

TEACHING TO
DIVERSITY

ENSOULING OUR SCHOOLS

A UNIVERSALLY DESIGNED FRAMEWORK FOR
MENTAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND RECONCILIATION



Jennifer Katz
with Kevin Lamoureux
foreword by Ry Moran

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For the three spirits who ensouled my life and whose light has passed – my Aunt Sheila, Reb Zalman, and my father, Philip Katz – this book is for you, and from you – it carries forward your light. This book is dedicated to all the young people whose lives are touched by languishing mental health, and the educators who pour out their hearts every day to try to be a part of the healing – you are seen, heard, admired, and loved. And finally, as always, for Jorel – whose life has ensouled mine from the day of his birth and inspired so much of my work – I love you. – **J.K.**

Dedicated to the inspiring people of Aboriginal Youth Opportunities in Winnipeg. Miigwetch for making the world a better place. – **K.L.**

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Foreword



To fully understand this country we call Canada, we need to understand the impacts and legacy of trauma.

Many Canadians carry lived experiences with trauma, having fled other parts of the world seeking a better life, or having lived through traumatic experiences right here in this country. The world is, sadly, filled with stories of human-rights atrocities, cultural suppression, and denial of rights in all countries. Canada, as we know it today, is built upon the notion that the country is a safe harbour for people to flee to – a place that can provide a better life for themselves and their children, a place where they can find economic and social stability.

In the construction of this country, however, Indigenous peoples – the original inhabitants of this land – were not afforded that same level of safety as settlers. Residential schools tore children from their families, Indigenous peoples were forced onto reserves, and entire communities were relocated. All the while, the great riches of the land were being plundered.

Safety, in this context, needs to be understood as much more than physical safety. Our schools today are working hard to create physically safe places for students – environments free from bullying and teasing. But, culturally, are they safe for Indigenous students?

The definition of safety for Indigenous students needs to include the safety of identity, culture, language, worldview, and approach and solutions to problems. Safety needs to be understood as the pursuit and ability to self-determine one's future. Most important, safety in the context of Indigenous peoples means being safe to be, to think, and to act Indigenous. Any abrogation of this ability means the ongoing suppression and denial of Indigenous rights.

Central in the colonization of Canada was the creation of deep divides between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. As Canada forcibly segregated Indigenous peoples from Canadian society, Canadians and the country as a whole lost the ability to learn from and hear the voices of the original inhabitants of this land.

At the same time, Indigenous peoples were forced to assimilate into Canadian society – they were told how to think, how to act, and how to live their lives. Colonial control and imposition stripped Indigenous peoples of their voice and of their right to determine their own future.

We now live in a country filled with Indigenous place names, but the meanings behind the words are hollow for the vast majority of Canadians. Words like

Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ottawa, and Canada roll off the tongue without any understanding of the meaning behind those words.

We also live in a land that remains little understood. Fish, forests, and animals are seen through the lens of resource management and extraction. Our lakes are now polluted; the land is scarred; and populations of whales, bison, salmon, and countless other members of the animal family are a shadow of their past populations. As we lurch toward a highly uncertain future of climate change and environmental decay, we need to, more than ever, learn how to live respectfully with the planet and original mother. Sadly, the long history of colonization continues to frustrate this effort, and the process of reconciliation is a hurried attempt – perhaps far too late in our national history – to finally establish and maintain respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

To heal from these profound wounds of colonization, we need to understand how we have all been affected. Systems of oppression and colonization have operated on a global basis. Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples and life is but one manifestation of a sick system of inequality and control that has been layered all over this planet.

Through this process of colonization and control, Canada has denied itself the ability to be a just and fair country – a national identity based upon the spirit and intent of treaties signed between Indigenous nations and representatives of the Crown; a country of respectful coexistence and peaceful relations.

The path forward is through acknowledging the wounds inflicted on this country on Indigenous peoples, on the land, and on families. This process starts with humility and respect – a solemn recognition that we have hurt Indigenous families deeply in the construction of Canada.

Acknowledging these wounds and scars presents us with a collective opportunity to become a deeper, richer, and more truthful society. It presents the collective opportunity where we will finally be able to learn from one another and where the forced assimilation and unjust attempts to dictate how Indigenous peoples ought to live their lives will finally be eradicated from this society.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report in 2015, we were given 94 Calls to Action to guide us in our healing journey. Central in this must be the recognition that the harms inflicted on Indigenous families and children will continue to reverberate for many generations to come. Unlearning the many ways we have been divided, subjugated, and collectively oppressed is also a central element in the successful implementation of these Calls to Action.

We cannot underestimate the complexity of the task at hand, nor can we afford to be naïve in our belief that it will not be deeply challenging on a personal, organizational, and societal level. This is a process of maturation that we are going through as a nation, and like all growth, it will at times be difficult and painful.

Guiding us on this path is the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights. This declaration provides the framework for reconciliation across all sectors and levels of society. It will only be through adopting a rights-based approach to reconciliation that we can ensure we move beyond mere pleasantries

and niceties to a state wherein Indigenous peoples are once again empowered and supported in being Indigenous. In the meantime, Indigenous families, languages, nations, and identities remain at risk of extinction.

Traditional knowledge keepers and Elders are fundamental in breathing meaning into these rights and must be cherished deeply by our collective society.

Our collective opportunity now is to make sure that education is no longer used as a weapon against Indigenous people – stripping and robbing them of their right to be Indigenous. Let us all work together to create education systems where we are finally given the opportunity to learn from one another in a spirit of mutual respect.

This is the path of reconciliation. This is our collective responsibility. This is what will transform this country into a nation we can all be proud of. I wish you the very best as you address the content in this book and apply it in your professional work. There is nothing more sacred or noble in life than sharing teachings with young minds, and I commend you for taking up the calling to teach our next generation of leaders.

*Ry Moran,
Director
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
Winnipeg*

Preface



I spent 30 years working in schools. I have been an educational assistant, youth worker, special-education teacher in a segregated setting, resource teacher, inclusive-classroom teacher, guidance counsellor, district consultant, author, editor, and presenter. I now serve as a professor of Inclusive Education at a major Canadian university, and work with government ministries, curriculum designers, school-district leaders, parent councils, school trustees, school-based administrators, and educators to support inclusive reform. In the last 12 years, I have travelled across Canada and the United States, providing professional development, conducting research, presenting at conferences, and co-teaching in classrooms from K–12. Why?

Because I believe in inclusive education.

Because I believe in inclusive societies.

Because I care about everyone – the adults and the kids.

When I was an adolescent, I worked with my Aunt Sheila, a psychiatrist who specialized in caring for children with autism and schizophrenia. She died young, at age 49, of lung cancer. She left me a card, asking me to “leave the world a better place than I found it.” Her mentoring gave me the start I needed, and I have been trying ever since to pay forward that legacy.

My father, too, lit my path. He was an adolescent psychiatrist who taught at the medical school in Winnipeg. Dr. Michael Eleff, a protégé, colleague, and family friend, said that my father emphasized: “The therapist’s task is to understand the patient and adapt his treatment to the experiences, beliefs, and values of the patient, not compel the patient to fit into a model of treatment which is foreign to the patient’s worldview.” I carried that forward into my teaching – believing that my job was to similarly adapt my teaching. A second teaching that all who knew and learned with my father was “the central role of the psychotherapist is in seeing the young person, not as a collection of symptoms and problems, but rather as who and what he or she might become in the future.” That teaching, too, helped to form my identity as a teacher, particularly in my years in special education where a medical model of diagnosis, based on symptoms and labels that limited expectations for students’ learning, was common.

In 1969, my father visited several residential schools. He was horrified by what he saw, and along with a few other doctors, called for them to be closed immediately. When the government didn’t listen, he went to the press. The *Winnipeg Tribune* published a front-page story about it. My father told me he

was sure something would be done, and when there was no reaction, he was devastated. He spent the rest of his life dedicated to supporting Indigenous youth, trying to help them cope with the legacy of the residential schools, the intergenerational trauma, and the racism that 50 years later still permeates Canadian society.

As part of my work, I have spent the last nine years working and learning with Indigenous peoples and communities. My experiences in that exchange have changed me as a person and as an educator. We have much to learn – about community, about spirit, about healing and educating the whole child from Indigenous Elders and educators. Unfortunately, we also have much to learn about coping with trauma, about suffering and its intergenerational impacts. On the positive side, we can experience the blessing of watching a people rise with resilience and renewed strength and spirit – and be allies to that healing.

One of my spiritual teachers, Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, challenged me and others to “ensoul our work” – to bring our spirit to what we do. He encouraged us to enact our values and involve our heart in our work life, not just our personal life, through the compassion, kindness, and mindfulness we were all working to develop under his tutelage. He talked about how, whatever we do, no matter the job/career, it could be ensouled. It could have meaning and purpose and serve others.

I have written this book because I want to do my part in reconciliation – with Indigenous peoples, and with the many, many students and teachers our educational system doesn’t work for. I want to do my part, too, in response to my aunt’s call to “leave the world a better place than I found it,” and to Reb Zalman’s call to ensoul our work.

I thought I was doing that when I developed the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (TBM of UDL), a holistic teaching model for inclusive education. The TBM includes programming for social and emotional learning (SEL) in Block One, inclusive instructional practices in Block Two, and systems change in Block Three. Research was showing us the TBM had significant, positive effects on social and emotional and academic learning. More and more teachers, districts, provinces/territories, and states were becoming involved. We had expert teams of facilitators being trained in several provinces. Teachers were sending me messages about the positive impacts they were seeing in their classes and students.

And then a tragedy happened. Two young people died by suicide. Their classmates and teachers were traumatized (I didn’t meet the family, but don’t mean to dismiss their loss and suffering). It all happened so quickly – in one weekend.

I heard a quote from a teacher that sent shudders through me: “I can’t go back to a classroom with two empty desks.”

The tragedy raised many questions for me. These questions had been in the back of my mind for a while – questions about trauma, mental health, and well-being. Questions about the purpose of schooling and why I, and others, became teachers.

In recent years, I had become more and more concerned by what I was seeing in schools related to the health and well-being of everyone – the adults and the

students. Somehow, the road we have all gone down has increased stress and pressure and decreased joy and learning.

