

HARMONY EDUCATION SERIES

Educator's Equity Workbook



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This workbook is part of Harmony Movement's *Harmony Education Series*. The workbook has been developed with support from the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Harmony Movement offers interactive, innovative workshops for school board employees, students, parents and community members who are interested in confronting prejudice in our society and in embracing and respecting differences. If your school or board would like to book a workshop or request additional copies of this workbook, please email educator@harmony.ca or phone 416-385-2660.

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The photographs in this book originally appeared in the national exhibition *Them = Us: Photographic Journeys Across Our Cultural Boundaries* ©1997 The National Movement for Harmony in Canada. The exhibition was a joint project of Harmony Movement, PhotoSensitive and Kodak Canada Inc., with financial support from Canadian Heritage.

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Front cover photos (left to right): Fred Thornhill, Caroline Hayeur, Stan Behal

Back cover photos (left to right): Stan Behal, Yuri Dojc, Sid Tabak

First Edition, September 2012

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Disponible en français

ISBN 978-0-9866890-0-0

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Teacher Rationale: Equity = Success

This workbook is designed to help you support the success of all students.

Thank you for demonstrating your commitment to equity and to the well-being of your students and colleagues. The *Educator's Equity Workbook* has been created to help you build on your successes as an educator and develop tools to address some of the challenges you encounter.

Harmony Movement's *Educator's Equity Workbook* aims to support schools and teachers in implementing the Ontario Ministry of Education's *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, and in creating more equitable, inclusive and welcoming learning environments.

The Ministry recognizes that when students feel respected, reflected and welcomed in their learning environments, student engagement increases, performance improves and achievement gaps are reduced. This *Educator's Equity Workbook* is a resource to aid Professional Learning Communities and individual educators in self-reflective practice.

This toolkit is designed to support educators to:

- develop an equity lens approach to increase efficacy in working with students, colleagues and community members;
- examine the education system and professional practices through an equity lens;
- understand how inequity manifests at the systemic and individual levels;
- explore how power and privilege may lead to inequity and exclusion;
- identify and address inequitable power relations;
- deepen our understanding of the impact of bias and stereotypes on students, colleagues, administrators, and ourselves; and
- promote critical and analytical thinking skills that align with expectations of the curriculum.

Equity and excellence go hand in hand... In a truly equitable system, factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic status do not prevent students from achieving ambitious outcomes. Our experience shows that barriers can be removed when all education partners create the conditions needed for success.

~ Ontario Ministry
of Education
*Reach Every Student:
Energizing Ontario
Education*

Realizing the Promise of Diversity

The Ontario Ministry of Education's *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* was launched in April 2009. It is designed to support the fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The *Strategy* calls for each school to "create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity".

- ▶ **Equity:** A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.
- ▶ **Inclusive Education:** 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.
- ▶ **Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human *qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.*

Three core priorities of the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*:

- ▶ Improving student achievement
- ▶ Reducing achievement gaps
- ▶ Increasing public confidence in Ontario's education system



Gilbert Duclos

The *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* aims to identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers, such as racism, religious intolerance, ableism, and homophobia, experienced by students, staff and parents/guardians, to help ensure that everyone feels respected and welcomed in their learning environments.



Stan Behal, PhotoSensitive

The *Strategy* is implemented within the context of the Education Act, which affirms the constitutional rights of Catholic and French language rights holders in Ontario. The *Strategy* respects the Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized by the Constitution Act 1982. The *Strategy* also reflects the values outlined in the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations.

The Ontario Ministry of Education directs each school board to develop and implement an Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and religious accommodation guidelines. The Ministry's Policy/Program Memorandum No.119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policy in Ontario Schools", outlines eight areas of focus:

1. Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices
2. Shared and committed leadership
3. School-community relationships
4. Inclusive curriculum and assessment practices
5. Religious accommodation
6. School climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment
7. Professional learning
8. Accountability and transparency

The *Strategy*, the Policy/Program Memorandum No.119, and the document *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation 2009* are tools to provide direction, support and guidance to boards and schools to create more equitable and inclusive learning environments, where students can achieve their highest potential.

