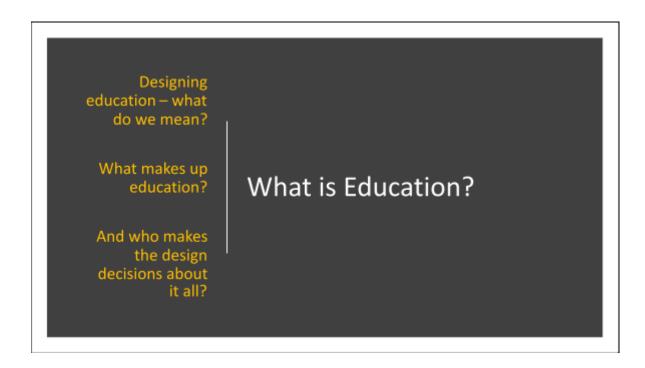


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These days everyone is talking about and saying they are doing diversity, equity, and inclusion. You'd be hard pressed to find an institution not talking about it. And within that DEI space, some are explicitly talking about and practicing accessibility too. It's a great change from not that many years ago when most weren't talking about these topics publicly at all.

It's a confusing time too though – because if everyone is doing this DEI work, then why has so little changed? Why is there still no clear understanding of what it means to be inclusive? Why aren't there more conversations about the edge cases – the ones that push us to consider our own ethical standards?

I want to spend some time exploring ways that education is and isn't addressing these issues. I want to elevate the conversation above the basics. And I'd like to dive into the details about how we, as educators, can impact inclusion in our own pedagogical spaces. How can we use any privilege we have as educators to create more inclusion.



To begin, I'd like to break down education into some pieces that make it up – it's far too abstract a word – I'm not sure what we're talking about when we say it anymore. Where doesn't education happen?

Of formal education, though, I want to ask the following:

- what does it mean to design education?
- · what makes up education?
- And I want to explore who is making the design decisions about all of this...

So, let's dive in...



To start with, education happens in spaces. To use a feminist lens, education is an activity that is situated in a complex place and time.

## Designing education – what do we mean?

So, when we 'design education' — we make decisions about the physical layout, setup, the tools available to us, the furniture, the colours, everything around us. Are you teaching 200 people in an intro class arranged in stadium seating? It impacts your teaching, and it impacts the learning too. Are you rearranging your chairs into circles each class? Do you have digital break-out rooms? How many people are you putting together for group chats? All of these decisions are design decisions that have an impact on teaching AND learning. I can guarantee that some students will not participate by creating groups big enough that they won't have to. I can force everyone to stare at the person in the front of the room by teaching in a room with stadium seating — you literally cannot turn around; you cannot rearrange yourself. I'm fascinated by procurement decisions about chairs — how many left-handed chairs does your physical classroom have? Are there directional chairs at all? Do you know who was involved in making that decision? Do you know how many lefties you have in your classroom?

So, when we ask of the architectural, spatial and physical what makes up education?? We are talking about all the items around us – the room, the chairs, the board, the computer, the rules of the video conferencing system. The context all around us plays a part in education. Every object around us contributes to or interferes or neutrally exists with us as we learn.

And who makes the design decisions about it all? I noticed a sign in my classroom years ago that dictated the room population limit as mandated by the fire marshal.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\_Right\_to\_Education\_-\_Refugees.jpg

https://www.flickr.com/photos/tabor-roeder/50699896692 Phil Roeder

https://unsplash.com/photos/MNic2K9zlr0?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=referral&utm\_content=creditShareLink Photo by <a

href="https://unsplash.com/@averye457?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=referral&utm\_content=creditCopyText">Avery Evans</a> on <a

href="https://unsplash.com/s/photos/books-and-

laptop?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=referral&utm\_content=creditCopyText" >Unsplash</a>





It was a plaque on the wall, more official than this. It told me how many people were allowed in the room in accordance with the fire code...

I began to wonder... did the people who chose the desks chose the person limit? Are they the same people? This was stamped by the fire marshal – how did they make the decision about how many people could be in the room.

And how was that ultimately related to how many students I could have in my class? Who made the decision about which room we'd be in?

And with the digital... how is this changing? Are our class sizes growing when we're online now? Or how about when we're hybrid?



Well, somewhat bizarrely it goes back to Florence Nightengale, the founder of modern nursing.