Teacher burnout rates are very high, as are youth mental-health needs. That may sound depressing, but it isn't. It's an opportunity. We have an opportunity to change course. Not to go backwards, but to move forward in a different direction. Research and experience can guide us now to what works – for everyone's well-being, and for improving learning.

I set out to learn – to expand my knowledge about what has been happening in our schools and what can be done about it. I listened to Indigenous Elders and educators; to researchers, scholars, and scientists; to psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers; to educational leaders, teachers, and support staff; to families, students, and spiritual leaders. I also read, and I learned. As I often joke – I am not married and have no children, so I can choose to have no life ☺. My gift has always been my ability to see connections, synthesize, and weave together what seem like disparate parts into a connected whole.

In this book, I bring together all that I learned about education, well-being, health promotion, spiritual and peace education, Indigenous worldviews, and inclusive education to further ensoul my work. I weave together the scientific evidence, professional knowledge, and human intuition and insights in our field and my own experiences, to take us that next step toward an inclusive professional culture and system that cares, and educates, in the largest sense of the word.

As an inclusive educator and proponent of UDL, I always consider all of the students in our schools. I do not focus on one specific group of students as the old special-education model did, nor solely on students with specific mental illnesses. Instead, I focus on the learning community and how it can be designed to celebrate and teach to diversity. At the same time, it would be irresponsible of me to write about trauma and well-being in Canada and not consider Indigenous peoples and students and the issues of residential schools and the Indian Act. As an ally, I recognize it is my role as a non-Indigenous person to support and promote such consideration, but not to lead it.

I met Kevin Lamoureux in my work with schools in Manitoba. Participants in my workshops kept telling me that our work connected, and we should meet. So, I sought him out. We met, ironically, at a conference in Ottawa, the same day the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was proclaimed on Parliament Hill. It was a momentous day – for the country, for me personally, and for my work. In the years since, Kevin and I have spent many hours talking about schools and schooling, reconciliation, inclusion, and well-being. Together, we have conducted workshops and led a conference, and we have shared our journey and passion to make the world a better place, despite the difficult moments along the way. When I decided to write this book, it was natural, then, to ask Kevin to work on it with me.

Kevin is the National Education Lead for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and the Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Winnipeg. He is an Indigenous educator and scholar, and someone I trust to make sure what is suggested in this book works for both Indigenous

and non-Indigenous students. He is also a very busy man, so rather than ask him to co-author the entire book, I asked him to write the chapter on the TRC, give feedback on everything in the book, and advise me on the programming I was suggesting. We'd meet, and I would ask questions. I'd draft sections, and then I would send them to him for feedback. When we weren't sure about something, Kevin sought out Elders for information, advice, and wisdom. Without him, this book would not have been possible. Miigwech, Kevin.

In essence, this book is an expansion of Block One of the TBM. It takes a decided focus on mental health and social and emotional well-being. However, it also looks through that lens at instructional practice and how it connects to mental health.

In Part I, we'll start with the underlying premises of ensouled schools – schools that create inclusive learning communities, that are trauma informed, and that nurture health and well-being. Ensouled schools support the discovery of meaning and purpose in one's life, for both students and staff, ally in reconciliation, and, hopefully, raise a generation that will make the world a better place than they found it. We'll explore what we know, what the issues are, what the research says, and why it matters. In Part II, we'll go through the how – step by step.

For joining me on this journey, witnessing, sharing, and enriching it – Miigwech. Todah Rabah. Merci. Thank you.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge all who live with challenges related to mental health. It is not an easy journey, and I hope this book contributes in some small way to the movement towards destigmatization and compassion.

To Kevin, my colleague, friend, and adopted brother – this is only the beginning of our journey, and to all of the PMP staff – Annalee, Catherine, Kirsten – thank you for continuing to support my work, and for the amazing work you do on behalf of Indigenous people and all educators.

This book began in 2012, when a panel of Indigenous educators presented to a group of teachers at a summer institute in Winnipeg. One of the women, a vice-principal of a northern school, told the tragic story of her son's death by suicide. She noted that at his funeral she was taken aback by the number of teachers who commented on what a good person he was, and then said, *"I shouldn't have had to wait until his funeral to hear good things about him."* The room was stunned into silence, and 120 teachers left there forever impacted, including me. That same group of amazing women educators became friends and colleagues – and so to all of the community of Norway House, Miigwech for your welcoming, sharing, and guidance.

The concept of "ensouling" was taught to me by my spiritual teacher, Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, who encouraged everyone to "ensoul your lives and your work." By that, he meant to bring your heart, mind, and spirit to every interaction in your life – whether with a sunset or a student. I spent many nights on Skype talking with him about what this meant for me and my work, and how I could contribute to the ensouling of our schools so that children's spirits were nurtured alongside their minds. We lost Reb Zalman shortly before his 90th birthday; this book is my small part of his amazing legacy.

I also lost my father in June of 2017. He was a powerful energy, and the world seems a little emptier without him. I am grateful for his modelling of respect for Indigenous cultures and people, wariness of anything ethnocentric or racist, and belief in the healing power of relationship.

To all of the members of the Manitoba Alliance for Universal Design for Learning (MAUDEL), and particularly that inner core who continue to sustain the organization – John Van Walleghem, Trevor Boehm, Jude Gosselin, Sherri Black, Alex Bertrand, Joan Zaretsky, Denise Smith, Deborah Dykstra, Val Wood, Sandy Turcotte, Karen Fraser, and Lesley Welwood – many thanks.

The faculty at UBC nurtured me through my beginnings as a teacher, my growth into a leader, and my days as a graduate student, and they now have

welcomed me as a colleague. They are an amazing group of brilliant minds, open hearts, and inspirational leaders. In particular, to Marion Porath, Kim Schonert Reichl, Shelley Hymel, and especially Pat Mirenda – my eternal gratitude, respect, and love.

To all of the family, friends, mentors, and spiritual teachers who have guided my spirit, nurtured my heart, and enlightened my soul, my heartfelt thanks. Many thanks to my brother Laurence, my sister Vivi, my niece Jessica and nephews Zach and Jorel for their love and support. A special thank you to Reb Nadya, Reb Victor, and Reb Laura for helping me to connect my spiritual life with my profession, and guiding me on the journey – I am eternally grateful. To my soul family – Lynna, Lisa, Andi, Dafna, Kathryn, Ida, David, Laura, Saida, Zana – my love and gratitude grow every day. Thank you for the inspiration and connection.

Finally, as always, and with everything I do – credit has to be given once again to the rock on which I stand – my mother. Now 87, she has seen a lot, triumphed, and become the wisest of elders. She remains friend, mother, consultant, social worker, advisor...spirit guide. There simply are no words – I am blessed.

Introduction



From the beginnings of public education, debate has raged about the purposes of teaching, learning, and schooling. Arguments have been made based on economics (to prepare the next generation of workers), philosophy (to produce democratic citizens), and communal values (to transmit the values of the local culture/society). All of these are unidirectional: they are the goals of adults for children and youth. Students themselves have no voice (an irony in the democratic model), and the balance of individual rights and collective rights is, therefore, lost. In a system determined to “school” a child, there is no room for self-actualization, self-determination, or, indeed, freedom.

Ask a teacher why they chose this profession, and the almost-universal answer is: “I wanted to make a difference for kids.” Ask most youth why they continue their education, and their answers are often (apart from “because I have to,”) to discover who they are, what they want to do with their life and their interests, and to form social connections and community. In truth, teachers become teachers for emotional, social, and spiritual reasons, and students come to school seeking emotional, social, and spiritual learning. Never have I heard a teacher answer the above questions with: “Because every student needs to know their times tables,” nor has any student ever said: “Because I can’t live a life of meaning until I have memorized the periodic table.”

Ask any teacher to list the 10 most important things they want their students to leave school with, and they will write things like, “respect, empathy, self-confidence, leadership skills, critical thinking, risk-taker.” No one ever writes, “passive, obedient, rote memorizer, conformist, good speller, teacher pleaser.”

So, do our practices match our dreams? Will they help us raise the kind of youth we want to hand our world to – the kind who can improve the world we live in?

The current state of youth is concerning. The most recent data from Statistics Canada speak to a growing sense of anxiety and sadness in our students, occurring at younger and younger ages. Approximately 20 percent of children and adolescents, well over 800,000 children in Canada, experience mental-health problems severe enough to warrant mental-health services. Yet, 75 percent of them receive no care. This is not just adolescent angst. Twenty percent of elementary-school students reported being so sad every day for more than two weeks they stopped doing regular activities and wished they were someone else. This rose to close to 40 percent by high school.

Similar numbers of students rated their lives as having low meaning and purpose. The rates of depression and anxiety, clearly, are significant and far too large for any single school counsellor to address. Research, however, tells us that schools can play a significant role in the well-being of youth (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, and Miller 2006). Given the numbers, it's going to have to happen in the classroom, with all the kids – universally designed mental-health programming.

Thus, it is critical that we create classrooms in which *all* students:

- feel good about who they are and what they have to offer
- feel connected to each other and treat each other with genuine respect and kindness
- are challenged to learn, develop critical thinking and perspective, and grow
- learn how to learn and work with diverse others

This is not new, or news. In 1994, representatives of 92 nations gathered in Salamanca, Spain, to discuss inclusive education under the umbrella of the United Nations. The resulting Salamanca Statement based its philosophy on the right to an education for all children. The framework adopted a guiding principle that schools (1994, 6):

should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote and or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities, and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

The Salamanca Statement further recognized “the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults with special educational needs within the regular education system” (viii). The delegates created an action plan to address this need, and stated that “those children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs” (30). The delegates asserted:

regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system (ix).

The Salamanca Statement compelled countries to implement inclusive education for all learners. However, it did not clearly define what was meant by the term *inclusion*. Surveys of definitions around the world appear to have several key components: (a) placement of all students in general education classrooms; (b) access to general curriculum and learning; (c) opportunities for meaningful participation, peer interactions, and social and emotional support and well-being. These qualities appear in definitions from such disparate places as the United States, Sweden, Russia, India, and Canada. Clearly, if the goal of the Salamanca Statement is “combating discriminatory attitudes,” “creating welcoming

communities,” and “building an inclusive society,” inclusive education must involve a social and emotional component.

