



PrincipalConnections

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JEAN VANIER

*Three Things
I Have Learned*

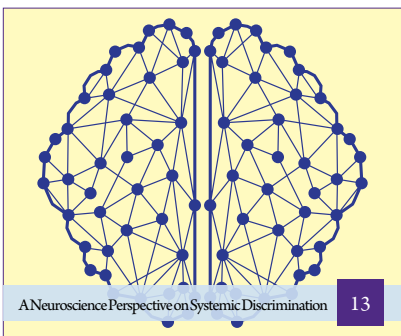
AVIS GLAZE

*An Interview with
Dr. Avis Glaze*

SHAKIL CHOUDHURY

*A Neuroscience Perspective on
Systemic Discrimination*

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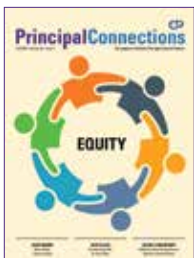


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Equity

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We would like to acknowledge that the CPCO office is on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

EDITORIAL, ADVERTISING & SALES

- Deirdre Kinsella Biss**, Editor
dkinsellabiss@cpco.on.ca
- Carol Anne Jeanson**, Copy Editor
- Ania Czupajlo**, Senior Designer/Principal Connections Art Director
aczupajlo@cpco.on.ca | ext. 25
- John Nijmeh**, Advertising Manager
events@cpco.on.ca | ext. 28
- Tarik Cox**, Marketing & Communications Manager
tcox@cpco.on.ca | ext. 38
- Gaby Aloï**, Manager of Corporate Operations
galoi@cpco.on.ca | ext. 26

CORPORATE, PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Jennifer Yust**, President
president@cpco.on.ca | ext. 22
- Joseph Geiser**, Executive Director
jgeiser@cpco.on.ca | ext. 34
- Wendy Lopez**, General Counsel
wlopez@cpco.on.ca | ext. 23
- Ron McNamara**, Support Services Advisor
rmcnamara@cpco.on.ca | ext. 27
- Jeff Baechler**, Support Services Advisor
jbaechler@cpco.on.ca | ext. 40
- Marguerite Thomson**, Support Services Advisor
mthomson@cpco.on.ca | ext. 41
- Adaeze Sunny**, Administrative Assistant, Legal
asunny@cpco.on.ca | ext. 42
- Luciana Cardarelli**, Program & Member Services Coordinator
lcardarelli@cpco.on.ca | ext. 37
- Jan Murphy**, Program & Member Services Assistant Coordinator
jmurphy@cpco.on.ca | ext. 24
- Vanessa Kellow**, Administrative Assistant, Professional Learning
vkellow@cpco.on.ca | ext. 31
- Jacob Chouinard**, Communications & Technology Officer
jchouinard@cpco.on.ca | ext. 30
- Maria Cortez**, Administrative Assistant, Operations
mcortez@cpco.on.ca | ext. 32
- Bessy Valerio**, Receptionist
bvalerio@cpco.on.ca | ext. 21

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Catholic Principals' Council | Ontario
Box 2325, Suite 3030, 2300 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1E4

1-888-621-9190 toll free • 416-483-1556 phone • 416-483-2554 fax
info@cpco.on.ca • blog.cpco.on.ca • www.cpco.on.ca



FROM THE EDITOR
Deirdre Kinsella Biss

Equity is Excellence

Greater equity for our students means greater student success. Helping students reach their maximum potential requires being aware of the barriers that exist in our schools and taking action to remove them. Recognizing the importance of our students' identity, their needs, their community and their well-being is vital to supporting their growth. As Catholic leaders we are called to make our schools safe, equitable learning places. So, the type of relationships we form, the learning environment we create, the curriculum we teach, and the policies we implement all matter significantly.

In his opening message, Jean Vanier says the change starts with us. He invites us to love others audaciously, to alter our perspective, to question deeply and to take responsibility for other people. He challenges us to think critically about what "normal" means in this world. He appeals to us to build a world of justice and peace by activating these foundational building blocks.

Shakil Choudhury shares insights on systemic discrimination and the "land of micro-inequities" in his article *A Neuroscience Perspective on Systemic Discrimination*. He draws our attention to the small words, actions and beliefs that can validate one group, while minimizing and diminishing other groups. He provides us with four starting points that can influence our practice.

Avis Glaze shares her thoughts with us about the importance of equity in our schools. In her interview with *Principal Connections*, Avis discusses the equity focus in Ontario from a historical perspective and highlights future trends that could impact equity initiatives in our schools. She also speaks candidly about her concerns for our Indigenous students and shares some personal experiences with equity and inclusion.