In addition to founding nursing, she should also be considered the founder of modern hospital design. She was deeply influenced by her experience in the Crimean War where she saw conditions in barracks and infirmaries used by the army. She observed that almost 80% of the British deaths in that war were caused by infection rather than battlefield deaths. She attributed this to poor ventilation and hygiene.

The first chapter of Nightingale's seminal book, *Notes on Nursing* – first published in 1859 – focuses not on patient care, but on ventilation<sup>1</sup>. She writes: 'The very first canon of nursing...: keep the air he breathes as pure as the external air, without chilling him.' She goes on to recommend natural air and natural light whenever possible – as long as you don't chill him!

She was a statistician – she measured the optimal space for an individual to have their own air – to optimize healing and minimize infections spreading... Kind of eerie, no? We're still using her measurements today.

Our contemporary building codes and engineering specs for our homes and schools can be traced back to Florence Nightengale's recommendations for indoor populations: including acceptable CO2 levels for inhabited spaces.

And it wasn't just hospitals that Nightingale was concerned with. She states: 'Oh! The crowded national school! Where so many children's epidemics have their origin. What a tale its air test would tell! We should have parents saying... I will not send my child to that school, the air test stands at "Horrid."'

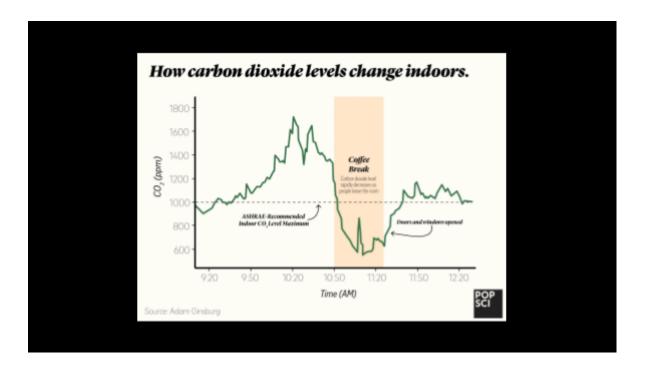
We now call the symptoms she observed "Sick Building Syndrome" – the descriptions of ailments include headaches, heaviness, inertness and nausea, in poorly ventilated spaces – these were the effects of elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

Ever find yourself yawning a lot at conferences? Or in crowded boardrooms during long meetings? It isn't you!!

https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/X7fWFRMAACEAja6b

https://images.prismic.io/wellcomecollection/c1c5cd23-9b85-4f4d-8da77609d8ef8981 \_Miss+Nightingale\_+in+the+Hospital%2C+at+Scutari%E2%80%99.jpg? w=1338&auto=compress%2Cformat&rect=&q=100

https://www.cibsejournal.com/general/florence-nightingale-nurse-and-buildingengine er/



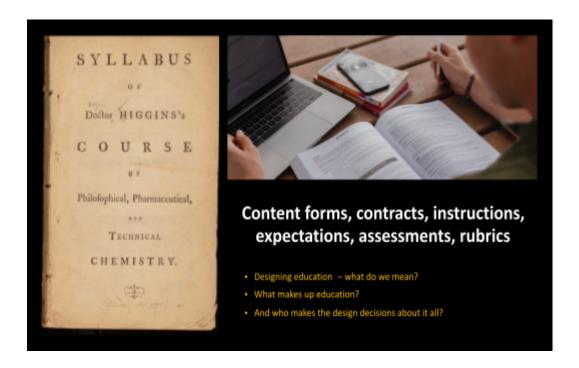
https://www.popsci.com/conference-carbon-dioxide-tired-office-work/

We know that the air, literally, has an impact on us all – on our clarity and our decision making:

<u>Many studies have also shown</u> that increasing the ventilation rate in schools can raise children's scores on tests and speed at tasks, and reduce absences.

The higher the carbon dioxide, the worse the test-takers did.

Fascinating stuff. The design of our educational spaces is connected to Florence Nightengale and the Crimean War.



Once we're in the space of education we engage with content in various forms, contracts such as the syllabus outlining the agreement, rules, mores, rubrics, marching orders...

So, in Designing education here—what do we mean?

The syllabus – the rules by which the educational dynamic is codified. Also codified in that document is the power, the determinations of 'fair' assessments, the determination of how to treat **all** students. Ever put together a late assignment policy? Is it the same for everyone—because we don't know how to do it differently and equality seems to be closer to fair than anything else we can come up with... but is equal fair? Remember, we have campus-wide policies now that say equity, not equality...

