

Digital Collages on Social Justice Issues in Education

DIGITAL COLLAGES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN EDUCATION

Perspectives from BA Educational Studies Students (Winter
2023)

ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Ontario Tech University acknowledges the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands in friendship. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississaugas, a branch of the greater Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

We acknowledge this land out of respect for the Indigenous nations who have cared for Turtle Island, also called North America, from before the arrival of settler peoples until this day. Most importantly, we remember the history of these lands has been tainted by poor treatment and a lack of friendship with the First Nations who call them home.

This history is something we are all affected by as we are all treaty people in Canada. We all have a shared history to reflect on, and each of us is affected by this history in different ways. Our past defines our present, but if we move forward as friends and allies, then it does not have to define our future.

INTRODUCTION

**“I found I could say things with colors and shapes
that I couldn’t say any other way – things I had no
words for.”**

Georgia O' Keefe

The above quote by painter Georgia O’Keefe reminds us of the importance of embracing different approaches to conveying knowledge outside of traditional expressions of communication. It is an especially fitting quote as the content in this e-book leans heavily into using visual techniques to not only engage readers, but also inform them on issues impacting education.

In this e-book, you will find a collection of digital collages created as an assignment for the course *Social Justice Issues in Education*, a fourth-year course that I taught in the Winter of 2023 in the Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies at Ontario Tech University. Through the creation of original digital collages and by writing essays to contextualize their work, students have shared their knowledge on a particular issue through a personal lens of lived experience. The topics on these pages vary, but there is a common thread that can be found woven into each digital collage: social justice in education.

I am grateful for the willingness of students who took this course to share their assignments as an open educational resource. As well, I would like to say thank you to Hannah Atkinson as I acknowledge the work she did in the role of associate editor. Hannah also designed the front cover to this e-book. In addition, I would like to thank Pranjali Saloni and her team in the OER Lab at Ontario Tech University.

It is my sincere hope that you enjoy learning about social justice issues in education through the personal perspectives of the students who graciously contributed their work to this collection.

Dr. Anna Rodrigues

Editor

PART I INCLUSION

1.

2SLGBTQ+ RIGHTS



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Emily Ventura

As we move towards a more accepting and understanding society, students are feeling more comfortable expressing themselves and their sexual or gender orientation with schools beginning to slowly follow their students and become more accepting and inclusive. Resources for students such as, Safe spaces and LGBTQ-

focused learning in classrooms are some ways schools are incorporating LGBTQ learning and inclusion into the learning environment (Snapp et al., 2015).

When creating my collage, I thought about how members of the LGBTQ community, especially the younger generations often deal with: hardships from lack of acceptance from their peers, bullying, struggling to be seen as valued members of their school community (Gilbert et al., 2081), and have a hard time expressing themselves outside of their safe spaces, as well as seeing themselves represented within heteronormative society (Hanna, 2017). I wanted to be sure to not just show LGBTQ histories like the Stonewall riots and LGBTQ gay liberation activist Marsha P. Johnson (Rothberg, n.d.), two important aspects of LGBTQ history that are not often taught, but also show what LGBTQ history makers had helped to create for today's youth.

I added pictures of students learning about LGBTQ unity and equality, as well as showcasing the pride that LGBTQ community members have for their sexual and gender identity. I also show how diverse and inclusive the LGBTQ community is, while also portraying how important it is for schools to understand and accept their LGBTQ students and create a safe space for them to express themselves and see themselves within society (Wagaman et al., 2018) and their learning environment to help foster acceptance and understanding and teach their students about the LGBTQ community and its history.

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Click on image to see a larger version.

All I heard was, “older people are stubborn; older people don’t want to learn; older people don’t want to change; older people need to unlearn.” I was taken aback by her stereotypical language and felt judged. In fairness, she could not see that I was one of “those people” as my webcam was off during our meeting. I responded by talking about the dangers of generational labelling and then moved on. But the interchange got me thinking. “Was she right?” I could certainly think of some older adults who fit that bill, but many more looked nothing like what she described.

According to a World Health Organization [WHO] report, “ageism is prevalent, deeply ingrained and more



socially accepted than other forms of bias” (2021a, p. 20). It states that one in two people globally has ageist attitudes manifested in policies, societal norms, and perceptions which cause exclusion. It calls out ageism as a human rights issue. Addressing ageism through education is essential as our global population is aging. The upcoming “grey tsunami” will see people 60+ double by 2050 and people 80+ triple between 2020-2050 (WHO, 2022). Living longer means considering options, including returning to school for various reasons, like Jules Means, in the week two PBS Video (Cerre, 2021).