The curriculum we teach matters. Equity includes students being able to see themselves in the curriculum they learn. Literacy and numeracy is not enough. In his article, *The Principalship Has Changed: 2020 Here We Come*, Michael Fullan discusses the need for all our students to develop certain foundational "Global Competencies." He suggests that our school communities must co-learn together to make a difference and change the world.

Equity involves everyone. It requires an inclusive and holistic way of thinking. It requires a deep understanding of the point of view of others. It involves a willingness to problem solve and work together.

Equity involves more than what happens in the classroom. Christine Corso discusses some of the double disadvantaged gaps that exist for students, starting at the school entry point. In her article, *Issues of Equity in Ontario's Schools*, Christine looks at the impact that situations of poverty have on student learning.

Awareness of personal biases and blind spots is an essential part of the equity journey.

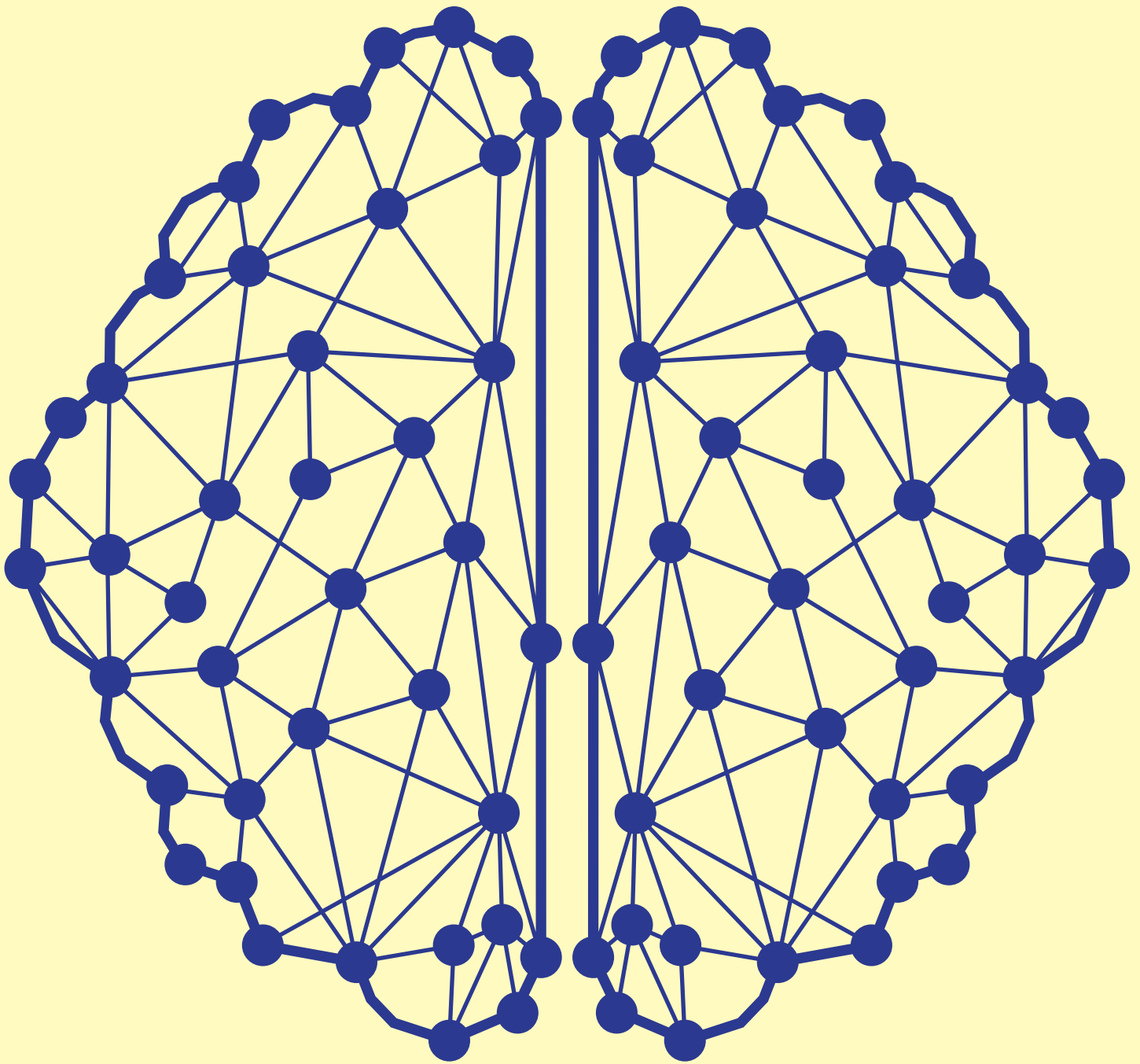
Understanding the role that "privilege" plays in society is necessary for personal growth and enables us to better identify and break down barriers. In the article, *Jesus Understood Privilege, Why Can't We?* Michelle Coutinho and Michael Harrison use Gospel stories to highlight Jesus as the ultimate role model for dealing with situations of privilege.