And we know so many of our policies do damage to those students on the edges. When you require students submit one format (for example a 5 page written essay), with one form for delivering the learning (5 paragraph essay), who does that advantage? And who does that leave behind?

What makes up education??

Education here is the rules of the game, the culture of the course, the rules of the course. In the architectural – the designing of education exerts a physical form – in the content level it exerts a force that begins to create the spaces between those who benefit and those who do not.

What about edtech? Who benefits there? There were heartbreaking articles written in the last few years about kids without technology not attending school because the barrier to joining a zoom class was too high. They didn't have the computer – they didn't have the high-speed internet. They were learning from their bedroom that they shared with all of their siblings who were also trying to learn online. Who benefitted these last few years and who got left a little farther behind?

Are you using an LMS? How does that impact learning? What decisions does the LMS make?

And who makes the design decisions about it all?

Who has the power here? Who is the decider? I was not consulted, in full disclosure, about the comment section in canvas.

https://unsplash.com/photos/MNic2K9zlr0?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=ref erral&utm\_content=creditShareLink Photo by <a href="https://unsplash.com/@averye457?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=refe rral&utm\_content=creditCopyText">Avery Evans</a> on <a href="https://unsplash.com/s/photos/books-and-laptop?utm\_source=unsplash&utm\_medium=referral&utm\_content=creditCopyText">>Unsplash</a>

https://picryl.com/media/syllabus-of-doctor-higginss-course-of-philosophicalpharmace utical-and-technical-f194bf?zoom=true



### Canvas – comments versus content

This interface is, in its form, conveying what is the priority and what is the expectation here. Who made the decisions that we see? Why is the Comments section so small. My students and I talk about how important practicing productive critique as the creator of something and as the one offering critique. Each of these decisions is, yes, a design decision. But each one also conveys what is meant to happen here.

I had a back and forth with a student that was so large, I got frustrated with the comments box and switched to email.



it's all relational. Teaching and learning are relational activities. WE do it together, we engage each other, we engage content, we do it in spaces and places where others have made design decisions all around us.

How do we design interactions? Can we create a space where people can feel brave? How do you do that? Can you create a space where people feel disempowered? How? I argue that each of us knows how to do this... in the course I'm teaching this term I tried something perhaps unusual in the first class. <Describe the class>

The elements that are making up education are entirely positional, intersectional, situated, socially-contextualized events. And in those events are people – and wherever we have people, we have power. And what we do with that power is what matters. I don't think we can eliminate the power that exists. There will still be power—but what will we do with it? What will we tolerate?

https://togetherweelect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/relational-organizinge1626 292949441.jpg

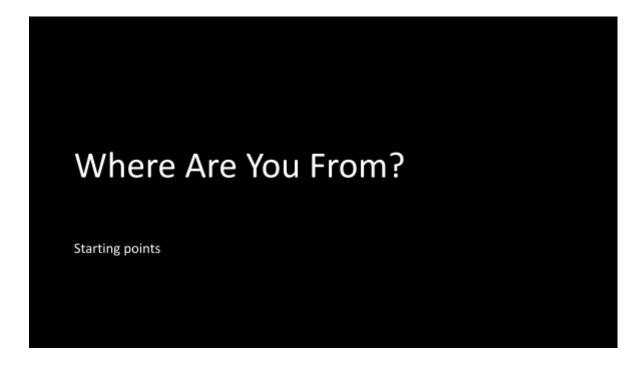


What happened before this picture was taken?

https://www.gettingsmart.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Project-based classroom-students-library-Feature-Image.jpg

# Designing Education for Equity

So, let's go back to the start... we want to do this work and we want to move beyond the basics... how do we get to equity?



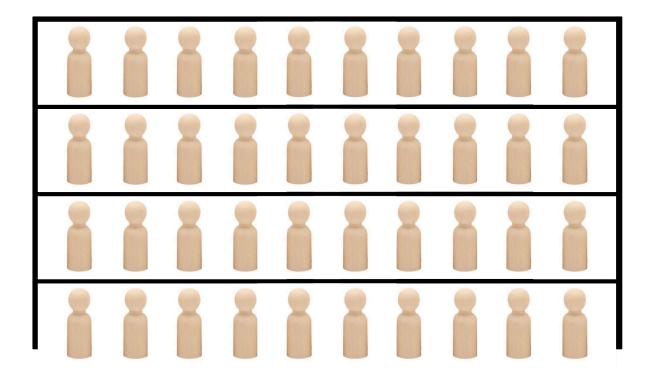
Before we even get into the spaces where education happens, we have a backpack that we carry. This backpack isn't full of books and computers and cables. Instead this backpack is full of our ancestors experiences, our own histories, our own preferences and needs. This backpack is WHO we are anywhere outside of that educational space—it's who we are and everything that comes into the room with us. It's our personality, whether we're comfortable speaking in front of others, whether we're an introvert or an extrovert. It's us, undeniably and unrelentingly us.