This assignment pushed me to dig deeper by reflecting on my experience with ageism and course content. In this collage, I have used various images to explore aging stereotypes, the notion of invisibility (especially pronounced in our youth-obsessed culture), and the idea of individuality. To combat ageism, we must move past seeing all older people as having the same tired, stereotypical traits and behaviours because we are not all the same – a message the embedded WHO video (2019b) reinforces.

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3.

MARGINALIZED IDENTITIES



Click on image to see a larger version.

By Lindsey Barbosa

This digital collage focuses on the social justice issue of marginalized identities. The images in this collage represent students from various marginalized communities. Each image was intentionally and carefully selected to represent the diverse identities of the student population. The Oxford English Dictionary defines intersectionality as “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group” (as cited in Eager, 2019). I chose to focus on identities that are marginalized for my digital collage as I recognize the unique daily challenges that students face based on different aspects of their identity. Students with marginalized intersecting identities face a variety of significant barriers to their emotional, social, and academic success (Eager, 2019).

In this course, we examined concepts of teaching for social justice using an activist approach. Zoric &

Heyding (2014) state that a democratic and socially just education system that serves all equally and well is a key component toward the goal of social justice education. Reaching this goal requires educators to recognize that students have overlapping identities that can significantly impact their experiences at school and in life. As I reflect deeper on my understanding of intersectionality and its impact on education, it made me think about the content from week two when we looked at educational equity in Canada. According to a 2016 Census, 29% of the population of Ontario were immigrants, 29% were visible minorities, and 3% identified as Aboriginal Persons (Statistics Canada, 2019, as cited in Campbell, 2021). This growing and diverse population is reflected in our school systems and contributes to intersectionality amongst our students. To best support students with intersecting identities, I believe educators must view students' identities through multiple lenses, explore ways to reduce barriers and strive to provide safe and inclusive environments for all learners.

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The collage is displayed on a Canadian flag with a globe to represent the 23% of the population who are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022). The maple leaf displays the multiple definitions of the word language; the highlighted parts remind us that language is more than spoken words but part of a nation and the style of a people. From the moment they enter school, immigrant students are at a disadvantage to their peers as

they must learn the language, culture, and values in addition to the curriculum. Despite intentions, educators often use an ethnocentric, not multicultural approach, and many “lack self-awareness and [their] response to difference can promote negative attitudes that can lead to wider achievement gaps and discrimination among immigrant students” (Lara & Volante, 2019, p. 4).

These students are further disadvantaged as their parents’ limited English skills reduce their ability to support their children academically (Lara & Volante, 2019). School Board practices such as standardized testing and streaming, often misidentify these students, failing to recognize that they actually need more time to learn the language and catch up to their peers (Lara & Volante, 2019). As a result, they are overrepresented in special education classes (MAEC, 2016). The pressure of learning a new language and struggling to communicate with others often leads to feelings of isolation and lack of belonging (Cardoza, 2018; Lara & Volante, 2019). Each of these factors, combined or independently, puts non-English speaking immigrant students at risk of not reaching their full academic potential.

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5.

2SLGBTQ+ RIGHTS



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Julia Amaral

Over the years, society has become more accepting of 2SLGBTQ+ people; however, homophobia is still a prevalent issue. Homophobia is often conveyed through jokes rather than direct comments, which are equally harmful (Queen Mary University of London, n.d.). When I was in high school, I constantly heard people making discriminatory comments or jokes about the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Hearing these comments multiple times a day, every day, for years, negatively affected my self-image as my mother identifies as lesbian, and I was confused about my identity. I used the collage to reflect on my experiences through this challenging time in my life. I included an image on the top stating the international day against homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia, as I felt it was necessary to spread awareness.