How do we ensure that students meet diverse others in a context that fosters respect and exchange, rather than division and fear? Research shows that knowing oneself and one’s environment is crucial to engaging difference positively. If we are insecure, we feel threatened by others who are different. Thus, devoting time to the development of students’ self-worth, and explicitly discussing the importance of respecting the value of all people, is a critical piece to developing a more just society.

In traditional [industrial] models of schooling, standards and accountability were all-important to measure both student progress and teacher efficacy. This model of education – which focuses on standardized outcomes, statistics and metrics, and measurable curricula – is often referred to as an “accountability agenda.” The further we have gone with “standards” and “accountability,” the more we have sold our soul. Yes, we need to have a vision, and intellectual challenge is absolutely part of that. The classroom is a learning community, not purely a social community. But we want to stay true to what it is we really want students to learn, and no government exam will ever capture that. You can never capture the mind, heart, spirit, and soul of a child/adolescent on a paper-and-pencil test. Even when focusing on mind and cognition, true development of the mind of an intellect – one who seeks out learning, debates multiple perspectives, critically analyzes bias and purpose, formulates new and unique ideas and views, proposes solutions and designs products that are founded in both reason and prosocial outcomes – cannot be assessed with a test that has a right answer. Only a professional, well-trained, and dedicated teacher who spends hours every day in relationship with their students can do that.

Teachers, too, have souls. They care. They have families and children, lives and loves. Walking into schools today, you can see a level of stress and burnout like never before. One teacher described her job as “soul-sucking.” It wasn’t because she didn’t like kids or teaching. It was precisely because she loved them, and didn’t feel like she could meet their needs, or do her job well. The rates of teacher burnout are staggering. Forty-seven percent of teachers in Canada will leave the profession before retirement age. No other profession loses half of its practitioners prior to retirement age. We don’t help children by burning out teachers. The result is increasing rates of anxiety in our youth, lower levels of learning and achievement, and higher levels of both teachers and students leaving our schools. We must bring back the heart and spirit of education; the love of learning and teaching; the sense of belonging, community, and connection.

It is time to ensoul our schools.

Are Schools an Archaic Institution?

Schools can be archaic institutions, but they don’t have to be.

The initial motivation behind the formation of schools in modern times (as opposed to Ancient Greece, for instance, where learning was for learning’s sake),

was industrialization. There was the need for workers who had specific skills and knowledge, which led to a training program called schools. This belief system related to schooling has maintained a role, though a significantly reduced one, in students', parents', and teachers' beliefs about schooling when they have only experienced the traditional form. However, there are nuanced changes to the interpretation of the economic value. Students often cite "getting a good job," while parents and teachers will talk about "preparing kids to be successful in the work world." Within this is a subtle but important change – it is less about what industry demands, and more about what the child needs. Nevertheless, it remains an economic motivation, influenced by what makes students employable. Ironically, many of the skills defined by employers in the corporate world as essential for effectiveness in the twenty-first century work world – for example, working with a team, relating to diverse colleagues and customers, analyzing and generating solutions to problems, and persisting in the face of setbacks – are social and emotional competencies.

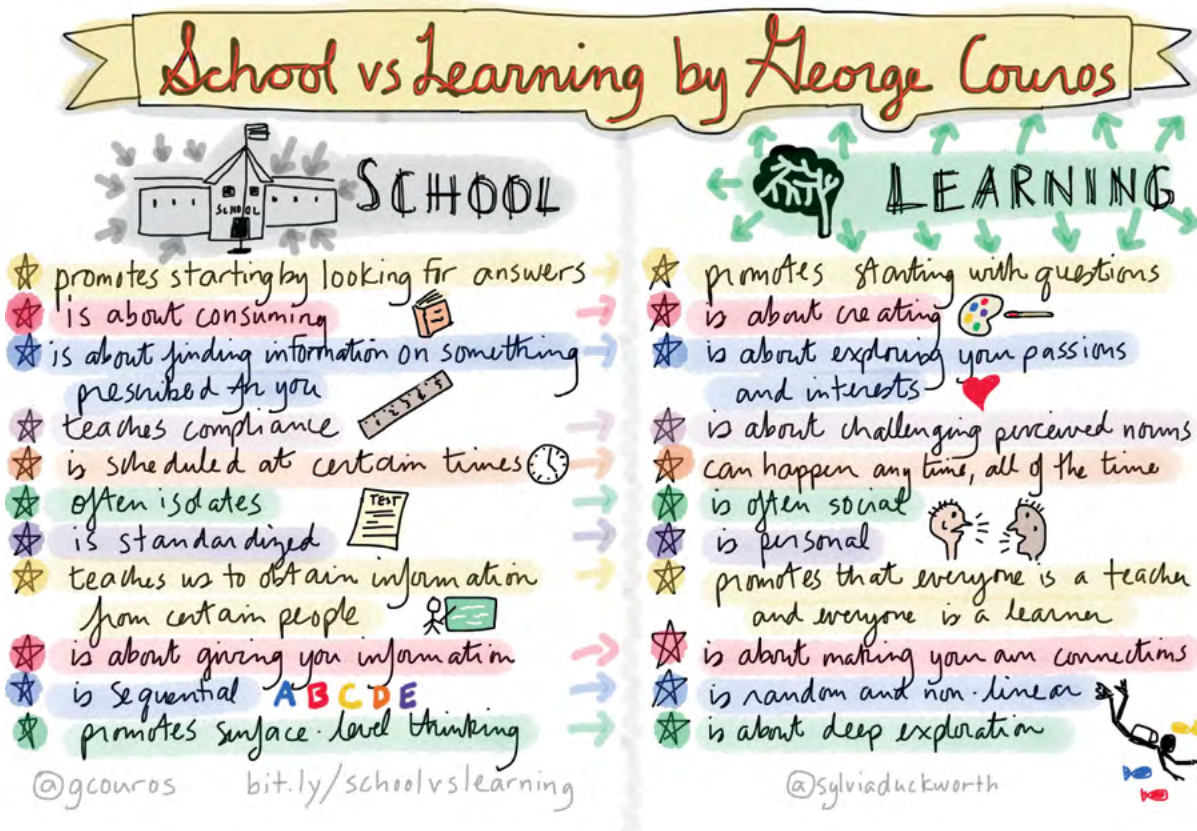


Figure I.1 Traditional Schooling versus Learning

Other purposes of schooling cited by teachers in the research and rated more highly than a strict economic function include teachers' desire to make a difference not only for individual students, but for society as a whole. Teachers cite:

the desire to effect social change through education (e.g., help eliminate all forms of discrimination from society; provide a vehicle for social and economic mobility; a way for the poor to reach their potential); and development of an ethical and socially responsible citizenry as more important than economic purposes, though not exclusive of them (Widdowson et al. 2015).

Students tend to agree far more with the social purposes of schooling than with the economic. International research documents amazing similarities on students' perceptions of the purpose of schooling – learning, and developing social skills and personal skills. In fact, students who viewed schools as being about jobs and economics demonstrated a preference for work avoidance and the belief that success involves a commitment to surpassing others' achievement, luck, and impressing the teacher. In Widdowson's study, four categories of beliefs about the purpose of schooling were identified: (1) to learn and develop self-knowledge, (2) to develop life skills and social skills, (3) to optimize life chances and quality of life, and (4) to enable future employment and economic well-being. The most significant finding of this study was the strong consensus among stakeholders in the importance of learning for learning's sake. Attending school, sending children to school, and teaching in schools were not viewed as being about producing a workforce.

A spiritual function was also mentioned by parents, teachers, and students – parents and teachers wanted students to find happiness and fulfillment, while students said they came to school because “it was fun,” and for learning about oneself.

In my own research, students in traditional classrooms described learning as a compulsory process, teacher dependent, and a means to employment. For example, student comments included: “It means trying stuff over and over again until you get it right.” Students did not appear to be engaged. Rote memorization of facts was seen as boring, as noted by comments such as: “She tells us what to do and we do it, and when we're done, we give the sheet to her” and “Study. Answers. That's it.” Comments such as: “I learn from teachers because they are older and they know better than us,” and “Our teacher tells us what to do, and we go do it” reflect the authoritarian, teacher-centred perspective inherent in an industrialized paradigm. There's a boss, and there are workers.

When we introduce spiritual and social and emotional learning (SEL), there are changes to the students' perceptions of learning. Many more students discuss learning as a means to better opportunities later in life, making statements such as: “Learning is the first stage to your future,” and “Learning is mandatory. Some people think it's something your parents are forcing you to do, but really it's to help you later on.” Students comment on extending their definitions of learning beyond school subjects and into other facets of life: “Do your own stuff to get your mind healthy,” “Sort of like encountering knowledge you haven't really encountered before and don't really have a lot of deep, concept or understanding

of it. If that makes any sense,” “Yah, it’s kind of just you learn something new every day, and it might not always be about school, but you learn something new every day, and school is just another way to learn something,” and “We develop skill sets that can be used in the future. And not just knowledge that sort of goes over your head but something that can just influence who you are as a person and how you react to the world around you.”

Health Promoting Schools

The World Health Organization (WHO) promotes a movement toward holistic education called “Health Promoting Schools” (HPS). According to WHO: “A health promoting school is one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.” Health promoting schools focus on:

- caring for oneself and others
- making healthy decisions and taking control over life’s circumstances
- creating conditions that are conducive to health (through policies, services, physical/social conditions)
- building capacities for peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, equity, social justice, sustainable development
- preventing leading causes of death, disease, and disability: helminths, tobacco use, HIV/AIDS/STDs, sedentary lifestyle, drugs and alcohol, violence and injuries, unhealthy nutrition
- influencing health-related behaviours: knowledge, beliefs, skills, attitudes, values, support

Education ministries around the world, including many countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia, as well as in India, Canada, and the United States, have adopted HPS policy. However, while policy exists, and government initiatives have taken place, consistent implementation of a holistic educational paradigm has not been achieved. Often these initiatives appear as mixed messages to teachers, when the same governments also increase standardized testing, merit pay, and other practices that increase stress, are not aimed at healthy learning or environments, and pressure teachers into focusing on rote skills and curricula. Perhaps as a result, the healthy schools movement has often ended up relegated to being enacted through health curricula, focusing on physical and sometimes mental health, and given little time or importance. Although the following is recognized, it is rarely enacted on the full spectrum:

Health promotion in schools is not just about encouraging children and young people to eat well and to exercise; it encompasses a much broader holistic approach. This approach is called the “whole school approach,” which includes promoting the physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being of all pupils and staff (Physical and Health Education Canada).

