Welcome to the
College Tool

Getting In
Intro

Learning
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Getting
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Training /
Professional
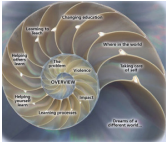Development

Credits
Glossary
PDF

Coming
Soon

Changing Lenses, Changing Practices

Tools to assist and strengthen college practices

Use these materials, please....

We encourage you to explore and use these materials and the resources you find on www.learningandviolence.net. You may download, print and share them with others. We hope that you will help to build a community of interest around the new ideas and approaches that this website inspires. We only ask that you contact us to tell us how you used the materials and what you learned.

You must let us know if you want to re-print or change the materials in any way. You must attribute the work to the original author and include the URL address where you found it. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Contact us at: admin@learningandviolence.net

This tool is one part of: **Web-based tools to support effective learning and teaching for survivors of violence**

A project of the School of Work and College Preparation, Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies, George Brown College, in partnership with Spiral Community Resource Group.

Table of Contents

Credits

Welcome to the College Tool

This is a place for new discoveries! If you work at a community college, this tool is for you, no matter what work you do. It can help you strengthen your own and your college's daily practices so that literacy and essential skills students who have experienced any form of violence can learn more easily and be more successful than before.

It is not a series of rules, nor even a set of answers, but an opportunity to increase awareness. By looking afresh at the ways you and your team operate, you may begin to see things differently, to discover surprising and remarkable solutions to fit your college's realities.

Introduction

Violence often affects what happens in our colleges. It is highly likely that more than a few people in your college—students and staff—have been hurt, abused, harassed or mistreated at some time in their life. Perhaps we don't talk about our experiences of violence, maybe haven't even viewed them as violence, and often haven't thought consciously about how they affect learning and teaching, but these impacts remain even when we don't acknowledge them. This tool was developed to help us do a conscious review of how our ways of working and our institutional structures affect students and potential students who have experienced violence.

Addressing the impact of violence on learning is an essential part of creating an equitable college, program, and classroom. If we fail to pay attention to the needs of survivors of violence, including those of us who experience systemic oppression based on race, class, gender, ability, age, and/or sexual orientation, there can be no equity. Equity in classrooms and programs includes recognizing the numerous ways that access is limited for many different students. We recognize that a flight of stairs creates barriers for those of us who use wheelchairs, but don't always acknowledge that attitudes about people with disabilities also creates barriers. In a similar way, established practices in educational institutions create both emotional and practical barriers for survivors of violence. When those barriers are unexamined, many students are denied access, completion, and successful transitions to further education or employment. While changing individual perspectives and behaviours is important, changing institutions and systems creates changes that are more fundamental and long-lasting.

The tool

This college tool will help you carry out a review of your own and your college's practices to strengthen your best work. It is an invitation to read and reflect, talk with colleagues, explore the issues in workshops, and set up—or take part in—more formal reflective processes.

If you are an administrator we want you to use this tool to create a school- or department-wide process that allocates time, energy, and resources to improve college practices.

This tool is an online resource as well as a print resource. We hope that you will create your own pathway through the resource using the online and print versions as appropriate. We expect that you will pick and choose the areas

that are relevant to your work. For this reason you will find some repetition between the sections.

What's in it?

The sections of this tool address various aspects of college experience:
- Getting into college
- Staying in a program
- Learning in the classroom
- Getting around the college
- Moving on to further education and work
- Training and professional development for college staff.

Within each section you will find:
- Information about how violence impacts that particular aspect of college experience
- Reflective questions to help you to understand the issues more clearly
- Actions you can take to enhance your practice
- Stories to illustrate the problem more clearly
- Links to further resources.

This tool is an online resource as well as a print resource. We hope that you will create your own pathway through the resource using the online and print versions as appropriate. We expect that you will pick and choose the areas that are relevant to your work. For this reason you will find some repetition between the sections.

Why use it?

This tool can help you address some of the problems you notice. It may make it possible to increase retention and effectively help students whose failures worry you. It may also make it possible for you to improve everyday practices that, although developed with the best of intentions, inadvertently create barriers.

You may question whether it is worth making the time for this tool, or be concerned about what issues it might raise. It is difficult to question ourselves and our colleagues, and even harder to change established institutional practices. You may find some of the reflection challenging. But we found that by exploring this issue we were better able to look afresh at persistent problems.

Working with this tool will open up more possibilities for success—which makes everyone feel better about their work.

Who created it?

The School of Work and College Preparation at George Brown College (GBC) and Spiral Community Resource Group are the two lead partners in this project funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. This tool was created by a diverse team from GBC and Spiral, with a depth of experience in different roles within colleges and outside.

As well as our own experience of learning, teaching, and working on the front lines in many different settings, this tool builds on many years of research and innovative practice to address the impacts of violence on learning, as well as on data specifically gathered for this project. To provide us with more detailed knowledge of college practices and their impact on students' college experience, we interviewed and held focus groups for college students, potential students, faculty, counsellors, front-line workers, administrators, and staff from other agencies.

This tool is one part of the project: ***Web-based tools to support effective learning and teaching for survivors of violence: Creation and promotion.*** Besides this tool for community colleges, there is a similar reflective guide for community-based programs, and an interactive kit with animations, activities, and resources for adult students in literacy and essential skills classes. There are also training modules for literacy workers and college instructors to help educators address impacts of violence on learning. The goal of all these tools is to make it easier for **everyone** to address the impacts of violence on learning and see that students who often have difficulty learning **can** learn in the right conditions. You can find all these tools at
www.learningandviolence.net/changingeducation.htm

The issue

The big picture

Violence happens to children, youth, and women of all ages everywhere. It also affects men, particularly gay men, men with disabilities, and men who are targeted because of their race. Some systemic inequalities and injustices—such as poverty, sexism, racism, colonialism, and discrimination against older people and people with disabilities—are in themselves violent, and increase vulnerability to violence.

There are no statistics yet on the numbers of people in Canada or around the world whose learning has been affected by their experiences of violence, or on the depth and breadth of such impact. It would be hard to measure the range of violences in people's lives, then show how each act of violence interconnects with and amplifies the others, and how they affect people's choice to participate in courses, or affect their experience when they do. Without such statistics it is not easy to bring an acknowledgement of the impacts into educational policy. Nevertheless, there are growing numbers of people and organizations in many parts of the world questioning the impact of violence on learning, and using research or innovative practice to develop ways to address it.

The close-up view: the impact of violence on learning

Violence is on a continuum, from humiliating to life-threatening. A useful definition of violence is "**any way we have of violating the identity and integrity of another person**" (Palmer, 2004, 169). The details look different in every culture. In our own culture, violence may be so familiar that we don't notice it. Or instead of defining the harsh or humiliating treatment we have experienced as violence, we may see it as normal, or even as something we caused. Still, in every culture and community, there are people working to end both violence and cultural acceptance of violence.

For some of us, violence has shaped who we are and our view of the world. The lessons we learned may have helped us survive, but can also make it harder to learn. In a learning context, the effects of violence can play out in different ways, including things like spacing out; acting out; silence; loss of hope or dreams; feeling bad, stupid or wrong; or missing school. In some circumstances, school may become a safe place where students can escape into the mind and excel, though often at personal cost.

Assessing the impact

Clarissa Chandler, an experienced trauma counsellor, says that a significant factor in how we cope in the aftermath of violence is less tied to how bad violence was, and more connected with the good experiences. Thus someone may have experienced what seems like relatively minor violence, but if there is very little support to make meaning of this experience, she may have great difficulty in the aftermath of this violence. On the other hand, someone who experienced what appears to be a much more significant amount of violence may have less difficulty dealing with it, if she also experienced some powerful, caring support which enabled her to avoid self-blame and helped to bolster a sense of self-worth.

The violence of racism, ableism, etc. can be particularly insidious when ongoing systemic injustice compounds it. For example gang violence is relentlessly blamed on youth, with little or no acknowledgment of the role played by a myriad of factors such as racist judgments within schools and society, grinding poverty, limited resources for recreational activities, limited job opportunities for both parents and young people themselves, past experiences of war and migration, and the short-term nature of the programs intended to "fix" the problems.

Given that we can't know the mix of experiences in a student life, it is critical not to judge students or compare how they cope with their studies. Instead we can become an ally to help students make new meanings and find strength and resilience in the face of challenging difficulties.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Introduction," then on Folder 2, "The Issue," then on "Resources."

At **www.learningandviolence.net**

The issue: http://www.learningandviolence.net/violence.htm

The impact of violence on learning:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/impact.htm

Strategies for instructors and tutors:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Making the connections: Violence and learning:

I'm doing everything I can but I'm not seeing the success I hoped for …
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections1.pdf

I can't teach the students who aren't really there.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections2.pdf

I find it hard to teach when some students are disruptive.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections3.pdf

If I find out about violence, what should I do?
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections4.pdf

I'm too tired: I'm not good at taking care of myself
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections5.pdf

I despair: What's the point of teaching adults when nothing changes and their kids are going to have the same problems
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections6.pdf

In print

Horsman, J. *Too Scared to Learn* (1999/2000).

The action

Changing lenses, changing practices

Whatever your past experiences with violence, we want to invite you to put on the "lens" that will let you see the legacy of violence and the ways it impacts learning. Looking through this lens may surprise some of you. Others may have always looked at life through the lens of violence. But we know from our own experiences that, even if violence is all too familiar, you may not have looked at learning through this lens.

Recognize that violence and its effects are widespread

Many of us have lived all our lives with some degree of violence. When violence has shaped us, we may barely see it or recognize it as violence—yet it may still shape how we respond to the world.

Recognize that we are all in this together

To cope with the widespread presence of violence, our society encourages us to operate as if it is only the rare individual who experiences or perpetrates violence—that violence is an aberration. But violence and learning impacts us all.

Recognize the need for self-care

When we see ourselves in the picture, we must pay attention to our own feelings and thoughts, not just those of others. Finding the time and appropriate ways to take care of ourselves will help us to avoid burnout and cynicism and foster the resilience necessary to deal with frustrating situations.

Recognize that we cannot do everything, but we can do something

Though conditions shape our practice, if we are willing to be curious about different perspectives, and explore both the possibilities for and limits to creating change, we may achieve more than we ever believed possible.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool: http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Introduction," then on Folder 3, "The Action," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Taking care of ourselves: http://www.learningandviolence.net/takecare.htm

Dreams of a different world: http://www.learningandviolence.net/dreams.htm

Getting in

Getting into a college is a big deal. Some students apply because they want to make changes in their lives, others don't dare. Either way many give up before they get in, as administrative hurdles and self-doubt combine to overwhelm them.

What's the problem?

What makes someone feel they don't belong in college? What happens to potential students who come to an information session and like what they hear, but don't take the next step? What barriers in the admission process are difficult to overcome for some students who have experienced violence? How can we pay attention to those who never approach the college?

This section is for you if you are involved in bringing new students into your college, whether you are creating or marketing a new program, staffing an

admissions office, planning an orientation, or working in intake, assessment, or advising,. You may find some ways to make your efforts in recruitment and intake more successful.

What's in this section?

This section will help you identify areas which may contain barriers to potential students. You will be invited to examine, from the perspective of a person who has experienced violence, some of the stages that prospective students may go through as they explore the option of coming to college.

Why look at recruitment and intake as a learning and violence issue?

The realities of dealing with the impact of violence often result in delayed education, "later-in-life" application to post secondary education, and gaps in work and study history. Violence, such as bullying, sexual violence, or family violence, creates wounds that leave some potential students feeling they don't belong at college, that they'll never amount to much, and that it doesn't matter anyway. Many potential students have been led to think they are the wrong colour, the wrong gender, that they're "too poor," "too sick," or "too queer" to belong in college. (See <u>systemic injustices</u> such as <u>racism</u>, <u>classism</u>, <u>ableism</u>, <u>audism, sexism</u>, and <u>heterosexism</u>.)

Some such students may never even think about your college, believing it's not for them; some may try to find out about your programs, but never get any further, blocked at the first step. Others may attend information sessions but never come back, feeling intimidated by the structure, red tape, or length of waiting time to start a program. Still others may get as far as initial testing and assessment, but not begin the program. Feelings of not belonging, of being wrong, can make it exceptionally hard to take the first steps to move into an educational program.

For the college, the difficulty is that the problem is invisible. It is hard to think about how to serve people who aren't here, even if we notice their absence. Yet when we understand where and how survivors of violence get lost, discouraged, or excluded in these initial stages, we will find it easier to address the barriers that exist and design a more inviting and accessible process for all those finding their footing in the college system.

Misconceptions

College staff who support students in application and admittance processes, and who do recruitment for colleges, often have the idea that healing from trauma is an individual's problem, which should be dealt with before returning to school.

There are several objections to this common attitude. First, an individual can often heal from and escape violence *through* education. Second, even people who have done a lot of healing work to deal with their experience may still be triggered in a new situation, especially a scary one, such as a return to school (Horsman, 1999/2000, p.81-82). Healing from an experience of violence is an ongoing process which may never entirely end. Third, because violence is a norm in our society, we all bear responsibility for changing it. Increasing access to education for people who experience violence is one way of doing that.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Marketing and information

1. Who is represented and invited in the marketing of your college? Are there groups of people who may not feel represented or invited when they see advertising for your college?

2. How do potential students learn about your programs? Is there anywhere you might reach students you are not currently reaching (e.g., a parent support group, an addiction recovery residence, a prison, a Gay Pride event)?

3. Are your website, marketing materials, program calendar, and other information provided in clear language and design (i.e., easy to read)? Have you asked instructors from the Literacy/Upgrading/Essential Skills program to give you feedback on the reading level?

4. Is it clear how to get from the main page of your college website to the information about the literacy, upgrading and essential skills program?

5. Does the name of the program clearly indicate that it is upgrading for people who have not finished high school? Or is the content disguised behind such names as "Developmental Education" or "Career and Academic Preparation"?

First contact and admissions

1. Are there staff in your program or department who see their function as gatekeepers? Do they ask "Can this person succeed?" or "Is this person appropriate for the program or field?" How is the question used to exclude or include potential students?

2. Are program outcomes used to eliminate people at intake, based on assumptions about their ability to succeed or their need for support?

3. When a student has been offered a place in a program, what is the process for accepting that place? What barriers are there for students with low literacy or computer skills? For students with no mailing address? Or no phone, only a "message number"? (For example, a student might lose his spot in a program because the information telling him how to accept the spot gets lost in the deluge of mail, full of unclear language and written at a high reading level, that he receives about his entry to the college.) How could you address these barriers in the acceptance process?

4. Are the process and form letters used to accept students into literacy, upgrading and essential skills programs the same as those used to accept postsecondary students? Which set of students was it designed for?

5. What strings are attached to funding and access to programs (e.g., First Nations status, disability benefits,?) What do students need to give up in order to get access and funding? (e.g., cultural or familial be-longing)

Gateways

1. What is the culture of your college in relation to access? Is there a sense of an open door, or a narrow gateway?

2. What programs and services exist at your college to invite and support students from marginalized communities (poor communities, racialized communities, Aboriginal communities, Deaf communities, and others)?

3. In what ways are your programs and services based on the values of access, human rights and equity?

4. What kind of relationships and partnerships does your college have with community-based organizations?

5. Are groups of interested students from community literacy programs, settlement services, women's shelters and health centres, etc. invited to tour the college and get information about programs?

6. What types of mentor/buddy systems are in place for prospective students?

Intake and entry assessment

1. What do you think a prospective student's very first experience of the college is? How positive and welcoming an experience do you think this is?

2. What is involved for the prospective students at each step of intake and assessment, from attending an information session to sitting in a chair in your program? What could get in the way? Do they get second chances if they miss a step? How could we be more flexible?

3. Does assessment take into account different styles of learning and expression (e.g., written and verbal)? Does it include breaks? Can an applicant come and go from the assessment if necessary?

4. How does the feedback applicants receive on assessment results help them to understand what they need to focus on to get into and succeed in the program?

5. How are students given the information they need to understand the responsibilities of registering in a college program (e.g., dropping courses by the drop date so that they do not receive a fail on their transcript)? Is the information clear and accessible?

6. How are students offered access to relationships with counsellors and teachers that allow them to disclose violence and trauma if they wish? How can counsellors, teachers and other staff proactively address and educate students about the impact of violence on learning and offer appropriate supports during early stages in the student's college journey?

7. What assumptions are made about students who stop and start a program?

What can you do?

Create community partnerships

In addition to on-campus programs, partnership projects can include satellite programs in the community, Aboriginal initiatives, street outreach, and community-based research collaborations, among other possibilities.