To stand up to homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia means recognizing the importance of creating inclusive and safe spaces for everyone without discriminating based on gender expression/identity or sexual orientation (Government of Canada, 2022). An example of one way to promote inclusivity in education for 2SLGBTQ+ people would be to create a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance). GSAs and anti-homophobia policies implemented in schools create a lower risk of suicidal attempts and ideations in homosexual and heterosexual students (Saewyc et al., 2014). I included an image from the Trevor Project, a suicide prevention non-profit organization focused on assisting 2SLGBTQ+ youth, to create awareness of the issue. I have also included photos of GSAs and students/parents supporting 2SLGBTQ+ rights. Baams & Russell (2021) state that several studies have concluded that schools with GSAs create a welcoming environment and assist student adjustment. Schools must enforce anti-homophobia policies and create safe spaces (i.e. GSAs) to improve the mental health, well-being, and safety of 2SLGBTQ+ students (Baams & Russell, 2021; Saewyc et al., 2014).

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6.

GENDERED AGEISM



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Katherine Hall

This collage represents gendered ageism (World Health Organization, 2021). Having experienced the demands of raising a family, postponing education, cultural expectations, and low-income stereotypical female employment resulted in experiencing gendered ageism. I advocate that gendered ageism in university is a social justice issue. Personally, gendered ageism became apparent in the recruitment process from universities' advertisements and the lack of scholarships or grants for older students.

UNESCO advocates that global poverty would be reduced in half by completing secondary education (Kotasinska & Watkins, 2020). Barriers to access higher education are summarized in the 1982 quote from Audre Lorde: "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (as cited in Dorfman, 2012, para. 12). Women are less likely to have pensions or significant retirement savings since they have often made less money and spent fewer years working (World Health Organization, 2021). The reasons older women pursue higher education vary but ultimately, it increases their earning potential. Educational institutions commonly lack a framework to support gendered ageism due to an unconscious outgroup bias (Rodrigues, 2022; Sorella, 2022).

Fostering a community for older students (PBS NewsHour, 2021), full support for evening and weekend classes, teacher candidates should be given the choice of board location on placement, and a University Liaison for out-of-district students are still barriers to overcome at Ontario Tech. "Globally, one in two people is ageist and this is unjust" (World Health Organization, 2021, p. 16). Carin Taylor (TEDx Talks, 2022, 07:49) reminds us that the five tenets of belonging (psychological safety, empathy, acceptance, connection, and embracing values) are critical pieces of diversity, equity and inclusion that need to be in place to "nurture human potential and challenge injustice" of gendered ageism (Zoric & Heyding, 2014, para. 2).

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PART II

ACCESSIBILITY

7.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY IN SCHOOLS



Click on image to see a larger version.

By Linda Prpic

Public education is a human right, but is it truly accessible for all? Research from the Ontario Human Rights

Commission states that “students may be unable to attend their local school due to lack of physical accessibility. Many schools are multi-level and the installation of elevators may be impractical or too costly” (OHRC, 2018, p. 15). This was the exact issue at the last elementary school that I worked at. It currently still has only one ramp for access to the school; a ramp leads from the parking lot to the basement of the school. Students with mobility aids do not have the ability to enter the school from the playground with their peers and there is no opportunity for students with mobility aids or concerns to access any of the three other floors of the school. As the student progresses through grades, educators shift classrooms to accommodate the learner in the lower-level classrooms. Sadly, the student will never have the ability to visit any other classrooms or the office.

It is disheartening to know that not all children have the ability to access every school based on their choice or their needs and some “parts of the school may be inaccessible due to lack of ramps, heavy doors, site elevation or playground features. Many schools do not have washrooms suitable for students with disabilities (wide doors, higher toilets, grab bars, change tables, hoists or lifts),” (OHRC, 2018, p. 15). Reflecting on the course content, compiling images and information for my collage, and reflecting on my own personal experience as an educator has made an impact on me; we as a community must continue to work towards creating an inclusive and equitable environment and ensure that “human rights education [remains] an integral part of education” (UNESCO, 2022, p. 15).

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[illegible]

By Julianne Mulgrew

It is easiest to write on what we know. For me, that is special education. This social justice issue is significant due to the inequalities in our education system. Over my lifetime, there have been changes in accepting a person's uniqueness. These changes can be seen in Government structures, messaging in media and public celebrations of people; however, society can continue to evolve to incorporate adequate advocacy for vulnerable peoples. Having a sister with special needs is the basis of connecting to this issue. Knowing her time as a student, her mistreatment, and the lack of resources has helped me gain insight into where improvements are needed and also guide suggestions to solve injustices.