Clearly, the purpose of schooling has changed, but in many cases, the pedagogy has not. Jones, Haenfler, and Johnson (2001) laid out what they called the “seven

foundations of a better world”: economic fairness, comprehensive peace, ecological sustainability, deep democracy, social justice, a culture of simplicity, and revitalized community. While many schools and government policies cite visions that align with these foundations, research shows there is rarely time dedicated to them, and often curricula, assessment practices, teaching methods, and school rules are not well aligned.

However, there is hope. We do know how to “do school” differently.

An alternative vision to the traditional industrialized version of schooling is offered through the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (the TBM of UDL), the basic theories and values of inclusive education, social and emotional learning (SEL), and health-promoting schools. This vision is also offered through Indigenous practices that draw in marginalized populations, move away from deficit models of students, and focus on developing student autonomy, self-regulation, and academic self-efficacy. Evidence shows that all children can have a school experience that develops academic and cognitive abilities, while also supporting them to become active contributors to a more just, peaceful, productive, and sustainable world.

The TBM of UDL was created in service to those goals and is the basis for curricula presented in this book. The model draws upon the philosophy of UDL – every child has the right to access our schools, an education, and the community of their peers. It seeks to create a true learning community – one in which teachers and students engage in deep, higher-order thinking around important issues and concepts, and in which students take charge of their learning and learn to be risk-takers, leaders, and team players. At the same time, the model provides students with the opportunity to develop their inner spirit – a sense of self-worth and connection to others, to the planet, and to something larger than themselves. The model pulls together the work of Rose and Meyer (2002), who developed the concept of UDL, key evidence-based strategies for inclusive education such as inquiry and differentiation, and the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which promotes social and emotional learning in schools. The TBM is a synthesis of effective practices for inclusive classrooms and schools.

The TBM of UDL, as a holistic educational paradigm, also fits well with the whole-child worldview of Indigenous education and the concept of reconciliation. In 2007, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was formed to investigate the legacy of Indian residential schools. Out of its six-year investigation came 94 Calls to Action to bring about reconciliation, including several that focus on education. Reconciliation recognizes that in any conflict, all parties are affected. Each loses out on the richness that relationships could bring. The 2015 report of the TRC states: “It [reconciliation] is about coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward.”

The premise of inclusive education, similarly, is that diversity, and the opportunity to interact in respectful ways with others, enriches our lives.

Systems and Structures

- Inclusive Policy – No “Except!”
- Visionary, instructional leadership
- Distributed leadership
- In-depth professional development
- Staffing for collaborative practice
 - Team planning time
 - Scheduling in cohorts/teams
 - Resource/EA allocations to classrooms
 - Co-planning/teaching/assessing
- Budgeting changed from segregated practices/funding allocations
 - Assistive technology available to all
 - Multi-leveled resources
- School and district culture of care and inclusivity
- Curriculum designed for diversity
- Flexible learning environments

Inclusive Instructional Practice

- Integrated Curriculum – Cross-Curricular Connections
- Student Choice and Autonomy
- Flexible Groupings/Cooperative Learning
- Differentiated Instruction and Assessment
- Self-Regulated Learning
- Assessment for Learning/Class Profiles
- Technology
- Discipline-Based Inquiry
- Meta-Cognition
- Understanding by Design
- Problem-Based Learning
- Inquiry
- Social & Academic Inclusion as Guiding Principle for Tier 2/3 supports

Social and Emotional Learning and Well-Being:

Developing Compassionate Classroom Communities

- Developing Self-Concept
 - Awareness of and pride in strengths and challenges
- Sense of Belonging
- Self-Regulation
 - Goal setting and planning
 - Emotional regulation, mindfulness
- Valuing Diversity
 - Awareness of the strengths and challenges of others
 - Valuing of diverse contributions to community
 - Sense of collective responsibility for well-being, achievement of all
 - Empathy, perspective taking, compassion
- Democratic Classroom Management
 - Collective problem solving, recognition of rights and responsibilities
 - Promotion of independent learning, student choice and empowerment, leadership
- Positive Mental Health for Teachers and Students
- Resiliency and Distress Tolerance
- Indigenous Perspectives on Health, Healing, and Reconciliation
- Service Education – developing meaning and purpose
- Programming
 - Respecting Diversity Program (RD), Spirit Buddies, Class Meetings, Brain Unit, DBT, Mindfulness,
 - TRC programming

Figure I.2 Three-Block Model of UDL

Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples stand to gain from positive and healthy relationships with each other, just as people with and without disabilities do, and just as our students do in interacting positively with each other. Thus, we believe every child who leaves our classrooms should know they have something of value to offer the world, they are unique and amazing, they matter, and they live in a diverse world with incredible beauty and majesty.

Inclusive education allows *all* children to discover a life filled with meaning and purpose.

In later chapters, we will discuss programming from the Three-Block Model of Universal Design (TBM of UDL), from peace education, and from mental-health initiatives that can help us to achieve our vision.

Weaving the Threads

Think of the structure of this book as being similar to that of a loom. The TBM has always been a weaving together of what we know is effective practice for inclusive education. The TBM is based on a belief, and now research evidence that says, to coin an old saying: “The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

When we weave together such practices as inquiry, differentiation, backwards design, and SEL – the impact for both students and teachers is exponential in power.

Implementing the TBM significantly increases diverse students’ engagement, self-concept, belonging, prosocial behavior, and respect for diverse others (Katz 2012, 2013; Katz and Porath 2011; Katz, Porath, Bendu, and Epp 2012), including those of students with learning and behavioural challenges (Glass 2013). Research investigating academic outcomes suggests the TBM has a significant impact on the learning and engagement of all students, and the greatest impact on students with disabilities and students who are Indigenous. In fact, mean scores for Indigenous students indicated “the gap” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in academic achievement was completely closed – both groups of students in TBM classrooms achieved at significantly higher levels than either group of students in typical classrooms (Katz, Sokal, and Wu, in press). Teachers have indicated planning and teaching through this framework reduces teachers’ stress, increases job satisfaction, reduces challenging behaviour, and improves teachers’ self-efficacy related to inclusion (Katz 2014).

In our woven tapestry (see figure I.4), we highlight four important threads within the TBM. Each thread represents a critically important issue in twenty-first century schools, and has a body of research, well-known proponents, policy, and classroom-tested practices associated with it. In Part I, we will discuss each thread – what it is, what the research says about it, who is leading the way, and why the

We believe every child who leaves our classrooms should know they have something of value to offer the world, they are unique and amazing, they matter, and they live in a diverse world with incredible beauty and majesty.



Figure I.3 Balancing Meaning and Purpose



Figure I.4 Weaving the Threads

thread is important for all educators to know. We will make connections between the threads; in the same way the TBM brought together instructional practices into a singular, practical framework, we can integrate each of these threads into the TBM and not feel like we are trying to do 50 things at once!

- Thread 1 (White) – Chapter 1: Spirit and Soul in Education
- Thread 2 (Black) – Chapter 2: Neurology, Trauma, Well-Being, and Mental Health in Our Schools
- Thread 3 (Red) – Chapter 3: The TRC and Indigenous Worldviews of Education for Well-Being
- Thread 4 (Yellow) – Chapter 4: Leadership for Inclusion and UDL

Of course, categories are always inaccurate. The three blocks all interact, the four aspects of the medicine wheel interact, and all four of the threads listed above interact. For instance, Thread 3, the TRC and Indigenous worldviews, include spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical elements. The connection is loose, therefore, but it made sense to link the spiritual aspect (and color of thread) to the chapter on spiritual education, the emotional aspect to the chapter on mental health, the mental thread to the chapter on the TRC (because it is about raising awareness, developing knowledge and understanding, and truth), and the physical aspect with leadership – because it requires action.

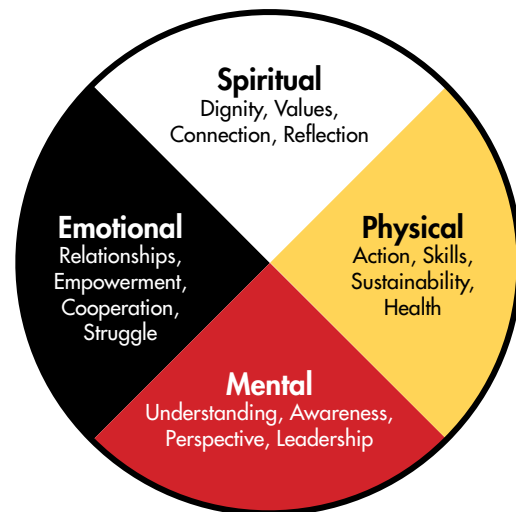


Figure I.5 The Medicine Wheel

- Threads 1, 2, 3, 4 (All) – Chapter 5: Weaving the Threads

In Part II, we propose practical, universally designed programming you can use with all students in your classroom) to address these threads, while connecting them to curriculum and school structures.

PART I

Ensouled Learning Communities:

*Finding Meaning and Purpose
in Schools and Schooling*



Chapter 1

Spirit and Soul in Education

What Do We Mean by Soul/Spirit?

Experts in spiritual education generally agree that the spiritual dimension can be situated within the context of religion or within a secular context. In this book, we address spirituality through a humanistic, secular lens, but without dismissing the individual and communal values that may be associated with a transcendent faith. Spiritual education, whether taught through religion or in a secular context, is recognized as having multiple pathways to the same goal – that living a life of meaning and purpose can be supported through secular and/or religious values.

Our soul is the core of who we are, our humanity, our essence. Soulful education is about self-actualization – discovering who we are, where our passions lie, and what gives our lives meaning and purpose.