And we are complex. We are never one thing or the other. We are coming into these spaces and everything in the space and every interaction and every moment is a complex of context, goals, hopes, dreams, feelings, insecurities, physical objects, digital objects, decision-making, planning, executive functioning – and much much more.

To try to crack into some of this complexity we have a few tricks. The question above is one that is often used to break open conversations about Diversity Equity and Inclusion. The reason it's such a poignant question to ask is because it quickly determines who has had enormous privilege and who does not.

Where are you from when you're a refugee, when you're an immigrant, when you're someone on the edges socially, politically, economically – all of those things add up to tell the story of where you are from... And if we're in a brave enough space... when asked this question, we can make ourselves quite vulnerable – we can do the work of being transparent, so we are seen and heard.

And I believe that is where we all begin – we want to be seen and heard.

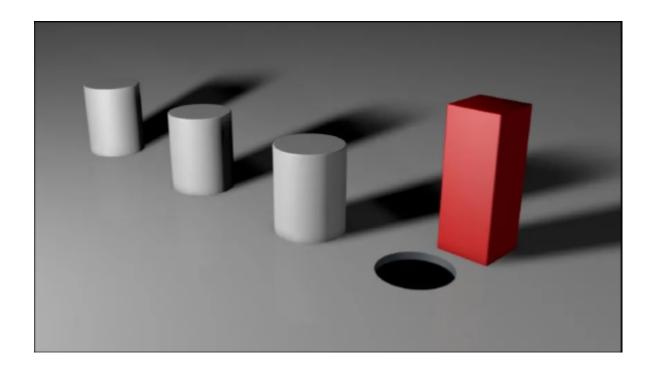


And when we feel like a number or a clone or a type we do not feel seen or heard. We file into seats all pointing in the same direction and we are all round pegs.

Sometimes I find conversations mentioning 'students' as if they're this orderly, monolithic group. Groups are made up of people... of individuals. Each of those individuals carries on their backs a backpack of And who sees that backpack and all the things in it?

At what point, pedagogically, do we see each other? At what point do we see some of what is in the backpack of others?

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0252/0471/9701/products/6.5cmpeg\_900x.jpg?v= 1588688540



But we don't all fit into the round holes provided for us in education. All of us is the red block and we contort ourselves to fit into the circles in education.



What do we do with the anomalous? How does education address the ones who are different?

How do we talk about the obvious – when we walk into a class or log in to a room and see one black student – what do we do? Do we talk to anyone about it? Do we change the way we're speaking? The examples we're giving?

Does it feel awkward... like we're trying to be woke or hip or cool – how do we connect with students who aren't like us? Who come from very different cultures and practices?

And this goes for everyone in the room... what about the young

POC professor whose students are older than they are?

Are you the one visibly disabled person in the room who requires an alternative format that doesn't exist and you have to ask for it?

How do we think those details impact us? How do they impact how brave a space we can create?

## Education The Tactical The EQ

I just saw a wonderful resource created by Josie Gray and Clint LaLonde from BC Campus. It's called Guiding Questions: Creating Equitable OER with Intention – as

they say in the resource: "Equitable, accessible, and engaging open educational resources (OER) don't happen by accident. They happen because someone (often many someones) planned for it and completed the work with intention and care."

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10kS9WhHquL 8S975V82vq8i628suSYJT0Oc-bl3goi0A/edit?pli=1#

In that resource they ask the questions to raise your own awareness in creating OERs. There are a number of questions asking about how you're going to make the content accessible – multiple formats and such... EQUAL access... There's also a section with questions about positionality. It has the following question:

How do your identities and lived experiences influence your approach and understanding of the subject of the OER in general and this resource in particular?

And I think that's a great place to start.