Working Through The Workbook

This workbook is intended to support you by offering the opportunity to reflect and examine the lenses with which you view the world. The following four guiding principles are adapted from American equity and diversity theorist Paul C. Gorski. Consider them as you work through the process:

▶ **Allow yourself to be challenged**

Equity work is high stakes. Because equity is about changing power structures, it can be uncomfortable and, more often than not, emotionally charged. When you are prepared for this and willing to allow yourself to be challenged, you create new possibilities for professional and personal growth, finding innovative solutions to past challenges.

▶ **Acknowledge your expertise**

You are an expert in your field and bring much knowledge and experience to your role as an educator. As an individual with a commitment to equity, your life experience and ethical knowledge are the foundation of this expertise. You have the skills and ability to make positive change in your school community and to have a profound impact on the lives of your students.

▶ **Acknowledge the need for even greater expertise**

We are all life-long learners on issues of equity and inclusion. These issues have an impact on the experiences of our students, colleagues and community members, not to mention ourselves, in multifaceted ways. The better we are able to perceive ourselves, our students and our schools through an equity lens, the better prepared we will be to meet the needs of our students and communities.

▶ **Challenge yourself to think critically and to ask questions**

We will narrow the gaps in student achievement only when we identify and address the root causes of these gaps. Ask yourself, how can the education system better meet the needs of all students? How can our practices as educators better address these challenges?

Equity-Based Analysis

The primary objective of this workbook is to explore our personal equity lenses, rather than to provide lesson plans or draw curriculum connections. This is because lesson plans and curriculum connections are specific to grade, subject, context and student demographics; whereas with a polished equity lens, we can analyze and study how any material or environment can contribute to equity and inclusion.

Every lesson and every environment therefore becomes a moment to teach about equity and inclusion. Ensuring the success of all students and closing achievement gaps isn't necessarily about spending precious hours searching for or creating the perfect lesson plan. It is about developing the ability to approach any lesson plan from the perspective of equity and inclusion.

E.B.A., or Equity-Based Analysis, is an essential tool that will help you ensure that all students feel respected, reflected, welcomed and equipped to succeed in your classroom, school and community.

E.B.A. is a set of questions to ask yourself in your daily work. These questions can be applied to curriculum, lesson plans, resource materials, classroom or school environment, physical surroundings, staff, interactions between staff and students, interactions amongst staff, interactions amongst students, assessment tools, etc. These questions are relevant to all aspects of the education system and to a student's experience of school.

► **When examining your own practices, materials, and environment, always remember to ask yourself:**

Who is represented?
How are they represented?
Who is not represented?
Who has power?
What kind(s) of power do they have?
What impact do these representations have on students?
How can I empower my own students?

► **Keep in mind the following, as well as any other aspects you may want to add:**

- Race/ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Ability
- Socio-economic status
- Sexual orientation
- Faith
- Mental and physical health
- Language
- Family status

► **Think of your own school and classroom:**

Who is represented in your curriculum materials? How are they represented? Who is not? For example, are diverse races depicted positively throughout your curriculum material? Are the historical contributions of people of diverse abilities celebrated throughout your curriculum? Are materials available in multiple languages? Do students see youth of diverse faiths represented positively in their textbooks?

Who is represented on your staff? Who is not?

Who is represented in pictures on the walls? Who is not? What cultures are represented in artwork around the building? In instruments and music in music class? In activities and sports in Physical Education?

Where and how is mental health represented in the curriculum/classroom/school?

Where are people of diverse sexual orientations represented in the curriculum/classroom/school? Where are people of diverse gender identities represented? How are they represented?

Where are First Nations, Métis and Inuit people represented? How are they represented?

Where are diverse families and households represented? (e.g., single-parent households, foster care, group homes, multi-racial families, multi-generational households, same-sex parents, multi-family households, etc.)

What can you do to make your school more inclusive?