Equity involves everyone. It requires an inclusive and holistic way of thinking. It requires a deep understanding of the point of view of others. It involves a willingness to problem solve and work together. We must reflect on the work we do and address whose voices are present and whose voices are missing. Equity touches the hearts and minds of those we encounter. Building equity in our Catholic schools requires us to consciously level the playing field and provide opportunity, support and access to learning for all.



An Interview with Dr. Avis Glaze

Dr. Avis Glaze is one of Canada's outstanding educators and a recognized international leader in the field of education. Avis has experience at all levels of the education system. As Ontario's first Chief Student Achievement Officer and Founding CEO of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, she has played a pivotal role in improving student achievement in Ontario. In this interview with Principal Connections Magazine, Avis shares her thoughts about equity and inclusion in our schools.



A Neuroscience Perspective on Systemic Discrimination

By **Shakil Choudhury**



After working with thousands of people across the education sector, I'm clear there is a central problem in our attempts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion: most people don't fully grasp the concept of *systemic discrimination*.

Without this key concept, we can't entirely understand what underlies the student achievement gaps so often discussed by education leaders. Nor, can we comprehend the phenomena of *glass ceilings* and *sticky floors* in hiring that often hold back minority group members. The end result is staff teams that often don't look, act or sound like the diverse communities they serve. The inconsistent understanding of systemic discrimination is similar whether I'm working with admin assistants, caretakers, teachers, school principals and vice-principals, superintendents or directors of education.

The results of my own work and a growing body of academic research show that inherited neurobiology coupled with the power of social dominance underpin

systemic discrimination whether in the forms of racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism or transphobia. I've concluded this after synthesizing considerable research from the fields of neuroscience, social psychology, anti-racism, emotional intelligence and mindfulness in my book, *Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us vs. Them* (2015). We will discuss what school leaders can do about it in four very concrete steps.

To back up slightly, systemic discrimination is a tough concept to understand as it only becomes visible when we collect data and analyze the experience of thousands of people. Through such statistics the gaps become evident, forcing us to ask questions like:

- Why do women earn less than men for the same or similar jobs (non-unionized)?*
- Why are racial minorities and Indigenous Peoples undertreated in the health care system?*
- Why do Black and Indigenous students face disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion?*

THE PRINCIPALSHIP HAS CHANGED

2020 Here We Come!

By **Michael Fullan**

Social institutions often evolve slowly over time, and then seemingly suddenly new patterns crystalize. The 2016-2019 period is one of those periods for leadership within schools. As pressures for change build, new sprouts begin to appear. At some point the breakthroughs gain momentum, take on clearer forms and appear more frequently. Akin to a social movement the new forms become more prominent. In an evolutionary sense this process has an inevitable quality, but in the end it is always shaped and confirmed by humans.

We have always been able to depend on the dynamics of evolution to end up for the better at the end of a struggle. For the past 20,000 years, broadly speaking each generation has ended up better than the previous in terms of resources and the quality of society. This time I am not so sure. Climate change is much more ominous; the future of jobs and the intermingling of robots is much more unpredictable; humankind's ability to work out problems and to ultimately get along is much more precarious. While

literacy is at an all time high so is anxiety and stress engulfing the very young and old alike.

Education has a special role to play in anticipating and linking the present to the future in real time. No other institution has a more critical role in saving society from a disintegrating future. Indeed, education needs to be the light at the end of the tunnel by positively and proactively developing alternatives in real time. Which bring us to the point of this article. Leadership of a special kind will be required.

Sure it is a big ask, but when has courage been judged on practical grounds? I just finished writing a book called *Nuance: Why some leaders succeed and others fail*. This article will serve as a precursor to my book.

There are three interrelated ways in which the principalship has been changing over the past five years. I predict that the dimensions of this role will become solidified in the next three years.