There may be many community-based organizations in your geographic area that are working with potential students who may experience barriers to access because of issues related to violence and oppression. Creating partnerships with these community organizations is an excellent way to invite potential students into your college, as well as to learn from people working within those organizations. Community partnerships can include:

- Local community literacy programs
- Adult upgrading programs
- Employment programs
- Mental health and substance use programs
- ESL programs
- Programs that serve particular cultural groups
- Youth groups
- Seniors' groups
- LGBTTTQQ groups
- Recreational groups that serve people who are socially excluded in any way.

Create pathways

Create initiatives for students to transition into the college by gaining the essential skills needed to succeed in their programs and help them navigate the bureaucratic maze of the intake process. For example, the "First Generation" program at George Brown College supports students who are among the first in their family to attend college, university or an apprenticeship program. It provides funding support and bursaries, workshops and advising, among other things. (Watch a video about this project at http://www.georgebrown.ca/firstgeneration/index.aspx.) If students are able to engage early and build relationships and knowledge along the way, they will have a stronger foundation on which to move forward.

Walk in the shoes of a student

1. Attend an information session and try to imagine you are a new student. Ask yourself: What was it like? Did you get the information you needed? Was there any acknowledgment that it may be difficult? Was there any way to get information you missed?

2. Try each of the following ways to access information about your program:

3. Explore your website

4. Call to ask for help

5. Drop into the college to see how you would find the right person to ask for help.

6. Notice the skills you need to get the information—technical, listening, talking, questioning, thinking, and social skills. Notice the background information you already have that helps you understand new information. How many potential literacy/upgrading/essential skills students would have those skills and that information?

7. Map out a time line of what your students need to do to get into an up-grading program at your college. Use this to get feedback from current students; ask them to identify places where it was hard.

Stories

From a student's perspective

Faculty from an upgrading program shared some stories they had heard from students:

> A prospective student who couldn't bear to open her letter from college. She had a firm belief that "it's not for me," and feared that she would be turned down. "If they actually knew about me they wouldn't let me in." She missed all of the deadlines she was supposed to respond by, and even though she was invited to the welcome dinner, she still thought she could be turned down. "People like me don't belong here."
>
> A Black student who didn't expect to see any other Black people in the college, because he thought college wasn't for people like him.

An Aboriginal student whose parents didn't want her to apply to college because they thought it would be just like the residential schools they attended.

The heart of the matter

A college Aboriginal counsellor got to the heart of the matter: "If you see an Aboriginal student in your class you can assume that he or she has climbed a hundred mountains to get there." Certainly we need to acknowledge the experiences of the student who climbs the hundred mountains to get into our programs. But beyond that, we need to take responsibility for our share of those mountains—complicated intake processes, inaccessible application forms, and multiple messages in complicated language and formats—then get rid of them.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Getting In," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

From a student's point of view: Find a program:
http://learningandviolence.net/helpself/findaprogram.htm

Other links

A link between College and community: Pathways to Education:
http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/regent/home-students.html

Staying in

"I give up! I might as well quit!" Many students think these words over and over again. Sometimes they manage to stay, in spite of their despair, but other times they slide away.

> *If you are here to help me, then you are wasting your time, but if you are here because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us begin.*
>
> *Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s.*

What's the problem?

Do you ever run across a student who wants to succeed but seems to have a lot getting in the way? Do students sometimes confide in you about the violence in their lives? Do they ask for help or advice that you're not prepared to

give? Do you feel worn down by hearing about problems you can't help with? Are you dissatisfied with yourself when those students drop out?

This section is for you, whatever your role in the college: knowing how to support and direct students to appropriate resources can make the difference between their staying in or dropping out. If you are a resource person, focusing on the impact of violence on learning can help you improve your service to students.

What's in this section?

This section will help you to think about how equity, support, and advocacy services in your college can address some of the issues that students face when dealing with violence in their lives. Understanding the impact of violence on learning can help us to implement more responsive and accessible services and supports.

In your college, equity, support, and advocacy services may take place in any of the following settings:
- Disability services
- Aboriginal services
- Counselling services such as personal and crisis counselling, career counselling, and academic advising
- Health, dental and wellness services
- Tutoring and mentoring
- Interfaith services
- Writing, learning, or tutoring centres
- Career centres
- Libraries
- Financial aid and financial services
- Human rights, diversity, and equity centres
- Safety and security services
- Assessment/test centres
- Child care centres
- First Generation services
- Women's centres and/or groups
- LGBTTTQQ (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, two-spirited, queer, and questioning) centres and/or groups
- Student association services, groups, clubs and spaces
- Food banks
- Free legal services
- With teachers and in classrooms

Why look at retention as a learning and violence issue?

Support and advocacy services within a college are important for all students' success, but the way in which these services are offered and accessed are particularly crucial for students who have experienced violence. Students who have experienced violence may find it harder to ask for help, to know where and how to ask for it, or even to feel worthy of that support. They may be used to coping by spacing out, living from crisis to crisis, or giving up. They may feel stupid or like they don't belong; they may also be untrusting of educational or social support and prefer to "do it on their own."

As these students launch into their college experience, they may be juggling many things around which they may wish to seek support, such as:
- Working with a new schedule
- Managing new childcare needs and issues
- Finding appropriate housing
- Increasing travel time and costs
- Changing employment and income
- Recovering from addiction or substance use
- Living with abusive families and partners
- Difficulty focusing, concentrating and learning
- Coping with illness and/or disability
- Harming self
- Facing systemic oppression, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia
- Marginal, dangerous or exploitative employment or workplace harassment

Students who are dealing with the any of the challenges above, compounded by their experiences of violence, are best supported by accessible and flexible supportive resources that recognize and understand the impacts of violence on learning and challenge negative assumptions about learners who need support.

Misconceptions

A common assumption around support and advocacy services is that they are special treatment or handouts. In fact, most college policies and practices are set up to meet the needs of the largest number of students, but they are seen as customary procedures, or efficient ways of working, not as accommodations for students' needs. In contrast, we do notice the minority of students who need something different, and they may be seen as "needy." When we

reinforce an equity perspective on advocacy and support, and encourage students to access their rights to supports, we increase students' capacity to stay in school. Access to something as basic as food, or a safe space, can mean the difference between students successfully meeting their goals in school and dropping out.

A related, and equally unfounded, assumption is that people with violence in their lives won't be able to succeed in their education. Through practices of equity and access, the participation and experience of survivors of violence will enrich our learning communities and create greater opportunities for all.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

In general

1. How easy is it for students to connect with other students, with their teachers and with the college services? What makes it hard?

2. How welcomed, noticed, respected (not judged) do they feel by other students, their teachers or the college?

3. How effective are the concrete, built-in supports for managing the rough times, including flexible processes for helping students catch up and stay connected?

4. Do you make time in your staff meetings to talk about individual students' needs and challenges and how to support them? Do you name violence as one of the things that could be impacting a student's success? If not, how can your team create opportunities to discuss these impacts while creating strategies that help students succeed?

5. Peer support can be invaluable and a great support in staying in school. How do you encourage students to connect with one another?

6. If a student needs to take a break from school, are accommodations made to maintain their academic standing? How is the student supported to return?

7. How are receptionists, clerks and other support staff informed about and supported in dealing with students who have experienced violence?

In the classroom

1. Are faculty aware of the range of academic accommodations and their obligation to provide them?

2. What support is available for faculty who provide accommodations? What kind of support do they need?

3. Are faculty aware of the strategies and information in the section Learning in the Classroom?

4. How can we modify our teaching and assessment methods so that students who choose not to access formal accommodations can use different learning styles and strategies to succeed?

5. How could students in various programs benefit from embedded supports such as job coaches, learning coaches, job developers, counsellors, and advocates?

Counselling and assessment

1. Do your counselling services recognize the impact of violence on learning and understand violence as a social issue related to systemic oppressions?

2. How can we make sure, when helping students to figure out how to stay in school, that we let them lead the process, and not take charge or rescue them?

3. How can we modify our intake and assessment methods so that students who choose not to access formal accommodations can use different learning styles and strategies to succeed?

4. Look at your counselling tools and assessment methods. How do they focus on the strengths of students and survivors? How do they encourage and provide opportunities for students to identify their own needs? How do they ask about basic needs such as access to food and shelter, as well as social supports?

5. Are students able to build lasting relationships with counsellors and other support people, or are there limits to the number of times they can access services?

6. Does your college have complex medical or administrative criteria for services, such as a medical diagnosis or a costly psycho-educational assessment for disability accommodations? Is there a lengthy intake assessment for crisis counselling services? How could these processes and criteria create barriers for students who have experienced violence?

Creating awareness of support services

1. Is everyone who works with students aware of the different types of supports available both in the college and in the community, and how students can access them? Do they know where to get this information?

2. Is everyone who works with students personally connected to people in disability, Aboriginal, and counselling services so that they can connect students to these people?

3. Are college employees who normally don't work with students, but who might spot a student in trouble, aware of support services. (e.g. cafeteria, library, security or cleaning staff)

4. How can we challenge the assumption that support services are "special treatment," "lowering the bar," or a "hand-out"? Are students seen as equal and different?

5. Think about how your students learn about your services and supports. Do you think you are reaching survivors of violence?

6. Reflect on the many barriers that students experience and how these might isolate them from staff, teachers, and other students. What are some ways of connecting them to supports, services, and a community of learning?

7. Are all students aware of a "go-to" person if they need help but don't know where to get it? How do you recognize and support staff who play this role?

What can you do?

As a group...

1. Brainstorm a list of responses to the question, "What can you do to support a student who has disclosed violence?"

2. Explore the limits and possible flexibility of services, supports, assessments, etc.

3. Hold professional development events that create opportunities for everyone who works with students to become aware of the range and relevance of support services offered at the college. Be sure to include receptionists, clerks and other support staff.

4. Hold an information fair where all parts of the college that provide services to students present what they do to everyone who works there.

As an individual...

1. Listen, be conscious and present, and follow up with students around their needs and concerns.

2. Reflect on your own biases and assumptions.

3. Ask around when you don't know how to help a student or speak to others who have previously worked with the student.

4. Apply a strength-based approach, which is empowering, and move away from a problem-based deficit approach, which is disempowering. Notice any changes in how students respond.

5. Find mentors and create strategies for supporting each other in improving conditions for students who have experienced violence.

6. Determine who to go to for help and advice when a student confides in you that s/he feels unsafe because of discriminatory or oppressive remarks made by someone at the college.

Stories

A student finds support for coming back to school

Coming back to school was challenging for me, being 48 years old with a grade 8 education. There were times where I wanted to give up, but the supports at George Brown College helped me overcome the obstacles I encountered. My way of dealing with some of these issues were the Disability Office on the fifth floor, support from my previous teachers from the Academic Bridging Department, Student Affairs (learning workshops) and the tutoring at the Learning Centre. Without these supports, I don't think I would have made it.

> Dave, currently enrolled in a community services preparation program and aiming for Social Work.

An upgrading program steps up

I taught a bright, vivacious single mom in her early thirties for three weeks during the orientation to our Academic Upgrading program. Shortly after, I received a call from her; she'd been brutally attacked while sitting in a café, her ankle was shattered and she was lying in her hospital bed after emergency surgery to embed pins and rods in her left leg. Her entire family and support system were in Jamaica, so she turned to us for help. While she recuperated, we were able to set her up with a home computer, gather some funding to provide some meals for her family (she was in a full-leg cast for four months),

and we rallied to provide a Christmas for her young children. It's been a long road back for her as she has had repeated issues with her children's daycare and Ontario Works, but with help from our counsellors and teachers, she has been able to overcome these obstacles as well as work through the emotional trauma that ensued. I'm happy to say that she has returned to fulltime upgrading, a year later, to pursue her dream of social work.

<div align="right">Faculty Member, Academic Upgrading</div>

A reflection on relationships with students

As a professor in an access program, I try to be aware of and to interrogate the extent and purpose of my relationships with students. I know that one of the strongest factors supporting students in this program to stick with the often difficult process of pursuing their goals and dreams is the relationships that they build with staff, their teachers, and other students. Breaking through the isolation they may have experienced outside of their time at the college is a relational process, as they begin to see themselves as part of a learning community, and, hopefully, supported by that community. But human relationships are complex. How far should our relationships with students go, how deep and caring, how distanced and "professional"? Some professors may be very uncomfortable with relationships that feel in any way personal, while others are comfortable engaging in boundaried but caring relationships with learners. In caring for and supporting our students, we can ask ourselves: Are we acting as rescuers or allies? Is student's success bound up in ours or can we offer support without being attached to the outcome? Are we cheer leaders, and fellow travellers along the road or are we perched on high looking down on the poor souls, or putting them on pedestals because they are so brave and have been through so much? Relationships and boundaries with students is a complex subject, and one around which much supervision and self-reflection could focus. How we construct our relationships of care and support with students is an ethical question, as well as a highly personal one, and in the end can have a great deal of impact on whether a student stays connected to their education or gets lost in the struggle. How do you approach this question?

<div align="right">Professor, Access Program</div>

A student's story

A counsellor we spoke with asked us to think from the perspective of a mature student who is coming back to school after leaving an abusive relationship:

"Here you are, and you've been living your life just fine as an adult and then you go back to school. And now you are told where to be, what time to be

there, what to say and what not to say, what you need to do—and then you are told that we are going to evaluate you on all of this!

Many things that learners encounter in the course of their day can recreate an abusive power dynamic for them: asking for help, asking for money, asking for time, asking for concessions or accommodations."

Keeping confidences: A literacy tutor's reflection

http://learningandviolence.net/violence/KeepingConfidences.pdf

The secret word: A faculty member's reflection on supporting a student in mental distress.

It's about 8 p.m. on the last night of exams. There are about 5 students left writing, when "Henry" approaches me with exam in hand. "I need to talk to you, Miss," he says. I ask Henry if he wouldn't mind waiting on the others. He agrees. I've sent the last student on the way when Henry comes back into the room.

"Do you need privacy, Henry?" He does. I close the door behind us.

Henry's nervous. He tells me that he's not sure how well he did on the exam. He hasn't been sleeping well. He tells me that he's been struggling with "losing time." He relates a number of recent episodes where he has been walking down the street or riding public transit and he will suddenly "lose time," regaining awareness sometimes hours later and, often, great distances from where he intended to be. Henry tells me that moments before each episode someone always approaches him and whispers a "secret word" in his ear. "I need your help, Miss. I need you to tell me what the secret word is," says Henry.

I wish I knew. I tell Henry that I am sorry but that I don't know the secret word. The expression on Henry's face runs the gamut from nervousness, through desperation, frustration, and anger in what seems like a second. He's angry now. "I thought you were different, Miss," he tells me, "I thought you would help me. Now I know you're one of them."

At this point my inexperience is staring me in the face. I'm trying to hide my panic and resist the urge to bolt. All I can think is that I am now alone, in a locked room, in an empty building, with an adult man who is not pleased with me. I look at Henry. The turmoil in his face is subsiding now and he looks like a scared child. He starts crying. His frustration is evident. "Please just tell me the secret word, Miss. I really need to know. I don't want to lose anymore time," he says.

I know I can't help him. I don't have the skill set. But I have to. I have to do something. I remember that GBC has a counselling office but I've never been there and don't know where it is. Is it open? Can they help Henry? I need to answer these questions. I see the computer. Good, I think, I can just look it up. But what about Henry? His frustration is turning into anger again. He's staring at me intently, suspiciously. I'm afraid that he will misinterpret my reasons for wanting to use the computer.

"I think I know someone that can help us," I tell him. My use of the word "us" is intentional. I want to be on his team. I pull up two chairs and invite him to take the seat beside me. Together, we log onto the GBC website. There it is, the GBC Student Affairs Counselling Office! The first link is the Urgent Contact List. We look at each other with a sense of relief.

"Have you ever been there?" I ask him.

"No," he says.

"Me neither," I reply. "Will you go with me?" I ask. He agrees. He stands up, offers to carry my briefcase and holds the door open for me. He offers me his arm. He's taking the lead. He's helping me.

The office was open. We got there as a team. The rest is history. For the record, Henry scored in the top 10% of his class on that exam.

The heart of the matter

Students have valid reasons for the decisions and choices they make, although we may not be aware of them. It is not our place to judge those reasons, decisions or choices. We can only ask ourselves, and the students, what we can do to make it easier for them to continue learning now, if they choose to stay. Many students drop out and return later; if they choose to leave, we can make sure they know they can come back.

> *One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone.*
>
> bell hooks

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Staying In," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Responding to disclosures: Making stories of violence known:
http://learningandviolence.net/violence/makingstories.htm

Teachers' room, *click* on the books "All or Nothing," "Old Patterns," and "Crisis": http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm

Helping Others Learn:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

A counselling model:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/A_Counselling_Model_Interview.pdf

A high-support model in apprenticeship training:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/marg_women_apprenticeship.pdf

Learning in the classroom

What happens in the classroom can make it easier or harder for survivors of violence to learn. It is important to pay attention to:

- Who is in the classroom, and how their beliefs and behaviours shape interactions
- What is taught, both what is included and what is omitted from the curriculum
- How it is taught, that is the educational methods and administrative processes needed to create safer learning environments.

