

ARE STUDENTS EQUITABLY ACCESSING A BROADLY BASED EDUCATION?

A Picture of Ontario

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Private Funding/Parental Funding in Public system

- 97% of elementary and secondary schools fundraise and fundraising per school ranges from 0\$ to 275,000\$. **The top 10% of fundraising schools raise the same amount as the bottom 78% put together.**
- Schools with a high proportion of low-income students raise, on average, less than half the amount raised in schools with a low proportion of low-income students
- 68% of secondary schools charge fees for courses
- 92% of secondary schools have a Student Activity Fee and the average fee has increased by 75% since 2001.

(People for Education Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2011).

Quality of Education

- 63% of English language elementary schools have students who require English Language support compared to 54% in 2003/2004
- compared to schools with a low proportion of low-income students, schools with a high proportion of low-income students have, on average, double the number of students on special education waiting lists.
- 56% of elementary schools have a teacher-librarian, a decline from 80% in 1997/1998.
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- *(People for Education Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2011).*

Standardized testing and teacher de-professionalization

- Those who serve the most disadvantaged children have their professional worth measured against high-achieving (on tests) schools. A no-win situation for teachers and students.

Toronto District School Board: Growing Achievement Gap

- No surprise here: the more students enjoy school, the higher the proportion of students who meet the provincial standard. For students who indicated they rarely or never feel comfortable with the overall school environment, significant proportions of them (18%-30%) appeared to be at risk.

(2006 student Census: Correlations of school experience with student demographics and achievement)

Who are the “At-Risk” students?

- those at-risk in Grade 8;
- male students;
- those older than the age-appropriate year of birth when they started high school;
- those from lower income neighbourhoods, but also other identified geographical Toronto neighbourhoods;
- those born in English-Speaking Caribbean, Central and South America/Mexico and Eastern Africa;
- those speaking Portuguese, Spanish, and Somali;
- those who had achieved fewer than seven credits by the end of Year 1;
- those who had not completed a Math credit by the end of Year 1 or had a mark of less than 60%;
- those who had not completed an English credit by the end of Year 1 or had an average mark of less than 60% (students taking ESL/D courses in Grade 9 had an average range of achievement by Year 5);
- those taking a majority of Applied or locally-developed courses;
- those with high absenteeism
- *(The TDSB Grade 9 Cohort Study: A Five-Year Analysis 2000-2005).*

Criminalization of Youth

- My previous ethnographic study illustrated the normalization of security practices in New York and Toronto schools, where gender and race were disproportionately implicated in those practices (Zero Tolerance policies etc.)
- My current ethnographic study is examining how social/academic stigma plays out educationally in disadvantaged schools in Taipei, Lucknow, Boston and Toronto

How is income and neighbourhood polarization exacerbating the issues?:

- One in six children in Ontario lives in poverty (low income cut-off of 30,000\$ for a family of 4) BUT some schools have a very high proportion of students from very low-income families. This is a concern because research shows students are less likely to overcome the impact of poverty when they attend economically segregated schools.
- In high-poverty schools (schools where over 30% of school population comes from low-income families) an average of 42% of students come from low-income families. In the low-poverty schools (under 2% of students come from low-income families), the average is 0.6%.

How is income and neighbourhood polarization exacerbating the issues?:

- Socio-economic segregation implies other forms of segregation (race; female-led lone-parent families; cultural/linguistic capital etc. etc.), which in turn raises the question of other inequitable applications of policies and further streaming practices within schools, reproducing increasingly untenable forms of social segregation.
- The new Ontario Secondary School Curriculum was designed to remove 'streaming' but from the recent Grade 9 cohort study, the outcomes of Academic streamed students are similar to those from the old "Advanced" stream, while the outcomes of Applied students are similar to the outcomes of the old "General" students under OSS. In effect, neighbourhoods of children end up without higher education and the greater possibilities afforded those with tertiary degrees.