They ask content creators to consider:

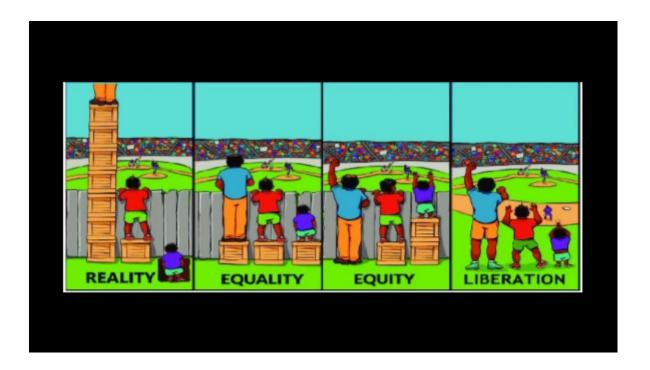
- How might this resource decentre the dominant culture and ways of knowing?
- How might your resource address social inequities and issues?

I'm feeling a bit more on-the-nose — I want to know how you'll do that with a person in front of you — not just abstractly, but when a student who is struggling is in front of you. I think we have to ask these questions of ourselves WITHIN the context of teaching and learning... in the spaces, with the technologies, and ESPECIALLY in the relational acts of teaching and learning. And I think Josie and Clint would agree with me. They are addressing content creators — arguably the tactical end of education. I'm asking you to ask these questions of yourself whenever you interact with another person (not just content). I'm asking you to acknowledge what we've all been tiptoeing around for the last number of years... that we're all people with histories and struggles. I'm asking us to apply what we know from the tactical (that your own positionality influences how you create content) to the Relational/the EQ. And when we step directly toward the EQ in education we have to deal with the very messy, deeply problematic, socio-economic historical racial and and and.

Diversity is a number
Inclusion is a process
Equity is an outcome

For years now I've quoted Barbara Chow's definitions of diversity, inclusion, and equity...

But I've watched us all use these words and not appreciably figure out how to do any of them all that well. All that deeply. All that authentically.



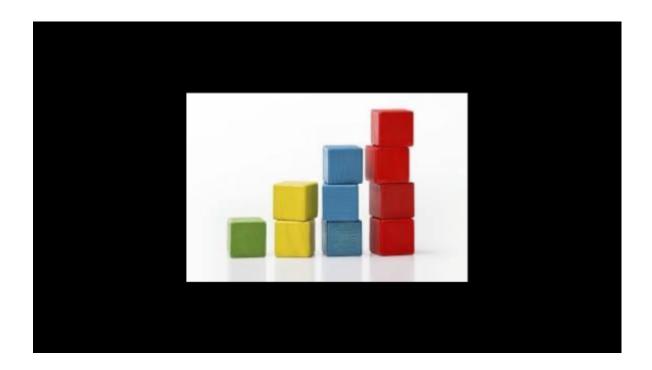
To be clear... this is the image that is often used to distinguish between equality and equity.

There are a number of versions of this. For example, this one also has reality and liberation displayed. Beyond this image though... are we talking about how to do equity? Are we providing additional boxes to anyone? Who is? And how are we making those decisions??

So, I'd like to start with how we get to the boxes first...

## https://images.squarespace-

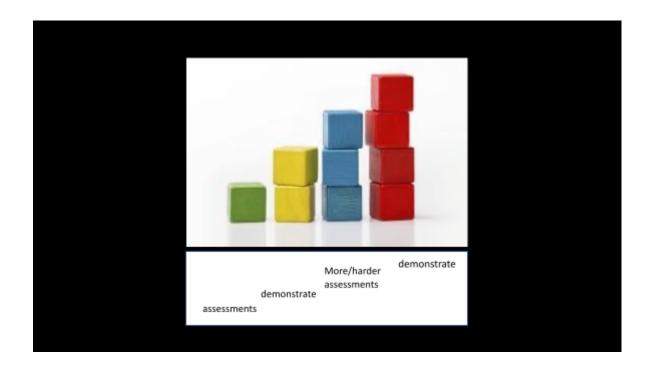
cdn.com/content/v1/54dee411e4b043f1c994d1f3/0474e98a-ae8b-4cd4-a338ec8cee9cb0a4/The-difference-between-the-terms-equality-equity-and-liberationillustrated-C.png? format=1500w



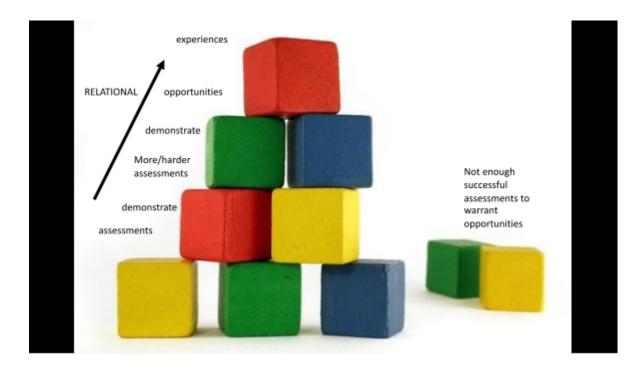
The architectural design decisions around the spaces of education The form decisions about the content of education And the interactional, relational aspects of education...