Each of these dimensions can open possibilities for equitable educational opportunities or close them down. If you are involved in shaping what happens in the classroom in any way—teaching, assessing students, writing curriculum, hiring or training teachers, making policy—the following sections are for you.

Student behaviour

Students behave in ways that even they may not understand. Despite their

hopes and dreams, many students act like their own worst enemies.

> *What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know. It's what we know for sure that just ain't so.*
>
> *attributed to Mark Twain*

What's the problem?

Do you worry about students who don't seem to "have it together"? What happens when you get frustrated by incomplete assignments or erratic attendance? Do you sometimes make judgements about how much individual students care about their education? Do you question their ability to learn? Do you wonder how to engage students more, or how to change those behaviours which seem self-defeating?

If you work with students, this section is for you. The information here, about the effects of violence on student behaviour, may change the way you respond and reduce frustration in your relationships with students.

What's in this section?

Student behaviours can sometimes provide useful insights about who is learning or struggling, who is feeling confident or unsure, who is motivated, and who appears bored. On the other hand, behaviours can often be misleading and mask what students are really thinking and feeling. This section explores how experiences of violence shape behaviours in the learning environment, and lead, for example, to lateness, absence, resistance or rudeness.

Why look at student behaviour as a learning and violence issue?

It is reasonable for educators to feel frustrated by behaviours such as fighting, frequent "I don't know" responses, fidgeting, or falling asleep in class. However, while frustrating for us, these behaviours provide insights into the impact of violence on learning. For many students with experiences of violence, overly passive or aggressive behaviours were once useful, even necessary for self-survival. Surprisingly, they can still be useful in a learning situation, as

a protection from further humiliation or shame. Even in a relatively safe class-room, these behaviours can come into play if a student feels stupid and fears failing yet again.

Experiences of violence can make it hard for students to reveal vulnerability or to take risks. This gives us a tricky task: to both respect and challenge behaviours that get in the way of learning, for individual students and for others in the classroom. Although we may need to address some of these behaviours, it is definitely not helpful to judge them (or the student), especially since these behaviours are well established and perhaps still vital in other parts of the students' lives.

However, it is hard not to go to a place of judgment when we feel that our students' behaviour affects our satisfaction in our own work: when our students don't seem to be interested in our lessons, or it appears to us that they aren't working hard enough; when our students are generally doing poorly, however hard we work. We may feel confused and question our ability as educators: "Is it my fault or theirs that they are failing?" We may feel that somebody must be to blame, and since we know we are working hard at teaching, we may assume that they are not working hard as students. However, that kind of judgment will hamper our ability to support student success, if the behaviour comes from the students' experience of violence.

Misconceptions

Based on student behaviours, most of us decide pretty quickly who is capable of progressing, who is putting in the time and effort, and who will benefit from extra attention. However, absenteeism, lateness, passivity, and aggression may all be the result of experiences of violence, and, as such, may mask a student's keen motivation and ability. We will make serious errors of judgment unless we challenge our assumptions about student intention and ambition, and seek out more generous interpretations.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

1. What behaviours do you notice? Students who…
   • "Space out" or "drift off" in class
   • Refuse to write
   • Are angry with everyone
   • Don't participate in discussions

- Don't read in class (or read at all)
- Often miss class
- Are mostly quiet, never quite joining in
- Act like everyone is out to get them.

2. What behaviours do you find unacceptable or unmanageable? Students who act as though…
   - They have every right to be absent or late
   - They can't help being absent or late
   - They know more than you
   - They can always complain about you to your coordinator or chair
   - Their ethnicity, race, or gender is superior
   - They can't learn
   - They couldn't be bothered.

3. What meaning do you make of any of the behaviours above? What conclusions would you draw?

4. What different conclusions might someone else draw from the behaviours above?

5. How do the behaviours affect you? When you see them, how do you react?
   - Blame the student
   - Blame yourself
   - Feel responsible to make things right
   - Feel irritated and exasperated
   - Grade more gently or more harshly
   - Remember your own experiences of violence.

What can you do?

1. With your colleagues, watch the video Black Whale at
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJbkFXKGpY and talk about the feelings it evokes in you. What would have happened if the adults hadn't eventually realized what the kid was colouring?

2. Brainstorm all the possible reasons that a student might be late. See how many you can come up with. Don't censor yourself—nothing is too ridiculous.

3. Make two lists: the behaviour you recognize in "good" students, and the behaviour you recognize in "problem" students. Try to think about the

types of experiences which would have led each behaviour to be developed.

4. Read more about how violence affects learning at
   www.learningandviolence.net/impact.htm

5. Learn more about the brain and trauma at
   http://www.learningandviolence.net/learning/psychother.htm

6. We all make judgments. Most often judgments are grounded in incomplete information that we have about people. Sometimes they come because we believe the "single story" about someone. Our simplistic stories are often influenced by and learned through media messaging, how we were brought up, and the generalized assumptions perpetuated by others about particular groups of people. Watch and listen to Chimamanda Adichie's lecture, "The Danger of a Single Story," at
   http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

7. Talk with your colleagues about how you can avoid the "blame game," that is how you can avoid going to shame or blame.

8. If your own sense of success is bound up with student success, talk with your colleagues about where you can get satisfaction that you are doing the best you can for your students, even when they seem to achieve less success than you would like to see.

Stories

A student's thoughts

One student we interviewed shared that she often purposefully arrived late for classes. For her, arriving late to class meant that she could control who she sat beside instead of having no choice in who sat beside her. This was important for her to feel safe within her learning environment. She recognized that the instructor might form a judgment about her and label her as a "latecomer" but it was necessary for her to feel safe before she could engage in a learning process.

Grace Anne's story

After grade 12, I set out for university, with excitement, anticipation and anxiety. The city was an unknown to me, but I found my way and got a place to stay. Attending classes, though, came as a shock. I simply could not pay attention. I tried many things, but after coming out of class time after time with only two or three lines of notes and no idea of what the professor had said, I decided I was just too stupid and undisciplined to pay attention. Still, I was

determined to continue. I developed a routine of memorizing texts and attending each class once a week or so to ask fellow students about assignments and tests. No one seemed to notice my absences. Twenty-five years later, I realize this lack of concentration was a pattern of disassociation I developed in school. I had found I could get good marks by memorizing the texts. The same technique worked in university.

An instructor's perspective

I consider myself a life-long learner and live my daily life visualizing and experiencing the world through multiple lenses. As a faculty member at the college, I am responsible for supporting learners to succeed in their learning by attempting to create learning environments that honour and celebrate multiple ways of knowing and being. As a full time PhD student, I am working through what it means to interrogate and deconstruct theories to support my work in the production of knowledge. These are some fluctuating identities I navigate daily. The one identity that is a constant for me is that of survivor—a survivor of sexual violence and trauma. What this means is that both as a student and an instructor, I am never free of the impacts of violence to my psyche. While I strive to create a safe classroom and be aware of the needs of my students; to be conscious of who is having trouble showing up, keeping up, needing a different explanation, more time with assignments, challenges coping, struggling with childcare, housing, poverty etc.; I am also conscious of my own struggles with coping with the impact of violence. There are days (as an instructor) where I am triggered and have to relive how violence impacts my life in the context of the classroom.

I am a teacher

Having been involved in developing the content for this college tool for the last year and interviewing many students during that time, I've come to realize the breadth and depth of trauma that many of our students have experienced in their lives. I am awed and at the same time buoyed by the determination and strength of will that I see as I orient each new group every three weeks-- some students are more overt in sharing the traumatic events of their lives and some choose not to--but they have chosen to make a change in coming back to school. As I talk to my new students about the services available to them through our college, I now speak of how the experience of violence can impact our ability to learn and where we can get help/what we can do when feeling triggered or overwhelmed. Recently, one of my new students thanked me for talking about the issue in class and how validated she felt after that discussion. As a result of delving into the violence and learning issue, I teach differently, I interact with my students differently and I'm a stronger advocate. I am not a counsellor, but I'm a better, more compassion-

ate teacher as a result of having had access to these wonderful materials. Thank you."

<div align="right">CORE Instructor</div>

The heart of the matter

When we honour the fact that different people have different methods of coping with their experiences of violence, we can appreciate the strength and ability they exhibit simply by showing up to class; the variety of their skills and talents; and the richness of the multiple levels of knowledge and experience that they bring to our learning environment.

Even the worst of student behaviour invites you to be curious about other possible explanations for the behaviour and so to avoid using your power to judge in ways that limit students' possibilities.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at: http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. Go to the tall filing cabinet. Click on "Learning," then on Folder 1, "Student Behaviour," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

How violence affects learning:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/impact.htm

Psychotherapy and brain research:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/learning/psychother.htm

Making the connections: Violence and learning:

I'm doing everything I can but I'm not seeing the success I hoped for …
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections1.pdf

I can't teach the students who aren't really there.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections2.pdf

I find it hard to teach when some students are disruptive.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections3.pdf

If I find out about violence, what should I do?
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections4.pdf

I'm too tired: I'm not good at taking care of myself
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections5.pdf

I despair: What's the point of teaching adults when nothing changes and their kids are going to have the same problems
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections6.pdf

Student kit, teachers' room: http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm

Other links

Chimamanda Adichie. The Danger of the Single Story:
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

Lamont Carey. I Can't Read:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lByDfPOG0LA

Japanese Ad Council. The Whale:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9REhdmJ36rg

Teacher assumptions

You work hard to get to know your students, but vulnerable students often hide their fears, doubts and ways of compensating, even from themselves. Let's reconsider some common assumptions and expand the possibilities.

> *Nothing evades our attention as persistently as that which we take for granted…*
>
> *Marion Brady*

What's the problem?

Do you teach many students well, but find there are some kinds of students who aren't successful? Do you worry about those students who seem destined for failure almost as soon as they start? Do you think there is something wrong with the assessment process, because you get so many "unsuitable" students in your classes? Does it seem like you're wasting your time on some students?

This section is for you if you want to reach some of those students you haven't been able to reach in the past.

What's in this section?

This section will help you explore some of your own assumptions and beliefs about students and teaching, and imagine how your teaching practice might change if you challenged some of those assumptions. When you bring your whole self to teaching, it pays to know what you're bringing.

Why look at teacher assumptions as a learning and violence and learning issue?

When students are actively disrespectful, passively accept whatever teachers do, or seem to be their own worst enemies, they challenge our belief in ourselves and our ability to do our work. In the face of this challenge, we may almost automatically look for reasons in the students or in the situation (too lazy, too stressed, too…) rather than examining our own assumptions about such behaviour. Or we may blame ourselves for being "bad teachers" and

feel sad that teaching may not be for us. In order to teach survivors of violence effectively, we need to question deeply held assumptions and beliefs about student behaviour and teaching methods. Teachers who don't question their assumptions may not serve students who have been through violence well.

One common assumption is that there's nothing wrong in teaching the same way we were taught. But when we do this we are unlikely to take account of the impact of violence on learning, because it is unlikely that our teachers were considering that factor. There has long been silence about this issue. When it is considered, those who have experienced violence are often encouraged to seek medical or therapeutic help and return to education only when they are ready to cope with classrooms and colleges the way they have always run. Yet access to education can be a vital part of healing, moving on, and making change in life. Teachers have to think anew to make sure that everyday teaching practices serve most people well. After even the most sweeping changes in educational programs to take account of the impact of violence on learning, some people may still be unable to learn in a college setting. But most will be able to find an appropriate program when there is general recognition that many teaching practices need to change.

Often the teacher is assumed to be "neutral," that is, it doesn't matter who he or she is; any two teachers would teach the same material with identical results. However, our own social location and past experiences shape our teaching. If we don't take this into account, we will not be able to serve all students equally well and will run the risk of reinforcing inequality and of increasing the negative impacts of violence, particularly the violence fostered through racism, homophobia, ableism, classism, sexism, and ageism. On the other hand, teachers who examine themselves and their approach to teaching can become reliable and trustworthy teachers and allies, particularly for students who are not like them. The purpose of questioning assumptions is not to make teachers feel bad or wrong if they have only known privilege, or if they identify with only one group and have to struggle to identify with others. Instead, it is to help teachers understand how who they are can shape how they are in the classroom, how they perceive students, and how students see them. Teachers who look closely at what is currently going on in their classrooms are freer to be more creative about reaching students who have survived violence and help many more learn successfully in our classrooms.

A common assumption, often shared by administrators, is that teachers can tell immediately who will succeed and who will fail. But such predictions rely on common assumptions about different behaviours and what they indicate. The fact that these assumptions are widely shared does not make them true. Unfortunately, such assumptions can become self-fulfilling prophecies for

students who are trying to take one step towards learning and making changes in their lives. Teachers can become the biggest barrier to success for such students. When we operate on assumptions, we can easily let racist, homophobic, classist, sexist, or ageist ideas shape our teaching and our expectations. Past experiences of violence, including the violence of poverty and racism, may lead some students to need several rounds of participating in courses, gradually becoming more comfortable and more able to relax and learn, to get to a place where they can actually complete and "succeed" in conventional terms. There is more information about this problem in the section called "Student behaviour."

Misconceptions

When teachers get together in a staff meeting or over lunch, some might express ideas like these:

- There aren't any students in my class who have experienced violence.
- There's nothing wrong in teaching the same way I was taught.
- Who I am doesn't have anything to do with how I teach.
- It's my job to make students learn.
- I can tell immediately who will succeed and who will fail.
- It's not my job to help students feel comfortable in my classroom, I just have to teach them the content.

By and large, teachers with some experience in teaching are confident about what they know about many aspects of their work. The more successful they have been with some students, perhaps with the majority of students, the more certain they are of what they know about students and about teaching. In many respects, such confidence is a good thing—it improves teacher morale, it provides a base for further professional development, it helps make many students comfortable, and so on. However, when teachers make incorrect assumptions like those above, they start a vicious cycle in which many students who have experienced violence will be invisible or misjudged, and may drop out or fail; this failure confirms the instructors in their incorrect assumptions, and so the cycle goes on.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Numbers of students affected

Have you thought about it like this? How would it change your teaching practice if :

- You knew that, in every class, at least a quarter of the students will have experienced violence, either in the past or at present.
- You assumed that some students' homes, weekends, and holidays will be stressful or sad, scary or dangerous.
- You understood that some students will react to your authority as a teacher in the same way they reacted to someone who has/had abusive power over them in another part of their life, not because of you personally?

Teaching philosophy and methods

Have you thought about it like this? How would your practice change if:

- You recognized that your classroom practices are partly shaped by your own past experiences.
- You recognized that your classroom practices are partly shaped by your own doubts and insecurities, beliefs and certainties.
- You found some ways to evaluate your teaching so that you didn't need students to succeed in order to feel good about your work.
- You had a variety of sources of recognition for the effort, work and creativity that you put into all aspects of your teaching.
- You met regularly with colleagues or supervisors to talk about teaching and challenge your assumptions about students.

The supposed "neutrality" of the teacher

Have you thought about it like this? How would your practice change if:

- You noticed which students you connect with and which seem to connect with you, and reached out to the others.
- You paid more attention to your feelings about students you tend to fear or avoid.
- You paid more attention to when you feel at ease with students and when you don't.
- You paid more attention to the success of students who are different from the majority of students in your class.
- You challenged yourself to imagine what else you might do to help more people feel they belong and to help them to learn well in your class.
- You taught for the student who feels s/he doesn't belong in the class.

Predicting student success

Have you thought about it like this? How would your practice change if:

- You refused to make any prediction about who will succeed or fail until the end of term.
- You questioned the worth of the usual signs that lead you to predictions of student success.
- You refused to give up on a student in spite of behaviour that usually leads you to predict failure or drop-out.
- You challenged the expectations of program coordinators or funders that you can give them early judgments of students that lead to decisions of who should stay in the program or get funding.
- You acknowledged that students may be accomplishing different things in your class.
- You encouraged different versions of success.
- You had a way to recognize a range of possible outcomes in your class, including gains when completed goals are not possible.
- You allowed for self-assessment at the beginning, middle and end of your courses to help students see their own achievement.
- You imagined how important (even life saving) "success" may be for each student.

What can you do?

1. Recognize that violence is widespread and there will always be many students (and colleagues) in our programs who have complex experiences in their lives.

2. Acknowledge that experiences of violence lead people to be strong as well as to struggle.

3. Teach all classes with an assumption that many students will have experienced violence, without trying to diagnose or identify them.

4. Acknowledge how difficult it is to challenge your assumptions and examine your practice.

5. Set aside a regular time to work with colleagues to gently challenge each other to review and examine your practices, notice what you are taking for granted, the choices you are making, and the places you are stuck in old ruts.