My sister is diagnosed with Global Development Delay and has struggled significantly with her mental health, experiencing episodes of psychosis. My sister went through the Catholic school system, whose model for special education emphasizes inclusion. I work in the public school system, whose model uses small class placements and suggests integration. Bunch et al. (2011) question if those with special education needs are the only group still considered appropriate to segregate.

When my sister was a student in elementary school, her diagnosis and demeanour did not allot her funding for the support she required. While general funding has increased since she was a student, accessing services remains difficult (People for Education, 2018). The waitlists to even have an initial assessment are lengthy. The Ontario Human Rights Commission points out continued barriers, including inadequate training for families and practitioners and insufficient resources to meet the needs of a person with a disability (OHRC, 2018). To improve student success, UNESCO states that “inclusive education needs to be better embedded within the fabric of education institutions, in both law and policy” (UNESCO, 2022, p. 4). To improve student success rates, we need to continue redefining education, teaching, learning and assessment and how we implement them. Recognizing the inequalities of the education system for those with special education needs is a real social justice issue. Pictures displayed in the collage were chosen to highlight the reality of this problem and the pathway of hope to a better tomorrow. Continuing to bring attention to these problems will help create a sense of belonging for all our community members and allow them to participate fully in their education journey (United Nations, 2022). We will strive to protect and promote everyone’s human rights by continuing to engage in conversations and turn those conversations into beliefs, advocacy and action.

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9.

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY IN SCHOOLS



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Natalie Waterston

Accessibility remains a significant concern in Ontario schools despite efforts to ensure inclusive learning environments. Students with physical disabilities continue to have difficulty accessing educational services because of physical barriers (Kovac, 2019). For the past 11 years, I have worked as an early childhood educator in a kindergarten classroom. I am particularly interested in this social justice issue because one of my students has Down syndrome. This child faces countless obstacles while navigating our school environment. The collage that I created depicts just a few of the challenges that students with physical disabilities encounter while they are in a school environment.

Some examples of physical barriers include heavy doors, stairs without ramps, small doorways, a lack of elevators, inaccessible restroom features, and overcrowded classrooms, which limit the ability to navigate the physical environment. With these visuals presented, I hope to gain awareness of this social justice issue. Stephens et al. (2015) conducted a study showing that children with physical disabilities face significant barriers in accessing, entering, and navigating school environments. These barriers, which set them apart from their peers, impact their emotional health. Separated entrances, alternate modes of transportation, and segregated restrooms are insufficient accommodations because they only provide partial accessibility and thus increase the child's anxiety from exclusion (Stephens et al., 2015).

It is necessary to provide an inclusive physical environment that allows students with disabilities to navigate, participate, and transition without being excluded. Schools are designed for students to develop and foster independence, competence and autonomy; why would this not imply to those with physical limitations? Kovac (2019) states that accessibility renovations may be time-consuming and disruptive, but inaccessibility is just as time-consuming and disruptive for students with disabilities. It is essential for Ontario schools to transition towards a more equitable environment for all students.

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10.

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES



Click on image to
see a larger
version.

By Nicole Khublal

It has been my experience that the prevalence of students with exceptionalities entering the public education system continues to rise. This collage represents the injustice of equitable education for students with exceptionalities. It symbolizes that in order for students to ‘reach for the stars’ and succeed in achieving their goals, equity must be present. Equal support provided for all students does not necessarily cater to individual needs. According to Article 23 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), children with special needs should have access to free education with special care and assistance from available resources. Although progress has been made to “foster equity and inclusiveness in boards and schools, evidence indicates some groups of students continue to encounter discriminatory barriers to learning” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, Background section, para. 3), affecting their quality of education and hindering the development of their full potential.

In 2022, the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee, in collaboration with government representatives, educators and members of the varying abled community, put forth a report identifying barriers within the Ontario elementary public education system. Ten categories of barriers were identified, including

attitudes, awareness and training, curriculum, instruction and assessment, digital learning and technology, organizational barriers, social realms, physical and architectural barriers, planning for emergency and safety, timelines and accountability, and transitions (Government of Ontario, 2022). The removal of these barriers would ensure that students can receive the best education possible.

The Ontario Government should investigate these barriers and consider the recommendations as necessary implementations to remove current and prevent future restrictions within the education system. Creating an action plan, in addition to standard province-wide board policies, can make all the difference between inclusive and student-centred equitable education.

