt this tension, for example, when an associate teacher commented, "These ideas are great and incredible, but sometimes you just need to get through the curriculum, and you need to teach certain things." Some teacher candidates strategized around these tensions by recognizing the limits of "doing something separate just to get my math assignment done." Instead, they tried to make their social justice math assignment relevant to important mathematical concepts that students were working on in class, such as regrouping in subtraction. Other strategies included taking into account students' cultural backgrounds, countries of origin, and the resources produced in each country. One group of teacher candidates placed in primary classrooms engaged children

in "buying and selling, negotiating, finding ways to calculate, and problem-solving with different sets of base-10s, and holding a sharing circle to discuss results" during an activity to simulate world wealth and distribution of resources.

Associate teachers' professional learning

The equity-oriented mathematics lessons sparked the interest of associate teachers in developing alternative pedagogies and incorporating issues of social justice into their teaching. An associate teacher reflected,

> It's an incredibly valuable experience, because you're doing all that reflection upon your own teaching, and you're also watching them teach, and when you're watching somebody else teach you're doing a lot of reflecting, and you're thinking oh, they do that really great—maybe I could. You know you're learning, too…. It's great PD [professional development], it's awesome.

IMPLICATIONS

This study had an impact on the instruction of mathematics on three different levels. First, the study aimed to examine whether the experience of collaboratively planning and delivering lessons with a social justice focus helped teacher candidates overcome their apprehensions around teaching mathematics. Second, in alignment with the focus of the Inner City cohort, the study aimed to make mathematics accessible and engaging for students typically marginalized by the educational system. Finally, the study sought to assess the impact of the role of associate teachers in the implementation of the lessons and their perceptions of integrating social justice into regular classroom instruction. This research project raises questions about the role of a

university's initial teacher education assignment in creating a professional learning model based on shared inquiry. As well, the research raises the question of how to create opportunities for associate teachers and teacher candidates to participate further in inquiry around mathematics teaching with a social justice focus.

Another question concerns the fact that there was little discussion of student learning, which points to the need for more explicit teaching of the skills required to collect evidence of student learning. The teacher candidates planned lessons that were exciting for students, but whether students gained a deeper understanding of the mathematics content remains untested.

NEXT STEPS

This project has added to the complex task of preparing teacher candidates to teach in inner-city schools. This research has prompted the development of professional learning communities that will continue to provide opportunities for teacher candidates and associate teachers to collaborate on inquiry projects that build teacher content knowledge in mathematics. As well, the project has contributed lesson plans to an online database that can be accessed through OISE's Centre

for Urban Schooling (CUS) website: **http://cus.oise. utoronto.ca/Resources/NEW_Teacher_Resources. html**. The project has also initiated the opportunity for teacher candidates to present their social justice mathematics lessons annually at OISE's Educating for Peace and Social Justice Conference and the Educational Activism Conference. Fundamentally, an ongoing result of the project will be increased access to mathematics for students typically underserved by the educational system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Supporting Diversity Through Afrocentric Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This research project explores the ways in which four elementary teachers within the Toronto District School Board employ an Afrocentric approach in their teaching. Building on previous research that explored representations of Africa and the diaspora, this project investigated teachers' beliefs and practices in Afrocentric teaching. Analysis of interviews with the participating teachers revealed the use of teaching practices that are linked to *Nguzo Saba*, the seven principles of Afrocentric teaching developed by Dr. Karenga in 1965. The project highlighted how the teachers applied these principles, in particular the resources and approaches they used to promote inclusion, community building, and a student-centred curriculum. It also revealed the challenges of using an Afrocentric approach, specifically the lack of relevant resources for the grade level.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Africa, the second largest continent in the world in both physical size and population, has been largely undertaught and grossly misrepresented in textbooks and classrooms in the West, as well as in media and popular culture. Afrocentric teaching promotes inclusion for all learners; it is value centred and focuses on the community of learners. This community could include people with different backgrounds, such as class, ethnicity, ability, and race. As researchers, we were interested in understanding how an Afrocentric approach might deepen teachers' understandings of inclusion in their local curriculum practices. According to Asante (1998), "The [Afro]centrist paradigm is supported by research showing that the most productive method of teaching any student is to place his or her group within the center of the context of knowledge" (p. 171). Asante further explains, "A person educated in a truly centric fashion comes to view all groups' contributions as significant and useful" (p. 171).

Shujaa (1994) emphasizes Asante's point by stating,

> [Becoming] African-centered in one's thinking necessarily involves a critical analysis of the social order and historical understanding of one's position in it…. We come to understand reality objectively through our interaction with the external environment, which includes other people engaged in their own interactions and reality-forming processes. We subjectively organize these experiences in our minds and draw upon them to make sense of subsequent interactions and to identify ourselves in relationship to others (p. 266).

In other words, Afrocentricity helps people understand themselves and others, and in the case of people of African ancestry, they recognize that they lost their cultural identity.

In 1965 Dr. Karenga, an internationally recognized activist and scholar in Africana studies, conceptualized the seven principles, or *Nguzo Saba*, of Afrocentric teaching. According to Karenga (2010), the seven principles "serve as an essential centering and a necessary foundation and framework for grounding and guiding our relationships and community, and honoring the ancient African imperative to constantly bring good in the world and share it in joy and justice" (p. A7). The Nguzo Saba principles are not exclusively related to the people of African ancestry. However, Dr. Karenga's articulation of these principles has become a cornerstone for some schools that use an Afrocentric approach to teaching. The Nguzo Saba were considered guiding principles for people's lives, including their formal education (Karenga, 2008). These principles are *Umojaa* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work or responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith).

One purpose of this project was to show how Afrocentric approaches to teaching can be and are being applied. The goals were to research the views of elementary teachers on Afrocentric curriculum and pedagogy in their classrooms, and to examine how teachers' views of curriculum and an Afrocentric paradigm inform their teaching, student learning, and their overall practice.

"The research participants indicated that they made a conscious effort to place students' experiences at the centre of their teaching. This reinforces the importance of teachers knowing the background of their students and being able to connect curriculum in meaningful and multiple ways."

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

The study took place in a school in the Greater Toronto Area where inclusion and Afrocentric teachings and learning were evident. The staff and administration were eager to be involved and supported this project. The key participants were four female elementary teachers in the primary division. All participants had prior experience in using equity and social justice pedagogical approaches in their teaching practice, and they showed their enthusiasm and determination to be part of an Afrocentric school. One teacher said she had volunteered for a year before she was offered a permanent position. Another said poignantly, "I needed to be involved in this school, whether it be teaching, or assisting, volunteering, or doing some research."

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Qualitative research was used to gain insight into daily practices of elementary teachers who use Afrocentric curriculum design and teaching. Qualitative research recognizes that the numerous constructions and interpretations of reality change over time (Berg, 2004; Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) further explains qualitative research as based on the notion that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world.

The research consisted of one semi-structured interview with each of the four participating teachers. Guided by the interview questions, the teachers discussed their teaching approaches, and the resources available to them. In an attempt to gain understanding of their knowledge base and skill acquisition, we also asked participants to explain how they acquired their Afrocentric knowledge and methods of teaching. Four key themes were identified.

Students' voices and experiences

Teaching practices that centre on the voice and experiences of students were key findings of this study. The research participants indicated that they made a conscious effort to place students' experiences at the centre of their teaching. This reinforces the importance of teachers knowing the background of their students and being able to connect curriculum in meaningful and multiple ways. In addition, all participants indicated that there was a need to provide students with a range of texts, which would enable students to achieve and perform well. One teacher said, "It is important that others get to know the downside of meritocracy … and the importance of including real stories of students not [only] celebratory events or occasion months." She also explained that the students should have the ability to "achieve academic success and be engaged learners through a connection with the materials and resources that reflect them."

Nguzo Saba and teaching practice

Although the school's organizing principles do not include Nguzo Saba, the participating teachers made these principles part of their everyday practice. For example, one teacher asked her students at the beginning of each week to write down their *Nia*, or goals, for the week. The teacher also asked the students to articulate their *Nia* in such a way that it included at least one or two of the seven principles, such as creativity or self-determination.

The teachers used these principles to organize their teaching, and they introduced them in ways that felt organic, rather than as mandatory information that had to be memorized. For example, they would start their morning class by explaining one of the principles, such as unity or self-determination. Then, to ensure consistency and practical applications, teachers created lessons and tasks in a subject area, for example, language, to reflect the meaning and application of the principle to students' lives. Teachers were quick to emphasize that although the majority of the students they teach are of African ancestry, the curriculum was applicable to all students.

Afrocentric teaching and student-centred learning

The intricacies of Afrocentric teaching in relation to lessons and teaching practices are derived from students' interests. By following students' desire for learning through discovery, teachers create opportunities for self-expression and creativity. As one teacher said,

> Afrocentric teaching encourages me to be creative. It allows me to develop purposeful lessons. For example, if [I] was teaching patterning, I would use Kente, or … pattern of braiding (in and out). I try to use things that are relevant to them, and that is what I think Afrocentricity is about.... I use performance poetry, engaging each student… in conversations about the impact of racism, discrimination, stereotype, asking each to look for evidence or lack thereof of diversity in learning resources … I want them involved … I make it student centred.

Another teacher explained,

> I find what helps them is teaching to each child's interest or talent. I use a lot of rhythm, repetition, and rap. I make poems, songs. I know the children respond to music, they are kinesthetic. They are good with keeping rhythms, beats, so I integrate those in my teaching.

According to another teacher,

> Our children are strong orally. I do a lot of story telling, and also give students the opportunity to speak about how they're feeling, and then express those in a written form. Also allowing them to express themselves in movement ... drama or dance.

To bring an Afrocentric approach to teaching, teachers must provide students with opportunities to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African worldview (Asante, 1998, p.171). The teachers were committed to exposing students to a range of perspectives, and this was evident, for example, in classrooms posters. One teacher described how she brought many voices and perspectives to her teaching, "I can teach in so many ways. I can draw on so many cultures. I can do that without feeling like I am stepping on anyone's toes."

Other teachers expressed the importance of bringing a critical lens to the curriculum.

> We've been doing this before, we've been using an Afrocentric framework.... So, discussing race critically, discussing varying levels of ability critically, gender, all areas of equity and social justice, exploring it with a critical lens. Now we can explore and not be questioned about how much time we are devoting to it.

> At the Afrocentric school, I am not the only one who has that goal (equity) in mind. We all have the interest of doing things Afrocentrically, with an equitable focus.

"The intricacies of Afrocentric teaching in relation to lessons and teaching practices are derived from students' interests. By following students' desire for learning through discovery, teachers create opportunities for self-expression and creativity."

IMPACT

Many educators use holistic education as a cornerstone for inclusive schooling and an approach that centres on the academic and social well-being of students. Participants in this study emphasized the importance of a holistic approach based on principles similar to the Nguzo Saba. The teachers adopted each of the Nguzo Saba theoretically and practically. This was evident in the way students greeted us and offered to help us when we visited the school. Students expressed self-determination or creativity when talking to their friends or their teachers, and especially when they were preparing to celebrate the school's one-year anniversary. The posters on the walls of the community centre where the celebration was held and the songs and poetry they shared encompassed different aspects of the Nguzo Saba.

The participating teachers expressed how the Nguzo Saba had an impact on their students' social, emotional, and academic development.

> One of the strongest elements is the Nguzo Saba (seven principles) on so many levels. It allows me to connect their social behaviour and academic progress. I try to give them the purpose of schooling; purpose … which is

Nia, and learning things that are relevant to them. I also emphasize the importance of *Umoja* (unity). I can teach Nguzo Saba using themes…. The Nguzo Saba helps me … explain concepts in ways that are developmentally appropriate and relevant to all aspects of students' well being.

> Every morning, we have assembly, we sing the two anthems, we have monthly affirmations, with quotes from famous people from African descent. When we talk about the Nguzo Saba, we centre everything around that, how they can relate to each subject. For instance, for maths or literacy I use cooperative economics (*Ujamaa*). We also engage our students in cooperative learning. Another part of our day is our *Nia* (purpose) circle, we come together in the morning, we share our feelings, our purpose for the day.

> We want the children to have a sense of value, work ethic. We have a unifying statement for the entire school. We have the *Nia* (purpose) school; we have *Harambee* (a Swahili word that means "let us pull together"). I believe those are strong elements to foster students' overall sense of pride in themselves.

The teachers explained different ways that the Nguzo Saba served as a foundation for collaborative efforts that can be applied in the best interest of all students. For example, teachers employing the principle of *Umoja* emphasize the importance of oneness of life, kinship, interrelatedness, and interdependence. This helps students see the importance of family and community, and also the roles that every member of the family or community plays to create unity and cohesiveness among members. A second example is how teachers can create situations or assignments for understanding *Ujima*

(collective responsibility). A teacher had students ask their parents or elders in the community about their creation stories, and this became a collective exercise, not only for the students but also for other members of their community. A third example is the application of *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics) whereby students learn the ethics of shared work, wealth, and need for equitable distribution of resources. They also learn the importance of having policies and practices that are just and that respect the needs of all, regardless of race, creed, age, and ability.