The three ways are:

First, as heretical as it might sound the focus will still include, but will move beyond, literacy, numeracy and high school graduation. I will call this leadership ***Living in the real, real world.***

Second, schools will become places where school principals mobilize students, teachers and communities to learn about and change the world. This we can label: ***Mobilizing the masses to engage the world.***

Fostering an Inclusive School Climate

By **Peter DeWitt**

“56.7% of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most commonly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or the situation could become worse if reported.”

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

Whether that feeling was real or perceived doesn't matter. What does matter is that these students didn't feel supported within their school environment. And no one should have to spend day after day in an environment where they do not feel safe. The lack of safety these students felt was partly due to the perceptions of their teachers, which contributes to a hostile school climate.

School safety and student engagement, regardless of how a student identifies, is an important element of school climate, which is a necessary component of how our schools function (DeWitt and Slade). “Taking action to make sure we have a positive and inclusive school climate means those actions include all students, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender” (DeWitt. 2017. p. 40).

The Every Teachers Project by the Manitoba Teachers' Society (Canada) found that

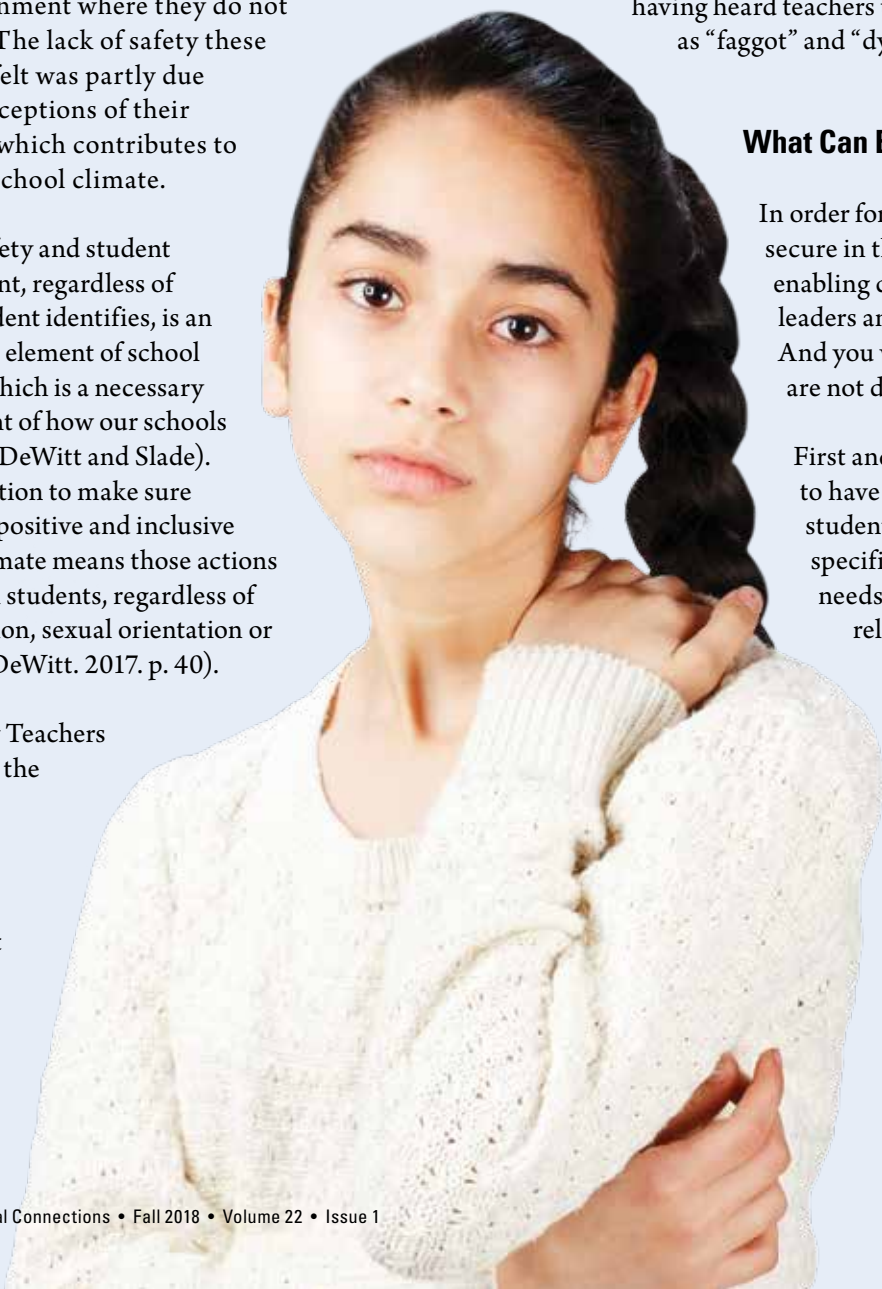
“Almost all educators (97 per cent) considered their school to be safe but when they were asked questions that focus on the safety of LGBTQ students the numbers dropped substantially, especially for transgender students.”