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PART III

EQUITY

11.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS IN EDUCATION



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Alice Pek

I was inspired to create my digital collage after watching the video, Older Adults are Heading to College in Pursuit of New Opportunities (PBS NewsHour, 2021). In this video, we learn that Jules Means has returned

to school to earn a degree at the University of California Berkley at age 67 with a full scholarship from the University, which she is grateful for as she explains that with the social security salary she is on, it would be almost impossible to afford the tuition. It is apparent in the video that Means is clearly enjoying her time at school and that the students that she works alongside both benefit greatly from her presence.

The fact that Means can return to school because of a full scholarship from the University is only mentioned briefly in this video, but this is a significant social justice issue and the inspiration for my digital collage. Article 26 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to education,” yet it’s clear that financial barriers make this impossible for so many.

Like Means, I also returned to university later in life at the age of 39 mostly due to a change in my financial situation for the better, and like Means, the benefits for me and others in my life are significant.

Overall, my collage is a snapshot of what returning to school means to me; showing how valuable education is for adults, and emphasizing why financial barriers should not hinder adults from returning to school later in life. In my collage, I have placed myself and my children on a path, which symbolizes the path of life that I am on now that I am in university. I have placed a picture of my partner on the path as well because without returning to school, we would not have met and changed the course of my life for the better. I have placed various images in the bird’s beaks or claws to show various ways that returning to school as an adult has improved or will improve my life. The cape and the flower crown symbolize the sense of happiness, freedom, and power I feel from being able to work toward my degree. The overall feel of the collage is one of joy, with the sun at the end of the path symbolizing this.

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12.

EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Angela J. Stoneman

I was appalled when reading about the conditions under which Indigenous children are still learning. The content triggered an emotional response that compelled me to focus on this issue for my collage.

The International Declaration of Human Rights states “everyone has the right to education” (Article 26). The Canadian government continues to fail to provide Indigenous children with an adequate education. First Nations students continue to perform below national and international standards (Campbell, 2021). The federal government is responsible for funding schools on First Nation reserves and continues to provide less to First Nations schools than provincial schools receive from their respective governments (Neilson and Madden, 2020). The disparity averages \$4000 per student (Neilson and Madden, 2020).

Many schools on reservations also lack a consistent source of water and contend with black mould and rodent problems (City News, 2021). Learning by Indigenous students is also impeded by the lack of books, gyms, and lab equipment. These conditions and disproportion in funding conflict with the government’s commitment to reconciliation with mutual respect and equity moving forward (Campbell, 2021).

Mel Ainscow’s suggestion to replace the term inclusion with “every learner matters, and matters equally”(Unesco, 2022, p. 11) emphasizes that Indigenous learners in Canada are not receiving an inclusive education. Indicated by the underfunding and barriers they face to succeed and move forward into higher education, our government has work to do to ensure these learners receive the resources required to close the achievement gap. Apologies for past injustices Indigenous children endured in residential schools are not enough. The government must ensure that all children in Canada may learn in clean, warm, and safe schools with the necessary resources to excel.

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13.

HOUSING CRISIS



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Ieva Jean

United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child “recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development,” as well as “the right of the child to education” and measures must be taken “to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates” (p. 9). Home status afforded by family income significantly affects a person’s sense of autonomy, certainty, and control, leading to higher levels of stress, emotional and behavioural problems, and predicts educational performance, attainment, and completion; thus, having a stable and healthy home is a fundamental need for all children (Conley, 2021; Taylor & Edwards, 2012).

Canada is experiencing a housing crisis due to the extensive price gaps between affordable housing and the actual market. Consequently, nearly 1.5 million Canadian households, and 1 in 10 children, live in an unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwelling and are not able to afford alternatives, and 80% of 18 to 28-year-olds worry they will not be able to afford a home of their choice, possibly ending up in unideal living situations (Bogart, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2022). 75% of Canadians report that rising prices affect their ability to meet day-to-day expenses, including housing, placing children in a vulnerable situation that also affects their education (Statistics Canada, 2022). Data suggests we need to build 3.5 million more homes by 2030 to reach affordability and stabilize soaring prices in the market (Adena, 2022).

I recognize that I would not be able to establish myself in today’s market and could not afford adequate housing for my family; thus, as a parent, I worry if my children, or anyone in need, will ever be able to afford their own homes and support their offspring.

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14.