CHALLENGES

This project focused on exploring strategies that promote awareness, rupture stereotypes, and build a richer understanding of Afrocentric curriculum and pedagogy. However, Afrocentric research and teaching is difficult, primarily because of the lack of classroom resources. For example, it is difficult to obtain books that represent the African continent holistically—from its ancient civilization to the present-day supply of minerals that are important to the advancement of technology.

Educators who want to teach about Africa or use an Afrocentric curriculum encounter other challenges as well.

1. Retrieving accurate information that is appropriate for elementary classrooms. There are limited sources of materials (electronic, print, audio, visual) that provide positive images about Africa or African people.
2. Finding materials that provide different African viewpoints. Teachers need to inform students with balanced viewpoints, not reinforcing stereotypes of Africa, for example, as a dark, diseased, and war-torn continent with nothing to offer.

3. Applying Afrocentric curriculum in contemporary Canadian classrooms. There is a lack of understanding for how to implement Afrocentric pedagogy.

All participants indicated that if they had more resources that supported an Afrocentric curriculum they could do more to create an inclusive environment.

> There have been challenges with resources and funding. For example, every school in the TDSB is provided with additional funding depending on their LOI (learning opportunity index).… We did not receive the LOI because we have students coming from diverse communities. I had to be inventive … through developing themes and teaching through themes. It required a lot of research, a lot of trips to the library. There is no manual to teach this.

> I believe in high expectations, but when we don't have resources, it makes reaching high expectations very challenging. The board does not have a lot of written work on Afrocentric education. There are Afrocentric lessons, and units; however there is nothing that would be for an Afrocentric school to use for their entire school year.

IMPLICATIONS

Students need to see themselves as subjects rather than objects of education. In doing so they come to see themselves not merely as seekers of knowledge but as integral participants and shapers of knowledge. Teachers in this project emphasized that it is

important not to marginalize African students by making them question their self-worth, particularly because their people's history is seldom told. The Nguzo Saba governed African people's way of life before colonization. For example, *Kujichagulia*

(self-determination) speaks to important cultural norms, values, and ways of knowing, and how each person is obligated to respect them. That principle places emphasis on practising what you preach, including the cohesiveness between theory and practice. *Kuumba* (creativity) teaches children to think and come up with new ideas. That principle requires people to revere life and have respect for all in the world. *Imani* (faith) helps students to have faith in themselves and their creativity.

The participating teachers recognized the importance of creating an inclusive environment, which is crucial for transformative learning. Using the Nguzo Saba as a guide can be a powerful force for teaching practices. Inclusion can be sought at many levels: each student's identity, the curriculum content, the values guiding the curriculum, and also the freedom teachers have to bring a critical lens to their work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Culturally Responsive and Relevant Teaching

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Winston Churchill Collegiate, the Toronto District School Board

Sir Sandford Fleming Academy, the Toronto District School Board

ABSTRACT

The *Culturally Responsive and Relevant Teaching Project (CRRTP)* is a collaboration between the Centre for Urban Schooling and the Secondary Initial Teacher Education program at OISE and Winston Churchill Collegiate and Sir Sandford Fleming Academy secondary schools in the Toronto District School Board. The project emerged in response to the need to better conceptualize culturally responsive and relevant teaching (CRRT) in urban secondary school communities. The specific purpose of the project was to gain a better understanding of urban secondary school teachers' perceptions of the theory and practice of CRRT. The project utilized qualitative methods. Thirty-six teachers participated in hour-long interviews and focus groups in which they were asked to define culture and students' cultural backgrounds, as well as discuss how they mobilize this knowledge base in their teaching. The major findings of the project are that secondary school teachers conceptualize culture and a student's cultural background in ways that reflect the tension of viewing culture as a property of individuals as opposed to being a property of groups. Despite this tension, teachers described different strategies for getting to know their students' cultural backgrounds and applying this knowledge in their teaching. Based on these findings we recommend that teacher education programs provide teachers with more practical frameworks for mobilizing their students' cultural backgrounds. A second recommendation is to develop a professional network of secondary school teachers who are interested in developing their capacities in CRRT.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

The literature documenting theories of, and research on, the application of *culturally responsive and relevant teaching* (CRRT) has been growing steadily over the last three decades. Essentially, the aim is to bridge the incongruity between students' home cultures and school cultures, which frequently leads to the achievement gap experienced by racialized youth. Gloria Ladson-Billings' three-pillar framework of *academic success, cultural competence,* and *critical consciousness* is at the heart of most studies of CRRT (Ladson-Billings, 1995). We are particularly interested in the notion of cultural competence, which refers to how teachers must learn about the home cultures of their students and incorporate this knowledge into

their teaching, with the view to reducing the incongruity between students' home cultures and the culture of the school. Teachers can use different strategies to accomplish this, such as incorporating communication styles that are familiar to students, or helping students connect to the curriculum through their own experiences (Alfred, 2009). Despite the existence of strategies to develop cultural competence, it remains a difficult endeavour because *culture* itself is a multidimensional, complex notion. Moreover, teachers may find it challenging to learn about and respond to every aspect of students' cultural backgrounds. Such complexities were illustrated during the *CRRTP.*

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

The goals of the project were met through two phases of qualitative inquiry. The first phase of data collection occurred during the spring and summer of 2009; semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen teachers who teach different subjects in secondary schools in underserved neighbourhoods in Toronto. The second phase of data collection occurred during late fall 2009 as part of a one-day Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy Institute (CRRPI), co-sponsored by the Centre for Urban Schooling, OISE, and the Equity Department of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The goals of the institute were to provide a forum where teachers working towards equity and social justice in high schools could network and share promising pedagogical practices, and to document the perspectives of Canadian urban teachers on (a) the role culture plays in teaching, (b) strategies they use to get to know students' cultural backgrounds, and (c) pedagogical practices that comprise CRRT in multiple subject areas. Twenty-four teachers attended, representing Greater Toronto Area (GTA) secondary schools in underserved neighbourhoods and also multiple subject areas. These teachers were selected by TDSB equity instructional leaders and

administrators who had observed their work and found them to be "effective instructors," who had "good rapport" with their students. Four of the teachers who participated in the institute had also been interviewed in the first phase of the project.

During the morning session of the CRRPI, teachers participated in focus groups, and in the afternoon small groups of teachers from the same or similar subject area gave short presentations on a lesson plan or teaching strategy they felt exemplified culturally responsive and relevant teaching. Members of the Centre for Urban Schooling facilitated the focus groups and the presentation sessions, and provided participants with the following guidelines to prepare their afternoon presentations:

- describe the goal of the lesson/unit/major task and how it aligns with curriculum expectations;

- outline the teaching strategies you used (including specific assignments, handouts, or activities); and

- discuss what impact the lesson/unit/major task had on student learning and engagement.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The interviews, often conducted during the teacher's lunch hour or after school, lasted 30 to 60 minutes and were audiotaped. The focus groups at the one-day institute lasted approximately 60 minutes and were audiotaped. The presentation sessions lasted 90 minutes and were videotaped. The following questions guided both the interviews and the focus group sessions:

- What role does culture play in teaching?

- When you think of identifying a student's cultural background, what qualities are you seeking?

- What strategies do you use to get to know your students' culture and cultural backgrounds?

- How does information about your students' cultural backgrounds inform your teaching and overall instructional practices?

Graduate research assistants transcribed the 14 semi-structured interviews and the focus group sessions, and they thematically coded the transcripts question-by-question. The presentation sessions were analyzed to determine the lesson plan, strategies, activities, and materials the teachers used to deliver the lesson. The research team met on two occasions in June 2010 to discuss the findings from data analysis.

"Noting that culture and cultural expressions are core parts of student identity, teachers easily saw the value of infusing their curriculum with culturally responsive and relevant content and practices."

PROJECT FINDINGS

Four major themes that emerged in relation to the research questions are described below.

Role of culture in teaching

Several teachers described culture as being at the centre of their teaching practice. One teacher said,

> I think it's everywhere and I think culture definitely goes beyond race, it goes into class, it goes into homophobia, it goes into every facet of our society… every part of teaching has to do with culture, whether it's being critical of it, accepting it, challenging it, or putting it at odds with another culture.

However, they did not share a common definition of culture. For example, one teacher in a focus group said,

> The way I see culture, every school has a school culture, and all our students come in with their own cultures and then you have your classroom culture…. I think that it's really complex and that in different situations there are different cultures at play.

While another teacher in a different focus group said,

> I'd look inward first, look at myself, my own, where I come from and then … not in a very egotistical way, but just in a very humbling way.

These different perceptions of culture highlight the tension between viewing culture as a property of individuals or as a property of ethnic, racial, and religious groups.

Qualities associated with students' cultural background

Teachers affirmed the importance of not making assumptions about a student's cultural background, and for this reason they were skeptical of associating students' backgrounds with particular social groups and identities. Some wondered, for example, if you could read cultural backgrounds through skin colour, accent, or religious apparel. Instead of linking these characteristics to particular groups, they argued

teachers should strive to get to know students as unique individuals. The teachers who took this position seemed concerned with stereotyping a student's cultural background. These teachers also seemed uncomfortable talking about certain sociocultural differences for fear of being perceived as prejudiced. For example, one teacher explained,

> For me the most important part of culturally responsive teaching is not essentializing students. So for example, I teach in a school where the majority of the student population is black …. However, the cultures or the countries of origin for those students are very different and the cultural norms and the expectations and traditions and customs that go along with those various cultures within that one racial group are very different. So I think part of being culturally responsive [is] allowing an open space for students to tell us who they are, and allowing their experiences to come out, allowing them to guide what is going to happen in the classroom … [and] understanding how these things play out [in classroom situations] with students as individuals, because their individuality is what matters to them—the personal.

Strategies to learn about a student's culture and cultural background

Despite having different perceptions of the role of culture in teaching and viewing students' cultural backgrounds as stemming from individual versus group identities, all teachers were able to articulate strategies to get to know their students' cultural backgrounds. These strategies were valuable because they could make a connection between the formal curriculum and their students' lived experiences. One set of strategies involves seeking out particular kinds of student demographic information such as race, ethnicity, class, parents, and home life. For example, one teacher did this through a particular assignment:

> There is an assignment that I usually give them, which is to go home, talk to their parents about their names, and where they research what the name means, where the name is from, why they were given the name, and then they get a chance to come back and address this with the entire class.

Another teacher did this more informally:

> I do it usually just by the set-up of my room and moving around the room, starting to have really, sort of, organic personal discussions with kids around issues.

> Then you start to get some of the stories like, "both my parents died," or … "we're from such and such a place," and then you learn the culture and the history.

These strategies imply that culture comes from home, from outside the school space.

Another set of strategies involves asking students to serve as guides to their own cultural backgrounds and identifications. As one teacher put it, "I don't really have an interest in defining my students' cultures, it has to come from them." Such strategies acknowledge that students may have different ways of describing their cultural background compared to their parents.

Ways students' cultural background informs teaching and instructional practices

Noting that culture and cultural expressions are core parts of student identity, teachers easily saw the value of infusing their curriculum with culturally responsive and relevant content and practices. For example, one teacher described a project she uses in a Canadian history class:

> In a Canadian history classroom, for example, this year I had lots of Chinese students … I made a conscious effort to seek out better sources, rather than just the textbook, about the involvement of Chinese-Canadians at certain points in history that's covered by our units. So, we looked at the Chinese head tax and how that affected the immigrants coming into our country at that time, and we looked at Canadian recruitment policies and whether or not they [Chinese-Canadians] were accepted into the army at certain points in time, and why that recruitment policy differed from time to time…. I assumed that the students that come from that background would be interested about hearing about it, and I think it's a safe assumption because of the questions that they would ask me and follow up to the information … because there was so much involvement, it told me that it was a good practice and to continue doing that in my classrooms when I'm teaching history.

Many teachers spoke with conviction about the importance of knowing and understanding the lived reality of students. One teacher said,

> I also think it would allow them to have conversations outside the classroom that have to do with some of the great things that they're learning inside the class. They'll see the relevance of it in their everyday life and perhaps begin to apply some of the learning skills they gained inside of the classroom outside of the class.

Even though they recognized the benefits associated with culturally responsive and relevant teaching, teachers spoke about personal and institutional challenges associated with implementing this approach. In particular, they realized that culturally responsive and relevant teaching takes more time than lecturing or using textbooks. For example, one teacher explained,

> I think it's so much harder than just teaching from the textbook. It requires a lot more work on my part and a lot more energy to get it done…. In the last few weeks, report cards and like, writing and marking exams, you know all the clubs that we run during the year, or coaching team sports, it's an additional thing to go home and find out how I'm going to get you know that kid, who sat quietly all period, to be engaged in what I think is important for tomorrow. And so it just takes a lot more planning and a lot more research, and I think that's the biggest challenge.