6. Meet all the behaviour in your classrooms with curiosity and questions. Park your assumptions and observe and listen carefully to learn what each student needs to succeed.

7. Connect with a broader range of students by learning more about the struggles in communities you are not part of, and bring in leaders from them to speak to your students to enrich the classroom experience for everyone.

8. Acknowledge your own privilege and become an ally of those with less privilege by using the videos and readings listed in the Resources section, or by attending anti-oppression workshops.

9. Value students' diverse life experiences.

10. A strong motivation for some students to attend college or college preparation is the possibility of creating value out of harsh life experience (e.g., experiences with homelessness, substance use, violence, etc.), with the hope that they may eventually work in support of people with similar experiences. Your understanding of the crucial and sacred things about a student's cultural and spiritual framework is essential to supporting their ability to effectively and positively apply their life experiences to their learning, and eventually to the work they hope to do.

11. Watch "The Danger of a Single Story," by Chimamanda Adichie, at http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html. She reminds us how easily we can get caught in judging others by the single stories we know about them and stresses the value of paying attention to diverse stories that may not be as readily available as the simple, often stereotypical, stories we hear most often.

12. Recognize more than one continuum of power and privilege.

13. Many instructors (especially those who work within college bureaucracies) feel more aware of their lack of power and less aware of the places they do exercise power over others. Yet if you look for the places where you enjoy some element of power, however tiny, you may be able to expand the possibilities for creating change. You may also become more aware of the way others experience you as having power over them.

14. Explore ways you can shift power dynamics, and practically address how power enters the classroom through your power to assess and grade.

Stories

A student's perspective:

"Teachers. They act like they don't know you—they need to be more friendly so students feel less alienated. Most teachers are too old-fashioned. They need to remember when they were students, especially around cultural/ethnic

sensitivity; understand that their students are not like them, they are not all white (like when they were in school). Most teachers are not even aware of their status, they need to be more sensitive to differences."

"Consider the importance of looking at what the Aboriginal community can offer as opposed to always characterizing us as 'barriered' and "the "24-hour job" a student has of proving you're not what people assume you are."

A faculty member's perspective:

"I never assume that there are no students in my class who have not experienced violence and are currently not experiencing violence in their lives. I try to work from a place of understanding that violence is a daily reality for a number of people including our students. I also recognize that I cannot control all the triggers that may surface in learning environments for learners but that I can however, be aware of how someone 'is' in my classroom and how I can create learning spaces that challenge all forms of oppression. I recognize how much effort it takes some learners just to come to be able to show up in class. Making sure that my classroom is a place that honours the fact that everyone has the capacity to succeed. This is no easy feat to accomplish in the classroom and I recognize that some days this is challenging to do."

One teacher was told by the teacher she was replacing that one of her students was sure to fail. When she read his first eloquent assignment she learned about the challenges that young man had been through and saw the enormous adversity he had overcome to get to college. She was disturbed by how easily he might be pegged as someone who would fail, wiping away all the hard fought gains he had accomplished over so many years.

The heart of the matter

Your crystal ball is always cloudy.

Question everything you assume about yourself as a teacher and your students. Be gentle with yourself and your students as you try to teach in ways that will support all learners. Whatever you know about the aggregate of students—students who don't hand in their homework, or who miss class often— you never know about the individual in front of you. Research shows that teacher expectations are powerful predictors of student outcomes. When you believe they can be creative, active, skilled learners, you will teach differently than when you believe they don't care, can't learn, will fail; when you teach differently, you may see different outcomes.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on
"Learning," then on Folder 2, "Teacher Assumptions," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Exploring violence: http://www.learningandviolence.net/violence.htm

Tutor training: Power and Privilege pitfalls:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/outlines.htm

Making the connections: Violence and learning:
I'm doing everything I can but I'm not seeing the success I hoped for …
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections1.pdf

I can't teach the students who aren't really there.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections2.pdf

I find it hard to teach when some students are disruptive.
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections3.pdf

If I find out about violence, what should I do?
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections4.pdf

I'm too tired: I'm not good at taking care of myself
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections5.pdf

I despair: What's the point of teaching adults when nothing changes and their
kids are going to have the same problems
http://www.learningandviolence.net/makingconnections/making_connections6.pdf

Horsman, J. But how can I teach her if she can't get her bum on the seat?
http://learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/reflprac/but_how_can_i_teach_her.pdf

Helping others learn:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Student kit, teachers' room: http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm

Other links

Paul Kivel is an Anti-Racist, Anti-Violence Educator & Advocate who has
done extensive work on education, engaged parenthood, political writing and
practical activism:

> White Benefits: A Personal Assessment:
> http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/whitebenefitsassessment.pdf

Understanding White Supremacy, Challenging White Privilege and Working for Social Justice:
http://www.wpcjournal.com/article/viewFile/6344/pdf_35

What's in a Name? http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/whatsinaname.pdf

The Culture of Power:
http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/cultureofpower.pdf

Retaining Benefits, Avoiding Responsibility:
http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/retainingbenefits.pdf

Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies:
http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/guidelinesforbeingstrongwhiteallies.pdf

Peggy McIntosh, is an American feminist, Anti-Racist activist, Director for the Wellesley Centers for Women and most well known for putting the dimension of privilege into discussions of gender, race and sexuality:

White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED335262

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack:
http://sascwr.org/resources/pdfs/anti-oppression/WHITE PRIVILEGE.pdf

World Trust: Social Impact through Film and Dialogue, is an organization that works to eliminate racial injustice through transformational education:

Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible:
http://world-trust.org/mirrors-of-privilege-making-whiteness-visible/ (The film is available in several parts at www.youtube.com; search the title.)

RANT Trainers Collective is comprised of a group of trainers who develop capacity within global justice movements to carry out creative, effective, non-violent direct actions to dismantle unjust systems, institutions and corporations:

Lisa Fithian. Anti-Oppression Principles and Practices:
http://www.rantcollective.net/article.php?id=17

Curriculum

Many students feel alienated and disengaged from college. They can't seem to hang on to why they are there nor how they will ever use what they are learning. Let's reflect on how inclusive curriculum can re-engage learners.

> *Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.*
>
> *Paulo Freire*

What's the problem?

Do you ever wonder why, given a consistent curriculum, some classes work and others don't? Why some students stay and others don't? Why some students seem ready to learn and others drag themselves into class and fall asleep? If you think about curriculum as having a powerful impact on learning success, then how do you cope with inadequate materials or outdated, biased textbooks? How can you shift the curriculum so its impact on students is more positive than negative? How can you make the curriculum inclusive of diverse students, especially in math or science?

This section is for you if you are struggling with a curriculum that doesn't fit your students' needs, or if you're writing a new one. It will help you integrate new insights about the impact of violence and learning into the curriculum you are working with.

What's in this section?

This section is about seeing curriculum afresh. It considers the meaning students make of curriculum and provides insights into the interplay between curriculum and students. Students are as much a part of the curriculum as all the words in any smartly bound textbook.

Why is curriculum a learning and violence issue?

Curriculum has the potential to increase or diminish confidence depending on whether it acknowledges, reflects, or speaks to people's experiences. Curriculum can reinforce feelings of being "not really there" when it ignores the diversity we see in our communities. It can reinforce feelings of not being good enough when it doesn't include the range of genders, family choices, people with disabilities and people of colour. Curriculum can reinforce feelings of being stupid when it presents learning as continuous and uncomplicated. It can reinforce feelings of shame when it off-handedly assumes that educators and students live coherent and stable lives, where nothing gets in the way of learning. Seemingly benign, this assumption of stability leads students with experiences of violence to blame themselves and to feel like failures when things go awry.

Misconceptions

On the surface, it would seem that teachers don't have any control over the curriculum: courses are pre-set, textbooks are pre-determined, and some subjects don't lend themselves to supplementary resources.

In fact, as teachers we have a great deal of control over the curriculum, by the way we emphasize (or downplay) certain areas of the curriculum, supplement it with our own material and ideas, comment on the worth of certain areas, and most of all by the enthusiasm we bring to it. We modify the curriculum every time we teach it. If we choose, we can adapt curriculum to connect it to students' identity, to their lived experiences, and to how they are actually feeling and learning in the classroom. When we assume that many students (if not most) have had experiences with violence and a history of learning failure, we can ensure that everyone feels reflected in and able to engage with the learning process.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Creating space in your curriculum to acknowledge diverse realities

1. How does the impact of your curriculum differ from its intent? Who seems more or less able to engage with it?

2. What are some sensitive ways to acknowledge and include different cultures and races when they are invisible in the curriculum you've been given to teach?

3. Sometimes it seems your efforts are not appreciated, even if you are trying to be an inclusive educator. What do you notice about how your students react? And how do you react to those reactions?

4. When there is resistance on the part of students or discomfort on your part, what do you do?

5. How do you try to create inclusive curriculum without appropriating culture or race?

6. There has been a huge critique of some curricula being Eurocentric and only presenting the world from a particular perspective (European lens). How can you avoid this bias as you prepare curriculum, or use what has been prescribed?

Acknowledging complex identities

Everybody has many identities, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and age. Some of these identities experience more inequity in our society than others do. Some people have multiple identities that experience multiple injustices.

1. What identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and age) are present in your student body?

2. How do race/gender/class/ability inter-connect in your student body? Does it affect how or what you teach? Why might it matter?

3. Do you incorporate scenarios and content that reflects students' real lives, that are not based in assumptions that come only from your own community?

4. What are your students' experiences and comfort with sharing personal and perhaps unhappy stories? What is your own comfort level in sharing?

5. How can you celebrate family and holidays while recognizing that "family" may have many different meanings and that the notion of home or holidays may not represent good times for everyone?

Building self-advocacy

1. What does self-advocacy look like in your classroom? That is, how do students assert their identity and needs when the curriculum does not adequately or truthfully reflect them?

2. How do you know if students feel comfortable talking with you? How would you find that out?

3. When and where are you available to talk to students? How does this time and place affect students' ability to raise sensitive issues?

4. Has your class discussed various options for advocating for themselves, for example, rather than one-on-one meetings, having a friend come with them, having a friend speak for them, writing in their journal, sending you an e-mail? What was the impact or what do you think it might be if you tried?

5. How are you helping your students develop skills to ensure they can speak up for themselves, within your class, within the college, within their community?

Responding to stories of violence and hard times

Many people experience hard times of various sorts but don't name it as violence. We discuss violence and its impact on learning, yet many people do not feel as though this relates to them. Violence might be a prolonged experience or might be just a moment or two within a life—one bullying experience, one push against the wall, one time being felt up, one or two insults or jokes at their expense—or the relentless experience of an entire life. All these experiences from the biggest to the smallest affect one's sense of self and it helps to become aware of how it affects the learning process.

1. How do you react to disclosures of violence in students' lives, on the street, at home, or in your classroom? Are there ways you minimize them because they are hard to handle? Are there ways you might sensationalize them?

2. What supports are available for students at your college? Do you help students to learn about these supports? How?

3. Have you thought about what your boundaries are and how to maintain healthy boundaries? Where could you get help to establish and maintain your own boundaries?

4. What happens when there are comments in the class that put any group or individual down (e.g., racist, homophobic or ableist comments)? How do you handle these incidents? Are there ways to prevent them or reduce their likelihood?

5. What are the unspoken assumptions you have about what is acceptable in your classroom?

6. Do you talk about these issues in advance?

7. How might talking about them change classroom dynamics?

Students as sources of curriculum content

1. What is the value of looking at students as people to learn from, as people who will learn from each other, and as full contributors to the content and processes of the class?

2. What is the impact on your classroom of viewing students as contributors to the curriculum?

3. What are some ways to encourage students to contribute to the curriculum and the learning environment?

What can you do?

Take into account that learners bring themselves to the classroom as well as the "messiness" of their lives.

1. Lessen the negative impact of seemingly "neutral" curriculum by:

2. Pointing out or asking students to point out what and who is missing from the curriculum, what might be offensive, and what the underlying messages are about continuous and successful learning

3. Noticing how students are reacting to the materials (e.g., sarcastic, bored, disengaged) and engaging with these reactions without criticising the students or getting defensive.

4. Bring in examples and scenarios that reflect the world as it is, to counterbalance the homogenized, cohesive world in curriculum. If students feel their world is reflected in the classroom they might feel less shame and less disconnect from the learning. For example, curriculum that prepares learners to become workers would include learning about:

   • Labour rights, such as right to refuse and hours of work
   • How to handle sexual/gender harassment and workplace bullying
   • How to take care of the kids when you feel tired and out-of-sorts.

5. Help students "talk back" to the curriculum and so to prove that they belong and deserve to be in class, in the college, and in the workplace. For example, if the curriculum is

   • Unnecessarily complicated: mention it and provide alternative ways to learn
   • Hard to read in terms of font, lay-out, or print quality: go over the materials together

- Lacking diversity: involve the students in bringing in more relevant examples
- Absent of human and social impacts: bring people into the learning
- Authoritative: tone down its inherent power by using it as a starting point for engaging discussions.

Stories

A teacher's perspective:

I ask myself this time and time again as a teacher— how do I ensure that the voices present in my classroom reflect the realities of the types of bodies that are in the room? Are the narratives we are engaging in sexist or heteronormative? Are they repeating a dominant narrative that furthers stereotypes about Indigenous people and people of colour? Am I challenging students to think critically or just teaching to the exam?

The heart of the matter

For students to learn well it is vital that they feel themselves reflected in the curriculum—both in the content and the processes used in class. As educators, we can reflect the diversity of the students we teach through using curriculum that accesses diverse media, is in clear language, addresses the multiple ways that people learn, and is current and relevant. We can ensure that the materials we bring to the classroom are not 'centric' (i.e., reflecting only a single story) and instead reflect the reality of the bodies/people in our classroom. Inviting students to analyze, critique and add to the curriculum can address the high level of self-doubt and vulnerability that students bring to their learning environment, and counteract the negative messages students give themselves.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Learning," then on Folder 3, "Curriculum" then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Anti-racist education:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/material/Anti-racist-education.pdf

Tutor-learner dynamics:
http://learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/material/walkingtheline.pdf

Materials: http://learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/materials.htm

Helping others learn (– especially curriculum and culture-based education):
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Other links

Toronto District School Board. Equitable Curriculum Resources:
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=5007&pageid=4366

Hartmut Lutz. Cultural appropriation:
http://www2.brandonu.ca/Library/cjns/10.2/lutz.pdf

Emily Style. SEED: Curriculum as window and mirror:
http://www.wcwonline.org/Projects-Extra-Information/seed-curriculum-as-window-a-mirror

Rethinking schools: http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml

The change agent: http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/

Improving conditions for learning

When students are relaxed and alert they can bring energy to their learning. But many students are anxious much of the time. Let's look with fresh eyes at ways to improve conditions for learning.

What's the problem?

Do your students sometimes seem not really ready to learn? Do you ever find that students seem lost, even after you have made clear explanations and given explicit instructions? Do students ask questions that expose an uncomfortable gap between what you are teaching and what they are learning? Are you ever disappointed by the quality of work that gets handed in? Do you sometimes feel you are the only one with these concerns?

This section is for you if you're interested in helping your students get into that state of "relaxed alertness" which research shows is what we need to learn best (Caine & Caine).

What's in this section?

This section explores ways to improve learning conditions for students who have experienced violence, and indeed, for all students. It explores ideas such as increasing connection, reducing anxiety, developing metacognition, encouraging self care, and dealing with instructors' emotions.

Why look at conditions for learning as a learning and violence issue?

Research shows we all learn best in a state of "relaxed alertness" (Caine & Caine). But trauma, especially repeated trauma, increases anxiety. After repeated trauma tit takes less and less to trigger an anxious response. In the face of trauma we prepare for fight, flight or freeze, and in this state, the part of the brain needed for higher order thinking and analysis—the neo-cortex—will close down. When trauma occurs over and over again, the response that

was designed to help us flee from a predator, to keep us safe, becomes mal-adaptive, damaging our health and leaving us stuck, caught in fear reactions that are triggered over and over again. Even a pleasant surprise, something exciting or new, can be registered as "danger," which causes the analytical portion of the brain to close down.

By becoming aware that students may shut down—in spite of how clear the lessons are or how caring we are—we can begin to explore conditions for learning that might re-open the brain, or even help it to not shut down so tightly or so quickly in the first place.

Misconceptions

As teachers, we think about what we are teaching, who we are teaching, and how to teach. We assume that learning will usually be possible if students try hard enough; if students are not learning, it is their fault. Some of us will say the student is lazy or has a "bad attitude"; others, more generous, will blame students' worries about outside problems, or lack of time due to multiple commitments.