IMMIGRANT EDUCATION



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Ingi Hong

The movie *Dr. Cabbie* (2014) reminded me of my frustrating experience in trying to get my education status recognized in Canada. The main character is a doctor from India who struggles to find a job in Canada and ends up working as a taxi driver. I immigrated to Canada with three years of Early Childhood Education and five years of work experience. However, my education and experience were useless according to the College of ECE. It was hard to accept that my three years of education in Korea, which upholds one of the highest worldwide education standards, is inferior to the two-year course in Canada.

In my collage, I tried to express unfairness in recognizing immigrant education. At the top of it, professionals celebrate their achievements outside of Canada, and the image of the road represents their immigration journey. People think of Canada as diverse, equitable and full of opportunity place.

The bottom half of the collage expresses people's struggle and frustration because their education and career are not recognized, so they have to jump into survival jobs. The banner's text says that although people are welcome in Canada, everything has to start from scratch. Guo & Shan (2013) noted that the Canadian equivalency assessment has to change its "deficit approach in viewing the knowledge and experiences brought in by 'the other.'" Instead, it embraces cultural difference and diversity as positive and desirable assets" (p. 478). Thus, for immigrant education recognition equity, the Canadian government needs to adjust the regulations, review the evaluation standards, and involve Ontario regulatory colleges in deciding the evaluation of immigrants' education and credentials. The Ontario government recently announced that the regulatory colleges of doctors and nurses had adjusted their regulations to register foreign-trained doctors and nurses (Jones, 2022).

It is the first step for removing the barriers for every immigrant professional, eliminating redundant education and improving the process of continuing their careers in Canada.

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15.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Iryna Ivaniv

Nowadays, education is equally a shield and a powerful weapon. In Canada, we might think there is no

problem with access to education as the right to education is included in provincial or territorial education acts. Children of kindergarten age to 18 or 21 years old have access to free public education. However, not enough has been done for people to access free education in early years settings for young children under the age of four. Also, according to results from a national survey by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (2019), not many can afford post-secondary education after they graduate from school.

Quality early years education is fundamental for all children for their holistic development. Ontario government states that “every child deserves the best start in life. And it’s the government’s responsibility to ensure that families have the right supports so children can grow and learn in a healthy environment” (The Government of Ontario, 2016, para 1). However, none of the Canadian provinces or territories do enough to ensure that every child has access to a high-quality educational environment before they enter the publicly funded school system (Government of Canada, 2022), even though studies show that investing in universal child care would benefit the country’s economy and is essential for children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Hoynes & Schanzenbach, 2018; van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018).

Similarly to early years education, the Canadian government does not provide enough financial support for all to have the ability to gain post-secondary education (Armanyous & Hudson, 2019; Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2019). Without higher education required by the current job market, many are stuck in poverty and cannot afford basic living expenses.

If Canada promises genuine inclusive education, it must shutter all the barriers to education and alleviate inequality of opportunities for all to access education.

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16.

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS



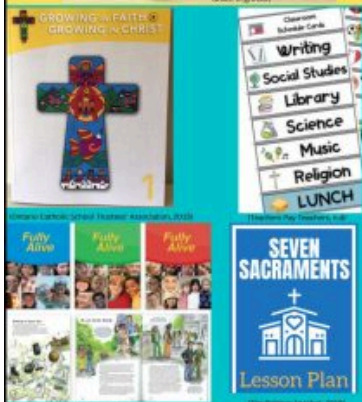
Many other minority religions receive no funding for education (All other privately run schools require parent funding) (Bayefsky & Waldman, 2007).



Educators have to be of "right faith" to be hired with the Catholic board and need letter from Priest, and proof of Catholic Sacraments records. If their beliefs do not "fit" those of Catholic religion, they may fear losing their job (Beier, 2021).

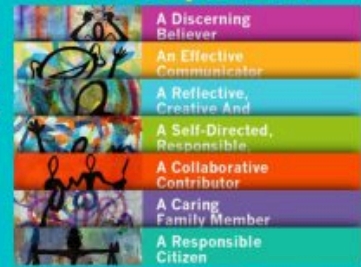


There are many diverse minority religious groups but only the Catholic religion operated schools are denominational using public money and they are able to discriminate when employing and for student admissions (Urbach, 2022).



Curriculum and practices are taught "through the lens of Catholic faith"; Students in the Catholic board aren't receiving the same education as public boards about sexual health, identity and other beliefs, values, cultures, etc. (Beier, 2021).