Moreover, because of the time that CRRT takes, at least one teacher said that her colleagues do not think it is worth the effort, particularly given the pressure to meet the expectations in the provincial curriculum standards.

> I don't feel it as a stress, but I know that when it's brought up at staff meetings, I've heard from other teachers, "Oh,

I don't have time to do that, it takes away from my curriculum, I need to cover all these expectations," and I think that in Ontario we're really crunched for time in terms of covering all our expectations; so you really hear this murmur in the background, like, "I don't have time for this, and that's why there is Back History Month, or Asian History Month"; like you really get that sentiment around the school, and that's, that's upsetting.

An institutional barrier connected to the amount of time CRRT takes is the lack of curricular resources at the school. Several teachers reported that their schools often lack the materials they need for CRRT and, as a result, they spend extra time outside school seeking newspaper clippings, books, posters, music, and other materials that better relate to students.

Overall, the findings show there is a need to provide teachers with practical frameworks for understanding culture and students' cultural backgrounds that take into account both the individual and group aspect of culture. Despite the fact they often lack curricular resources at their schools to support CRRT, and the fact that CRRT takes more time than traditional pedagogical approaches, almost all of the teachers saw the value of this approach.

"Overall, the findings show there is a need to provide teachers with practical frameworks for understanding culture and students' cultural backgrounds that take into account both the individual and group aspect of culture. Despite the fact they often lack curricular resources at their schools to support CRRT, and the fact that CRRT takes more time than traditional pedagogical approaches, almost all of the teachers saw the value of this approach."

IMPACT

The findings from *CRRTP* suggest there is a need to establish professional networks of teachers who want to develop their capacity in the area of CRRT. The evaluations of the Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy Institute described earlier lend support to this idea. In response to the question, "What is most valuable about this institute?" teachers responded that they liked the fact that their experiences as teachers were "valued and encouraged." They also liked "seeing

colleagues who also care about this stuff" and "being able to talk and share with colleagues." Particularly at the secondary level, where school departments, pathways, and streams define school cultures, it is difficult to identify and connect groups of teachers, particularly across subject areas and school sites. While the evaluations for CRRPI suggest it was a step in the right direction, much more is needed.

NEXT STEPS

The Centre for Urban Schooling has established a professional network focused on CRRT for teachers in the elementary panel. We suggest it is time to establish a professional network for teachers in the secondary panel. At the time of this writing the research team is working with the Centre for Urban Schooling to launch in the fall of 2011 a network of secondary school teachers who are interested in CRRT.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lance T. McCready is an assistant professor of urban education at OISE. His research and writing focuses on curricular and pedagogical issues in urban education, specifically the "troubles" facing Black male students in urban schools and the experiences of queer youth of colour.

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Dominique Rivière is a research officer at the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE. Her research interests include critical multicultural education, educational policy reform, culturally relevant pedagogy, arts education, and school–community relationships.

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Supporting Struggling Learners: Collaborative Problem Solving in Mathematics

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PROJECT PARTNERS

Six associate teachers who teach Grades 2, 3, 5, and 7 in four schools in the Greater Toronto Area

ABSTRACT

This project involved six associate teachers connected with the teacher education program of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Over the course of 10 months, they investigated collaborative problem-solving strategies to support struggling learners of mathematics in their classrooms. Data were gathered during seven documented meetings of the participants, and through student work samples, student reflections, and teacher reflections. The project findings demonstrate that grouping methods have an impact on students' self-concept and performance during mathematics problem-solving processes. Also, cooperative groups, in which the educator provides specific structure as to how the students are to participate, improve student collaboration and engagement.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

All students can engage in problem solving and meaningful mathematical discussions (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], 2000). However, all too frequently, students who struggle in mathematics are discouraged from engaging in problem-solving activities because many believe that these students cannot do mathematics that require greater levels of critical thinking or communication (Allsopp, Kyger, & Lovin, 2007). As educators and researchers we know that by engaging students in sharing their thinking in cooperative groups in mathematics, students can deepen their understanding and improve their achievement (Fosnot & Dolk, 2006; Marks Krpan, 2001). However, struggling learners in mathematics often remain passive in small groups, which can prevent them from developing a deep understanding of the concepts they are learning (Baxter & Olson, 2000). Within cooperative groupings, ability or status differences can impede interactions and limit discussions (Battistisch, 1993). There is now a greater awareness that mathematics instruction for struggling learners should involve more than the direct teaching of

basic skills, and that these learners can in fact develop a deep understanding of mathematics. This kind of learning is optimized when struggling learners are provided with different levels of teacher support (Mercer, Lane, Jordan, Allsopp, & Eisele, 1996).

The six educators who participated in this project teach in Grades 2, 3, 5, and 7 in four schools associated with the Regional cohort, a cohort of 60 teacher candidates that is part of the OISE teacher education program. The participants are associate teachers who mentor teacher candidates during practicum placements. They embarked on an action research study to explore how they could support struggling learners through cooperative problem solving in mathematics. Teacher candidates who had completed their practica within these teachers' classrooms also participated in this project. A total of 105 students were involved. The focus of the project was to identify strategies that educators found successful in assisting students with special needs in cooperative problem solving. The following areas of inquiry guided the research group's discussion and sharing:

- How can educators structure cooperative learning in mathematics to be more inclusive of struggling learners in mathematics?

- How can educators create meaningful opportunities for learners to communicate their thinking?

- How do students feel about learning collaboratively in mathematics?

- Can the strategies implemented for struggling learners assist all learners in mathematics?

"As educators implemented a variety of problem-solving activities using different grouping formats they noted that when they explicitly discussed with their students how the cooperative groups were to collaborate and work together beforehand, the struggling learners were able to participate meaningfully in the mathematical activities."

STAGES OF THE PROJECT

Examining our own practice

The group of associate teachers met eight times during the study. Each meeting was two hours in length and took place during the school day. During the meetings, the educators discussed the challenges and successes they experienced teaching learners who struggled in mathematics. The educators also shared articles and analyzed student work samples. Occasionally, the researcher would provide resources and make suggestions to support the teachers' investigations. The first two meetings focused on how the educators taught mathematics in their classrooms and what they observed of struggling learners in mathematics. The degree to which each educator implemented collaborative problem solving varied. Most participants noted that they had implemented a form of group work or collaborative problem solving occasionally, but they did not teach specific cooperative learning skills as an integral part of their mathematics program. All the teachers noted that their struggling learners were reluctant to participate in group activities and relied heavily on teacher support. The struggling learners also relied heavily on their group members to solve the math problem, instead of offering ideas and solutions.

Considering alternative approaches

As the meetings progressed, the educators began to explore different grouping strategies based on ability (pairs vs. groups of four or five, heterogeneous vs. homogenous groupings), and they examined the impact these strategies had on the social interactions and academic achievement of their learners. The educators compared and discussed student work samples they had collected and the observations they had made before and after implementing each strategy. Throughout the project, the educators continued to learn from each other and implemented ideas shared by their colleagues.

Changing our role in the classroom

The researcher created a student survey on group work to gain insight into how students perceived group work in mathematics; the survey was conducted in each classroom midway through the study. Articles, book chapters, and videos of Fosnot's (2006) math congress approach were shared by the researcher for the group to discuss. The educators subsequently explored in their primary and junior classrooms several of the teaching strategies from these resources, for example, questioning techniques and grouping approaches. They invited students to share with the whole class their own problem-solving strategies, and they implemented questioning techniques that focus on students'

thinking processes, rather than only finding the right answer. The educators also considered how the educators in the video promoted student-to-student discourse.

As the research project progressed, several educators noted that to support their struggling learners it was important to infuse the teaching of cooperative strategies in their classroom practice, such as providing roles for group members and debriefing cooperative learning lessons (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001). They felt that these strategies would enable students to have more ownership of their learning and a greater role in the group process.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANAYLSIS

Five methods of data collection were used during this research project: audiotaped discussions of the action research meetings, written teacher reflections, student work samples, researcher's notes, and student surveys. For each two-hour meeting, the researcher prepared questions to guide the educators' discussion. Information gathered from all five data collection methods was triangulated and analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the research.

The survey responses were coded based on specific indicators in the students' responses. If students explicitly indicated in their answers that they did not like math or were not good in mathematics, their attitude towards mathematics or their ability was coded as negative. Even though students were not explicitly identified in the survey as struggling learners, it should be noted that struggling learners in mathematics often feel they cannot do math, and they dislike the subject (Allsopp, Kyger, & Lovin, 2007). If students explicitly indicated that they like mathematics or thought they were good in math, their attitude was considered positive. Those who gave no indication either way were considered neutral. Three months after the initial coding, the responses were recoded. The code-recode was 98 percent accurate, which exceeds the 80 percent level deemed acceptable by Miles and Hubbard (1984).

Impact of group size

Moving towards a more collaborative approach to problem solving was challenging for some of the educators. They were concerned that their struggling learners would get lost in the problem-solving process

because so many students would be trying to work together. In some contexts, the teachers were not sure how to set up the cooperative groups to enable all students to experience success. As educators implemented a variety of problem-solving activities using different grouping formats, they noted that when they explained to their students beforehand how the cooperative groups were to collaborate and work together, the struggling learners were able to participate meaningfully in the mathematical activities.

The project results suggest that grouping methods can have an impact on the achievement of struggling learners in mathematics. The group observed that these learners seemed to work better in pairs than in groups of four. The educators wondered if their struggling learners were actually grasping the concepts, or just following along with group consensus. They commented that in groups of four, these learners were more reserved and less willing to participate. In some cases, the teachers surmised that while in pairs students had more opportunities to share their thinking. In several sets of work samples, the contributions of struggling learners were far more numerous when the students worked in pairs instead of groups of four. As one teacher explained, "They seem to prefer to work in partners as it is less hectic and they can focus more on the task at hand. There are a lot of social pieces in play with the larger groupings." In smaller groupings, the students also contributed more to the problem-solving process and the mathematical discourse, which allowed the teachers to assess their students' thinking more readily.

Working in pairs seemed to benefit all learners, not just those who stuggled with mathematics. Students were able to negiotiate their ideas in a more equitable context. The teachers also felt that they could modify some of the problems more readily to suit their students' needs. Struggling learners made more progress in heterogeneous pairings based on ability. In several contexts, the struggling learners were able to share different approaches: for example, by using visuals that enabled their partners to learn about a concept in a different way.

Structuring larger groups

Even though pair groupings seemed to help struggling learners in mathematics, the educators felt that groups of four provided more opportunities for these learners to see how other learners organized their information and communicated their ideas. However, teachers recognized that they needed to ensure all members had an opportunity to participate. One educator pointed out, "When collaborating in mathematics, students must demonstrate and justify their thinking using concrete materials, images, and specfic mathematical vocabulary. It is more complex than in other subject areas."

For several educators, assigning each group member a role had a significant impact on the engagement of the struggling learners. Some of the roles included presenting the group's solutions, resolving the group's conflicts, recording ideas, and ensuring everyone understood the concepts they were learning. One educator observed that teaching about such roles completely changed the dynamics of how her students interacted and greatly improved the problem-solving skills of all her students.

One educator used a math chart (Marks Krpan, 2009) to help improve group dynamics (see Figure 1). She felt that by inviting her students to discuss the cooperative skills and fill out the chart, group interactions improved and all students became more aware of the expectations of collaborative group work in mathematics.

Figure 1. Collaboration in Mathematics Chart

Skill	Looks Like	Sounds Like	Feels Like
Listening to Others	-eyes on speaker -Serious -mouth are shut	-one person talking -quiet	-respect the speaker -being careful about you reactions
Sharing my Thinking	-use expression when speaking -eye contact	-Cretive - pacing yourself -clear	-included -important
Disagreeing in a Positive Way	-no negative facial expressions - talking to each other - sharing ideas	-calm conversation -one person talking at a time	-understood by the other person
Including Everyone in the Process	-everybody has a job or is "doing" -every body has a turn to talk -Participation	-each group member expresses opinion w/o being interrupted	-everyone feels important and included
Posing Good Questions during Presentations	-peers look curious -making eye contact with presenter -raising hand -waiting your turn	-not asking questions that you already know the answer to -one person talking at a time	-could feel impatient cause you want to ask your questions of present -at times you feel interested and other times you feel bored

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Teacher-directed versus student-directed learning

Moving from teacher-directed sharing and instruction to a more student-directed sharing and discussion improved the engagement of all learners. At times the struggling learners were hesitant to participate and share, often waiting for someone to give them the correct answer. Improving the engagement of struggling learners in the sharing process required lots of prompting and support. In some cases, to support these learners through this process, educators needed to explicitly teach concepts and problem-solving skills.

By restructuring the focus of group sharing to problem-solving strategies, the struggling learners were able to participate more meaningfully in mathematics. The project participants noted the importance of improving their own faciltation and questioning skills so they could encourage more mathematical discourse among their students. The educators also noted that they were able to gain more insight into their students' thinking through a student-centred approach, and thus could provide more effective feedback and support for their struggling learners.