How do we get there? How do we show up?

I want to explore this question of getting to where education happens by exploring what the building blocks of education are...



When we begin our education we're taught that through assessments we will demonstrate how much we're learning. To achieve we need to demonstrate effectively. That will get us an A; and an A will beget more opportunities for assessments where we can once again demonstrate our learning.



And then something happens... the spaces where we're educated PLUS the accumulation of successful assessments PLUS the relational attention of someone leads us to a new place...

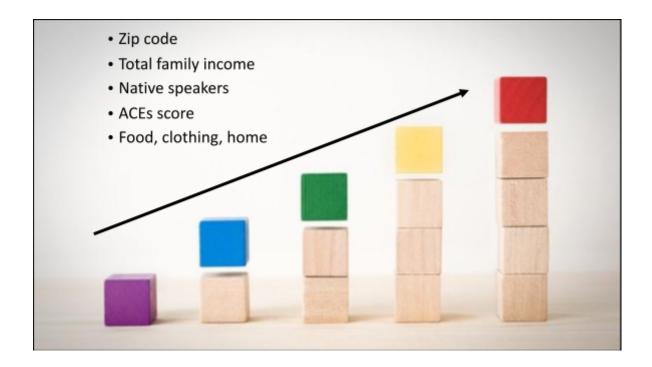
At some point an accumulation of successful assessments – a clump of opportunities will lead us to having experiences. We might do well all year and as a reward we get to go to an art museum as part of a school trip. Maybe we get to sit in the front of the bus on the way there. Maybe only the kids who do well all year get to go. Now we've begun to build our pathway... The snowball of our success has begun to form. And with each experience we get into a dance with more opportunities. And more opportunities beget more experiences.

This is true for those of us who teach too.

Or those of us who apply for a grant...

Success begets success – if you get a grant, you're more of a sure thing for future grants.

 $https://t4.ftcdn.net/jpg/00/00/60/01/360\_F\_600175\_Xi5xT89XgijkuQZjkGQ5yzd9XCqrtX.jpg$ 



And these neat boxes... this linear gain... we know it depends on many things we can't control:

And now we are off and running...

Our zip code

Our total family income

Our native language

Our ACEs score... not acing... aces... the tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences. Can you tell if your students have seen a parent get arrested? Have suffered abuse? Neglect? If they manage to get to your classroom, are you doing anything to keep them there or to scaffold their success while there?

The assessments we knocked out of the park

The opportunities that became available as a result

The slight addition of responsibilities and more assessments

The playing the game

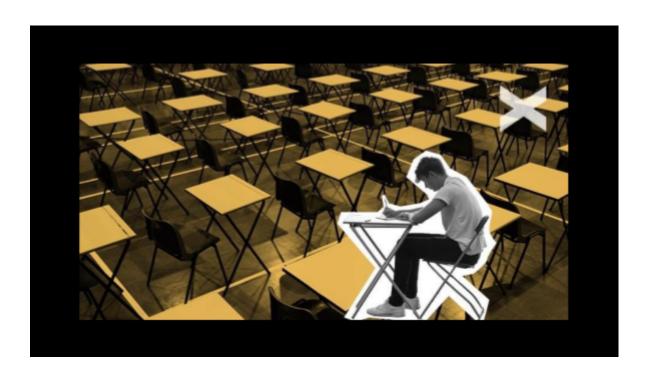
The learning how to be successful

## Who decides?

- Achievements
  - · Who decides?
  - · What are they based on?
  - · If we're getting achievement wrong, we're screwing up the whole pipeline

This is all based on assessments – and the assumption here is that this is the best way to determine achievement...

But we know that isn't always the case. We know our measures are flawed... that we leave people behind. We know not everyone is on the same track ... let alone the same start line.



We know we contort students into symmetry – standardized Standardized Same EQUAL

This is not equity...