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations



NOTE: The language used and the highest expectation is "A Discerning Believer"

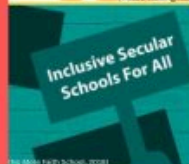
How is Religious (beliefs) Discrimination still happening in the Catholic Schools even after knowing history?



Forming/Changing beliefs to fit Catholic Religion practices...



Not enough has changed!



Education as a Human Right

From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 26

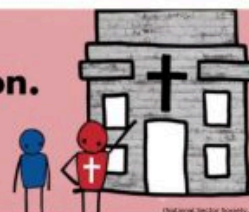
1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Ontario Catholic Board Violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Free if you are if you are Catholic or follow Catholic beliefs

Discriminates against teachers hired & students enrolled based on religion

Education, not segregation.



[Click on image to see a larger version](#)

By Krista Scroccaro-Fry

Ashamed and angry. These two words sum up the reflection that has occurred in completing the collage above. Religious discrimination is a social justice issue that, unfortunately, has been present throughout my education path and is one that there has not been enough change (in my opinion) throughout Canadian history. Education is a human right.

After reviewing Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, n.d), the Catholic School Board displays violations of this declaration, and I began to examine further how and why this is happening: two publicly funded options. Ontario education sectors provide citizens with only two free education options (Bayefsky & Waldman, 2007) and other minority religious groups are overlooked. I recall mandatory religion lessons were embedded every day, prayers were monotonously spoken throughout the school day and attendance at all monthly school masses was expected. After working in the Catholic School Board as an Educational Assistant, not much had changed. Students are still expected to follow, learn and meet the expectations of Catholic beliefs. The Catholic school board can discriminate and be denominational when hiring educators and when enrolling students (Urback, 2022). This in itself is shocking because in any other workplace setting there would be an uproar as discrimination towards religion should not determine job stability or student enrollment. How are they getting away with this? After everything we know about colonization, the connection to how the structure of education in church-based education was developed to reinforce colonial-settler ideology (Masta, 2018), and the history of residential schools implemented by the Catholic church; how do Catholic Schools systems still have all of this power? Education is a human right. Religious discrimination continues to happen. Bringing awareness to this social justice issue is essential. Not enough has changed and I am angry and ashamed.

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17.

STOPPING ANTI-BLACK RACISM



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Keisha Kerr

My social justice collage depicts the journey I have and still am experiencing as a Black woman, mother to Black children, and a Black educator in society. This journey began as an immigrant from Jamaica at a young age, where I witnessed my first brush with discrimination in the school system.

This collage represents the many experiences I have witnessed as an educator and experienced personally in the education system. The different shades of Black, the underrepresentation in schools, the lack of support for lower socioeconomic groups and immigrants/ newcomers, and the overall lack of opportunities for marginalized groups.

Supporting Students' Intersecting Identities (2019) clearly illustrates the intersectional identities of many

students I am privileged to teach and work with. As an educator, this article really resonates with me because students face many overlapping identities that impact and shape how they see themselves and view the world they live in. The struggle of race, gender, and the style of your hair are a few examples of barriers that affect students and their learning. (Eager, 2019).

These struggles have been going on for a long time; however, there seems to be a continued pattern where not much is being done or has changed in the school system. According to Campbell (2020), data have shown that the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status negatively affects student educational opportunities and pathways (p. 13). So why have these practices remained the same or not been changed for all students to reach their fullest potential?

Every student should be empowered, supported, and encouraged to strive for success. I believe all students deserve the opportunity to be their best and reach their potential, regardless of the barriers they may face because of the colour of their skin. I want students to believe that they can be successful and be in a school system that is equitable and inclusive for all.

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18.

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITY



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Melanie Nickel

When children attend the same classes in the same school, the hope would be that each student would have the same opportunities for success, support, and enjoyment of learning. The reality is the socioeconomic inequality students face creates a divide. There is a gap in the learning that money creates. This fact is not just

true in developing nations; this issue also impacts Canadian students from coast to coast. “Poverty remains a stubborn fact of life even in rich countries like Canada. In particular, the poverty of our children has been a continuing concern” (Ferguson et al., 2007, p. 701).