However, the cause may be right in the room. If students are anxious and preparing to fight (angry and combative), to flee (silent and non-participative) or to freeze (spaced out and absent) then no learning will take place. Students may look as though they are "getting it," but may have not heard a word we said. Feelings of panic may have had years in the making and we may not be able to undo them. Nonetheless, we can take steps that will create conditions for learning that support relaxed alertness more of the time and bring students back to learning sooner, when anxiety takes over.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Increasing connection

How do you/could you help students to:
- Become more comfortable with you and the structure of your class
- Learn each others' names
- Get to know each other
- Bring their voices into the room
- Get fully "here" at the beginning of the class.

Reducing anxiety

1. How could you/do you:

   - Find ways for students to make the learning space their own
   - Create beauty and comfort in the room
   - Bring the class back to attention without raising your voice or making a lot of noise
   - Gently re-engage students when they withdraw
   - Help students feel safe enough to take risks and ask questions in your classroom,
   - At the beginning, middle, and end of a term?

2. What else could reduce anxiety in the classroom:

   - At the beginning, middle and end of a class session?

Developing metacognition (Learning about learning; thinking about thinking)

How could you/do you help students:
   - Get to know themselves as learners
   - Learn to figure out and ask for what they need in order to learn well
   - Make connections between their prior knowledge and the new knowledge of the course
   - Make connections between the ways of studying they have used before and the ways expected in your class
   - Understand their own strengths (e.g., learning styles, multiple intelligences, memory techniques, etc.).

Self care

1. How do you/could you encourage your students to take care of themselves, both inside and outside of class?

2. How do poverty and culture play a role in self care?

3. What kinds of self-care activities do you encourage?

4. How do you/could you discuss self care with your students?

Responding to student failure

1. Think about the following teacher behaviours. What effect would they have on conditions for learning:

- Teacher reacts to the appearance that students are not serious about their learning by trying to push or shame them into working harder
- Teacher excludes students from class if they haven't handed in their assignment, if they are late, or miss too many classes
- Teacher holds up student work, or publicizes grades, in hopes of making students do better
- Teacher talks to students harshly when s/he feels they are not trying hard enough.

2. What could you/do you do to help students experience you as an ally to support their best learning?

Instructor's feelings

1. How do you feel when students withdraw? when students aren't learning?

2. What factors lead you to blame yourself or blame them?

3. In what ways do you link students' success or failure to your own success as a teacher?

4. Where else could you get recognition for your work when student success doesn't happen?

5. What strategies could you use to increase your ability to work with students who learn slowly?

6. Do you state your own feelings to the students when you are worried or irritated about something else, so that they won't assume you are angry at them? If yes, how difficult is it to do so? What are the results?

What can I do?

1. Assume that students will bring anxiety into the classroom and that their anxiety can be reduced or increased by what you say and do and the environment you create in your classroom.

2. Help students to become aware of how they are feeling and what they need to reduce their anxiety.

3. Connect with students so they know you care about them—not just their success.

4. Help students to connect with one another and to help each other.

5. Encourage students to share their doubts and fears, especially when the work is hard and their goals seem impossible to reach.

6. Consider the small steps you can take to create a more relaxed atmosphere, ranging from what you do with the students, to the way the room works for the students, to decreasing pressure on students, to giving them respect and space to come back to the learning at their own pace.

7. Challenge students and encourage them to do their best work without tapping into feelings of shame and anxiety, which often only lead students to be combative or close down and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to stay with their learning.

8. Use discussion, learning style inventories, and evaluation of teaching/learning techniques to make students more aware of how they learn best.

9. Explore, alone and with colleagues, ways to balance challenge and gentle support to draw out each student's best work.

Stories

A student's story

> I am a child whose life cycle has been fragmented by emotional, psychological and physical abuse which has contributed to how I struggle to learn, how slow I sometimes feel when processing information, the fear I feel of punishment and the ease in which a sense of paralysis takes over me when required to perform, how quickly I can fade away in a classroom when not engaged and yet sit through classes without ever acting out and most importantly the constant shame I carry around constantly. I am a child whose life cycle has been fragmented by sexual violence. This fragmentation has contributed to a number of things in my life, including decisions that I have made; good and bad; patterns that I continue to repeat that sometimes hinder me, get in my way and stir me down a road of depression, lack of self forgiveness, lack of self-confidence. I navigate through the world of institutionalized education often at great cost to myself. My journey is one of decolonizing the self (Kaur, M. [in press]).

Student perspective

Teachers need to remember that "our mind is still outside of the class" when we arrive, that their job is to get us in the class, welcome us. For some of us, getting up in the morning creates worry and stress, so coming to school needs to be calming (not more stressful).

Student perspective

Teachers need to feel comfortable with students, relating to students. Take time to say the little things that matter, like "sleep more" or "take care of yourselves," tips for succeeding in school. Share their stories. Let us get to know them. Show humility, be humble. Acknowledge that they also struggle, challenges in life (like getting to school on time, or parenting experiences, etc.)

The heart of the matter

The fear of getting things wrong, the challenge to be clear about assignments and expectations, to speak out in class, to stay present and listen enough of the time to understand the whole, even simply being seen, and judged, are all difficult. Although we hope our students will learn, we can also acknowledge there will be many times when they can't and nobody is to blame. If we can avoid judging ourselves or them, we can be curious and creative as we explore innovative ways to reduce anxiety and help students experience that relaxed alertness so vital for learning.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Learning," then on Folder 4 "Improving conditions for learning," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Click on the book "Create Conditions for Learning":
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Psychotherapy and brain research:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/learning/psychother.htm

Student kit, teachers' room, click on the book called "Judging":
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm

Marking for confidence:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/reflprac/marking_for_confidence.pdf

Equity in the classroom

On top of everything else students have to deal with, many are also dealing with teachers or students who act in racist, sexist, ablest, homophobic and other discriminatory ways. Most students stop learning once the atmosphere begins to feel unsafe. Let's consider how to address some of the harsher realities of college life.

> *The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom.*
>
> *bell hooks (p. 207)*

What's the problem?

Have you ever wanted to make the learning environment in your classroom fairer and safer? Are you unsure about your responsibilities under the human rights or access policies of your college? Do you notice that the inequality present in our society reproduces itself in your classroom? Have you wondered why some students choose to sit at the back of the room, or don't speak in class, even though you think they have something to contribute? Do you feel confused or powerless to address discrimination when it happens in your class?

What's in this section?

This section contains information, questions, and stories that focus first on understanding a framework of social equity and then exploring ways to apply it in the classroom environment.

This section is for you if you want to move beyond mere "classroom management" into a practice of creating transformative learning spaces based on equity for all. This section is for you if are bound by the terms of a human rights or equity policy.

Why look at equity as a learning and violence issue?

Equity is quite different from the concept that we should treat all students equally. Equity suggests that we acknowledge and accommodate differences, rather than assuming all students have the same needs. This perspective affirms that we are all equal, but different, and that we must work to ensure that that those groups that are disadvantaged by systemic injustices such as racism, classism, ableism, sexism and heterosexism have the access to the time, space, resources, information, education, and power that they need.

Practicing equity is a way to address and redress the violence in our society. Students who have histories of violence and systemic oppression have equal rights to education; however, they may have to fight an uphill battle. When we put in place classroom practices that level that playing field and address the impacts of violence on learning, we can support students to contribute and fully engage in their learning. Talking about equity, difference, and accommodations in the classroom can help students to feel less shameful, invisible, scared, or angry and can help them to be aware of their rights within the classroom.

Misconceptions

It is widely assumed that classrooms are neutral spaces where social inequity does not play itself out, with its consequent detrimental effects on students' learning. When college policies and practices acknowledge that this assumption is false, equity becomes a stated and overt value, and we can take action to acknowledge and accommodate differences, rather than pretending that differences do not exist. We are all equal, but different.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Equity policy

1. Does your program or educational institution have an equity or human rights policy? What is the policy? Is it clear? Could you explain it to students?

2. How does the wording of your human rights policy incorporate and address issues of racial, cultural, and homophobic discrimination or harassment or other forms of systemic violence?

3. How does the wording incorporate issues of equity, safety and diversity?

4. What are your responsibilities under the policy?

5. What are the consequences for college employees who fail to live up to their responsibilities under the policy?

6. Is the policy written at a reading level and in language suitable for literacy/upgrading and essential skills students?

7. How well is your policy enforced? In what ways can students ensure the policy is enforced?

8. Where can students and faculty access the policy? How is the policy made available to students?

9. Do you connect your human rights/equity policy to class norms and behaviours?

10. In what ways does the policy shape interactions between students and faculty?

Equitable classroom management

1. Are there groups of students who become marginalized in your classroom, for example, a group of Black students who sit at the back, or a cultural group which doesn't participate in discussions? Are students silent about their experiences, sexualities, and families when they are not viewed or represented as the norm?

2. Do you establish classroom norms? Who creates them? Is it a participatory process?

3. Whose voices are dominant in your classes? How can you create learning spaces that ensure non-dominant voices are heard and validated?

4. Do you feel comfortable challenging discriminatory comments, stereotypes and oppressive beliefs in your classroom? If not, what would help you become more comfortable?

5. Are faculty and staff trained on how to "interrupt hate"? Are there any anti-racism/anti-oppression trainings available?

6. How do you send students the message that they can talk about their identities and their experiences of oppression?

7. How do you establish and maintain respectful boundaries in your classes?

8. How do you support and encourage students to be open and respectful with one another?

9. Are students given opportunities to participate in, and even facilitate, class discussions?

Equitable teaching and learning

1. Do you invite students to talk to you about accommodations?

2. How do you teach to multiple and differing learning styles and intelligences?

3. How do you acknowledge your power and responsibility when discussing expectations with students?

4. Do you reflect on your own "-isms," judgments, and assumptions?

5. Under what circumstances would you apologize to a student?

6. When a student discloses experiences of violence and/or inequity, how do you respond?

7. Are you aware of appropriate ways to work with interpreters, note-takers, assistance animals and devices, as well as being aware of other cultural expectations around disability (e.g., understanding Deaf culture)?

8. Do you acknowledge that the classroom is on Aboriginal land?

What can you do?

Reflection and action

Positioning yourself within a social justice and equity framework involves deep and sometimes uncomfortable self-reflection. It can mean hearing critical feedback from students, colleagues, and managers that may challenge your concept of yourself as a good, well-intentioned person, and it can mean accepting that you make mistakes and offering apology when you do. It is a process of interrogating your power and privilege, both earned and unearned, and its impact on your classrooms and your communities.

Reflection should lead to action and often those actions are small but powerful:

1. Take the time to check in with students, individually and as a group.

2. Review materials with everyone.

3. Adequately prepare students for what will happen, what is happening and what has happened.

4. Think about whether curriculum and materials take into account students' different needs, and make adjustments.

5. Learn to be aware of the spaces you teach in and find ways to make them more comfortable and conducive to learning (e.g., seating students in a circle, providing comforts, or adjusting the lighting in the room).

6. Be aware of how you interact with students: your tone, the nature of your interactions, and how you model respectful behaviour.

7. Advocate for yourself and your students, beyond the classroom and into the world.

Use the college equity policy

Introducing an equity policy or simply the concept of equity into your classroom makes room for discussion of discrimination, safety and diversity. An equity policy or framework can be used as a process to address violence in the classroom and help create a safer, more equitable and respectful learning environment. As a tool for your own reflection, you may want to use the article below by a teacher who uses a discussion about the college's equity policy to build group guidelines.

A faculty member's perspective on using the college equity statement to establish group guidelines

As educators and group facilitators, many of us have some system of creating group norms or guidelines with participants when a group begins its process. Well established group norms can set the tone and provide a reference point for constructive group process, in which strong interpersonal communication and healthy conflict can enhance the learning of everyone in the group.

I teach in an access program at a community college that supports students who experience mental health and substance use as barriers to education. In this setting I have learned that establishing an equity framework for group guidelines helps students to work together to achieve, by consensus, norms that move beyond 'class rules' to agreements that consider learners as whole people existing within social contexts. To establish this framework, I begin with the equity statement of the college for which I work, which is on the front page of every course outline in the college. I use this policy as an impetus for a discussion about our responsibilities, as students and educators, in contributing to a safe, non-violent and equitable learning environment.

The policy goes: "George Brown College values the talents and contributions of its students, staff and community partners and seeks to create a welcoming environment where equity, diversity and safety of all groups are fundamental. Language or activities which are inconsistent with this philosophy

violate the College policy on the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment and will not be tolerated. The commitment and cooperation of all students and staff are required to maintain this environment. Information and assistance are available through your Chair, Student Affairs, the Student Association or the Human Rights Advisor."

Unpacking this policy always leads to very interesting class discussions. We work together to understand and interpret the policy, identifying vocabulary, behaviours and actions named in the policy. We also talk about the fact that it is an already established group guideline, which, by nature of being students at the college, they must agree to. There are two basic parts of this policy as it pertains to the creation of group guidelines in the classroom, so if your discussion articulates the following points, you should be able to move on to creating group guidelines from this framework.

1. Who does the policy pertain to?
According to this policy, who is responsible for a positive learning environment? "Students, staff and community partners." Talk about these "stakeholders" and put them in context, along with the responsibilities of each.

2. What values does the policy uphold?
The three values of "equity," "diversity," and "safety" are named and made accessible. Students can be asked whether these are values that they share, and it can be named unambiguously at this point that they are the values held by the college community. I provide the following definitions for the values.

Equity: We are all equal but different. We will work to level the playing field so that those groups that are disadvantaged by sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism etc. have access to time, space, resources, information, education, power etc.

Diversity: We are all different and those differences make our class richer and stronger.

Safety: Violence harms us all. We will use non-violent and non-judgmental ways to address conflict and express ourselves. When I discuss the importance of safety and non-violence in the learning environment I bring in a discussion of the body's physiological response to fear and threat, that of being flooded with adrenaline and experiencing the "fight, flight or freeze" response. I also discuss with students the impact of violence on learning, and how quickly our bodies can go to that state when we have experienced violence. We talk about how difficult it is to learn in this state: "It's harder to learn when you're scared."

3. What does the policy look like in practice?

From here we move into the discussion of group guidelines. The equity framework that we have established provides a reference point for discussions about whether guidelines such as "cell phones off" or "don't come if you're more than 15 minutes late" come from an equity perspective, and whether we can re-phrase them from within this framework. People who are responsible for children or have other caretaking responsibilities, for example, may need to put their phones on vibrate and may at times need to be late or absent for reasons outside their control. We can agree as a group to accommodate that need and value those individuals. It also provides an opportunity to name the challenges, yet importance, of balancing their school with their lives. It also provides opportunities to further explore the more ambiguous common guidelines, such as "be respectful." This guideline can be made more specific by asking "What does this look like, in behaviour, when we are coming from the values of equity, diversity and safety?

Explore the idea of using the equity statement to create class guidelines by discussing the following questions with your colleagues:

1. Our students are whole people with complex lives, histories and responsibilities. Explicit rules such as "don't be late," "cell phones off," and "no swearing," can end up making the classroom less inclusive. How could the practice of using the equity statement to frame group guidelines make the classroom more inclusive?

2. Students participate and learn differently. Some students can dominate class discussion while others have a harder time contributing. Sometimes students "side talk" in order to get or understand information they missed or to relieve some anxiety they're experiencing. How could the practice of using the equity statement to frame group guidelines address various behaviours and needs?

3. Confidentiality is a very important group agreement in creating safe learning spaces for all students. How could you use the values of equity, diversity and safety to talk about confidentiality? Write an example of a confidentiality agreement in clear language.

4. We can't assume that "being respectful" looks the same for everyone. How could the practice of using the equity statement encourage students to think about and describe what respectful behaviours actually look like in the classroom?

Stories

How does an equity or human rights framework enter the classroom environment?

A faculty perspective

One faculty member shared her experience of introducing the equity policy of the college in the first class she teaches in every course, every semester. She reads an excerpt of the policy to the class and they discuss ways it can impact the learning dynamics of the classroom, course content and interactions between students and faculty throughout the rest of the course. Using the equity policy as a framework she stresses the need to ensure that all students feel safe to share and learn from one another, especially about topics and content they are not familiar with. With one class, she stressed the need to ensure that the classroom is a "positive space," one that values and is safe for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, queer, questioning or other. The notion of safety was discussed, and it was acknowledged that safety differs for everyone, in different spaces and situations.

As faculty, she noted, we can't always guarantee safety, but it is our responsibility under the policy to do our best to uphold the policy. She also shared that if a student feels that the policy isn't being enforced, there are many ways to address it: through the faculty teaching the course, the Human Rights office of the college, the Student Association, etc. After taking the time to talk about the policy and the need for a positive space in the classroom, a student approached her a few weeks later and she shared that this was the first time in her learning that she had ever felt included as a lesbian. She felt supported and acknowledged. It was the first time she didn't feel like she was on the outside. It was an affirming experience for her. This experience shaped her learning, throughout her college career. A student perspective Coming back to school means facing abuse I experienced in other places. Are teachers doing enough to deal with, understand discrimination?