When we assume same, we rob people of their individual experiences. Their backpacks...

https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SW-262 feature-exams feat.jpg

## Don't you Wonder...

- Opportunities
  - · How do you get them?
  - · Who gets them?
  - · Why do they get them?
- Experiences
  - · How do you get them?
  - · Who gets them?
  - · Why do they get them?

Achievement > opportunities > experiences

Doesn't this pipeline result in an Amplification of success and a Doubling down on failure. How do you redirect yourself or catch up ever?

What if you made a wrong turn? Or a mistake? Or had a crisis? Or suffered a trauma? Or lost your home? Or became a refugee? Or or or... lived a life. Are we asking students to leave their backpacks outside the room???? I mean those metaphorical backpacks.



And all of those factors – the social, the political, the judgement by someone in a position of power in some ways determine what options are available to us... these signs are options after high school...

https://media-exp1.licdn.com/dms/image/C5612AQEwfWht5O11eA/articlecover\_image-

shrink\_600\_2000/0/1563903099264?e=2147483647&v=beta&t=m7MmvAJY2dhAOO 9vykm0clgifXLprviYPd5uQlKGPxg



And much has been written about the school to prison pipeline – where did achievement, opportunity, and experiences go here? Why?

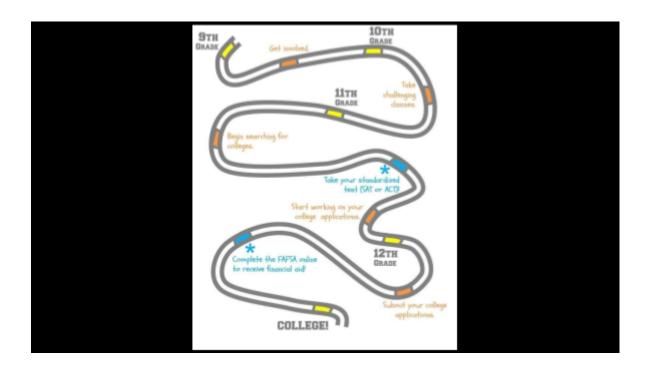
http://www.vibe105to.com/uploads/1/0/7/4/107458669/721406249\_orig.jpg



And where I grew up there was also the sports option for those who were talented. And farms. Are we teaching to a round peg or are we teaching to all of these people?

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This simple 4 years of your life pathway to college. But who doesn't start on the road at grade 9? And how do they get on?

https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/casalab/wpcontent/uploads/sites/123/2015/03/Pathway2.jpg



Redirect... let's remember – how do we do this equity thing?

Sometimes we do it through policy –

We have policies for giving students accommodations –
how to do that AND still develop boundaries – we're still deciding who needs or deserves an accommodation. This isn't neutral and I wonder, is it an effective way to \*do\* equity?

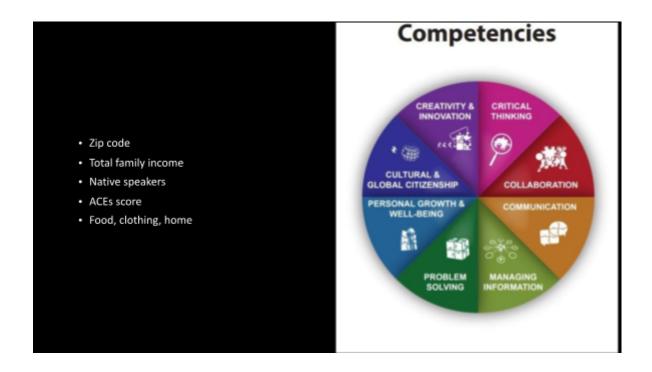
We also still have people Masking – that is they are hiding their disabilities in plain site Suppressing themselves – because the system wasn't created for you



When our ideal student has all of the following:
Competencies include: Creativity & innovation
Critical thinking
Collaboration
Communication
Managing information
Problem solving
Personal growth & well-being Cultural
& global citizenship

What does that mean? Does that include real creativity and innovation?

https://arpdcresources.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/competencies.png



How do we reconcile these things?

How can we see a person with a backpack of histories in the competencies?

https://arpdcresources.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/competencies.png

Even teachers who say they value creativity may actually find creative characteristics undesirable.

Turn out Individuality doesn't scale in Education

Dave Cormier pointed this article out... it's called

Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity in the Classroom And they found that teachers who say they value creativity may actually find creative characteristics undesirable. What a mess...