Money may not be able to buy happiness, but it can buy laptops, nutritious and plentiful food, school supplies, and other educational equipment. As Agnew notes, “many kids will have trouble focusing in an academic setting due to a lack of energy and motivation. A hungry child often has ongoing health issues, so he may have frequent school absences that also make it difficult to learn” (2017, para. 3). Money can pay for internet access, music lessons, athletic activities, before and after-school care, and tutors. A household with stable income and consistent employment can also ensure that children have less disruption to their education when families don’t have to relocate. “High mobility adversely affects the children who are forced to move frequently, withdrawing from one school and enrolling in another. Frequent moves disrupt children’s education” (Lynch, 2019, section 4). In spite of Canada’s health care plan, prescriptions, dentist treatments and checkups, and eyeglasses are all costly for families. Until all children have equal access, supports, and resources needed for educational success poverty will impact their education in some or all components.

The UNICEF report *The State of Global Learning Poverty* (2022, p. 56) states, “after all the hard work by so many families and educators to provide education for all, it is unacceptable that less than one-third of children in low- and middle-income countries are now enrolled in school and reading with comprehension at a minimally acceptable level.” We must continue to improve and evaluate how we support families and educators to ensure our future generations have educational success.

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19.

THE RIGHT TO READ



[Click on image to see a larger version.](#)

By Sophia Del Medico

This digital collage is about the social justice issue in education called *The Right to Read*. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launched a public inquiry into Ontario's public education to shed light that the right to read is a basic and necessary right. This inquiry held all important stakeholders and led to the

conclusion that the public school system is failing those that are most vulnerable. For example, those who have learning disabilities, are dyslexic, are from marginalized communities, and many others. These learners are not receiving evidence-based approaches to help them read (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2019). The OHRC (2019) gave a hundred and fifty-seven recommendations to address the gaps. Issues such as accommodations, reading interventions, professional assessments, and raising awareness of systemic issues.

The Dyslexia Project states that there are four pillars of literacy: Education, Economics, Empathy and Equity. From the above OHRC inquiry, it can be concluded that the education system is notwithstanding its duty to ensure there is equitable access to literacy materials. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1973) Article 26, “Everyone has the right to education.” However, not all are given the right to read, which is a fundamental component of education. “The assumption that some students with disabilities will never be able to read is a form of ableism” (Decoding Dyslexia, 2021, para 5).

I believe this to be a matter of economic value, investing in giving learners the ability to read is not high on the political radar. Although Steven Lecce tweeted “Ontario will make a 25 million dollar investment in evidence-based reading interventions programs and professional assessment supports” this is only half the battle. According to the OHRC, it is also about access to literacy materials, which Steven Lecce did not address a plan for. Subsequently, I was unable to locate any information on the release of said funds that were planned to be allocated for the school year 2022-2023.

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20.

FOOD JUSTICE



[Click on image to see a larger version](#)

By Tracey Webster

The social justice issue I decided to focus on for my digital collage is food justice, specifically food insecurity

for adults in the workplace. “Food insecurity is defined as inadequate or insufficient access to food due to financial constraints” (TEDx Talks, 2021, 2:13). I selected this topic based on my current work experience. At my organization, our CEO subsidizes the cost of food in the cafeteria to ensure that all employees have access to healthy food at work.

The belief is that there is a direct correlation between healthy food and its impact on the body and mind. It helps create a healthier, more productive, happier, less stressed employee with increased mental health (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2020). Unfortunately, only some organizations share this philosophy.

As I depicted in my digital collage, many additional benefits can result from having access to healthier foods. Studies showed that 65% of food-insecure households were in the workforce, so more organizations need to implement similar programs (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). The *Wanted* title at the top of the collage represents the deficiency we are currently encountering within organizations. Additionally, it is not enough that people have access to sustenance, as true food security means that “people have enough high-quality, protein-rich, safe food to eat” (UFCW Canada, n.d., para. 3). Therefore, the selected images characterize the foods that should be readily available. I also attempted to illustrate that food insecurity is unfairly more common in Black and Indigenous communities (TEDx Talks, 2021, 4:33). With multicultural images, I show that food security should be available to all ethnicities. Considering that employees with unhealthy eating habits are 66% more likely to be unproductive, it is advantageous for organizations to encourage employees to make healthier choices (Gonzalez, n.d.). Following my organization’s leadership and providing employees with healthier choices at a reduced or subsidized rate ensures they have access to at least one healthy meal daily.

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