Student voices: One example

The student survey provided further data on how students felt about working in groups in mathematics (see Table 1). In this section, the focus is on survey data gathered from the Grade 7 students. At the time of this survey, the educators had not explicitly taught or implemented all of the cooperative learning strategies discussed in this paper.

Most of the students surveyed preferred to work in either groups or pairs in mathematics classes. Many explained that they enjoyed collaborating with their peers and liked the opportunity to ask questions if they did not understand a concept. One student wrote, "When I work in groups I feel good because you are working with people around you and can learn the different ways to do things."

Over 86 percent of the students who had a negative attitude towards mathematics felt very positive towards working in pairs or in groups of four. They stressed the importance of having support and not having to complete the work on their own. However, only 35 percent of the students who had a positive attitude towards mathematics or their ability preferred group work; 71 percent expressed a positive attitude towards working in pairs. They explained that sometimes it was frustrating to work in a group of four. According to one student, "When I work in a group I feel that my voice is not heard because one person takes over and does everything." This finding supports what the educators observed in their classooms. The students stressed that in pairs they could talk about the mathematics and complete things more quickly. The project participants felt this information was helpful for understanding the group dynamics in their classrooms, and they emphasized the importance of balancing different kinds of groupings and explicitly teaching collaborative learning skills as an integral part of mathematics instruction.

Table 1. Grade 7 Students' Group Preferences in Mathematics

Student Attitude	Partners			Groups of Four		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Negative (n=15)	14	1	0	13	2	1
Positive (n=14)	10	3	1	5	6	3
Neutral (n=6)	5	1	0	5	1	0
Total (n=35)	29	5	1	23	9	4

IMPACT OF THIS STUDY

The findings of this study have contributed to ongoing research in the area of struggling learners in mathematics (Baxter & Olson, 2000; Allsopp, Kyger, & Lovin, 2007; Battistisch, 1993). The research provides insight from the perspective of educators and students in authentic classroom contexts. By identifying specific teaching approaches that can support struggling learners in collaborative problem solving, this study can assist educators in creating an inviting context for all learners as they investigate mathematical ideas and concepts.

This study changed the way the participants taught problem solving in mathematics. One teacher wrote,

"Participating in this project has completely changed the way I program not only for my struggling learners but for all of my students. The strategies I now use for cooperative problem solving have greatly improved the performance of my struggling learners and has benefited all my students. I am better able to assess my students' progress and provide opportunities for meaningful interactions." The educators in this study recognized that providing support for struggling learners in mathematics is a complex process that will require continued exploration and research in their own practice.

"Participating in this project has completely changed the way I program not only for my struggling learners but for all of my students. The strategies I now use for cooperative problem solving have greatly improved the performance of my struggling learners and has benefited all my students. I am better able to assess my students' progress and provide opportunities for meaningful interactions."

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

The focus of teacher education at OISE and of the Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat in the province of Ontario is to support the diversity of learners in our schools. The research findings from this study will be used to further inform and enlighten teacher candidates and graduate students of the needs of struggling learners in mathematics. The findings also include practical ideas, such as grouping and teaching strategies for cooperative learning, that educators can implement to benefit all learners in their mathematics program.

In addtion to changing teacher practice, this project supports OISE's ongoing partnership with its partner schools. The associate teachers involved in this study commented on how much they valued sharing ideas with other associate teachers in other schools. They felt that what they learned from this experience would inform not only their practice but also enable them to better assist their teacher candidates and their school colleagues. The study was grounded in their own professional learning and teaching experiences; thus, the findings are authentic and student centred.

NEXT STEPS

The participants in this study expressed the need for more opportunities to conduct collaborative research in their classrooms. They commented that their lives as educators are very busy and to have release time for meetings such as those in this project was critical for their learning (McNiff, 2001; Mills, 2008). They noted

that the rich sharing of ideas and support that they experienced through participating in this project enabled them to take risks in their own teaching. The action research approach allowed them to explore their own practice through the eyes of other educators.

As educators and researchers, we need to continue to explore ways to support stuggling learners in mathematics classrooms. How can we continue to structure learning experiences in mathematics to ensure that all students experience success? How can teachers influence students' perceptions of their abilities and attitudes towards mathematics? Further research that examines student attitudes and perceptions towards mathematics and their own abilities could provide us with key insights that would enable educators to empower their students to become confident learners of mathematics.

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Putting Inner City Students First: A School-University Partnership

Kathleen Gallagher and Dominique Rivière

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Five model schools and two cluster schools[1] in the Toronto District School Board

ABSTRACT

Putting Inner City Students First (PICSF) is a research project connected to the Toronto District School Board's Model Schools for Inner Cities program. Using multiple methods (e.g., interviews, digital photos and videos, observations, and document analysis), *PICSF* produced six case studies that examine the following features of the model schools: (a) schooling, student engagement, and academic achievement; (b) schooling and social equity; and (c) schooling and community connections. Significant findings include illustrations of the central role of teachers' biographies and their conceptions of community in their pedagogical imagination; the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and the role of language and culture in students' self-conceptions as learners; the necessity for school principals to find ways to combat deficit thinking about parents in urban communities; and the need for funding mechanisms such as the Model Schools initiative to provide crucial resources for sustaining and developing programs to enhance the physical, social, and emotional health and culture of schools.

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[1]Cluster schools are in the family of schools known as model schools. They share geographic parameters.

PROJECT CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Research from Australia, United States, UK, and Europe demonstrates that inner-city schools and students face significant socioeconomic, political, and cultural barriers to academic success. In Canada, however, while there has been a significant history of critical school-based research, there are still relatively few studies that specifically address the changing face of urban education in Canadian contexts. Global events and immigration patterns in the last decade have dramatically changed the cultural and political landscape of Canada and of the world at large. Thus, new studies that consider the impact of these changes on public institutions, particularly schools, are greatly needed. Our project, *Putting Inner City Students First (PICSF)*, is one such study.

At the local level, *PICSF* is connected to the Toronto District School Board's Model Schools for Inner Cities program. The purpose of this important initiative, which has designated seven model schools in each of the most economically marginalized and underserviced communities in Toronto, is to provide students in these schools with the supports necessary for academic and social success. A key feature of the model schools is that they serve as hubs of learning for students, parents, community members, student teachers, and university faculty, and researchers.

PICSF has produced six case studies—each situated in the model schools or their cluster schools—that document aspects of change at the pedagogical, administrative, and institutional levels. In addition to their overall conceptual similarities, the case studies are grouped thematically under the three categories: (a) schooling, student engagement, and academic achievement; (b) schooling and social equity; and (c) schooling and community connections. The following discussion represents a brief snapshot of the context, questions, methods, findings, and implications of each case study.[2]

Theme One: Schooling, Student Engagement, and Academic Achievement

Case Study 1: The Learner, the Teacher, and the
    Space In-Between, 2008–10

Researcher: Kathleen Gallagher

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This case study is based on conversations over two years with a Grade 8 teacher, Denise Langley, who works in a school and community in "challenging circumstances." Her choices, descriptions, and insights reveal how she sets her pedagogical goals, engages with the lives and families of her students, and navigates her professional relationships.

Many of the students who attend her school are economically disadvantaged, and the neighbourhood in which they live faces many challenges associated with poverty, unemployment, racism, drugs, and crime. Denise recalled the importance of social context in her own past learning experiences:

> I had the most negative, horrible experience being a student. And I think—well, I don't think, I know—that that's what pushed me into becoming a teacher because I thought, oh hell, there's got to be a better way to do this thing.

Denise uses the personal, biographical details of her life to understand herself as a teacher and to make sense of her sometimes precarious, always intense and often playful relationship with her Grade 8 students.

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[2]Please note that all names and other identifying details have been changed to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretically, this study shares the view that students, inside schools and out, live in an "eco-system" (Sokal 2003) and that teachers need to understand the system if they are interested in building relationships that promote learning and achievement. This sociocultural framework is not new, and neither is there agreement on the best way for teachers to understand, work within, and sometimes challenge the larger eco-system of which they are a part.

A large amount of educational scholarship has focused on the idea of community in classrooms and schools and on the notion of a teacher as a community builder. Less well documented are issues of how teachers come to understand what is meant by community, how their own biographies shape those understandings, and how hegemonic ideas about community often limit the potential of students.

In fact, it is often easier to notice when community is present or absent in a classroom than it is to define the term *community*. Gereluk (2006) points out that the word community, coming from the Latin root *communis*, means being "linked together by obligation" (p. 7). Just as a neighbourhood community is linked together by geography, situation, or circumstance, so too is the classroom community of students. Whether the students or teacher like it or not, a community will develop and evolve. The question thus becomes, what kind of a community will develop? And that question, theoretically and practically, sits at the centre of this case study. Early on, the observations and interviews that provide the empirical data for this case study pointed to a strong notion of community as central to the pedagogical contract. Therefore, as we continued to spend time in our site, our theoretical interests became articulated as follows: What does a "conscious community" look like? How does a "supportive community" feel? How is a "healthy community" developed? How does a teacher understand and perform her central role in this work?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Questions

- What role do issues of diaspora and immigration and settlement play in school and student success or underperformance?

- What relationship does "inclusion" have with "achievement"?

- Do certain pedagogical practices better recognize the interplay between identity, social activity, and achievement?

- How do student-driven pedagogies of drama impact on students' classroom relations and achievement outcomes?

Methods

Five one-hour interviews with Denise Langley and seven two-hour participant observations in her Grade 8 classroom were scheduled between 2008 and 2010. One classroom discussion (one hour in length) with 26 students was also audio-recorded and transcribed.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed using Express Scribe software. From here, a coding manual was developed from the emerging themes and categories in the transcripts. We wrote narrative accounts of the prevalent themes that emerged from the data. Our aim was to have the professional life of one teacher in one setting hold meaning for others beyond the unique specificity of her teaching world.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

From the interview data and classroom observations, five major themes and six major spatial categories (spaces where these themes were most manifest) emerged from the data. The five major themes are (a) understandings of school and community context, (b) relationships and the metaphor of family, (c) teacher navigating personal and professional identities, (d) pedagogy and the role of affect, and (e) students' conceptions of curriculum and classroom space. The six spatial categories are (a) community connections, (b) school environment, (c) classroom environment, (d) classroom instruction, (e) classroom content, and (f) pedagogical insight. We developed a matrix to show the correspondence between the themes and the spaces. Following are brief descriptions of two themes, in two specific school spaces, and an empirical example for each.

Theme A: Relationships and the metaphor of family

The hierarchy of power is played out in various ways within Denise's school and classroom. This theme looks at how one teacher incorporates the different elements of "family" as a metaphor in shaping how she interacts with parents and local residents, the development of school-wide programs, and her own pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Spatial category: Classroom environment

Denise uses the metaphor of family to help students understand the culture and context of their classroom. Having to work each day with people who do not always share our perspective presents obvious challenges. However, Denise explains to the students that they are to accept these conflicts and work through them together, as it is their responsibility to do so as a family.

> We're here in this building in this classroom eight hours a day, five days a week. I see you people more than I see my own family." I said, "So we're a family. You know, we're a pseudo family; these are your brothers and sisters. You know, this is what it is. Like, you're here. You didn't choose me, just like I didn't choose my parents or my brothers and sisters. We're just here and we gotta deal with what we got.

Theme B: Teacher navigating personal and professional identities

This theme explores the levers Denise has that allow her personal identity to influence or emerge through her professional one. In other words, how does she incorporate key elements from her own identity and history into her daily practices as an educator?

Spatial category: Classroom instruction

Denise reflects upon her own experiences as a teacher and student to inform her pedagogical approach during lessons. She draws on her own challenges with

learning to better understand the struggles of some of her students and to shape her practice in a way that best supports their growth and progress. In the following quote, she describes how she uses drama activities and strategies to help students explore their own ideas by openly confronting some of the learning barriers her students face:

> And I guess, 'cause I've got a learning disability as well, and I share that openly with the kids, and I let them know—"This is what I'm good at. This is what I really struggle with." And so I can share with them, "You know what?" I always tell them, "When I was your age I used to write stuff down too because of the same reason. But everyone has a good idea. Everybody has good ideas. And I always start with ideas first. And with drama I can get all your ideas." And the kid doesn't have to feel put on the spot.

IMPLICATIONS

In many ways, Denise Langley is the best kind of teacher for the district-wide Model Schools for Inner Cities initiative. This initiative was conceived by imagining the school-as-hub, and she clearly sees her community as extending beyond the walls of the school. To be a hub, the classroom walls need to be permeable; they need to allow the lives, challenges, and interests of students to influence the pedagogical contract and sometimes to disrupt the formal curriculum. According to Denise, the students need to feel that they can love and fight like a family.

Denise Langley was conscious not only of her role as a classroom teacher but also of her important function as a kind of community support worker, parental liaison, and student advocate in their larger worlds. Although not chosen, her group represented a kind of family, an extended family, and one in which people were accountable to one another in both good and difficult times.