Throughout this workbook, we use various terms to refer to the original inhabitants of this land and their descendants. At times we differentiate between First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, though we also use terms such as First Peoples and Aboriginal to refer to all three categories. We do this in recognition of the contested nature of all of these terms, as well as in recognition of those people who identify as Aboriginal but have been denied more specific knowledge of their ancestry.

Prejudices and Stereotypes

This section provides you with the opportunity to explore the roots of prejudices and stereotypes, to reflect on their accuracy and their consequences, and to address their harmful effects.

Learning objectives:

- To gain an understanding of the meaning of the words prejudice and stereotype;
- To identify when prejudgment or stereotyping is occurring;
- To recognize and question our own assumptions about others;
- To recognize the harmful effects of prejudgment and stereotyping; and
- To challenge the prejudices and stereotypes held by ourselves and others.



VISUALIZING THE INVISIBLE

As you might have noticed, about only 10 per cent of this iceberg sits above the surface of the water. This image is one way to visualize the visible and invisible aspects of an individual. The only way we can get to know a person's "90 per cent" is to take the time to build relationships.

Three things people often assume about you:

Five things you wish people knew about you:

Are there parts of your identity you do not share with others? What is the effort involved in keeping those aspects private? What would need to change for you to feel comfortable sharing these parts of your identity?

Reflect

Reflect

What are the visible and invisible parts of your identity? How do these relate to your students'/ parents'/ guardians' perception of you?

What are the visible and invisible parts of your students'/parents'/guardians' identities? How does this relate to your perception of them?

How accurate are the assumptions we make about other people?

CALL IT WHAT IT IS

- ▶ **Stereotype:** A stereotype is an idea or belief that assumes the sameness of all members of a particular group. Stereotypes fail to recognize individual differences and attribute the same characteristic(s) to all members of a group. There is no such thing as a positive stereotype.

What are some of the stereotypes we see in the media about gender? About socio-economic status? Race? Ability? Age? Language? Sexual orientation? Mental and physical health? (For example, “pink is for girls” or “teenagers are lazy”).

- ▶ **Prejudice:** A prejudice is a prejudgment or assumption about a person or a group of people without adequate knowledge of who they are. It is an irrational thought or attitude, often based on stereotypes. Prejudices can affect someone’s behaviour towards another person or group. An example of a prejudgment is assuming that someone will be a bad student because of the way he or she looks.

Can you think of a time when someone prejudged you before getting to know you?

Can you think of a time when you prejudged someone else? How did you feel when you discovered the truth?

Prejudice + Power = Discrimination

- ▶ **Discrimination:** Discrimination is an action based on prejudiced attitudes. It is the unfair/ inequitable treatment of someone based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, socio-economic status, language, faith or other part of their identity, and it can be conscious or unconscious. To discriminate, one group must have social, economic and/ or political power to affect another group.

Discrimination can be individual, such as imitating someone’s accent, or spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation. It can also occur on a larger systemic level, involving policies and procedures which limit access to services or activities, such as charging money to join a school team or club. Students who face discrimination can feel unsafe and unaccepted at school, impeding their ability to learn.

What individual acts of discrimination have you seen at school? What about examples of systemic discrimination?



Craig Chivers, PhotoSensitive

You are invited to reflect on your journey through this workbook and to make a personal commitment towards taking action in your school. You have the opportunity to set both short- and long-term goals, and to revisit them to assess progress and to determine the potential for further growth.

Becoming a Leader for Change

This section offers the opportunity to reflect upon, brainstorm and plan effective practices to ensure more equitable and inclusive schools and communities.

Based on Harmony Movement's LINKS program, the first step involves examining **Leadership, Initiative, Networking, Knowledge** and **Sustainability** for social change. Educators also are provided with a Strategy Planning template to use with colleagues, administration, students and/or community members.

What does *leadership* mean to you?

What can you do to become an equity and inclusion leader in your classroom?
School? Community?

What does *initiative* mean to you?

List three initiatives you can take to promote equity in your school

With whom can you *network* to create positive change in your school/board?

What additional *knowledge* do you need to be an effective leader for equity at your school?
Where will you gain this knowledge?

What steps can you take to ensure that change is *sustainable*?