An ensouled school recognizes the needs of all human beings for connection, appreciation, respect, and meaning. Staff and students alike become more engaged when they feel valued for who they are, are given the opportunity to learn and grow, and feel they have an impact on their world. Leaders in such schools recognize these needs as paramount to their role, and find ways to nurture both staff and students in their spiritual education journey. As such, leaders play both a visionary and a service role. They keep the big picture in mind while making decisions about what matters and is worth investing in, and they know how to provide the supports staff, students, and families need to achieve their goals.

Spiritual education embodies a holistic vision of children and youth – a belief that schools need to consider the heart, mind, body, and spirit. Modern medicine is beginning to focus more and more on the approach taken by holistic and ancient medicines – what affects the heart, affects the mind, body, and spirit. They are all connected.

So what does this mean for educators and education?

Before we define a holistic vision for ensouled schools, let's look at some of the theoretical/historical frameworks that may apply.

The History

Communities of Care

The concept of care as both a means and a goal for education is both ancient and modern. Aristotle spoke of *eudaimonia* as well-doing, and well-being as “living

flourishingly,” and a goal for every individual. Feminist teachings emphasized an ethic of care as being integral to education. In care ethics, relation is the core principle of education, and the caring relation is ethically basic to teachers. Nel Noddings’ work on caring education had tremendous impact on the evolution of social and emotional learning in schools. She demonstrated the significance of caring and relationship both as an educational goal, and as a fundamental aspect of education. Noddings’ 1984 work, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, is considered seminal for those wanting to emphasize the ethical and moral foundations of spiritual education.

The opposite of feeling cared for is feeling rejected, alienated, and unwelcome. Research has long shown that when youth feel their lives are not worthwhile, or if they become disconnected from their community or society, the experience of alienation that often follows can promote mental and emotional instability. Alienation can be social or academic. Socially, alienation results from a feeling of not “fitting in,” of being different in a negative way that results in rejection and being unwelcome. Academically, alienation results from varying degrees of student estrangement from the learning process. When students have little power over their learning, when learning has little relevance to their lives and aspirations, or when they are devalued or marginalized, they are likely to engage in acts of resistance the system often terms as “oppositional.” Or they may withdraw their assent for schooling altogether. Research shows that before leaving school (dropping out), students often disengage gradually, resulting in truancy, school failure, and disinterest in school-related activities. In such cases, dropping out represents the mismatch between student needs and expectations and school demands and benefits. Academic alienation occurs when students lack meaningful connection to their studies, when they see little relevance in the course content, and often, when they are effectively disconnected from other students through highly individualized forms of instruction that either require them to do a different activity than their peers, thus removing the opportunity to collaborate and participate, or remove them from the classroom altogether. Unsafe classrooms are therefore those that exclude students from social and academic success.



Figure 1.1 Stages of School Dropout

From the perspective of care ethics, a teacher's primary role is as "carer," responding to the needs of their students. At times, teachers will have to wrestle with the dilemma of a student's expressed need, and that of the curriculum, school, or class. In their role as carer, teachers are interested in students' expressed needs, not simply the institutional needs of the school and the prescribed curriculum. Relation becomes the critical lens – that which will maintain the relation determines the course of action. When teachers work very hard to help their students succeed, we often give them moral credit for caring. They seem to know what their students need and act faithfully on those beliefs. However, teachers have assumed these needs; the student has not expressed them. These teachers, therefore, have not established caring relations because they have imposed upon, rather than responded to, the needs of the student. For instance, a teacher who assumes a student is struggling to read a particular text and steps in to scaffold removes the right of the student to persevere through the text independently, seek out a peer to support them, or select another text. Such students may feel humiliated by the teacher's "support," or resent the inference that they are not capable of solving the challenge themselves, or on their own terms. At times, these teachers end up frustrated and stressed, because they believe they are doing everything they can to support their students and some students respond with negative behaviour. Care ethics, therefore, emphasizes the difference between assumed needs and expressed needs. From this perspective, it is important not to confuse the cared-for wants with those the teacher thinks students should want. Noddings counsels teachers to listen, not just "tell," and to not assume they know what the student needs.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is one aspect of spiritual education that, at its simplest, focuses on developing emotional and social competence. In its more complex iteration, SEL expands to consider meaning and purpose in the context of self-actualization, peace education, and social justice.

SEL and the Individual

The theoretical framework of SEL synthesizes the work of a variety of scholars within the fields of medicine, psychology, and education. Salovey and Mayer (1990) coined the term *emotional intelligence* and defined it as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action." Based on Salovey and Mayer's work, perhaps the more well-known theory of social and emotional learning was then put forward by Daniel Goleman and his colleagues at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). According to CASEL (Zins and Elias 2006, 1), SEL is defined as:

...the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, developing caring and concern for others, making responsible decisions, establishing positive relationships, and handling challenging situations capably.

The CASEL model, based on Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence, includes "five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies": self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These five competencies include components of social and emotional development (well documented in the research) that influence both academic success and mental health as youth develop (e.g., achievement, belonging, self-worth, self-efficacy, and citizenship). Self-awareness involves recognizing and acknowledging one's strengths and challenges. Children who are self-aware are able to recognize their own emotions, and are aware of how they are perceived by others. Social awareness, on the other hand, involves the ability to take the perspective of others. Children with well-developed social awareness recognize that others have differing strengths and challenges. These children are, therefore, able to understand others' reactions to situations and suggest win-win solutions to problems. Children who have self-respect embrace their strengths and see them as tools for achieving their goals and overcoming their challenges. They willingly take risks and try challenging tasks. Students who are respectful of others demonstrate empathy and accept the relative strengths and challenges of others in relation to their own. They can work cooperatively with others, using their own and others' abilities appropriately. Socially, respect for others implies an appreciation for diversity.

In addition to the direct effects of SEL on factors such as bullying and trauma recovery, spiritual educators must pay attention to the social and emotional influences on academic learning. With rising rates of anxiety and stress among youth, it is no wonder teachers are reporting rising rates of students' inability to pay attention, retain information, or interact positively with peers and teachers. Thus, social and emotional issues will continue to create barriers to learning for youth unless successful SEL programming is implemented. Indeed, the ability to learn is affected by the joy associated with the experience of learning and the relational environment of school. "Involvement, motivation, self-esteem, hope, play, and the positive emotions experienced with the grasp of new concepts, all facilitate plasticity and learning" (Nelson et al. 2013, 245). It should come as no surprise, then, that SEL programs have been shown to affect academic achievement, even at the college level, including improving scores on standardized exams. Even when considering academic outcomes alone, inclusive, socially, and emotionally supportive classroom environments support positive outcomes for students.

SEL and Teachers

Implementing SEL programming in classrooms can have both direct and indirect positive effects on teachers who teach these types of programs, not just on their students. Teachers who have implemented SEL demonstrated lower levels of stress, and those with greater comfort in implementing SEL showed greater general professional commitment to teaching. Such positive effects suggest: "implementation of SEL nurtures teachers' own well-being" (Collie et al. 2011, 1045). Teachers who have well-developed social and emotional skills demonstrate

greater enjoyment of teaching, and feel more self-efficacy. SEL programs that reduce challenging behaviour and improve achievement in the classroom are likely to further reduce teacher stress, given that student behaviour and failure have long been known to affect teacher well-being. These findings are significant, as many teachers worldwide experience high levels of stress – the main reason for career dissatisfaction and leaving the profession. As well, stressed teachers tend to have relationships with students that involve more conflict and less warmth. Moreover, these conflictual relationships are also associated with lower student engagement and achievement. When teachers and students learn about SEL and take part in its programs, teacher stress is lowered and poor, conflictual relationships between student and teacher are mitigated. Clearly, when teachers teach and practise SEL skills with their students, both teachers and students benefit.

SEL and the Community/Society

A second, broader theoretical basis of SEL comes from a social-justice perspective that explores issues of belonging as opposed to marginalization, conflict, and alienation in diverse school settings. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), Paulo Freire theorizes that the alienation of youth may be the single biggest factor in leaving school, disengagement, and the achievement gap. Freire suggests that because in traditional schooling students have little power over their learning, the content of the learning has little relevance to their lives and aspirations. Furthermore, students with disabilities, as well as those within cultural and sexual orientation minorities, are devalued or marginalized, resulting in youth who are more likely to engage in acts of resistance or to withdraw from school altogether. In schools with (a) a deficit view of students (i.e., the focus is on what students can't do, rather than on developing their strengths), and (b) teacher-centred instruction (i.e., students are expected to conform and listen passively, not given voice or choice or the belief that they are capable of having an impact on the world), Freire says, students often “succumb to a sense of fatalism. Enveloped in a culture of silence, they come to accept that this is the way things are meant to be and they lose their transformative capacities [the belief in their ability to effect change and make a difference in their world],” and, thus, disengage. A good deal of the causes of disconnection and powerlessness experienced by young people are rooted in major social divides based on class, ethnicity, and gender. Much like Noddings, Freire argues the need to incorporate the interests and concerns of students into the curriculum, because a spiritual education “challenges students to build a critical understanding of their presence in the world” and helps them acquire knowledge and resources to engage in social activism.

Teachers as Change Agents

One cannot be included if one does not belong. Noddings, in her work on the ethics of care, explicated the impact of relationships on teaching and learning. Despite power differentials, teachers and students affect each other's engagement

and self-efficacy through their relating. Higher levels of belonging improve students' well-being and reduce the chances of future substance abuse, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Positive relationships with teachers, instruction in resiliency and distress-tolerance methods, and positive classroom climates can also mitigate these negative impacts. Teachers, therefore, have the power to include the excluded by paying attention to unique needs and responding with an ethic of care. "Findings suggest a temporal sequence between positive feelings toward school as a protective mechanism for poor future mental health" (Lester, Waters, and Cross 2013, 159). Schools are effective socialization contexts in our culture and hold great influence in guiding social and emotional learning. Teachers can effectively facilitate children's social and emotional learning via classroom and school-based interventions, and teachers are therefore essential partners in building inclusive classrooms that truly celebrate diversity and allow all students to learn and grow together. This is the vision put forward in the Salamanca Statement.