A student perspective:

"Coming back to school means facing abuse I experienced in other places. Are teachers doing enough to deal with and understand discrimination?"

The heart of the matter

Creating an equitable classroom is a basic foundation for teaching well. It is both a legal and an ethical obligation. Creating equitable learning opportunities for all includes addressing the impact of violence on learning. Equity policy is a useful tool to persuade others—students, colleagues, and administrators—that it is vital to pay attention to the impact of violence on learning. We may find it challenging at first to address the ways that systemic inequities play out in our classrooms, but help is available in the form of train-

ing, talking with colleagues, and reading. It gets easier with practice, and the results are worth it, both for students and for ourselves.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at: http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Learning," then on Folder 5, "Equitable Classrooms," then on Tab 8, "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Helping others learn: http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Global Justice: http://www.learningandviolence.net/violence/global.htm

Community Action: http://www.learningandviolence.net/violence/community.htm

Other links

Examples of equity policies from educational institutions:
Nova Scotia Department of Education:
http://www.ednet.ns.ca/pdfdocs/studentsvcs/racial_equity_policy/RacialEquityPolicy_Webversion.pdf

Red River College (Manitoba): http://www.rrc.mb.ca/index.php?pid=530

Seneca College (Ontario): https://inside.senecac.on.ca/redc/index.html

Toronto District School Board:
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=682&pageid=546

Antiracist Multicultural Education Network of Ontario (AMENO):
http://www.ameno.ca/docs/Equity%20in%20Education%20Today%20AMENO.pdf

Poverty Network, Ontario:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/material/PovertyFactSheets-aug07.pdf

George J. Sefa Dei:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/material/Anti-racist-education.pdf

Seneca College: https://inside.senecac.on.ca/redc/positivespace.html

Getting around the college

When getting around the college is a nightmare and students don't feel they belong, they can't do their best learning. Let's explore the impact of space on learning.

What's the problem?

What would it be like to use the bathrooms in your college if you were a young man who had been targeted by homophobic bullying throughout high school? If you were a recent immigrant or refugee fleeing violence, what would show you that you were welcome in these hallways and other spaces? Where would you go to get grounded before going to your next class if you grew up in a violent home and had just left a classroom where the instructor acted aggressively and in a way that reminded you of the violence at home?

This section is for you no matter how much influence you have on what your college looks like: you may simply decorate your own office or classroom, or you may be responsible for facilities management, or plan the design or decoration of large college space. It will help you to see your college's physical plant through the eyes of students with histories of violence and exclusion.

What's in this section?

This section focuses on physical spaces in your college and the ways in which those spaces can enhance or pose obstacles to students dealing with experiences of violence: public spaces shared by the college community; classrooms and other spaces dedicated to learning and study; and administrative and support offices.

Why look at moving around the college as a learning and violence issue?

All aspects of the college environment send students messages about their place, or lack of it. The shape and state of classrooms, corridors, offices, libraries and other spaces can have far more impact on possibilities for learning than we might imagine. For students struggling with the impact of violence, shared spaces can either provide comfort and a safe haven, or disrupt focus, increase anxiety, and reinforce a sense of being unwelcome.

Misconceptions

Those of us who work at the college often project our feelings onto students. If we feel welcome and find it easy to get around, we assume students must feel the same way. If we can "park" our troubles outside when we come to work, we assume students can, too. We may think that students don't notice how public space is allocated in colleges so long as they get access to fast food and Tim Horton's coffee. However, interviews with students have shown that the daily navigation of the college environment can have either positive or negative effects. Students may:

- Arrive in class feeling frustrated, anxious, confused, angry, dissociated, late, or unable to focus
- Experience bullying, messages of exclusion, and flashbacks to violence experienced in public school
- Find themselves exposed to people and situations intimately connected with their earlier experiences of violence.

On the other hand, public spaces in colleges can also:
- Provide students with a place to regroup, retreat, and get focused and grounded before heading to class or the library
- Encourage students to work collaboratively to solve problems and support one another
- Send students messages that they belong, that they are in the right place and that they are valued by the institution.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

General questions

1. What are some examples of spaces that are set up to be vibrant nurturing spaces that support positive learning environments? What can we learn from them?

2. Might people's past haunt them in any of the college spaces? Why? Where? How?

Responsibility

1. Who is involved in maintaining the appearance of these spaces?

2. Are the people in authority aware of the role that these places play as sites of stress/refuge/violence for students?

3. How can people in positions of authority participate in conversations about the role that these places play as sites of stress, refuge or violence for students?

4. Do more people, or different people, need to be involved in this process of creating and maintaining nurturing spaces?

5. What is needed to inspire a co-operative effort to make these spaces vibrant, or at the very least neutral zones that support rather than hinder the establishment of positive learning climates?

Codes of conduct

1. Are there guidelines for the use of space?

2. Who is involved in "regulating" behaviour in various areas?

3. Is there a code of conduct? If so do students know about it? Care about it? Want it to be used? What about faculty? Administrators?

4. Are students encouraged to discuss the meaning and application of the code?

5. Are there particular programs or areas that have their own codes of behaviour? If so, are they known and respected?

6. What might make any space feel safer or less safe?

Appearance

1. Are spaces welcoming, beautiful, tired, over-used..... etc.

2. Which are better resourced than others? less well resourced?

3. Who might feel welcome in this space and who might feel excluded or not reflected? How do you know?

Public spaces

Hallways

1. What practices are in place for dealing with harassment in the hallways? Are they used and effective?

2. Who is trained in dealing with harassment in the hallways? Are they supported? Do different/more people need to be trained?

Maps and directions

1. Are they clear? up-to-date?

2. Do they show where you are as well as all the places on that floor?

3. Are there visually striking aids (e.g., colour coded, large wording, bold arrows etc.)

4. How easy is it to find all the spaces a student might need to reach?

5. How easy is it to find people to ask?

6. What hinders people finding their way around your college?

Signage

1. Are doorways clearly marked, and is it easy to understand what lies beyond?

2. Are there signs that welcome?

Bulletin boards and display spaces

1. Are they visually pleasing? busy and exhausting?

2. Which students see themselves reflected in the people and places represented in posters, flyers, art displayed?

3. Marketing posters and materials on display

4. What do they say about who belongs at your college? about who will succeed?

5. What messages do they convey about the experience of being a student in your college?

Washrooms

1. Are the washrooms clean and inviting?

2. Are they places a student could go to cry?

3. How is hate graffiti dealt with?

4. How do students find them?

5. Are there gender neutral bathrooms (bathrooms labelled as male/female) for transgender and gender non-conforming people who often are harassed in single sex washrooms?

Stairwells

1. Are they easy to find?

2. Are they well lit, inviting?

3. Are they empty and threatening? jam-packed with people to the point of being dangerous?

4. Are there clear signs to show each floor and what is on it?

5. Are there alternative, easy, inviting, routes to all parts of the college using ramps or elevators?

Elevators

1. Is the signage clear?

2. Do they bump and malfunction often?

Lockers

1. Are there lockers for anyone who needs one?

2. Are lockers easy to find?

3. Is there enough room to use them that students aren't being jammed into them constantly?

Cafeterias and lunch rooms

1. Are there spaces where students can eat alone or in groups?

2. Can students who have brought food from home eat alongside of those buying their food?

3. Is there a broad range of reasonably priced foods from different ethnicities available?

4. Are cafeterias/restaurants open at times when upgrading and continuing education students are present?

5. After cafeteria hours is there good food available, or only foods high in sugar and fat?

Meditation and prayer rooms

1. Are there multi-denominational prayer rooms?

2. Are there rooms which meet the needs of each faith group?

3. Are there spaces for meditation and quiet?

4. Are these spaces well maintained, comfortable, inviting?

Smoking spots, outdoor patios/gardens etc.

1. Are there places to relax where there is no drug dealing/drug taking activity?

2. Are there comfortable places outdoors to smoke and comfortable places free of smoke?

Garbage and recycling

1. How do these areas affect the feel of the public space?

2. Is the signage clear or could anyone feel stupid for putting the wrong thing in the wrong place?

Student space

Use these questions to reflect on areas students use, such as student lounges, quiet spaces, program spaces, First Nations/Aboriginal spaces, women's centre, LGBTTTQQ Trans centre, Athletics centre, etc.

1. Where do students go to meet each need they have during the college day (e.g., for food, washrooms, recreation, quiet, religious or cultural activities)? How easy is it to find a space for each need?

2. How segregated are these spaces? That is, are different spaces used by different groups, ages, or programs? by fee-paying students and students who don't pay?

3. Who is using these spaces? Who is absent?

4. Do some students avoid certain areas? If so, why?

5. Have particular groups of students taken over any of these spaces?

6. How much drug dealing goes on in the college and its environs? Where? How would a student with a history of addiction as a coping mechanism for dealing with violence experience your outdoor patios or walkways?

Access

1. Are all students likely to feel comfortable in all areas of the college?

2. Do students need student cards to access any of these areas? If so, do all students receive student cards?

3. Do all students have places they can go to:

   - Cry?
   - Rest and relax or nap when they are dealing with tough stuff at home or at school, when they are coping with the emotional exhaustion of struggling to learn, to cope, to stay in an alien environment, when their memories or their present responsibilities keep them from sleeping enough?
   - Regroup after a hard class or meeting?
   - Feel at home, feel they belong?
   - Feel they will be safe from harassment?
   - Hang out with others like themselves?
   - Get to know and hang out with others in their program?

Learning space

Use these questions to reflect on classrooms, library, writing centres, etc.

Classrooms

1. Is there space for all students?

2. Are classrooms comfortable for students who are larger or smaller, taller or shorter?

3. Can students using assistive devices easily move through all parts of the classroom?

4. Is it easy to slip in late without disturbing class?

5. Is it easy to leave a classroom during class if necessary?

6. Can everyone hear? see all parts of the room?

7. Is the set-up rigid and traditional, focusing everyone's attention on the person standing at the front of the room? Or is it easy for students to hear and see one another? to move into small groups for discussion?

8. How are classrooms allocated? Do less desirable classrooms go to programs with less status?

9. How do people treat each other in these spaces?

10. How accessible are drugs and alcohol?

Teachers' offices

1. Do students have easy access to teachers?

2. Is there somewhere they can comfortably sit down in private and discuss their challenges with a teacher?

3. Do faculty offices suggest that students are welcome? How or how not?

Libraries

1. Who has access?

2. Who uses it?

3. What is the general climate and how do people treat each other?

4. Who feels comfortable in this space?

5. Can students expect to hear offensive or oppressive language or comments from others?

6. What can students do when the student code of conduct is not being respected?

7. Is material available on paper or electronically or both?

8. Who has a library card?

9. Who gets excluded?

10. How do fines work?

11. Are there academic penalties or loss of borrowing privileges to people who owe fines?

12. How accessible are drugs and alcohol?

Study spaces

1. Is there some where students can go to:

2. Study silently alone

3. Talk with others to study

4. Work collaboratively on group projects

5. Access computers

6. Is there enough space for everyone or do people fight for space?

7. Is there an assumption that all students will have access to computers and the internet at home?

8. Is it easy for students to explain that they do not have access and not be shamed?

9. Is information provided to students about where to access computers and the internet outside the college?

Administrative and support space

Use these questions to reflect on areas where students connect with the college outside the classroom, such as registration, program offices, housing office, human rights, equity offices, disability support, elders rooms, counselling rooms, etc.

Are there "inspirational" posters, slogans, etc. on the walls? What do they seem to say about who belongs there? who will succeed? (E.g., "If you want to learn we're here to help," but perhaps you don't really want to learn that's why you're absent, late, etc.)

What can you do?

Explore your environment

1. Take a walk through your college and look at each element afresh to see what messages it gives. Think about how it might feel to negotiate this space when trying to prepare for a classroom experience, or what it would be like to retreat to this space when you are trying to cope with stress.

2. Walk into your office and try to it see through the eyes of a student who has been told by all of the authority figures in her life that she will never make it to college.

Consult with students

1. Each day, ask one student or potential student what you could do to make your office or workspace more inviting.

2. Hold a pizza lunch (or regular lunches) and invite students who have dealt with learning and violence issues to come in and talk with you about how they experience your college's services and what they would like to see.

3. Ask a range of students where they hang out between classes, or where they escape to when they need a break.

Retreat spaces

1. Create an Aboriginal centre – with space for the full range of uses needed, e.g., study, sleep, finding allies, pot lucks, consulting with an elder, smudging etc.

2. Create a women's centre, transgendered people's centre etc.

3. Create a "home room" for a program to help students find community, resources, and retreat from class when needed.

4. Create a space where people without spare money can get the comfort of a cup of coffee or tea.

Reach out

1. Organize facilitated peer support through your counselling office for students with histories of violence who are negotiating their way through college.

2. Host an awareness session for students that focuses on demonstrating this tool and the entire website .

3. Sponsor a poster or collage contest to generate welcoming, inclusive materials for your walls.

4. Meet with members of your student association see if your administration can support leadership among students in the area of learning and violence.

Stories

Student's story

I feel really good about myself as I work towards getting into my post-secondary program, but there are times when I'm reminded of my old life.

Sometimes I'll leave the classroom and see someone in the hall who knew me from the street. The memories come flooding back and I worry that I'll be outed—that the people from my past will tell my teachers and the students in my class about my earlier habits and lifestyle. I feel embarrassed and ashamed. All the good feelings of moving forward suddenly disappear and I feel helpless and powerless because of my past. I feel safe enough in the classroom, but I'm never sure when I go to the bathroom or leave for lunch if I'm going to meet someone I've known before in the hallway.

I went to the washroom and it took me half an hour—I'd left my schedule in my bag in the classroom, so I didn't have the room number and I couldn't find my way back. Oh—and I also couldn't find the washroom initially and I got scared I'd wet my pants."

When I was applying to colleges and I was checking out George Brown I noticed the Positive Space rainbow ribbons in the library right away. That definitely influenced my decision to come here….Now that I'm a student I don't notice the ribbons as much—though I am very aware of which of my teachers have one at their desk—but I swear every time I go past the security office and I see the serious-looking security personnel working alongside that rainbow ribbon, I get the biggest grin on my face.

The men's bathroom has to be repainted repeatedly because the homophobic graffiti is so bad. And there are students who have to see that graffiti several times a day.

Positive changes

1. The Human Rights Office at one college has actively been reclaiming student space through hosting open public events in contested areas of the college. Students heading to the large lounge area to eat lunch, or on their way to the bathroom, or socializing in an open area near classrooms have recently encountered the following:

   - Queer dub poetry and spoken word artists performing works that address their experiences of violence, exclusion, resistance, celebration
   - Performances of a play about youth living on a northern reserve
   - Queer valentines and candy handed out across from the Tim Horton's line-up near the main entrance
   - Multimedia presentations from a collective of Muslim youth

A worker in the office has found that "These events make a visual statement: queer and trans people belong here, people of colour belong here, immigrant and refugee people belong here."

2. CBC radio's DNTO broadcast a show focused on the importance of bath-rooms in public spaces. This show, available as a podcast, touches on some of the issues students raised in focus groups. It also tells a hopeful story about the simple and inexpensive transformation of a bathroom in a public workspace:
   http://www.cbc.ca/dnto/episode/2010/08/27/whats-on-dnto-august-28/

The heart of the matter

The use of college space is complex, particularly for upgrading and access students. Do they feel they "belong" in all areas of the college? If space seems really to be for some other category of students—those who pay fees, those of a different age, ethnicity or class, those who attend in the day—then students may not be able to resource themselves within the college for the challenging work of studying. If they feel they don't belong, they will go away.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Getting Around," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Click on the book called "Create Conditions for Learning":
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Other links

Egale Canada. Gay-straight alliances: http://mygsa.ca/

George Brown College. Positive Space Campaign:
http://www.georgebrown.ca/positivespace/index.aspx - maincontent

Seneca College. Positive Space:
https://inside.senecac.on.ca/redc/positivespace.html

Toronto District School Board. Equitable Curriculum Resources:
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=5007&pageid=4366

Moving on

What's the point in helping students complete their courses if they don't move on to the programs and jobs they worked so hard to reach? Let's look with fresh eyes at the challenge of helping students to move on.

What's the problem?

Do you ever worry that the students who are doing well in your program just aren't going to make it in the program they hope to move on to? Do you later hear from students who had done well in their program, and find that they never were able to get or keep a job? Do you wish you knew better how to support students to move on and get a little closer to their dreams and goals?

What's in this section?

This section explores the ways a college can support students as they move from preparatory programs such as academic upgrading, ABE (Adult Basic Education), literacy and essential skills, and Pre-Programs, to postsecondary programs and/or to employment.