Case Study 2: Engaging Literacies—Identity Texts as Catalyst and Medium for Academic Performance, January 2009 to 2011

Researchers: Jim Cummins and Saskia Stille

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This case study was designed to explore innovative ways of enabling students to engage with literacy by mobilizing their home language resources and prior knowledge, and by using digital technology tools such as PowerPoint, iMovie, and digital story telling software to publish and disseminate students' work. Working collaboratively with English as a Second Language (ESL) and classroom teachers at the elementary level, our team of university-based researchers assisted teachers in integrating knowledge media into literacy teaching and learning activities, and assisted students in the creation of bilingual identity texts. We use the term *identity texts* to describe the products of students' creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts, which can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The project is embedded in a set of theoretical frameworks that highlight the role of societal power relations in the achievement trajectories of students from marginalized social backgrounds (Cummins, 2009). These power relations, conceived as operating along a continuum from coercive to collaborative, express themselves in the patterns of identity negotiation orchestrated by teachers with their students (Cummins, 2001). Classroom interactions that enable students to create identity texts—which showcase their intellectual, linguistic, and artistic talents—challenge the devaluation of identity that many students who are bilingual, English language learners experience in contexts where their home languages are not explicitly acknowledged as intellectual and cultural resources.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODS

The research focused on the following research question: To what extent can the creation of identity texts and engagement with information and communication technology tools increase students' literacy engagement and sense of academic accomplishment?

Teachers, students, and researchers collaborated in this action research project. The research team worked directly with students in helping them to use various technology tools to create their identity text projects. Sources of data for the research included field notes on the interactions and the observed outcomes, as well as document analysis, individual and group interviews, and planning notes.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The findings highlight the role of cultural production within the classroom in promoting identity affirmation and literacy engagement among students who are still in the process of learning English and catching up academically. They also illustrate the role of technology in enabling students to develop identities of competence in academic work. These themes are elaborated below.

Identity affirmation

Students exceeded their own expectations of what they could accomplish academically. As one student expressed it, "I liked the project because it was so hard." Furthermore, showcasing students' work in both English and their home languages to parents, caregivers, and family members presented the students in a new light to these significant people in their lives. As a result of the work they produced in the classroom, students were seen as individuals with linguistic talents, creativity, and intellectual potential. This is illustrated in the following quote from a teacher:

> Having the opportunity to share your story with someone is empowering—what you have to say matters. Your history, your background, your views, they matter ... the students were very proud of this work. It had intrinsic value, not just doing it for the sake of doing it.

Literacy engagement

Students were so engaged with their projects that they sometimes did not want to leave the classroom for recess. They also discussed their projects at home and got help from parents and older siblings. The level of student engagement is illustrated in the following quotes:

> I wrote my story, I talked about my family, I practised. I was practising so much because I wished I could do good. I tried to balance stuff; I worked a long, long time, and my brother helped me.

> I learned about choosing pictures, about typing. I know how to make this story now ... and I did it in Urdu, English, and Pashto.

Technology

The project illustrated how digital technology tools can serve as "amplifiers" of a student's voice. The use of technology facilitated the production of identity texts and enabled students' creative work to be shared with multiple audiences. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

> The computer helped me to do my work, it helped me to find [information] and it helped me to do the design.

> People can see my things that I [wrote] about, my dad can see it from Afghanistan, and all my family can see it.

IMPLICATIONS

The creation of identity texts by recently arrived immigrant students resulted in five important outcomes.

- Students were encouraged to connect new information and skills to their background knowledge.

- Students were enabled to use their first language (L1) as a cognitive tool.

- Students were enabled to produce more accomplished literacy work in the school language.

- Students' identities were affirmed as intelligent, creative bi/multilinguals.

- Students' knowledge of the relationship between their L1 and their second language (L2) was extended.

The findings address several of the specific objectives of the *PICSF* project. For example, they identify mechanisms and systems that bring about and maintain improved quality of education for economically and culturally marginalized populations. Among these mechanisms and systems are the implementation of instruction that recognizes both the value of students' home languages as cognitive tools and the power of technology—when harnessed to an enrichment rather than a remedial pedagogy—to fuel students' engagement with literacy.

Students' projects and teachers' reflections will be made available in print and a visual/video format on the OISE Language-as-Resource website in early 2011. Knowledge mobilization will be pursued through a professional development process which we have termed actuality implies possibility—in other words, if a particular instructional approach or innovation has happened, then it can happen.

"What we see in common among these six cases, are educators who do not rely on good intentions alone, but who ask questions of their interventions and are seldom satisfied with their work. Self-reflexive and community-minded as they are, these teachers and administrators are not prepared to settle for "good enough."

Theme Two: Schooling and Social Equity

Case Study 3: Teachers' Perspectives on the Education of their Muslim Students in the GTA, January–May 2009

Researcher: Sarfaroz Niyozov

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This study explored how an elementary public, inner-city school teacher understands her Muslim students' educational and social needs, and how she addresses the challenges and opportunities she encounters in working with her students. As an extension of my study in high schools (Niyozov, 2010), this study is critical to dealing with increasing cultural and religious diversity in Canadian schools. It has implications for curriculum and teacher development as well as broader notions of citizenship and multiculturalism in Canada (Banks & Banks, 1996). Notably, teachers' work with Muslim students remains an under-researched area, surrounded with unfavourable images and misconceptions about public schools and their teachers. This study aims to rebalance this portrayal.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework consists of four overarching and interconnected categories including teachers' worldviews, pedagogies, relationships, and biography. Each of these categories or themes has its own sub-themes, which guide the study. For example, *teachers' worldviews* refers to teaching goals, reasons for teaching particular subjects in a particular school, roles in and outside their classrooms and schools, and their knowledge of Islam and Muslims (including students, parents, and communities) (Niyozov, 2010).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Questions

● How does a teacher in an inner-city, public, elementary school in Toronto understand her work with Muslim students?

● How does she recognize and address her Muslim students' particular needs and aspirations?

● What challenges does she face in teaching her Muslim students, and how does she address these challenges?

Methods

This qualitative study used interviews, observations, and follow-up conversations with one experienced female teacher, Monica. In 2009, when the data were collected, Monica was teaching students who were Canadian but lived in non-English speaking home environments. She was a special education teacher, team-teaching in an integrated classroom. Her primary task was to teach all subjects in accordance with the Ontario curriculum. Teaching English and working on social skills were major parts of the curriculum. Her class had twenty-five students, eight of whom were special needs. Approximately 55 percent of the students were Muslims. Each observation (n=3) lasted for one-and-a-half to two hours, and each interview (n=5) lasted for 45 to 60 minutes. The follow-up discussions (n=2) were either face-to-face or by phone conversation, and lasted for about 30 minutes.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Monica developed a complex understanding of her Muslim students' identities, realities, needs, and aspirations. She did that by exploring the meanings of their names, their styles and behaviours, the countries, cultures, and religions they come from, and most importantly, by discussing religious and cultural issues in her class. In this way, they can better learn basic literacy skills of reading and writing, listening, and speaking. According to Monica, the students might also have misconceptions, biases, and prejudices. She acknowledges that the children may not see their own knowledge and ideas as biased and, therefore, uses this as material to be engaged with politely and seriously.

Monica learns about Islam and Muslim from many sources: from children's books, such as *A Faith Like Mine* by Laura Buller (2005), as well as from her students, media, workshops, and scholarly literature. Relevant issues include theological subjects such as

Shi'a–Sunni differences and Shari'a, and socioeconomic topics, such as women's status, polygamy, and girls' education. She does not see Muslims as one monolithic mass. Further, Monica senses that there might be a difference between what her particular students say about an Islamic practice and what the adults, media, or scholarly perspectives say about it. That is why any particular student's practice and view on Islam is as important as that of any outsider's.

Because Monica's school has a strong anti-racist milieu—encouraged by former and current principals—Monica is able to bring religious and cultural discussions to her class. Her students like to talk about Christmas, Santa Claus, Eid, Ramadan, Diwali, Chinese new year, and so on. Her students talk about their cultures and languages, and she channels these discussions to ensure they learn cognitive skills, such as language and comprehension, and social skills, such as appreciation and respect.

Not all of what students say and bring to class is uncritically celebrated, however. Such engagement must be done politely and sensitively: "You do not have to bluntly tell the student he or she is wrong or ignorant. You show an alternative viewpoint, ask about what other views are, make them think about it, respond to negative remarks by bringing in simple examples." As Monica responds, she also tries to explore where her students' biases and misconceptions come from.

Her pedagogy reflects her complex perspective on what the education of her students, including Muslim ones, means. She engages students' particular experiences and aspirations, envisaging Canadian society and the world at large. She says, "Our students come from different communities. We need to build on them, but create a new community with them in Canada." Her vision comprises her self-concept as an educator and citizen, her expectations for her students, the support she receives from her colleagues, and the challenges she faces in facilitating meaningful learning for her students. Individually and with her colleagues, Monica continues to strive even amid difficult circumstances such as increasing demoralization, overload, blaming of teachers, and superficiality toward serious global and Canadian issues.

IMPLICATIONS

Educators like Monica need to be given podiums to speak about what it means to be a teacher in Canada today. There is a need for providing more of the non-romanticized, critical, and diversified resources on curriculum and pedagogy, as well as a support system for learning about Muslim students' complexity and diversity, and the critical perspectives on issues in Muslim communities within and outside Canada.

Communicating the relevant, transferable findings of *PICSF* to other school districts within Canada or internationally can be done through dialogical courses, workshops, and seminars that present various perspectives on Muslim education and communities, both historical and contemporary. Such professional development initiatives should have comparative-historical approaches where both intra-Muslim as well as interfaith comparisons are made (Niyozov, 2010). They should critically engage both the views of the participants, instructors, and scholarship in the fields of Muslim education and Islamic studies.

"Our collaborators in the schools not only believe but also know that equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. They know that in order to expect much and receive much from their students, they need to reconcile themselves to better understanding their students' families and communities; they need to see academic achievement as intimately connected to social, physical, and psychological well-being."

Case Study 4: Performing Policy—Critical Multicultural Education in a Diverse Classroom, May–June, 2010

Researcher: Dominique Rivière

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

My earlier research focused on how students' performances in a drama classroom could offer important contributions to how *identity* was conceptualized in provincial multicultural curriculum and policy (Rivière, 2006). As part of that work, I rewrote the Ontario Ministry of Education's six objectives of multicultural curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993) into six reflective practices that would highlight the performative nature of both students' and teachers' identities. This case study looks at a master teacher's reflective practices in a junior-level classroom for students with "exceptional needs."[3] The aim is to highlight aspects of teaching and learning that might be transferable to "regular" diverse classroom contexts.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This case study draws upon three theoretical frameworks.

Identity

The notion of socially constructed identity presupposes its fluid nature, in that identity-construction is a dialectical, relational process. That is, identities are defined as much by what they are not as by what they are. In addition, LeCourt (2004) reminds us that relations of identity are also inextricably linked to relations of power and, often, of domination.

Socialization and schooling

McCarthy (1998) maintains that to understand how racial inequality operates in education, a link must be made between social structures (e.g., economic, social, political, or ideological) and what real people (e.g., students and teachers) actually do in schools. Yon's (2000) notion of the "discursive space of schooling" is

a useful framework for making such links because the power of sociocultural and political discourses about racial, cultural, or ethnic identity structures the ways in which students are perceived to engage (or not) in school.

Critical multiculturalism

Critical multiculturalism challenges the conventional understanding of multiculturalism as "celebrating" diversity, by arguing that it serves to mask the structural inequalities inherent in Canadian society. Critical multicultural education requires that schools' curricular, pedagogical, and policy practices are oriented towards non-essentialist conceptions of students' cultures; towards challenging Western hegemonic knowledge in all school contexts; and towards recognizing the broader social, political and economic contexts in which education takes place.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

- How does a model school educator place the identities and experiences of her marginalized students at the centre of her curriculum and pedagogy?

- What are the salient and transferable features of this teacher's curricular and pedagogical approaches to multicultural education in diverse classrooms?

- What does using a "performative" lens bring to the analysis of those features?

The methods comprised three two-hour classroom observations, two one-hour semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

In diverse classrooms, certain institutionalized pedagogical practices can reinforce the marginalization of certain students. By considering the social aspects of teaching and learning in an exceptional needs classroom in a model school, specific pedagogical practices and ways of interacting with students can be illuminated, which can then reveal the institutional

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[3] I have used the term "exceptional needs" to obscure the precise nature of this teacher's classroom; otherwise her anonymity might be compromised.

aspects of teaching and learning that often go unnoticed in regular classrooms. After analyzing the relationship between the institutional and the social, I identified two significant ways in which this teacher interrupted the cycle of marginalization: by acknowledging the fluidity of students' identities, and by maintaining high expectations.