In Part II, we will discuss programming from the Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (TBM of UDL), from peace education, and from mental-health initiatives that can help us achieve this vision.

The Vision of Spiritual Education

In general, experiences of connectedness have been associated with the spiritual. It can be confusing to tease apart the difference between spiritual education and SEL. There are many shared values, concepts, issues, and foci. However, spiritual education places a larger focus on an existential perspective; that is, it goes beyond human relations to relations with all living things and the planet, with a purposeful or meaning-filled life, and with the conflict within, over a present reality and our ability to affect that reality. As Hay (1998, 12) contends: "Spirituality is what goes on when a person becomes directly and sensitively aware of themselves and of themselves in relation to reality." In other words, connection includes connectedness to self and connection to other in both the physical and transcendent sphere. Within schools, experiences of connectedness potentially enable individuals to rediscover and/or interact with the spiritual dimension by promoting a sense of self and place, as well as meaning and purpose. Indigenous perspectives on land-based and place-based education reflect this existential perspective. They recognize the importance of youth having a sense of who they are in the context of their natural environment. Being "a kid from the prairies," where winter survival and ice hockey are part of identity, for instance, shaped – and continues to shape – my values, experiences, and conceptual understanding.

Spiritual education is based on worldviews associated with many ancient and modern cultures that believe all living things are connected and deserving of respect. Even the most sophisticated science can neither prove nor disprove the holistic and complex interactions of all living beings on the planet, let alone the forces of the universe in general. Despite our desire to predict and control, we are limited by what we don't know, the technologies available to us, and the

complexity of our natural world. Research may be our best hope for a given goal or vision. However, as a scientist, I know that denying phenomena just because we don't yet have proof is not science. Gravity, as has every other natural force, existed before we could measure it. We must entertain possibilities, seek to discover and innovate, and continue to recognize the difference between factual knowledge and wisdom.

Relationships with self and others bring passion and power to an individual's life and learning. Humans are social animals. Our initial instincts as young mammals are to fit in with the pack and model ourselves on adults as a means to survival. The awakening consciousness that takes us beyond purely instinctive living, however, begins with an external effort to embrace others who are familiar, and to connect to others who are different and unknown. Moving from tribalism to universalism requires guidance and support. Simultaneously, as adolescents explore their identity, there is a need to “go within” so the individual can discover new parts of one's self. The path leads to empathy and compassion at the outer level and to self-knowledge at the inner level. This growing sense of self in relation to one's proximal world, and to a role in the wider human and planetary community, provides a sense of meaning and purpose for the individual. It allows students to make sense of existential questions related to identity, place, and purpose – questions such as “Who am I?”, “Where do I fit in?”, and “Why am I here?”

Why Spiritual Education Is Critical in the 21st Century

Spiritual education is also connected to peace and social-justice education. Recognition that we are all connected gives rise to the understanding of equal rights. Scholars in peace and social-justice education suggest that rational, knowledge-based teaching is not sufficient to effect change in students' values, beliefs, and actions. Teaching about cultures and faiths around the world does not guarantee students' attitudes and prejudices will shift from what they currently believe.

Inclusive education is directly connected to peace and social-justice education, particularly when one defines inclusion as being about all marginalized populations, not just students with disabilities. If prejudice, discrimination, and ethnocentrism can be learned, so too can peace, acceptance, and respect for diversity. As with inclusive education, there are many different approaches to peace education, but the unifying concepts remain human rights for all and the need to empower students to become agents of change. Schools and universities have significant impact on the ideas and information “known” by the populace. We can choose to have schools that promote human rights, peace, inclusivity, critical thinking, and innovation, or schools that reinforce “traditions” that continue a legacy of privilege for a minority.

If prejudice, discrimination, and ethnocentrism can be learned, so too can peace, acceptance, and respect for diversity.

Bringing It All Together

In ensouled schools, mental, emotional, and physical health and intellectual development (including academic achievement) are all connected within the concept of spiritual education. We cannot teach students human rights, inclusivity, critical thinking, and innovation or help them become powerful agents of change if we don't help them become literate and numerate, understand scientific concepts and discoveries, learn about human history and geography, or develop their ability to maintain their own health. For students to live a life of meaning and purpose, they need to see the complex web that is their world and find their place in it.

In the next three chapters, we will break down the pieces of this vision and provide more details about each remaining thread. Only then can we weave the threads together into a practical framework for classrooms and schools to achieve truly ensouled schools.



Chapter 2

Neurology, Trauma, Well-Being, and Mental Health in Our Schools

For the first time in more than 50 years, the worldwide prevalence of children's mental-health diagnoses has surpassed those of physical injury and illness. The annual direct and indirect costs of mental illness have surpassed \$48.5 billion in Canada. According to Statistics Canada:¹

- It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder – the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide.
- Today, approximately 5 percent of male youth and 12 percent of female youth, ages 12 to 19, have experienced a major depressive episode.
- The total number of 12 to 19 year olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million.
- Mental illness is increasingly threatening the lives of our children, with Canada's youth suicide rate the third highest in the industrialized world.
- Suicide is among the leading causes of death in 15- to 24-year-old Canadians, second only to accidents; 4,000 people die prematurely each year by suicide.
- Schizophrenia is youth's greatest disabler, as it strikes most often in 16- to 30-year-olds, affecting an estimated one person in 100.
- Surpassed only by injuries, mental disorders in youth are ranked as the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada.
- In Canada, only one out of five children who need mental health services receives them (Smetanin et al. 2011).

Think about that. Can you imagine if only 20 percent of children who had a broken leg, measles, or even cancer got the treatment they need? Why is it that only 20 percent of youth with mental illness get the help they need? Do we not care? Or is the stigma so great that students and their families hesitate to seek treatment? Our experience tells us it's both. We care, but we have not, until recently, acknowledged the mental-health needs of our children. We believed it was a private family affair and something to be kept private. The stigma of mental illness remains significant.

1 See <<https://cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>>

Biologically, the separation of mental illness from physical illness makes no sense. All illnesses involve both biochemical and environmental factors. Genetics, organ malfunction, chemical imbalance, emotions, trauma, stress, and so forth affect cancer and heart disease, depression, and anxiety. If we take the example of diabetes, we are dealing with a malfunction of an organ in the body, the pancreas, not properly secreting the chemical it is supposed to, insulin. If insulin levels are only slightly off, then changes in diet, exercise, and behaviour may be sufficient to control the illness. If, however, the disease is significant, then we replace the missing insulin with insulin modern medicine has developed. If we look at ADHD, we are dealing with a malfunction of another organ in the body, the brain, not secreting a chemical it is supposed to, dopamine. If levels are only slightly off, then changes in diet, exercise, and behaviour may be sufficient to control the illness. If, however, the disease is significant, then we replace the missing dopamine with dopamine modern medicine has developed, called “methylphenidate” (Ritalin). If we look at depression, we are again dealing with a malfunction of the brain. The brain may not be secreting enough of the chemical serotonin, or it may lack receptors for it. If levels are only slightly off, then changes in diet, exercise, and behaviour may be sufficient to control the illness. If, however, the disease is significant, then we replace the missing serotonin with an antidepressant modern medicine has developed that blocks the serotonin reuptake. While the above is a very simplistic description of three illnesses, the point being made is valid. In all cases, an organ in the body is malfunctioning, causing a chemical imbalance, and modern medicine has developed ways of correcting the imbalance. Why is it then, that if a parent gives their child insulin to treat their diabetes, no one bats an eye, but if a parent gives their child Ritalin, they are accused of “drugging their child?” Why is there shame in taking an antidepressant, but not an antibiotic? Why do individuals feel stigmatized by seeking counselling, but not physiotherapy?

Indigenous Views of Mental Health and Well-Being

Canadian society has much to learn from Indigenous cultures. Traditional ideas of health in Indigenous cultures do not separate mental health from other aspects of well-being. Indigenous peoples’ connections to the land and community (including all living beings around them) and everyday activities needed for survival include a spiritual dimension that maintain harmonious relations and balance (Health Canada).

Mino-Pimatisiwin

Mino-Pimatisiwin is most easily translated as “leading a good life.” Some Indigenous Elders describe it as “walking in a good way.” What is critical to understand is that the Indigenous worldview of well-being reflects the interdependent worldview of Indigenous culture. While “living the good life” in Western society is seen as an individual accomplishment, often based on monetary success, Indigenous views of well-being are a mixture of self-actualization and

playing a valued role in one's community. In fact, among Indigenous peoples these two concepts are interconnected. They could not self-actualize without developing the gifts they had been endowed with from the Creator and contributing them to their community. This is not the same as destiny, which is individualistic. This definition of well-being and actualization is not a predetermined end goal, but rather a suite of gifts that one learns how to carry and use to serve.