This section is for you if you work in a program that prepares students to move into college career or trades programs AND for you if your program receives students from ABE, Essential Skills or pre-programs, because making smooth transitions is a problem that both preparing and receiving programs have to work on together.

Why look at transitions as a learning and violence issue?

Students who have experienced violence often seem to get stuck and have trouble moving on from programs where they did well, and into new, challenging programs and workplaces. They may have experienced a supportive and welcoming environment within their preparatory program and be reluctant to leave the "known" to embark on the unknown, often in a much bigger and less personalized pool of students. When students have lived in abusive or violent situations, often their fear of the unknown, even if it is a more positive situation that awaits them, will keep them in their current familiar environment. This fear of the unknown, mixed with self-doubt and fear of making mistakes, can paralyze them, and without support they may drop out of their new program in the first few days, before they have time to settle in and realize that they can do the work.

Misconceptions

Many people assume that it's up to students to manage their own transitions, if they've been taught what they need to know for the next level. However, this is not true for students who have been through violence. Most need help with transitions if they are going to move successfully into what feels like scary new territory. As an example, one educator worked with a student who received an acceptance letter detailing that he had met the criteria for the program, but the letter omitted the fact that he hadn't yet been awarded a place in the program. He proudly told family and friends about the acceptance, until the error was found out. Other students, with more self esteem or self confidence, might have been angry at the college, or have shrugged it off, seen it as as a problem that could be solved, and have set about getting more

information, getting on a wait-list, etc. This student, however, was devastated to learn that he didn't have a spot reserved for him. The old familiar feelings of unworthiness and disappointment returned, and without support he could not mobilize himself to resolve the situation.

Students who have experienced violence in their lives can be disillusioned by the smallest of setbacks, such as: not understanding correspondence, feeling intimidated about walking into a classroom/workplace not knowing anyone, feeling abandoned because they are suddenly a number instead of a person, and feeling overwhelmed with no one to turn to. As college staff, we know that transitions for students in general are difficult; students who have many more barriers to surmount are in even greater need of our support and understanding.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Moving on from preparatory to postsecondary programs

Getting information to students

1. How and when do you inform students about how to transition from preparatory programs to postsecondary programs? Is this method effective?

2. Do students know how the preparatory program articulates with the training program they are preparing for? Does it ensure entry? Does it reduce time or the course load in the program they are moving into?

3. Are there clear pathways and resources for students?

4. Is there clear information about how to apply for postsecondary programs? Are deadlines and critical dates clearly communicated to students?

5. Do you have time available to help students with the often lengthy and confusing application process for post-secondary ?

6. Do you have the time and resources necessary to advocate for students in preparatory courses to ensure that moving on is well supported?

Articulation between preparatory and postsecondary programs

1. How do the preparatory programs articulate with postsecondary programs? For example, are there spaces held or kept open for students who are currently in the college system, doing what they need to get ready for

postsecondary? Are there supports in place which are included in a formal agreement between the preparatory programs and the related postsecondary programs?

2. Is it possible that a student's experience in a preparatory program may block them from moving on? For example, if students do not do well in some of their preparatory courses, can it jeopardize their entrance into postsecondary programs?

3. Do preparatory programs or courses play a role in weeding out or gate keeping, rather than helping people into these programs?

4. Are preparatory programs one more hoop to jump through for students who are judged as "not ready"? Or are they a trampoline which helps students bounce into a postsecondary program?

Supporting students

1. What kinds of supports are available to you, as counsellors, administrators, and other staff, to support and advocate for students through their transition to postsecondary?

2. Do you and your institution see these students as needing different forms of support? If so, what?

3. What mechanisms do you have in place to support transitions?

4. What are your responsibilities? Your boundaries?

5. Are students left with a next step? Do they know what to do or where to go when they leave your office?

6. Are students given training or support to cope with, and advocate for themselves in, their postsecondary programs?

7. Does your department provide opportunities to build connections and contacts in the college and the community to better support students moving on?

8. How do you ensure that your contacts are reliable and helpful? Have you made an effort to connect with your contacts to see if they are willing to help? Are you sure they won't set up more barriers for students moving on?

Moving on to the workplace

1. What are some of the ways you support students to transition to the workplace once they complete their program?

2. What kind of follow-up supports are in place?

3. What supports do students need to be ready for the work environment they are moving into? What changes in your program are needed in order to give them these supports?

Preparing for the "real world"

1. What proportion of your program is aimed at preparing students for the "real world," whatever that may be? What is the right balance between activities that attempt to prepare students for the work world and activities that give them the content and skills directly related to the work they will do?

2. Do you train students for the work world by reproducing it in your programs? For example, are students penalized for arriving late because lateness wouldn't be allowed in the "real world"?

3. Do you provide time and processes to help students to reflect on and understand their own complex picture of practical problems and emotional reactions that often lead them to be late, or absent, or behave in other ways that would cause them problems at work?

4. Do you make allowances for economic and social forces that prevent students from acting as if they were working? For example, students may not be able to afford reliable transportation or daycare, although once they are finished the training and are working, they might well have enough money for these things.

5. What classroom practices make it difficult for students to act like they are at work? For example, do rigid timelines, formal ways of doing things, or lack of freedom of movement make it more difficult for students manage their own work?

6. How many of our students have worked and already have the knowledge and experience needed to succeed in the work world, but are not applying it to their learning environment because of how the classroom experience makes them feel?

7. Do we make assumptions about our students' readiness for the workplace based on classroom habits and behaviours that may make it seem that they are not ready? Sometimes these habits and behaviours are in response to the ways the learning environment makes them feel.

What can you do?

1. Recognize how hard moving on can be. Notice that students may find it just too scary to leave the comfort of a familiar program and move to a new program where they feel unknown and even invisible.

2. Design activities before they leave to help students prepare for this reality, and put in place the support they will need—in themselves, with fellow students, and elsewhere.

3. As soon as possible, design activities in the new programs that help students develop some level of comfort and familiarity with you and each other. These will be helpful for all students but vital for those who struggle with acute fears.

4. Go that extra mile to help students navigate the system.

5. Advocate with your peers on behalf of students.

6. Provide support for students to begin to feel more comfortable in a new workplace, such as a job coach or mentor, perhaps a fellow worker who will agree to take the student under her wing, or a mentor from the college who will look in on the student at breaks for the first few days, or check in regularly. Explore what might be possible in your setting.

Stories

Students' perspectives

"Make space for us/hold space for us/recognize that we are here."

"Just tell me, clearly, what you want from me and when you want it."

"It is important that counsellors take the time to guide and show us the number of steps needed to achieve our goals. This often means asking the same questions over and over again because it is very confusing. Breaking down the steps into manageable steps is helpful."

Staff perspective:

It is important that we provide support for students as they enter the field, whether in placement or just out of school. One student talked about all the GBC courses she has passed yet she is still not working in the health care field. When asked why, she gradually explained that she is scared. Scared to make a drastic mistake, like dropping someone. Scared that people would judge her, that she wouldn't fit in. When asked what would make a difference she said someone who came into the workplace to support her, so she would

have someone to talk to in her breaks, someone to talk with about the challenges. Someone to reassure her that she is doing fine. Otherwise the fear is just too big and she can't start, or if she does she quickly quits.

Staff perspective:

I have learned that navigating the system in the college is not an easy process. Taking courses myself has taught me that you can't assume that every person that a student encounters will be helpful and care about student success at the college. To ensure that the student has moved on in a way that is helpful and relevant, I connect with relevant contacts, such as admissions. Otherwise a student could easily fall through the cracks.

At the same time, I am aware that that most staff will respond [more sympathetically] to a concern coming from a staff member compared to a student's concern. That being the case, I am okay with using my position and privilege in the college, which means using whatever advantages, power and resources to advocate for students moving on. Until the system is easier to navigate and is fair and accessible, I will continue to advocate for students and build allies within the college and the community to ensure that students are moving on in supportive ways.

The heart of the matter

Students who have experienced violence will likely need more help to transition than we may expect to have to provide. If we can create a variety of options to provide that support, depending on the students' needs, we will see that many more survivors of violence will move on successfully. However, without well-timed and appropriate interventions, they will often slip through the cracks, and after working so hard to complete a program, they may, in a remarkably short time, lose everything they have gained.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Moving on," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Janus Gate (activity):
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/outlines.htm#workshops

Surviving Christmas:
http://learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/materials.htm - learners

Believe in yourself: http://learningandviolence.net/helpself/believe.htm

Training and professional development

Students deserve the best teaching we can give them. Professional development can give us the tools to work with students who have experienced violence. Let's think afresh about training needs.

What's the problem?

How could you sensitize a whole department, division, or college to the issue of violence and learning? What kind of training might move them to improve policies and practices at every level, for each aspect of the college experience? In what ways are the training needs of an instructor the same as a receptionist, a counsellor or an administrator? How are they different? How can

you take a broad societal issue and narrow the focus to its impact on learning and education? When and where will you meet resistance?

If you design or deliver training, this section is for you. Here you will find some ways to break down this huge task into some manageable parts.

What's in this section?

This section will help you think about how to incorporate what we know about violence and learning into training and professional development for various college audiences.

Why look at training and professional development as a learning and violence issue?

Educators, front-line staff, and administrators may not be aware of the ways their day-to-day practices affect many students who have experienced violence, practices which get in the way of their ability to study effectively and which damage their rates of retention and success as students. The connection between violence and learning is not generally part of any training given to faculty or staff, and often remains hidden; there will be a wide range of knowledge and ignorance about the topic. Furthermore, many staff members will have their own experiences of violence which will affect their ability to deal with students who have the same experience.

The effects of violence on learning have been documented, and strategies for improving the success of students with experience of violence have been articulated. The role of training and professional development is to make that knowledge available to everyone who deals with students, so that practice can keep up with theory.

Misconceptions

Because the effect of violence on learning is not generally articulated, people who work with students have personal perspectives on the question, rather than a common perspective based on evidence. In any college, there will be people with the following misconceptions and misguided attitudes about violence and learning:

1. Violence does not affect learning ("The periodic table is the periodic table, no matter who is learning it.")

2. Only a very few students have been affected by violence in their lives ("No one in any of my classes has ever mentioned it.")

3. People should not come to college until they have "healed" from prior experiences of violence ("I'm not a therapist, so there's nothing I can do.")

4. Violence is a big societal problem, and outside the scope of a college ("I can't solve society's problems, so there's nothing I can do.")

5. Students who have experienced violence should be pitied rather than taught ("Really, I feel so sorry for her, but I don't expect her to succeed in this program.")

6. Let's not think about violence ("I have my own memories and experiences that I don't want to deal with.")

Training and professional development can provide opportunities for all college personnel to gain information about the effect of violence on learning, to examine their practice, and to learn tactics to support students.

Questions for reflection

These questions are starting points for reflection and discussion, either alone or with your colleagues.

Orientation for new staff

1. Are new full, part-time, and temporary staff given an orientation to your institution on paid work time?

2. Do orientations include a recognition that many students have experienced violence and that this may affect their behaviour in the college and their studies?

3. Do your professional development opportunities and orientation provide staff with opportunities to reflect on their power and privilege when interacting with students?

4. Do your professional development opportunities and orientation help and encourage staff to find their own strengths and recognize the ways their own past experiences may shape their interactions with students?

5. Do your orientation or professional development opportunities provide forums for staff and faculty to explore the language used to describe students? Are there opportunities to develop positive, non-judgemental ways to address concerns about students that consider students' experiences of violence, as well as experiences of oppression, discrimination and prejudice?

Training on violence and learning

1. Are any courses offered that focus on assessing and creating practices which support learning for survivors of violence?

2. Are there any courses offered that explore how violence may impact learning and access to the college?

3. If there are courses, who are they for? Who has access to the information? For example do part-time staff get paid time to take them? Are front-line staff able to take them?

Other professional development opportunities

1. What courses and workshops are offered?

2. Do these offerings include an acknowledgment of how violence affects learning, and how to address it?

Equity and other relevant policies

1. Is the equity policy presented in workshops or orientations for educators and other staff?

2. If so, within what trainings and in what way?

3. Is it taught as a way to address some of the ways impacts of violence may play out in classrooms and other areas of college functioning?

4. Are other relevant policies included in training?

5. Is there an anti-oppression or social justice component to any of your professional development, orientation, or training?

What can you do?

1. Offer a new course to address impacts of violence on learning.

2. Integrate new resources on the issue into existing courses.

3. Broaden the range of who is supported to take on training.

4. Offer a thorough orientation to the workplace for all workers, an orientation designed with an acknowledgement of the impact of violence on learning, and which includes teaching about the issue, and about how your college addresses it.

5. Show these resources to those who are in a position to take this on, if you are not yourself in a position to offer new courses or adapt old ones.

Stories

Instructor's story

Having been involved in developing the content for this college tool for the last year and interviewing many students during that time, I've come to realize the breadth and depth of trauma that many of our students have experienced in their lives. I am awed and at the same time buoyed by the determination and strength of will that I see as I orient each new group every three weeks-- some students are more overt in sharing the traumatic events of their lives and some choose not to--but they have chosen to make a change in coming back to school. As I talk to my new students about the services available to them through our college, I now speak of how the experience of violence can impact our ability to learn and where we can get help/what we can do when feeling triggered or overwhelmed. Recently, one of my new students thanked me for talking about the issue in class and how validated she felt after that discussion. As a result of delving into the violence and learning issue, I teach differently, I interact with my students differently and I'm a stronger advocate. I am not a counsellor, but I'm a better, more compassionate teacher as a result of having had access to these wonderful materials. Thank you.

Academic Upgrading instructor

Instructor's story

I often run into people at the college, both students and staff, who tell me how much difference the Positive Space Campaign has made in their life at the college. Students frequently talk about what it means to them to see the Positive Space rainbow ribbons in offices, in the libraries, in the athletic facilities, at faculty members' desks. They will say things like, "This is the first time I've ever felt comfortable in a classroom, or in the hallways of my school." They talk about how their attitude towards learning changes when they feel accepted and acknowledged, about how much more of their brain energy is available for learning when they aren't worrying about hiding or covering up, about bullying and harassment.

Instructor for Positive Space training

From a counsellor's chair

Being involved with the OLES project has been a great professional development opportunity. This process allowed me to revisit and deepen my understanding of the effect of violence on learning. At the same time, I found myself cherishing the opportunities to envision change in a college setting with OLES team. During these meetings, we would discuss strategies that

would better support students with their learning and well-being. I then noticed a change in the way I would work as a counsellor and community practitioner. As I became more reflective on my practice, I would openly share some of the research with students and staff, which would open up spaces for others to share their experience and insights with me. I also became more hopeful that the college environment would become a more compassionate learning environment that would create a sense of community and belonging. I really value this opportunity to continue to reflect on the impact of violence on learning.

Academic Upgrading Counsellor

The Heart of the matter

If there is no training on how to address the impact of violence on learning, anyone who comes in contact with students, or who makes policies that affect students, may miss opportunities to support students and potential students who have experienced violence. You and they may believe that they just couldn't learn—and may never know what might have been possible for them if you had only known how to support them better. In the interests of equity, recruitment, retention, and student success, this issue needs to be included in and inform all training and professional development activities.

Resources

For the latest resources, go to the college tool at:
http://learningandviolence.net/changing.htm. In the tall filing cabinet click on "Training/Professional Development," then on "Resources."

At www.learningandviolence.net

Mapping the evidence: Impacts of violence and learning:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/impact/handouts/impactexer.pdf

Training resources and materials:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach.htm

The A B C D of addressing the impact of violence on learning found in the four "books" in the foreground (Acknowledge Violence, Build connections, Create conditions for learning, Develop curriculum):
http://www.learningandviolence.net/helpothr/hlpothers.htm

Moving research into practice:
http://www.learningandviolence.net/changing/ElevenResearchers/ElevenResearchers.htm

Morrish, Horsman & Hofer. *Take on the Challenge:*
http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/challenge.pdf

Other links

Spectrumlens. Making White Privilege Visible, Part 1(video):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAljja0vi2M

Paul Kivel. Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies:
http://www.paulkivel.com/articles/guidelinesforbeingstrongwhiteallies.pdf

Paul Kivel. (An exercise inspired by the work of Peggy McIntosh) The Bene-fits of Being Male:
http://www.paulkivel.com/resources/benefitsofbeingmale.pdf

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Glossary of Terms[1]

Ableism: The cultural, institutional and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign different (lower) value to people who have developmental, emotional, physical, sensory or health-related disabilities, thereby resulting in differential treatment. Disabilities, invisible or visible, have been redefined in the disabilities studies field as impairments that can have effects on the level and quality of activities that individuals can pursue. Since the 1970s, people with disabilities, and allies, have worked to explain their reality, based on the idea that it is not the actual impairment that limits a person's interaction in the world, but the barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that society constructs around impairments. Academics refer to ideas that support this thinking as the social model of disability.