For example, when I asked the teacher whether knowledge of her students' identities influenced her decisions about curriculum content, she mentioned two Grade 5 students who were excited about researching their ancestral heritages for the ancient civilizations unit. Yet, when I asked if all of her students were interested in studying their own heritage civilizations, she said,

> María was quite excited that she did learn about Ancient Mexico. And one of the other girls ... Parvati, like she wanted to do Mexico too, because of María … that kind of stuff…. I thought she might have chosen, uh, India … I think she was born in Bangladesh, but her family background is Indian… But then again, that might be why she didn't choose India.

This example shows that it is problematic to employ pedagogical practices based on the assumption that the identities that society deems to be the most salient are the same ones that students deem to be the most salient; this is because they don't take into account students' understanding, interpretation, and expression of their multiple subject positions. In short, they deny students' agency and right to self-determination.

Several times during our conversations, the teacher mentioned that one of the most difficult things about her job was finding relevant and academically challenging material for her students. She described the materials available at some of the professional development conferences she had attended as, "all those, sort of, level 2 thinking stuff … you don't want that." This teacher was not interested in those resources largely because she had higher expectations of her students.

[If they need] to make a correction … I could underline it, leave them…. Or, I could go through and make all the changes for them, but then they'll never learn it. Right? So … you're scaffolding it for them a little bit. You're making it easier for them. You're telling them, you know, "Look here. You'll find that information here" … plus, it's immediate and meaningful. It's from their personal writing … or whatever we're doing. Like, it's their responses. So it's personal, it's immediate, it's something they're gonna learn…. And it puts the ownership back on them, so that they're responsible for their learning.

The dearth of suitable curriculum materials and resources for exceptional students reinforces a deficit view of their needs and abilities. Therefore, individual teachers need to develop pedagogical practices that make up for this lack. These practices need to be contextual and engaging, so that the curriculum content is meaningful for students and allows them to develop a sense of agency.

IMPLICATIONS

The grade team meeting that occurred before the beginning of each term was a key institutional feature of this teacher's practice. At these meetings, all teachers from the same division would discuss which units had to be covered, what expectations needed to be met, the key texts to be used, the key concepts for students to learn, and the forms of authentic assessment that could be employed. Using a backwards-design format, the teachers then developed a pathway for a given unit, which was integrated across multiple subject areas. A primary focus of the grade team meetings was how to recognize and reflect the students' identities, heritages, and agency throughout the curricular activities.

Having observed some of those team discussions, and then analyzed the resultant pathways, I have found that these meetings are integral to bringing about and maintaining improved quality of education for marginalized students. They allow for teacher innovation, professional support, and an infusion of equity-minded practice throughout the curriculum.

Theme three: Schooling and Community Connections

Case Study 5: PLAY (Place, Activity, Youth)—
Geographies of a Model School, 2009-10

Researcher: Caroline Fusco

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This research examined what role physical educational landscapes play in the health of a model school and its community. Educational landscapes that account for the diversity of students and the complexity of urban space in a city such as Toronto play a key role in advancing the health of schools and their students and communities, and may contribute to children's perceptions and experiences of success, achievement, and engagement.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research focused on the geographies of schools and paid attention to the importance of place (Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2003). It specifically addressed the ways that health practices are governed in school spaces (Fusco, 2007), and the conceptions, perceptions, and lived realities of healthy school spaces from the point of view of children and teachers (Lefebvre, 1991).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Primary questions

- What role do healthy school and physical activity initiatives play in student success in a model school?

- Is there a correlation between physical health and school health?

- How do various stakeholders imagine a healthy school space in a model school environment?

- What role does the school play in the social health of the neighbourhood?

- What are the existing social inclusions and exclusions that impact the social and physical health of students?

Methods

Using spatial ethnography methods, I conducted classroom observations and focus group interviews with teachers and staff (n=9) and students (n=16) in Grade 5 and Grade 6. I also had children participate in a write and draw exercise, in particular asking them to draw and give a description of their ideal physical activity space. Finally, school spaces were videoed and photographed.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Correlation between physical health and school health

The particular model school that I studied invested their Model School funding in physical activity (PA). Teachers and staff perceived that such an investment would impact on students' achievement and enhance their community relations. This investment required a mutual understanding about the value of PA and healthy school space, and the relationship of these to students' physical, social, and emotional well-being. Teachers' conceptions of such a school space was realized through sports.

> I love the idea of kids staying after school and doing a sport. So they don't have to go home, they don't have to sit in front of the T.V. … it's only an hour with one group, an hour with the other, they're all able to do it, the sign-up sheet was great, so they all want to do it. The parents of the younger kids especially come out. Mothers come, they sit in the stands, they talk, they're socializing, they're clapping for their child even if he takes, you know, ten swings at the ball to try to hit it. Everyone's clapping and the child who, you know, hit the ball finally on the tenth try is running down to first and waving at his mom and is thrilled…. They're thrilled, I'm thrilled. And I think that this is what it's all about. It's self-esteem; they feel good; they feel great.

Students' enthusiasm for the new PA culture in the school was palpable.

> They have a lot of stuff that you can join. And if you don't—if you have a team and you don't make it into one thing, you can go to another thing that you like … like hockey. I wanted to join it, but I didn't get to it and now I joined the cricket team.

Educational landscapes can reproduce dominant discourses of health

Although well-intentioned, certain health initiatives in schools, such as the banning of junk food, may construct an idealized healthy school citizen (Fusco, 2007), which might, inadvertently, marginalize families who are not able to provide healthy foods for their children. This can result in moralizing about family choices or lack of responsible parenting.

> **Teacher 1:** And you've always been an advocate of kids having nutritious food. I know you've talked to a lot of parents?
>
> **Teacher 2:** Oh, about chips!
>
> **Teacher 1:** We will tell the parents, you know, "Your child had a bag of chips today for lunch. Perhaps, tomorrow they can have…." Whatever, but like you've talked to them and had lots of meetings with parents on this.

PA is often recognized for its functional purposes only; for example, it provides an energy release, prevents fidgeting, makes student more attentive, improves grades, teaches students about Canadian life. However, PA may eliminate the pleasure children feel in, and through, movement and play (Sutton-Smith, 2001). According to one teacher,

> I've definitely seen … structured play as beneficial because it cut down on the amount of trouble they can get in at recess, let's put it that way. So, socially they're on the same team; so they're helping each other … So, yeah, it helps, you know, them running around outside they need to burn off of that energy. So when they do come back after recess they are a little more—I don't know if they're more focused because they're not squirming around as much. I can't decide whether they're just more tired or they're more focused. Either way, they're paying better attention.

Children experience these discourses and are well able to articulate the relationships between PA, a healthy lifestyle, and the expertise of the teacher in delivering the health curriculum.

> In the after-school activities there's like a kids club there, and there's like a 45 minute physical education class, like where you run and everything and the other 45 minutes you go inside and have a healthy snack and learn about eating healthy foods and everything.

IMPLICATIONS

This case study has four major implications for the practice of PA and health in Toronto's economically and culturally marginalized school spaces.

1. Teachers can use students' PA experiences to support other classroom activities and tasks because the physical and social health of the school space supports students' achievements.

2. School-community partnerships can be enhanced if inclusive PA opportunities are provided, especially for newcomer families, who may feel excluded from school PA and cultural activities.

3. When health is broadly defined in school (i.e., emotional, social, physical) and is valued by administrators, teachers, staff, and volunteers, a sense of connectedness may develop that ultimately impacts positively on students' perceptions and experiences of their educational landscapes.

4. Funding mechanisms, such as model school funding, provides crucial resources for sustaining and growing programs that enhance the physical, social, and emotional health cultures of schools.

Case Study 6: Principals and Parents—Connections and Disjunctions, Spring/Summer 2009

Researchers: Joseph Flessa and Rachael Nicholls

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

There is a large body of normative and professional writing on school improvement that highlights the importance of parental involvement. Typically, such work highlights the role of the principal in encouraging home-school connections and makes recommendations. Our study diverges from this typical approach by focusing on how principals learn about the families and communities they serve. What inquiry process, explicit or implicit, do principals follow to learn more about the context in which they work?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Using an inquiry approach, we considered the relevant theory and literature, including policy incentives, parental engagement, and urban schools in challenging circumstances, to gain understanding about the way that principal learning and reflexive inquiry counterbalanced prevalent deficit frameworks about urban families and communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Questions

● What do principals in model inner-city schools say they know about the parents and communities they serve, and how did they learn it?

● What do principals say are the purposes of parent and community involvement?

● What do principals in model inner-city schools say are the nuts-and-bolts of encouraging parent and community involvement?

● How do principals evaluate their own work with parents and community partners?

Methods

Before visiting the schools we accessed public documents through the school board and each school website. We visited and interviewed four model school principals in the spring of 2009. Each interview was one to one-and-a-half hours in length. Following the interviews, we observed the participants through a school tour. Interviews were transcribed and used alongside documents to develop themes.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The findings of this research provide interesting insights about how principals learn about the community, what principals feel the purpose of parent involvement is, and how principals evaluate their own work with parents and community partners.

The principals in this study described rapidly changing school communities from year to year and a demographic imperative to view parental and community needs and expectations as ever-changing. Their inquiry approach to parental involvement meant structuring both official meetings (parental council meetings, family literacy evenings) as well as smaller scale events, such as teas with the principal, organized by families themselves. Given the overarching derogatory stereotypes that circulate in urban schools regarding students' home life, principals viewed these interactions as important ways to combat deficit frameworks in their own work. Principals also perceived these meetings as modelling a flexibility and curiosity useful for teachers and other staff.

Importantly, no principal described any concrete incentive or support that encouraged her to pursue parental involvement as part of her daily routine. No principal could point to formal professional development offered by the district or province, nor any aspect of principals' evaluation by supervisors that emphasized parental involvement. This absence of guidance, supervision, or mentorship caused the principals in this study to pursue parental involvement based on their own understanding of the importance of establishing trusting relationships between families and schools.

IMPLICATIONS

One implication of this project for sustainability and professional development is to attempt to address the

silence from districts on supporting and encouraging principals to take parental involvement—and inquiry into their own practice with parents—seriously. Although policy statements exist, a broader implementation will require professional development and some more specific articulation of how different approaches to parental involvement can have an impact on how principals are assessed and evaluated by superintendents. As long as principals are required to take this work on as a voluntary, entrepreneurial endeavor, it is unlikely to become a part of most principals' core understanding or practice of their job. Assessment will be a controversial topic, but neglecting it will leave parental involvement policy in the realm of aspiration, not systemic change (see Flessa, 2008).

Our case studies of dedicated educators who resist prevailing deficit-based perspectives about communities, make important connections beyond the walls of the school, and continue to learn while on the job contribute to our understanding of what kinds of partnerships are possible. Part of trying to understand how to take such experiences to scale—how to make them typical in urban schools rather than exceptional—requires an examination of the policies and incentives that shape leaders' work. In what ways are principals rewarded for taking on the work of home-school-community connections, and in what ways are they discouraged from making these connections? To move parental engagement from aspiration to reality and to bring schools and communities into closer collaboration requires attending to the incentives that shape the day-to-day work of the principal. We observed a handful of principals whose inquiry-based approach to their contexts provided them with the information they needed as a starting point for connections with homes and families. Finding ways to encourage more principals to approach their work similarly would be a step in the right direction.

PICSF CONCLUSIONS

By looking at individual teacher and administrative practices, and also at various pedagogical projects in these diverse classrooms, we have come to recognize the complexity of the work and the nuance required of educators in schools where the needs, both academic and social, are great. We have spent time with teachers whose expectations are very high and whose sensibilities about the diversity in their classrooms (language, religion, culture, socioeconomic, ability, etc.) are finely attuned. We have met principals who resist deficit thinking about their parent communities, and do so at times with little systemic support. And we have witnessed programs that have placed front and centre the social and physical health of students. What we see in common among these six cases, are educators who do not rely on good intentions alone, but who ask questions of their interventions and are seldom satisfied with their work. Self-reflexive and community-minded as they are, these teachers and administrators are not prepared to settle for "good enough.

They are not the first to understand this; however, our collaborators in the schools not only believe but also know that equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. They know that in order to expect much and receive much from their students, they need to reconcile themselves to better understanding their students' families and communities; they need to see academic achievement as intimately connected to social, physical, and psychological well-being. No matter how precarious school-community relationships might be at times, these educators want to support relationships, even if this means opposing protocol, familiar ways of doing business, or conventional curriculum and wisdom. They know that the school and the community must have understanding of and respect for one another.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kathleen Gallagher is a Canada Research Chair, professor, and the academic director of the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE. Her research interests include urban schooling, student engagement, and the pedagogical and methodological possibilities of theatre.

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Caroline Fusco is an associate professor in the Faculty of Physical Education and Health at the University of Toronto. Her areas of expertise are the sociology of physical activity and health; cultural geographies of children and youth's physical activity and health environments; poststructuralist and feminist theories of the body, gender, and sexuality; qualitative research methods; equity and diversity studies in education.