Todd Kettler, Kristen N. Lamb, Amy Willerson & Dianna R. Mullet

To cite this article: Todd Kettler, Kristen N. Lamb, Amy

Willerson & Dianna R. Mullet (2018)

Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity in the Classroom,

Creativity Research Journal, 30:2, 164-171,

DOI: 10.1080/10400419.2018.1446503

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2018.1446503

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305044258\_Teacher\_Perceptions\_of\_Creativity\_in\_the\_Classroom/link/5fde4592299bf1408829aff0/download

## The reasons we tolerate this...

- Exceptions
- Disruptions
- Relational

I think these systems are tolerable because we make exceptions, we treat people as individuals, we fundamentally disrupt policies that make no sense, we dive deeply into the relational. And we do it without talking about it openly, without communities of practice, and without supports. So much of this work happens off the corner of our desks as we say...

We subvert the situation – we invite BIPOC folks to speak first if we're covering a topic that historically has excluded their voices. But that feel REALLY weird. Now we're the judge? Now we're the jury? Whose responsibility is it to protect? To listen? To design a pedagogical gaze that brings the student voices from the edges into the conversation. It's scary as hell – it makes me feel deeply vulnerable – I can't just lean back on the equality of the syllabus – I can't just lean back on the power of being the one assigning the grade. I have to question everything. And sometimes I get it wrong. Other times I don't...

33

And it's in those moments when I feel this is necessary. When my international students who feel uneasy about language start to speak and their peers start to hear their perspective...

34

When my disengaged young black male student starts to lean forward in his chair – starts to ask question, starts to get excited about the materials.

When my painfully shy young woman of colour in a male-dominated discipline (Computer Science) finds her voice. When she has confidence in her ideas. When she knows what she knows and she has comfort drawing the line and acknowledging what she doesn't.

When I finally hear the voices of my international students who are not sharing their video or audio in general. When I can hear the trepidation in their voices. The fear of saying something wrong. When I know they've run their talk through a translator and a friend and practiced it a million times so they don't say something wrong... how do I accomplish equity there?

As soon as we acknowledge that we are in positions of power over others and that education is relational, I argue we have a responsibility to explore and keep exploring how to do this.

Isn't this how education is supposed to happen? Pedagogical gaze

Now, I'm not advocating a white saviour approach. I'm just imploring us to consider how we use the power we have. To me, this is humanizing pedagogy, this is humanizing education.

Diversity is a number – we know the limits of numbers alone

Inclusion is a process– it has to be a practice, we have to keep doing it, we have to keep trying to do more of it.

Equity is an outcome– I'm not sure we know how to do this? What does it look like? How do we 'action' it?

And this doesn't happen through legislation and obligation alone. Fear of litigation does not give us humanized education.

Do we know how to do this without mandate?

Affirmative action law – American's with disabilities Act

Diversity is a number — we know the limits of numbers alone

Inclusion is a process— it has to be a practice, we have to keep doing it, we have to keep trying to do more of it.

Equity is an outcome— I'm not sure we know how to do this? What does it look like? How do we 'action' it?

And it means being curious and questioning and always wondering how we're getting it wrong. It means trying new things. It means being uncomfortable.



Is it our job to protect people?

Who will protect them in the classroom? This goes well beyond community guidelines.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/11/30/yale-lawsuit-mentalhealth-suicide/



The closest thing I've seen that gets at how we might do this is from an article a friend and colleague, Sarah Roberts wrote in the LA Times last week:

She says of social media content moderation:

Done well, content moderation requires an expansive, interrelated and cross company system of people, policy and practices. It must adhere to legal mandates that differ country by country and that can carry costly fines. It must encourage the widest possible user participation and at the same time reduce the potential for user harm from that participation. And it must constantly refine computational tools, automation and the human judgment required to meet those ends.

Seems to me this holistic approach plus a deeply relational, humanizing of education would get us somewhere...

https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2022-11-08/elon-musk-twitter-contentmoderation

## **Boundaries**

- You aren't a number
- · You aren't a token
- · You are an individual
- We value your uniqueness
- · We want you to be empowered here

Not talking about reparations here

And not talking about a completely relativistic approach

Talking about what we're already doing: judging people as we get to know them...

Talking about ways we can do that and approach equity...

Yes, this approach makes us vulnerable to distractions that try to suggest it is ill advised, it is social relativism, it is social engineering – but those are distractions. If we are to actually do this equity thing, we have to do it relationally and talk about the limits of scale.

Right now we don't really know how to empower you – here's the writing center – they'll help!

Can we begin a community of practice today?