Additionally, the project found that, “One in five participants overall reported hearing teachers make homonegative comments such as “that's so gay” at school, with likelihood higher among Catholic school participants (28 per cent) and Ontario participants (also 28 per cent). A third of participants (34 per cent) reported having heard teachers use homophobic remarks such as “faggot” and “dyke” at school.”

What Can Educators Do Collectively?

In order for all students to feel safe and secure in their school, there are a few enabling conditions that all school leaders and teachers must have in place. And you will find that these conditions are not difficult to adopt in your school.

First and foremost, schools have to have school board policies and student codes of conduct that have specific language addressing the needs of students based on gender, religion, race and sexual orientation. This language will help support leaders when they receive pushback from families who do not agree with the teaching of controversial topics, such as LGBTQ issues, in school. Research supports this need.



THE DOUBLE DISADVANTAGE

Issues of Equity in Ontario's Schools

By **Christine Corso Schandl**

Gaps at school entry

There is a large body of research that indicates children coming to school from low-socio-economic backgrounds (SES) begin their learning journey at a disadvantage.

Children raised in lower SES homes are more likely to be identified as “not ready for school” based on the Early Development Instrument, a survey of five-year-olds carried out by teachers and parents across Ontario. This means that these children are behind their peers in areas such as emotional maturity, social competence, language and cognitive development.

The correlation is easy enough to picture: families with more financial and social resources can provide their children with more enrichment opportunities, meaning their children can develop many competencies before they even step foot in a classroom. Enrolling children in high-quality early childhood education programs, exposing them to age-appropriate cultural activities and accessing parenting resources is easier for families with more economic and social capital.

A question of equitable opportunities

Although some students are already disadvantaged at school entry, this should not seal their fate. These gaps can be closed. Social-emotional learning, creativity and other competencies are teachable and learnable, and even the structure of an individual's brain can change in response to the right environment. The key lies in the opportunities for learning that are afforded to each child. And with the vast majority of Ontario's children enrolled in publicly-funded schools, local elementary and

secondary schools are the perfect venue for providing rich learning opportunities to develop these skills and habits.

Unfortunately, children are not able to access the same learning opportunities in each school across the province.

Tracking resources across Ontario

Every year, People for Education surveys Ontario's publicly-funded schools in order to keep track of essential resources and programs and understand how they are affected by changes to policy and funding. In 2018, 1244 schools responded to our survey, representing 22 per cent of Ontario's schools from almost all of its publicly-funded school boards.

An analysis of information from Statistics Canada and Ontario's Ministry of Education, alongside the survey results, shows that access to things like childcare and arts enrichment is affected by where a student lives, their family's income and the education level of their parents. Therefore, students who come from lower SES homes may be attending schools that also lack vital resources.

In high poverty schools in 2018¹, the median amount fundraised was half that of low poverty schools (\$6,000 compared to \$12,000 per school). The amount fundraised per pupil also differed considerably: the average was \$27 per student in high poverty schools compared to \$44 per student in low poverty schools. These funds can be used to support charities, but also to fund arts programs, busing for school trips, purchase new technology, establish student bursaries and scholarships, or add outdoor learning spaces.



Jesus Understood Privilege, Why Can't We?

By **Michelle Coutinho** and **Michael Harrison**

Discussions about privilege are difficult and complex, they often evoke feelings of guilt and unease. These feelings typically manifest themselves in avoidance, resistance, and often the outright denial that privilege, especially white privilege, exists.

This denial lives in the myth of meritocracy, the idea that education is a great equalizer and that we all have the same opportunity to 'pull ourselves up by the boot straps.' The reality is that any longstanding, large system is subject to structures that serve certain voices over others, usually the creators of that system. Education is no different.



Literacy and Equity

By **Brian Weishar**

In education, we have long talked about the importance of literacy for success, both in school and also beyond school. Individuals with strong literacy skills tend to have greater access to resources, privileges and opportunities. Successful employment, active citizenship and personal well-being draws on one's ability to read and write, think critically, and express ideas. In addition, having strong literacy skills is a protective factor against disadvantage.