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Saskia Stille is is a doctoral candidate who works with students and teachers to learn about language learning in multilingual school contexts.

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RESOURCES

These resources have been selected for their relevance on issues of inclusion in the Canadian context, their focus on classroom practice and strategies, or their ability to raise awareness of individuals or groups in society.

PRINT RESOURCES

Adams, M., Bell, L.A., & Griffin, P. (2007). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook* **(2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.**
This resource, relevant to those teaching Grades 7 to 12, includes theoretical foundations and curricular frameworks for social justice teaching practices. Practical, activity-oriented modules address issues of sexism, racism, heterosexism, anti–Semitism, ableism, and classism.

Allen, A. (2002). *African heritage: Activities and resources for the K–8 classroom.* **Toronto, ON: Toronto District School Board.**
The purpose of this resource is to help teachers integrate African heritage into their daily teaching. The resource includes detailed cross-curricular activities that support Ontario curriculum expectations and offers a self-education guide to ensuring equity in the classroom.

Arthur, A. et al. (2010). *Creating spaces: Embedding equity in education.* **Toronto, ON: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.**
This resource provides educators with practical classroom strategies that may be used to overcome cultural barriers, address inequity in schools, and provide marginalized students the opportunity to reach their full potential. The following topics are addressed: sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and academic achievement, sexual harassment, and visible minorities and racism.

Chen, J., Goodreau, J., & Zoric, T. (Eds.) (2009). *Educational activism: Resources for change.* **Toronto, ON: OISE/UNICEF/OSSTF Partnership.**
This resource includes profiles of educational activists and key points presented during their workshops at the *Annual Educational Activism* conference. Activists describe their work and offer key resources and strategies to use in K–12 classrooms.

Comper, E., & Comper, T. (2010). *Choose your voice: Anti–Semitism in Canada. Fighting anti–Semitism together (FAST).* **Toronto, ON: Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee.**
This program includes a teacher's guide and DVD that supports Grades 6, 7, and 8 Ontario curriculum expectations. The activities may be taught together as a unit or can serve as extension activities during Remembrance Day, Human Rights Day, Black History Month, and Holocaust Remembrance Day. Each activity helps students to understand how stereotypes are constructed and how prejudice has led to historical and present-day misunderstandings in Canada. Visit **www.fightingantisemitism.com** to order a copy.

Derman–Sparks, L., & Edwards, J.O. (2010). *Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves.* **Washington, DC: NAEYC Books.**
Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves supplies teachers with practical strategies for addressing and eliminating barriers related to prejudice and misinformation and biases related to personal and social identity. Specific topics include culture and language, racial identity, family structures, gender identity, economic class, different abilities, and holidays.

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2002). *We're erasing prejudice for good* **(Rev. ed.). Toronto, ON: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.**
This resource includes monthly themes and numerous picture books to facilitate and motivate inclusive behaviour and practice. The following website provides an updated picture book resource list: **www.sbbooks.com/uploads/forms/650_Erasing_Prejudice_By_Theme.pdf.** Teacher manuals specifically for K–8 classrooms are available with lesson plans supporting each picture book. The supplementary guide *Respecting Cultures and Honouring Differences* includes additional lesson plans for picture books on the revised booklist.

Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario. (2003). *Reflections of me: The ETFO body image project.* **Toronto, ON: Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario.**
This research-based resource offers a whole-school curriculum package designed for K–8 classrooms. This program assists teachers in ensuring that elementary children develop positive body image and self-esteem through affirming diverse student bodies and developing critical media literacy skills.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* **New York: Teachers College Press.**
This text speaks to being a culturally responsive teacher to ensure the diverse needs of all students in the classroom are met. Gay uses multicultural education theory combined with real-life classroom stories to demonstrate that student achievement is heightened when teaching is filtered through students' own cultural experiences.

Gaztambide-Fernández, R. (2007). *Inner, outer, and in-between: Why popular culture and the arts matter for inner city youth.* **Orbit, 36(3), 35–37.**
Gaztambide-Fernández explores the connections between popular culture and the arts, and asserts that both should be considered in urban education. When working to complement each other, popular culture and the arts can greatly influence urban youth.

Iseke-Barnes, J.M., & Nathani Wane, N. (Eds.) (2000). *Equity in schools and society.* **Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.**
This text examines equity issues of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender in school and society. Readings and critical discussion questions are organized to aid teachers and teacher candidates in addressing stereotypes, biases, and misrepresentations in schools and society.

Kugler, J., & West-Burns, N. (Spring, 2010). The CUS framework for culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. *Our Schools/Our Selves***, 215–223.**
The Centre for Urban Schooling has developed a framework that encourages schools to examine their perspectives, attitudes, and actions in seven key areas: school climate, classroom climate, student voice and space, family- or caregiver-school relations, school leadership, community connections, and professional development. The provided continuum allows educators to situate themselves and identify areas that require further attention.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice***, 34(3), 159–165.**
Billings describes her three-year study with African American students and the success of using culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. This article conceptualizes culturally relevant pedagogy and provides examples of this practice in action.

Lee, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (Eds.) (2006). *Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K–12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development.* **Washington, DC: Teaching for Change.**
This interdisciplinary resource includes lessons that teachers developed for educators, staff, students, and parents. It shows how they can work together to transform the curriculum through investigating and analyzing the impacts of racism on their personal lives, families, and communities. By examining the relations between racism and forms of oppression, this guide assists those committed to multicultural education.

Lundy, K.G. (2008). *Teaching fairly in an unfair world*. **Markham, ON: Pembrook Publishers.**
This text uses many examples to support teacher and teacher candidates who wish to use transformative teaching and learning practices in Grades 1–12. As a dramatic arts teacher, the author includes drama-based activities to support students in finding their own voices while they connect with social justice issues. A glossary of over 50 strategies and reproducible pages are available.

MacArthur, M. (2000). *Manifesting encouraging and respectful environments*. **Mississauga, ON: Peel District School Board.**
This resource provides information on the "isms" (ageism, classism, ableism, sexism, faith as an ism, heterosexism, and racism) and offers information on the dynamics that fuel these isms. Classroom teachers can conduct a self- and classroom audit to evaluate the level of equity in their classrooms.

Ministry of Education, (2009). *Aboriginal perspectives: A guide to the teacher's toolkit*. **Toronto, ON.**
This Ministry document has been created in order to assist elementary and secondary teachers in including aboriginal perspectives in their teaching. This guide explains how to use the *Teacher's Toolkit*, which is located online at **http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/toolkit.html**. The *Toolkit* addresses Ontario curriculum expectations that focus on Aboriginal communities, and it includes practical teaching strategies that may be used in the classroom.

Pelo, A. (Ed.) (2008). *Rethinking early childhood education*. **Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Ltd.**
Rethinking Early Childhood Education includes a collection of inspiring social justice narratives from childcare teachers, early-grade public school teachers, scholars, and parents. This text informs educators how to nurture empathy, an ecological consciousness, curiosity, collaboration, and activism in young children.

Santamaria, L.J. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing gaps between best pedagogical practices benefitting all learners. *Teachers College Record, 3***(1), 214–247.**
Recognizing variation in teacher pedagogy, Santamaria finds common ground between culturally response teaching (CRT) and differentiated instruction (DI). A common teaching practice framework is proposed so that teachers can better meet the needs of today's complex multidimensional classrooms.

Schniedewind, N., & Davidson, E. (2006). *Open minds to equality: A sourcebook of learning activities to affirm diversity and promote equity*. **Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Ltd.**
Activities in this text promote respect for diversity and interpersonal equality among students; the aim of the activities is to create a classroom that is participatory, cooperative, and democratic. Grades 4–10 educators will benefit from this sourcebook of activities that help students understand and change inequalities based on age, class, gender, language, physical or cognitive ability, religion, and sexual orientation.

Singer, R., Chackal, G., Mascarin, M., Anderson, S., Oliphant, M., & Matern, R. (2009). *Who's hungry? 2009 Youth guide to hunger in the GTA*. **Toronto, ON: Daily Bread Food Bank.**
http://www.hungrycity.ca/educators/tools.php
This youth-friendly guide describes the issues of hunger and poverty in the Greater Toronto Area using statistics, definitions, and personal stories. Five predominant groups that use food banks are described: people with disabilities, immigrants, single parents, working poor, and people experiencing persistent poverty.

Stagg Peterson, S., & Swartz, L. (2008). *Good books matter*. **Markham, ON: Pembrooke Publishers Ltd.**
Good Books Matter provides teachers with guiding principles for choosing books to use in K–9 literacy programs. It includes book lists organized according to gender, age, and purpose, and it provides activities to support the development of reading comprehension and writing skills. The chapter on multicultural literature describes how teachers may use literature to celebrate diversity and highlight injustice.

Stocker, D. (2006). *Math that matters: A teacher resource linking math and social justice.* **Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Education Project.**
This text contains 50 mathematics lesson plans for Grades 6–9 that incorporate issues of social justice. The author calls for a shift from using overly simple connections in mathematics education to involving the students in considering social justice issues while learning math. Each lesson addresses Canadian and international issues.

TDSB Equitable Schools. (2006). *Tools for equity: A resource for best practices (Grades 7 – 12).* **Toronto, ON: Toronto District School Board.**
This resource includes 20 teaching and learning strategies to support TDSB's commitment to inclusive curriculum practice. It covers five areas of equity as identified by TDSB: ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic equity, and equity for persons with disabilities.

Wells, K. (2006). *Gay-straight student alliance handbook: A comprehensive resource for Canadian K–12 teachers, administrators, and school counsellors.* **Ottawa, ON: Canadian Teachers' Federation.**
This handbook offers teachers the tools to initiate and sustain gay-straight student alliances. It allows teachers the opportunity to understand educational, health, and safety needs of bisexual, gay, lesbian, trans-identified and two-spirited students, and provides resources for creating safe and inclusive spaces in schools.

Willet, M., & First Nations Storytellers of the Northwest Territories. (2008). *The land is our storybook series.* **Canada: Fifth House.**
This series includes 10 picture books for children, each portraying the land and people of the Northwest Territories as they exist today. Each book highlights a distinct Aboriginal language group and includes the work of Aboriginal photographer Tessa Macintosh.

Zoric, T. (2005). *Challenging class bias Grades 7–12.* **Toronto, ON: Toronto District School Board.**
This curriculum resource for the Grades 7–12 includes activities that support deconstructing the class bias that leads to discrimination. *Challenging Class Bias* contains lesson plans thematically organized to address the following topics: Understanding Power; Needs, Wants and Haves; Understanding Class Bias in the Media; Investigating Poverty and Economic Inequality; Labour Issues; and Global Connections.

WEBSITES

Aga Khan Foundation (2010). *Bridges that unite.* **www.bridgesthatunite.ca**
This website, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), includes teacher resources developed for Grades 5–8. The focus is on supporting education about critical issues around the world, including global citizenship, democracy, action and participation, world geography, cultures, and economies.

Bullying.org. (n.d.). *I want to learn: Helpful resources.* **http://www.bullying.org/**
As one of the world's largest bullying websites, this site includes a comprehensive resource section that provides links to lesson plans for K–12 teachers and to articles, books, and films that address bullying in the classroom and school community.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2011). *Publications.* **http://www.policyalternatives.ca**
This institute is concerned with issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. Educators may browse through informative, published reports related to Aboriginal people, housing and homelessness, human rights, inequality and poverty, and children and youth.

Canadian Association for Community Living. (2007). *Inclusive education Canada.*
http://www.inclusiveeducation.ca/english/index.asp
Information on this site is consistently uploaded and updated with Canadian resources. Teachers and teacher candidates can find links to inclusive curriculum resources and best practice articles. Interviews with school leaders speaking about inclusive strategies within their schools may be found here.

Canadian Culture Online Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. (2006). Four Directions Teachings. http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/
This interactive website is entirely audio narrated, with accompanying short video clips for learning about the indigenous culture and philosophy of the M'ikmaq, Mohawk, Ojibwe, Cree, and Blackfoot nations. A teacher resource package is available through http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/Teacher_Resource_Kit.pdf.

Centre for Social Justice. (2011). *Catalog.* http://www.socialjustice.org/index.php?page=catalog
This site includes thematically organized educational print materials. Free downloadable reports and booklets support teacher professional development related to themes of economic, racial, gender, and health inequality.

Centre for Urban Schooling. (2011). *Resources for teachers.*
http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca/Resources/Teacher_Resources.html
The Centre for Urban Schooling, established at OISE, University of Toronto, is dedicated to improving the quality of teaching and learning experiences for all students. The *Resources for Teachers* section includes thematic unit and lesson plans essential to promoting equity in the classroom.

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2010).
http://www.etfo.ca/resources/forteachers/pages/default.aspx
Teacher resources on this site are listed alphabetically by theme; the resources support elementary teachers in enriching their programs to include diversity and social justice. Book lists, lesson plans, and professional development readings are available.