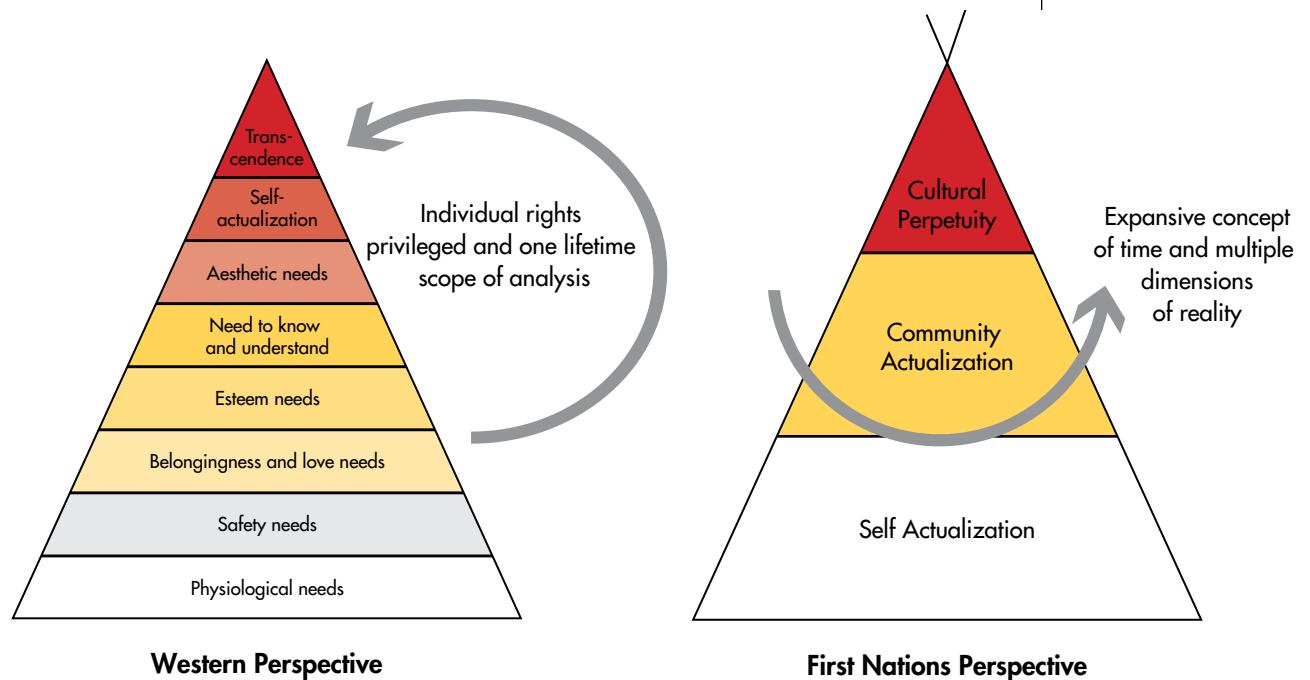


Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (informed by Siksika Nation, Alberta). *Huitt, 2004; Blackstock, 2008; Wadsworth*

The clan system of government was also about personal relationships. Membership in a clan defined what role was expected of you, and your community counted on you to serve the greater good of the collective. Obligation was to the community over oneself. This was not thought of as self-sacrifice, but rather that “there is no me without the collective.” Interestingly, it is now understood that Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was based on teachings he received from the Kainai people in Alberta while doing research there. However, Maslow stepped further back than did the Siksika and stopped at the development of the individual; his triangle stops where the Siksika triangle begins. The triangle, shaped like a tepee was meant to have self-actualization as the foundation, with community actualization in the middle, and cultural perpetuity at the top. In other words, development of the self led to, and was aimed at, the strength and development of the collective. By contributing in this way, one’s life contributes to a legacy that continues long after death – cultural perpetuity.

Mino-Pimatisiwin involves walking in a good way – toward being the individual you are meant to be. In pursuing that, moments of self-doubt, hardship, and trial become lessons that allow for an expression of a good life – resilience and the ability to use trial toward self-actualization.



Figure 2.2 Abraham Maslow with his anthropological team and Siksika interpreter, circa 1938

In contrast to the emphasis on the individual in many Western societies, the concept of the healthy person in Indigenous cultures relates to their role in the community, their impact on others, and the support of others for them. Interdependence, rather than independence, is valued. From a spiritual perspective, relations in Indigenous cultures include ancestral ties, which teach youth a respect for Elders and lineage, and in turn provide a sense of connectedness across time. Because of the trauma of cultural oppression and abuse, combined with this collective worldview, in Indigenous communities mental health is seen as a collective need for healing rather than as an individual failing. (In Part II, we will introduce programming to address this issue further.)

The Four Spirits

The four spirits, often represented through a visual such as the medicine wheel, reflect a contemporary view of Mino-Pimatisiwin. Although Western cultures relate to this with words such as *holistic* or *balance*, it is more than that. The 2D visual of the four spirits represents four separate concepts (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), but these are actually intertwined. In fact, there are traditional teachings that differ from medicine wheel teachings (e.g., seven directions, which reflect a multidimensional view of human development, rather than four).

Indigenous peoples recognize you can't think about wellness without talking about the entire person. Being intellectually healthy but not spiritually healthy means an individual is not “walking in a good way.” Some Indigenous Elders have articulated a developmental view that involves four stages of life (infancy, teenage, adulthood, senior/elder), each of which has four elements (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual). Thus, emotional health for a teenager looks different than emotional health for an older person. Modern psychology recognizes this as stages, but Indigenous teachings were less defined and more of a continuum – a person could be in infancy physically, and teenage development intellectually. By Western standards, this is seen as “abnormal psychology” or “asynchronous,” but among Indigenous peoples, this is a normal part of learning how to develop one's gifts.

The Circle of Courage

Martin Brokenleg developed a framework for exploring well-being that is based on the medicine wheel, which many schools use with their students. The circle of courage (COC) combines Indigenous beliefs about well-being and Mino-Pimatisiwin, and modern research on resilience. Brokenleg identifies four main human needs for growth and well-being: mastery, generosity, independence, and belonging. Mastery is developed when youth are given graduated levels of challenge and experience success, whether that is in the mental, physical, spiritual, or emotional realm. Students who experience constant failure and, therefore,

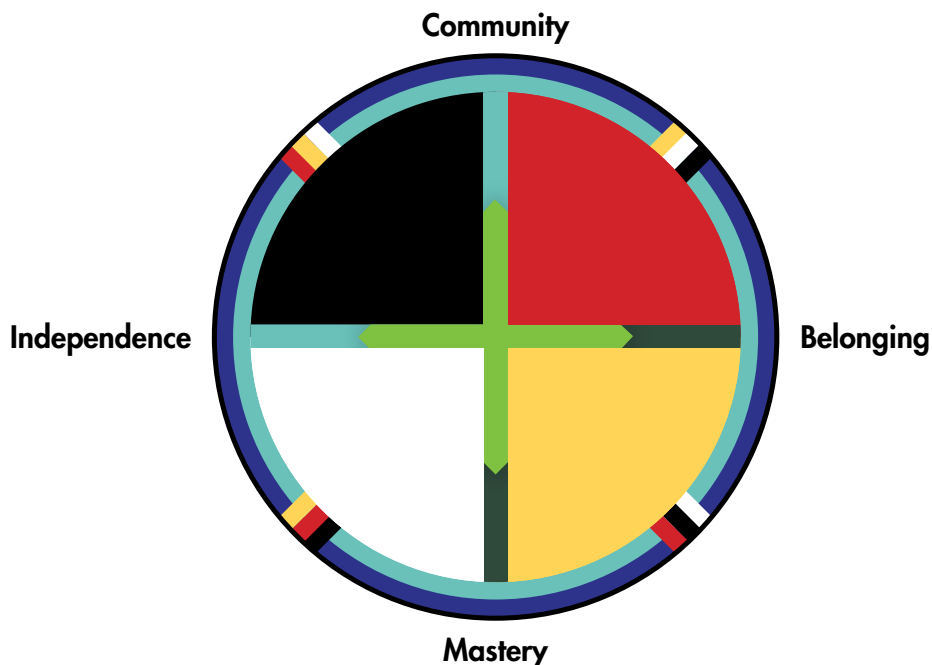


Figure 2.3 The Circle of Courage

lack self-worth and self-efficacy, are likely to demonstrate frustration, sadness, and anger – verbally, physically, and behaviourally. Generosity is nurtured in children when they learn to serve others, to appreciate the needs of the collective, and to place them ahead of their own. When students are made to feel they have nothing to offer, or when survival and trauma lead to a sense of isolation and the need to protect one’s life, generosity is lost. Yet, it is generosity, the opportunity to help others, that can lift an individual out of trauma and create belonging. Independence in the COC is equated to autonomy and self-regulation. Adults are encouraged to guide, but not to direct. To learn how to self-regulate their learning and their relationships, children must be allowed to make choices, and mistakes. Finally, the sense of belonging is key in the COC. In youth, belonging is expressed through trust, friendship, and intimacy. Teachers must foster a learning community that accepts and values diverse learners to develop a sense of belonging. The circle of courage explores the needs of youth for positive development and can be used in schools as a planning tool to meet these needs.

Mental Health: Contemporary Western Views

In the rest of this chapter, we will use terms such as *mental health* and *mental illness*, because it is in keeping with the field. However, I challenge the reader to let go of any difference between mental health and health, and between mental illness and illness, and to consider the role of community and connection over the impairment of an individual.

The rest of the health field has not gone as far as eliminating the term *mental illness*. However, there has been a shift to recognizing the focus should be less on illness and more on health. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as “a state of well-being emerging from the realization of individual potential, ability to cope with normal life stressors, working productively and contributing to the community.” Health Canada defines mental health as “a state of well-being that allows us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.” In both definitions, we see the balance of self-actualization and happiness, with the need for resiliency and the ability to interact with others, and less focus on illness from a diagnostic point of view.

Mental Health and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

At times, the two terms *mental health* and *social and emotional learning* (SEL) are used interchangeably in the literature, for understandable reasons. Both share a vision of living a life that is fulfilling to self and contributes to community. Let’s have a look at the factors involved in the definitions of SEL and of mental health.

SEL	Mental Health (WHO)
Self-awareness	Realize individual potential
Self-management	Cope with normal stressors
Social awareness	Work productively
Relationship skills	Contribute to community
Responsible decision making	

Figure 2.4 SEL and Mental Health

A closer look at the above table reveals that SEL defines some of the key skills needed to achieve mental health. For example, to realize one’s potential, an individual would have to develop self-awareness; to cope with normal stressors, one would need to develop self-management. In that sense, mental health is inclusive of SEL. However, mental health expands beyond it to include clinical illnesses, spiritual well-being, and more. Thus, when we refer to mental health we are talking about the big picture, and when we refer to SEL, we are focusing on some targeted skills to achieve mental health.