The work of ensuring equity complements the work of providing strong literacy instruction in schools in all grades Pre-K to 12. As part of their moral calling, schools and systems empower their learners with the literacy skills needed to be engaged and contributing citizens. As Berger, Dei and Forgette-Giroux point out, "Literacy is not simply reading and writing, but also the ability to grasp and work with knowledge to bring about personal and social transformation" (Berger, Dei & Forgette-Giroux, 2009).

A document which guides professional learning related to literacy in Ontario, *Paying Attention to Literacy*, states that "Literacy is the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, discuss and think critically about ideas. Literacy enables us to share information and to interact with others. Literacy is an essential tool for personal growth and active participation in a democratic society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

However, we need to ensure that literacy instruction is informed and formed with equitable literacy practices. In other words, the instruction and approaches in schools and classrooms must allow all learners to be accessing the necessary supports and opportunities for literacy learning. If equity,

10 Reasons We Should Embrace Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan

By **Debbie Kasman**



Educators need to embrace Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan. Here are 10 reasons why:

1 The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives says that based on the small incremental changes Canada has made in gender equality at the senior management level over the last 20 years it will take 228 years to close the gender gap in Canada.

2 A new report called "The Pursuit of Gender Equality – An uphill battle," by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, states that the gender gap "stubbornly persists" and must be "urgently addressed." Glass ceilings are "still unbroken," and progress has been "far too slow." The lack of structural and institutional backing for women is an obstacle, as well as inadequate support or buy-in from leaders, lack of accountability, and proper monitoring systems.

3 A 2013 study at the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University showed that grades factor in to how much money students are likely to make later in life, but gender matters more. In the United States, women with a 4.0 GPA in high school make less, on average, than men with a 2.5 GPA. The study was based on more than 10,000 students. The study also found that women receive better percentage pay increases than men as their grades improve, but the increases aren't enough for women to catch up to men's salaries. In addition, minorities tend to benefit less dollar-wise from getting good grades than

white students, even though African-American and Latino high school students with high GPAs are more likely to continue their schooling than white students with good grades.

4 A 2015 study from LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company found that across all organizational levels, women are 15 per cent less likely than men to be promoted. Researchers looked at data on promotion and attrition rates (as well as other aspects) in 118 different companies across North America. They surveyed nearly 30,000 women and men about their attitudes toward gender diversity in the workplace and found that women were nearly three times more likely than men to say their gender had posed a hindrance to their career advancement. Women in the study also said they are consulted less often on key decisions than men, and they are at least nine times more likely than men to say they do more childcare, and at least four times more likely to say they do more chores at home. The study also found that only three per cent of women at the senior executive level are Black.

5 A new report led by York University professor Carl James found that a large number of Black students are being streamed into applied courses instead of into academic programs. Black students are also suspended at much higher rates than white students in Toronto. The report followed consultations with 324 parents, students, educators, administrators in Toronto and surrounding Peel, York and Durham regions.

ONTARIO'S LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

A Tool for Equity Leadership

By **Dr. Richard Williamson**

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* and the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF), it is timely to revisit these important documents and what they mean for today's school leaders.

This article outlines how the OLF supports leadership for equity. The framework is a detailed and thorough presentation of what the province believes educational leadership should look like in Ontario schools. Through a brief consideration of selected equity literature, seven essential themes of an 'equity agenda' emerge. Drawing on these themes, it is possible to see the ways in which the OLF is, in fact, a tool for equity leadership that promotes an agenda for equity.

The broad themes in equity literature provide the key elements of an agenda for equity leadership. These themes can be identified as:

1. **Participation (including community involvement)**
2. **The achievement and success of all students**
3. **Inclusion and exclusion**
4. **Ongoing professional learning**
5. **Accountability**
6. **Equity of outcomes**
7. **Diversity**





By **Mary Ellen Cornelius**

Not that long ago, the common response to, “How are you?” was always, “Fine, how are you?” This response has changed in recent years to, “Busy,” with no time for further conversation. When, how and why did we all become so busy that we have no time to be fine?

As an elementary school principal in a 117-year-old school comprised of diverse ethnic, socio-economic and faith backgrounds, I am forever searching for ways to integrate mental wellness into the day-to-day activities of my students, staff, principal colleagues and myself. Ensuring that these activities are equitable and accessible is a full-time job, but it is what defines my vocation as a Catholic leader.