Government of Canada. (2010). *Aboriginal Canada portal: Resources for teachers.*
http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/ao31045.html
The Aboriginal Canada Portal contains a comprehensive selection of teacher educational resources, as well as lesson plans and activities for K–12 classrooms. A list of Aboriginal picture books, interactive student websites, and numerous cross-curricular activities offer teachers the opportunity to infuse Aboriginal culture into their programs.

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. (2011). www.religioustolerance.org
This multi-faith agency is devoted to promoting religious tolerance. This site includes objective and inclusive articles about religion, morality, and ethics. General information about world religions and essays surrounding controversial issues may be found on this site.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2011). *Inspire: Equity of outcome.*
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/equity/index.html
This Ontario Ministry of Education site includes information centred on the following themes: English language learners, First Nations, special education, boys, Black students, and general equity issues. Articles review current research and application into practice.

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. (n.d.). *Social justice.*
http://www.osstf.on.ca/Default.aspx?DN=a44b58d9–9a05–4e45–b2a5–3dbce0cbd325
The OSSTF has designed socially based curriculum units to be integrated into programming for secondary school classrooms. Canadian secondary school teachers involved with the *Common Threads* international solidarity program travelled to countries such as Guatemala, South Africa, Bolivia, and Brazil to create curriculum resources that address equity issues. Their units may be found on this site.

PFLAG Canada. (2009). *Helpful links for teachers.* http://www.pflagcanada.ca/en/index–e.asp
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has created a list of resources and links to support teacher programming to meet the needs of GLBT students in their classroom. Curriculum support, working with parents, GLBT student health, and understanding GLBT history and culture are some of the topics found on this site.

Provincial Centre: Special Education Technology. (n.d.) Special Education Technology (SET) British Columbia. www.setbc.org
This site provides educators with information about various assistive technologies that can be used to support curriculum access for students with special education needs.

RadicalMath. (2007). http://radicalmath.org/
This site includes a comprehensive list of resources for K–12 teachers looking to teach social justice through mathematics. Resources include lesson plans, articles, graphs, data sets, maps, books and other websites; these can be browsed according to a desired mathematics topic, social justice issue, or by resource type.

Rethinking Schools. (2011). http://www.rethinkingschools.org
Advocating for the reform of elementary and secondary education and emphasizing issues of equity and social justice, Rethinking Schools, is a not-for-profit publisher of K–12 educational materials. Publications include *Rethinking Columbus, Rethinking Globalization, Rethinking our Classrooms*, and *Rethinking Early Childhood Education*.

Reese, D.A. (2010). American Indians in children's literature.
http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/
Professor Reese created this blog to aid the deconstructing of stereotypes surrounding American Indians as found in children's books. This site includes an extensive list of picture books and professional development articles related to inclusion and thinking critically about a text.

Simon Wiesenthal Centre. (2011). *Library and archives* **and** *Moriah films*.
http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4441267
The Simon Wiesenthal Centre is a global Jewish human rights organization dedicated to confronting anti-Semitism; it provides resources for teaching the lessons of the Holocaust. Educators may visit the *Library and Archives* section to obtain print, media, and digital archive artefacts, images, and documents. The *Moriah Films* section includes documentaries with a focus on the Jewish experience as well as human rights and ethical issues.

Special Needs Opportunity Window (SNOW). http://snow.idrc.ocad.ca/
This website provides useful information regarding universal design practices in education, along with resources on assistive or adaptive technologies. Resources, reviews, and links pertaining to specific adaptive technologies are available, as are special education resources including lesson plans and teaching strategies.

Techmatrix. (2010). *Assistive technology tools and resources for learning.* **www.techmatrix.org/**
This website describes how to effectively use assistive technology in the classroom. Teachers can browse according to subject-specific content (e.g., mathematics, science, reading, or writing), as well as gain information on how to implement and use assistive technology for the purpose of differentiated instruction.

The Legacy of Hope Foundation. (2011). http://www.legacyofhope.ca/Home.aspx
This national Aboriginal charitable organization website raises awareness and provides educational resources about residential schooling. Teacher resources may be ordered, or a free virtual interactive exhibition may be accessed from this site.

The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy. (n.d.). *Teacher resources.*
http://freireproject.org/
This website is dedicated to promoting social justice through the use of critical pedagogy in the classroom. This site includes teacher resources in the form of lesson plans and readings, and includes links to other sites dedicated to critical pedagogy.

Toronto District School Board. (n.d.). *Equitable and inclusive schools: Inclusive curriculum.*
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=5007&pageid=4366
The Toronto District School board has created an extensive collection of inclusive curriculum resources thematically organized by issues of social justice. This website includes curriculum connections, community events and speakers, and additional print, video, and Internet resources to support equity initiatives in schools.

UNICEF. (2009). *Lesson plans and classroom activities.*
http://globalclassroom.unicef.ca/en/resources/secondary_lesson_plans.htm
With a primary goal of protecting the rights of children, UNICEF has created classroom resources that advocate for the child. In particular, *Kid Inclusive: A Toolkit Promoting Children's Participation and Inclusive Action Against Discrimination* is resource for Grades 4–12 that aims to build empathy while challenging stereotypes and discussing social justice issues. Personal stories and photosets with accompanying classroom discussion questions and activities are included in the kit.

WETA (2010). LD OnLine: The world's largest website on learning disabilities and ADHD.
http://www.ldonline.org/index.php
LD Online provides up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. The *Technology* section provides articles on finding the right technology, responses to frequently asked questions, and helpful links. The *Especially For Educators* section includes key articles, instructional strategies, and additional links relevant for teachers.

MEDIA RESOURCES

Alfonso, L. (Director). (2008). *Twelve.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
Philippine-born filmmaker Lester Alfonso asks, "If you could go back and speak to your 12-year-old self, what would you say?" Seeking to understand himself better, Lester interviews 12 people with the shared experience of immigrating to Canada at the age of 12.

Aung-Thwin, M., Gaylor, B., Ohaituk, D., Ningiuk, C., Ohaituk, R., Ningeok, W., Idlout, S., Echalook, B., Iqaluk, L., Kasudluak, L., & Cross, D. (Directors). (2004). *Inuuvunga—I am Inuk, I am Alive.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
Eight Inuit teenagers in their last year of high school document their lives in Canada's North Inukjuak. Sample issues discussed in the film are peer suicide and the communication divide between generations. This film dispels myths of northern isolation and despair.

CBC Learning. (2006). *CBC Newsworld: Reds, whites & blues.* **[Motion Picture]. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.**
This documentary follows four students living on an urban Indian reserve in Vancouver and their experiences in predominantly white high schools. Only four out of 10 Native teenagers living on reserves complete their high school education. Alarmed by the dropout rates, the community takes a stand against drug use by adolescents. This thought-provoking film encourages teachers to reflect on how their teaching practice ensures success for Native Canadians.

Chartrand, M. (Director). (2000). *Black soul.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
This animated film shows defining moments in Black history and Black culture as a grandmother relays the events that shaped her people's cultural heritage to her grandson. The viewer can travel from Africa, to the West Indies, to the United States, and to Canada in a matter of minutes, gaining understanding of slavery, rebellion, and Martin Luther King's dream.

Dalby, P. (Director). (2005). *Fighting words: The social crusades of Joseph E. Atkinson.* **Toronto, ON: The Atkinson Charitable Foundation.**
This film documents Joseph E. Atkinson's goal of abolishing poverty and exposing the horrors of the slums through his position at The Star newspaper in Toronto. This film shows how Atkinson used the newspaper to achieve a fairer society. While over a century has passed, social justice issues of universal health care and child poverty still need to be addressed.

Delmos, M. (Director). (2008). *Everybody's children*. **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
Everybody's Children follows two teenagers, ages 16 and 17, who escaped to Canada from atrocities of prostitution and family murder in their home country. It follows them as they undergo the pressures of being teenagers while simultaneously applying for refugee status in Ontario. This film shows how people can make a difference in young people's lives.

Desjardins, R., & Monderie, R. (Director). (2007). *The invisible nation*. **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
This film portrays challenges endured by the Algonquin people since the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century. Over time, due to the loss of land and resources, some Aboriginal traditions have disappeared. Today, many of the remaining 9000 Algonquin people live in poverty and suffer human rights abuses. A teaching guide is available at **http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100556.pdf**.

Fernie, L. (Director). (2003). *Apples and oranges*. **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
This short film, appropriate for Grades 4–8, addresses name-calling, homophobia, and stereotyping. It includes in-class footage of a classroom discussion with an equity educator and two short animations about homophobia and bullying stemming from the discussion. Students are challenged to rethink their responses to people and families that are different from their own.

Glazier, L. (2004). (Director). *It's a girl's world: A documentary about social bullying*. **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**
This documentary showcases the behavioural and social dynamics of 10-year-old female cliques. The classroom version of *It's a Girls World* is divided into six modules showing clique behaviours from the perspectives of the bullies, targets, bystanders, parents, and researchers. Module 1–4 can be used in Grades 4 to 8 to discuss choices girls make and the role of power in social groups. Module 5–6 is intended for a secondary school audience as it shares the story of a 14-year-old girl who committed suicide as a result of bullying. A teacher resource guide is available at **http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100303.pdf**.

Gagne, A. (2011). *Growing new roots*. **OISE/UT School University partnership grant in part from SSHRC** **http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/eslinfusion/Home/Streamed_Video_Resources/index.html**
This DVD series includes five videos showcasing experiences of immigrant teenagers in Canada. Teens reflect on topics such as family, friends, and racism. Various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community workers, discuss English language learner issues.

Harvard University. (2011). *The achievement gap initiative at Harvard University. Video Library*. **http://www.agi.harvard.edu/Search/SearchAllVideo.php**
This website includes a collection of resources intended to support the elimination of the educational achievement gap. The *Video Library* section includes video clips and PowerPoint presentations supporting inclusive education. The following videos are recommended: Mica Pollock's June 2007 video, *How do we get educators to consider and engage in the topic of race and opportunity?*; and Mica Pollock's June 2006 video, *Talking about race in education*.

Kabour, M., & Schwab, T. (Directors). (2003). *Being Osama*. **Montreal, Quebec: Cine Fete.**
Being Osama follows the lives of six Canadian men named Osama and how their lives have been affected following 9/11. This film challenges the stereotype of being "Arab" and offers a look into the difficulties that Canada's Arab communities face in light of tensions in the Middle East.

McTair, R. (Director). (2000). *Journey to justice.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

Journey to Justice tells the story of six Canadians who fought for Black civil rights by refusing to accept inequalities during the 1930s to 1950s. While many know the name of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., few Canadians are aware of Viola Desmond, Fred Christie, Bromley Armstrong, Donald Willard Moore, and Stanley G. Grizzle who paved the way for social justice in Canada.

Nawaz, Z. (Director). (2005). *Me and the mosque.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

This documentary visits mosques across Canada and interviews scholars, neighbours, and members of the mosque about equal access for women. The role of women in Islamic faith is explored. All sides of the issue are presented through personal stories.

Osborne, J. (Director). (2003). *Sleeping Tigers: The Ashai Baseball Story.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

This documentary visits mosques across Canada and interviews scholars, neighbours, and members of the mosque about equal access for women. The role of women in Islamic faith is explored. All sides of the issue are presented through personal stories.

Padgett, J. (Director). (2001). *In other words.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

Interviews with gay, lesbian, and transgender teenagers offer firsthand accounts into the hurt that is experienced when peers use homophobic language as verbal put-downs in schools and local hangouts. This film deconstructs homophobic language and examines how language affects attitude.

Padgett, J. (Director). (2001). *Sticks and Stones.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

This film portrays the feelings of young children ages 5 to 12 who live in same-sex parent households. Children describe their experiences with bullies, commenting on how it feels to be teased for living in a gender role home that is not traditional. This film encourages empathy among young children and opens the door for discussion surrounding gender stereotypes, name-calling, and respect for all families. A teacher guide is available at **http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/66945.pdf**.

Sky, Laura. (Director). (2009) *Home safe Toronto.* **[Motion Picture]. Skyworks Charitable Foundation.**

This film is the second in the series about the impact of homelessness on children and young people. Home Safe Calgary was released in 2008 and Home Safe Hamilton in 2010. The films are set up in chapters so that a teacher could use specific sections for classroom discussion.

Swerhone, Elise. (Director). (2000). *One of them.* **[Motion Picture]. Montreal, Quebec: National Film Board of Canada.**

This video deals with a group of high school students planning a number of events to raise awareness of sexism, racism, and homophobia. When some of their peers, including a good friend, begin calling them homophobic names they must decide how to deal with this challenging situation. A classroom activity package is included with the video.

Rethinking Schools (2008). *Unlearning "Indian" stereotypes.* **[Motion Picture]. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.**

Narrated by young Native American children, racial stereotypes are deconstructed and an introduction to Native American history is presented. This film serves as a resource for teachers seeking to confront stereotypes in their classrooms.

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