Ageism: The cultural, institutional and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign different values to people according to their age, thereby resulting in differential treatment.

Acculturation or **Cultural Appropriation**: The process whereby the culture, values and patterns of the majority are adopted by a person or an ethnic, social, religious, language or national group. This process can also involve absorbing aspects of minority cultures into the majority culture's pattern.

Ally: A member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression that gives her or him privileges. For example, a white person who works to end racism, or a man who works to end sexism.

Anti-Black Racism: Anti-Black racism is the racial prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent, rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement. It is manifested in the legacy and racist ideologies that continue to define African descendants' identities and their lives, and places them at the bottom of society and as primary targets of racism. It is manifested in the legacy of the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians in society such as the lack of opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Anti- Black racism is characterized by particularly virulent and pervasive racial stereotypes. Canadian courts and various Commissions have repeatedly recognized the pervasiveness of anti-Black

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[1] Terms in this glossary have been adapted from various sources, which are listed at the end.

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stereotyping and the fact that African Canadians are the primary targets of racism in Canadian society.

Anti-Oppression: Strategies, theories and actions that challenge socially and historically built inequalities and injustices that are ingrained in our systems and institutions by policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate over other groups.

Anti-Racism/Anti-Racist Education: An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes. A perspective that permeates all subject areas and school practices, aimed at the erasing racism in all its various forms.

Anti-Semitism: Latent or overt hostility or hatred directed towards individual Jews or the Jewish people (not to all Semitic peoples), leading to social, economic, institutional, religious, cultural or political discrimination. Anti-Semitism has also been expressed through individual acts of physical violence, vandalism, the organized destruction of entire communities and genocide.

Assimilation: The full adoption by an individual or group, of the culture, values and patterns of a different social, religious, linguistic or national group, resulting in the elimination of attitudinal and behavioural affiliations from the original cultural group. Can be voluntary or forced.

Barrier: An overt or covert obstacle; used in employment equity to mean a systemic obstacle to equal employment opportunities or outcomes; an obstacle which must be overcome for equality to be possible.

Classism: The cultural, institutional and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign value to people according to their socioeconomic status, thereby resulting in differential treatment.

Colonialism: Usually refers to the period of European colonization from Columbus (1492) onwards, in the Americas, Asia and Africa. It has taken different forms from settler colonies like Canada, to non-settler colonies such as India during British rule. Colonialism differs also across colonizing nations and across time. For example, French colonialism had different policies from British, while modern colonialism is often referred to as "globalization," which includes the exploitation of labour and national resources by transnational corporations and the expansion of free trade agreements and blocs.

Convention Refugees: Men, women and children with good reason to fear persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, gender, nationality, political viewpoint, or membership in a particular social group.

Their lives are in danger. If they are lucky enough to escape from their home country, they cannot return to it in safety until the situation changes. Refugees do not leave because they want to, but because they must.

Cultural Group: Members of a group having the same beliefs, behavioural norms, values, language, ways of thinking about and viewing the world.

Disability (also see Ableism): Inborn or assigned characteristics of an individual that affects full participation in educational, social, economic, political, religious, institutional or formal activities of a group, or that may require accommodation to enable full participation. Disability has less to do with the individual and more to do with the "shortcomings in the environment and in many organized activities in society, for example, information, communication and education, which prevent persons with disabilities from participating on equal terms" (United Nations Economic and Social Council. Backgrounder). Visible disabilities are readily apparent and consequent discrimination or stigma may be more predicable than with invisible disabilities which are not immediately apparent. There are just as many 'invisible' disabilities as there are visible ones. These include mental and emotional illnesses and chronic illnesses such as chronic fatigue, epilepsy, AIDS, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, fibromyalgia, learning disabilities, environmental allergies, and others (United Nations Platform for Action Committee). Persons with disabilities form one of the designated groups in employment equity programs. An important aspect of this definition is voluntary self-identification. .

Discrimination: The denial of equal treatment, civil liberties and opportunity to individuals or groups with respect to education, accommodation, health care, employment and access to services, goods and facilities. Behaviour that results from prejudiced attitudes by individuals or institutions, resulting in unequal outcomes for persons who are perceived as different. Differential treatment that may occur on the basis of race, nationality, gender, age, religion, political or ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation, marital or family status, physical, developmental or mental disability. Discrimination also includes the denial of cultural, economic, educational, political and/or social rights of members of non-dominant groups.

Diversity: A term used to encompass all the various differences among people—including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, etc.—and commonly used in the United States and increasingly in Canada to describe workplace programs aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and outcome for all groups. Concern has been expressed by anti-racism and race relations practitioners that diversity programs may water down efforts to combat racism in all its forms.

Employment Equity: A program designed to remove barriers to equality in employment by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices, remedying the effects of past discrimination, and ensuring appropriate representation of the designated groups.

Equity: If our concern for equity arises from our sense of fair play and compassion, a definition is still required. Webster's "freedom from bias or favouritism" works well enough, but current notions of equity are much more complex. One way of defining equity is to identify the inequities we hope to eradicate. Two sources of inequity are evident: those arising from the education system's structure and practices, and those arising from the student's ethno-cultural and socioeconomic context. Another way of defining equity is to consider the broad sequential elements comprising education—a common trilogy emerges:

1. Equity of resources (supports, finances, taxes);
2. Equity in process (the school experience, program, content, access);
3. Equity of outcomes (learning achieved, impacts on later life).

Such general conceptions of equity are very broad in scope. The brief list below, in no particular order, will illustrate the scope of the equity challenge in an educational setting:

- Equity in teacher expectations and behaviours
- Equity in access to good teachers
- Equity in career expectations and career or academic counseling
- Equity with respect to gender
- Equity with respect to sexual orientation
- Equity in access to culturally appropriate learning resources
- Equity in access to appropriate language supports
- Equity in access to programs and resources appropriate to individual abilities, disabilities, interests, talents, gifts, special needs
- Equity in access to technology
- Equity in access to and participation in education governance, policy-making, advisory bodies (adapted from Arnold Reimer (2005) Equity in Public Education, Manitoba Association of School Superintendants http://www.mass.mb.ca/EquityinPublic_Educ.pdf)

Ethnic Group: Refers to a group of people having a common heritage or ancestry, or a shared historical past, often with identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic and/or religious characteristics .

Feminism: Refers to theories, movements and actions that aim to challenge and eliminate sexism.

First Nations: One of the three distinct cultural groups of Aboriginal Peoples. There are 633 First Nations Bands, representing 52 nations or cultural groups, and more than 50 languages. Most individuals prefer to be referred to by their specific nation e.g. Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, etc. (AFN).

Harassment: Persistent, on-going communication (in any form) of negative attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group, with the intention of disparaging that person(s). Harassment is manifested in name calling, jokes or slurs, graffiti, insults, threats, discourteous treatment, and written or physical abuse. Harassment may be subtle or overt.

Heterosexism: The belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and thereby its right to dominance. An ideological system and patterns of institutionalized oppression which deny, denigrate and stigmatize any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship or community.

Homophobia: Disparaging or hostile attitude or negative bias towards gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person(s). (See: LGBTTQQI2S). The fear and persecution of queer people, rooted in a desire to maintain the heterosexual social order.

Human Rights: Human rights affirm and protect the right of every individual to live and work without discrimination and harassment. Human Rights policies and legislation attempt to create a climate in which the dignity, worth and rights of all people are respected, regardless of age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (faith), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender, marital status, place of origin, race, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Immigrant: One who moves from his/her native country to another with the intention of settling for the purpose of forging a better life or for better opportunity. This may be for a variety of personal, political, religious, social or economic reasons. The word is sometimes used incorrectly to refer, implicitly or explicitly, to people of colour or with nondominant ethnicities.

Inclusive Language: The deliberate selection of vocabulary that avoids accidental or implicit exclusion of particular groups and that avoids the use of false generic terms, usually with reference to gender.

Indigenous Peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of a land. In Canada/Turtle Island "the term is used to collectively describe three groups of Indigenous people: "Inuit," "Métis People," and "First Nations." These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs, histories and political goals" (Assembly of First Nations).

Institutional Violence: see Systemic Discrimination or Systemic Violence.

Intellectual Disability: Characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behaviour, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability often originates before the age of 18. This definition is a changing one, adapting to overcome stigmatization.

Internalized Oppression: Patterns of mistreatment of racialized groups and acceptance of the negative stereotypes created by the dominant group become established in their cultures and lock members of racialized groups into roles as victims of oppression..

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of all forms of oppression (cultural, institutional and social) against particular groups, and the way they are imbedded within existing systems such that they operate in insidious, covert, and compounded ways (e.g., gender and colour; religion and race; sexual orientation and race).

Islamophobia: A term recently coined to refer to expressions of negative stereotypes, bias, or acts of hostility towards followers of Islam or towards individual Muslims.

Learning Disability: Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:
- oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, understanding);
- reading (e.g., decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- written language (e.g., spelling and written expression); and
- mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving).

Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and Ontario).

LGBTTQQI2S: An acronym for the various sub-communities and identities of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Intersexed and 2-Spirited people.

Marginalization: With reference to race and culture, the experience of persons who do not speak the majority group's language, cannot find work or gain access to social services and therefore, cannot become full and equal participating members of society. Also refers to the process of being "left out" of or silenced in a social group..

Mental Health/Psychiatric Consumer/Survivors (or people with Mental Health problems): A person who is under treatment for a psychiatric illness or disorder. The term was coined in an attempt to empower those with mental health issues, usually considered a marginalized segment of society. The term suggests that those individuals have a choice in their treatment and that without them there could not exist mental health providers. Today, the word mental health consumer has expanded in the popular usage of consumers themselves to include anyone who has received mental health services in the past. Other terms sometimes used by members of this community for empowerment through positive self-identification include "peers," "people with mental health disabilities," "psychiatric survivors," "ex-patients," and "people labeled with psychiatric disabilities."

Minority Group: Refers to a group of people within a society that is either small in numbers or that has little or no access to social, economic, political or religious power. In Canada, refers to the diverse ethno-racial identities that are not of the dominant white group. In some areas, they are not always in the minority numerically. Minority rights are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Human Rights Acts and Codes, and the UN Convention on the rights of minorities. The term may imply inferior social position. In common use, Racial or Visible Minority describes people who are not White; Ethnic Minority refers to people whose ancestry is not English or Anglo-Saxon; Linguistic Minority refers to people whose first language is not English (or, in Quebec, not French).

Multicultural/Multiracial Education: A broad term which may refer to a set of structured learning activities and curricula designed to create and enhance understanding of and respect for cultural diversity. The term often connotes inclusion of racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, national, international and political diversity, and is also inclusive of the culture, heritage, history, beliefs and values of the various peoples people within a pluralistic society. Although multicultural/multiracial education can and should include anti-racism, there has been an increasing recognition of the limitations of this concept because it does not explicitly acknowledge the critical role that racism plays in preventing the achievement of the vision of Multi-

culturalism, and also because it may promote a static and limited notion of culture as fragmented and confined to ethnicity.

Oppression: The unilateral subjugation of one individual or group by a more powerful individual or group, using physical, psychological, social or economic threats or force, and frequently using an explicit ideology to sanction the oppression. Refers also to the injustices suffered by marginalized groups in their everyday interactions with members of the dominant group. The marginalized groups usually lack avenues to express reaction to disrespect, inequality, injustice and lack of response to their situation by individuals and institutions that can make improvements.

Patriarchy: The norms, values, beliefs, structures and systems that grant power, privilege and superiority to men, and thereby marginalize and subordinate women.

People of Colour: A term which applies to all people who are not seen as White by the dominant group, generally used by racialized groups as an alternative to the term visible minority. It emphasizes that skin colour is a key consideration in the "everyday" experiences of their lives. The term is an attempt to describe people with a more positive term than non-White or minority which frames them in the context of the dominant group.

Persons with Disabilities: Refers to persons who identify themselves as experiencing difficulties in carrying out the activities of daily living or experience disadvantage in employment, and who may require some accommodation, because of a long term or recurring physical or developmental condition. (Also see Disability/Ableism)

Poverty: Canada has no official definition of poverty, no official method of measuring poverty, and no official set of poverty lines. In the absence of any kind of official government-approved methodology the debate over how to measure poverty continues. Technically, the word poverty refers to the state of being poor; lack of the means of providing material needs or comforts, however a closer look at the systemic and institutional impacts of poverty and their disproportionate effect on women, children, older people and those from racialized backgrounds indicates that poverty is much more complex.

Power: That which allows one group to name and classify subordinate groups and to subject them to differential treatment.

Prejudice: A state of mind; a set of attitudes held by one person or group about another, tending to cast the other in an inferior light, despite the absence of legitimate or sufficient evidence; means literally to "pre-judge"; considered irrational and very resistant to change, because concrete evi-

dence that contradicts the prejudice is usually dismissed as exceptional. Frequently prejudices are not recognized as false or unsound assumptions or stereotypes, and, through repetition, become accepted as common sense notions. When backed with power, prejudice results in acts of discrimination and oppression against groups or individuals.

Privilege: The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded members of the dominant group in a society or in a given context, usually unrecognized and taken for granted by members of the majority group, while the same freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages access and/or opportunities are denied to members of the minority or disadvantaged groups.

Queer: Once a negative term to describe those who did not meet societal norms of sexual behaviour, queer is now used by many LGBTTQQI2S people as an umbrella term to describe themselves and their various communities.

Race: Refers to a group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by physical characteristics such as colour of skin, shape of eyes, hair texture or facial features. (This definition refers to the common usage of the term race when dealing with human rights matters. It does not reflect the current scientific debate about the validity of phenotypic descriptions of individuals and groups of individuals). The term is also used to designate social categories into which societies divide people according to such characteristics. Race is often confused with ethnicity. Various types of broad-based groups (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious and regional) are rarely mutually exclusive, and the degree of discrimination against any one or more varies from place to place, and over time.

Racism: A mix of prejudice and power leading to domination and exploitation of one group (the dominant or majority group) over another (the non-dominant, minority or racialized group). It asserts that the one group is supreme and superior while the other is inferior. Racism is any individual action, or institutional practice backed by institutional power, which subordinates people because of their colour or ethnicity.

Sexism: Sexism stems from a set of implicit or explicit beliefs, erroneous assumptions, and actions based upon an ideology of inherent superiority of one gender over another and may be evident within organizational or institutional structures or programs, as well as within individual thought or behaviour patterns. Sexism is any act or institutional practice, backed by institutional power, which subordinates people because of gender. While, in principle, sexism may be practiced by either gender, most of our socie-

tal institutions are still the domain of men and usually the impact of sexism is experienced by women.

Social Justice: A concept premised upon the belief that each individual and group within society is to be given equal opportunity, fairness, civil liberties and participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the society.

Stereotype: A fixed mental picture or image of a group of people, ascribing the same characteristic(s) to all members of the group, regardless of their individual differences. An overgeneralization, in which the information or experience on which the image is based may be true for some of the individual group members, but not for all members. Stereotyping may be based upon misconceptions, incomplete information and/or false generalizations about race, age, ethnic, linguistic, geographical or natural groups, religions, social, marital or family status, physical, developmental or mental attributes, gender or sexual orientation.

Systemic Discrimination (also Systemic Violence): The institutionalization of discrimination through policies and practices which may appear neutral on the surface but which have an exclusionary impact on particular groups, such that various minority groups are discriminated against, intentionally or unintentionally. This occurs in institutions and organizations where the policies, practices and procedures (e.g., in employment systems, job requirements, hiring practices, promotion procedures, etc.) exclude and/or act as barriers to racialized groups. Systemic discrimination also is the result of some government laws and regulations.

Tolerance: Usually meant as a liberal attitude toward those whose race, religion, nationality, etc. is different from one's own. Since it has the connotation of 'put up with', today the term acceptance is preferred. That is, through anti-racism and equity work we aim to counter intolerance, but to achieve acceptance for all.

Violence: An attack on the identity and integrity of another person; may be an attack on the body, emotions, mind or spirit.

White Privilege: The term White is used here to refer to people belonging to the dominant group in Canada. This group of people are either largest in number, in a superior social position, or successfully shapes or controls other groups through social, economic, cultural, political, military or religious power. In most parts of Canada, the term refers to White, English-speaking, Christian, middle to upper-income Canadians. This group may also perceive themselves to be superior to and more privileged than Aboriginal Peoples, Black People and other people of colour, people of minority religious and linguistic groups, LGBTTQQI2S, and women. It is

recognized that there are many different people who are "White" but who face discrimination because of their class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, language, or geographical origin.

Xenophobia: An unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers, their cultures and their customs.

Some terms in this Glossary adapted from the <u>Canadian Race Relations Foundation Glossary of Terms</u> and the following sources:

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