Positive Mental Health

Corey Keyes (2005) expanded on the dimensions of SEL and definitions of mental health with the dual continuum model of mental health. This model fits with WHO’s recognition in 2004 that mental health is not simply an absence of mental illness, and incorporated both skills and the larger paradigm of mental health. In Keyes conceptualization of mental health, it is conceived as a syndrome, with measurable symptoms and diagnostic requirements. Keyes showed that data support the existence of two distinct continua (mental illness and mental health) and identified 13 “symptoms” of mental health:

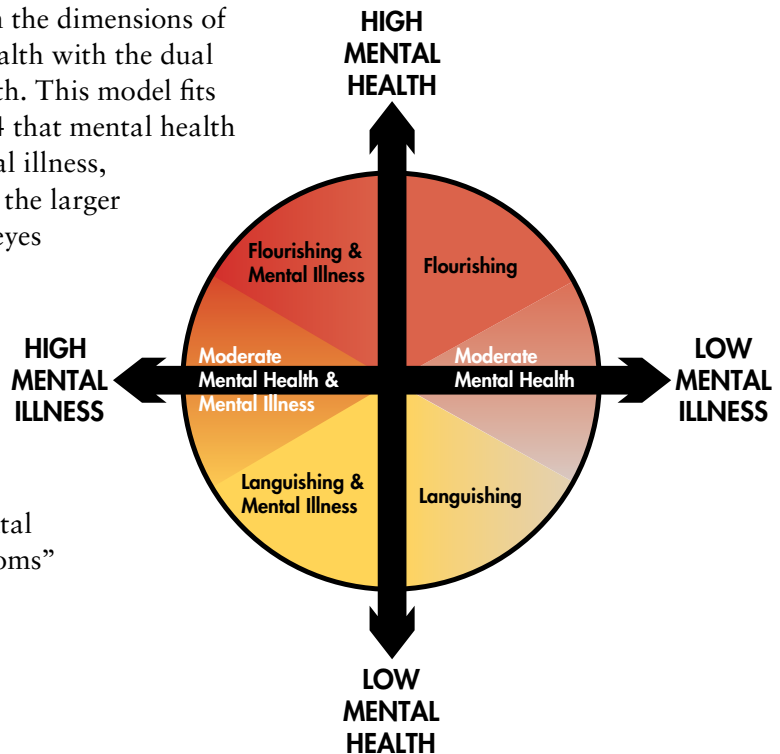


Figure 2.5 Dual Continua of Mental Health

- High emotional well-being, defined by 2 of 3 scale scores on appropriate measures falling in the upper tertile.
 1. Positive affect
 2. Negative affect (low)
 3. Life satisfaction
- High psychological well-being, defined by 4 of 6 scale scores on appropriate measures falling in the upper tertile.
 1. Self-acceptance
 2. Personal growth
 3. Purpose in life
 4. Environmental mastery
 5. Autonomy
 6. Positive relations with others
- High social well-being, defined by 3 of 5 scale scores on appropriate measures falling in the upper tertile.
 1. Social acceptance
 2. Social actualization
 3. Social contribution
 4. Social coherence
 5. Social integration

Positive feelings about life, such as being “in good spirits,” being hopeful about the future, and satisfied with the present.

Six factors contribute to positive functioning (self-acceptance, personal growth, etc.): individuals feeling good about who they are, having goals and believing they are growing toward them, having positive intimate friendships and relationships, being able to meet their needs in their environment, and having a sense of personal power and choice.

Individuals’ experience of connection and belonging. Social coherence reflects a person’s feeling of “fitting in”; that is, a sense that society’s values and practices are coherent with one’s own. Social actualization refers to an individual’s perception of society as moving forward—the hope that “things will get better.” Social integration and acceptance are feelings of being included and valued by your community. Social contribution refers to the perception that the individual is making an important contribution to society.

Symptoms of emotional well-being are determined based on participants’ responses to questionnaires or interviews and relate to positive feelings about life, such as being “in good spirits,” being hopeful about the future, and being satisfied with the present. In addition to these emotional states, Keyes wanted to quantify how individuals functioned in their lives, much as functioning levels are measured for depression, or disability.

Psychological well-being represents the intrapersonal, or internal, processes that an individual experiences. By contrast, social well-being represents an individual’s experience of connection and belonging. Social integration and acceptance are similar to the sense of belonging referred to in the Three-Block Model (TBM) (see pages 53–55) – a feeling of being included and valued by one’s community.

Similar to the specific criteria used for diagnoses of mental illness, Keyes proposed that individuals must exhibit at least 7 of 14 “symptoms of hedonia or emotional vitality” and “positive functioning” to be diagnosed as “flourishing in life.” Furthermore, he proposed that under this new understanding of mental health,

intervention programs must focus not only on decreasing the prevalence of mental illness, but also focus on helping individuals flourish and achieve a mental health state that includes “high levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being.” Thus, the focus of SEL expanded beyond the original five components (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) to address the larger goals of developing both the skills needed to flourish, as well as those required to mitigate mental illness. When distinguishing between happiness as short-term gratification and as longer-term flourishing, flourishing is presented as involving the search for meaning – a spiritual perspective.

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (2013) elaborates:

These positive mental health themes include: social and emotional learning, positive (strength focused) youth development, protective factors and resiliency, diversity, acceptance and understanding of student mental health needs, connectedness, strength-based perspectives, mental fitness and self-efficacy.

NOTE: In this text, we use the term *mental health* to refer to this expanded understanding of wellness, and the term *SEL* when referring to specific research, programs, and skills based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Educational Learning’s (CASEL’s) model (see pages 15–16).

Languishing and Flourishing: The Implications for Youth

Languishing mental health is characterized by alienation, isolation, hopelessness, and the lack of a social support network. Youth who have friends and positive relations with significant adults are far less likely to have languishing mental health. In turn, adolescents who have close friendships and support at home and at school generally have higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Similarly, according to Health Canada, opportunities for social interaction support the development of trust between people, a deeper sense of meaning in life, and an enhanced sense of coherence, control, and positive self-regard. These psychosocial factors then contribute to improved mental and immunological health. Flourishing mental health and positive self-esteem enable an individual to connect with and embrace a community of people. Belonging to a supportive community contributes to mental health by providing support in times of crisis, grounding in one’s cultural roots, and opportunities for creativity.

So, how are our youth doing? Most students are doing well. Four out of five students report they rarely or only sometimes feel left out. That needs to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, 20 percent of our youth are suffering, and that’s not okay. According to a WHO survey, approximately one in five boys and girls in grade 6 in Canada report that they often feel lonely or left out. A higher percentage of boys than girls feel they do not belong at school. This peaks in grades 8 and 9, where approximately 23 percent feel they do not belong at their school. Stress in youth is often first manifested physically, with symptoms such as headache, stomachache, backache, and dizziness. At other times, symptoms can

be mental or emotional, including feeling low or depressed, irritable, nervous, and having problems sleeping. One in four grade 6 students in the survey reports having at least one of these symptoms daily, with no difference between girls and boys. Beginning in grade 7, a greater percentage of girls than boys report daily symptoms; by grade 10, the percentage among girls is 35.7 percent, or one in three girls.

And what is the number one source of stress? School.

Stress in school often presents as challenging behaviour, withdrawal, avoidance, truancy, and anxiety. Students with high stress levels react aggressively and without the ability to exercise judgment (see the next section on the effects of cortisol). While educators often assume that the stress comes from home, this denies the fundamental truth that, for many students, school is stressful. Students who struggle with the demands of traditional schooling, such as the abilities to read and write, sit still, process large amounts of auditory information, and navigate social and cultural expectations that may not be familiar to them, can find school extremely stressful and demeaning. Think about the one thing you find the hardest to do. Now imagine being asked to do it for six hours a day, five days a week, for twelve years. Don't complain, don't avoid the task, cooperate with your peers who find that task easy, and, oh, don't be oppositional! For me, that task would be sewing (I have very poor fine-motor skills). If I was asked to be a seamstress all day, every day, and a manager came by my workspace and told me to stop fooling around and finish what I was sewing, I'd exhibit oppositional behaviours, too!

The Role of Trauma, and the Promise of Plasticity

Today, neuroscience has much to contribute to classroom practice. Research has demonstrated that what happens in the mind affects the body, emotions, and spirit, which, in turn, influence learning. Our emotions regulate learning and memory. Our experiences affect us on every level. Studies in epigenetics and brain plasticity (see page 33) have provided additional promise, and questions, for the field of education.

Trauma

Trauma affects brain function. Chemical release during times of stress affects brain function and, over time, structure. When we perceive ourselves to be in danger, our brains release cortisol, a stress hormone related to adrenaline, into the bloodstream. It activates the fight-or-flight mechanisms of the brain in response to danger. Our heart rates rise, we go on alert, and we become totally focused on survival. Our brain shuts off the cortex (the part of the brain responsible for thinking and judgment) and uses only the lower, instinctual brain so that we can act quickly (e.g., throwing our hands up in front of our face to protect ourselves). This state of mind is called "fight or flight," because we look to escape the danger if we can, and otherwise fight for survival. It is an appropriate response when we are truly in danger (e.g., when in a car accident, or when chased by a dangerous animal). After

the danger is gone, the brain stops releasing cortisol, and it is slowly metabolized out of our systems. Our heart rate comes down, our breathing returns to normal, and we can begin to think clearly and determine our next course of action.

Our brains are programmed to prioritize danger and safety messages, which makes sense. The problem is, our brains have not evolved to discern emotional from physical danger. Whether a tiger is chasing you, your boyfriend has broken up with you, or a pet has died, the brain's reaction is the same. It doesn't matter whether the threat is real or perceived – each results in cortisol release, fight-or-flight reaction, and, therefore, avoidance and/or aggression. A student who is worrying that they will be embarrassed in front of their peers because they can't read well, or that they will be bullied at recess, will react as if in danger. A teacher who thinks parents are being critical, colleagues or admin are not supportive, or has challenges at home, will respond similarly. As a result, students (and teachers) who are under chronic stress – who perceive themselves to be unsafe emotionally or physically – retain high levels of cortisol in their systems. These are the students who are constantly in avoidance or anxiety mode; who react to others looking at them, talking to them, or touching them; and who are aggressive and defensive over seemingly “minor things.” Students in this state of being *cannot* “be rational” or “problem solve” – their cortex is not functioning well. No one reaches in on a cornered animal that is growling out of fear. We lower our voice and try to show that we are harmless and won't hurt it. So, why do we react to our students in aggressive, power-based ways and then act surprised that we “get bit”? Why do we react to an overwhelmed colleague with judgment rather than with compassion?

Long-term, ongoing stress or trauma leads to continuously high levels of cortisol. In turn, cortisol reduces the brain's ability to produce serotonin, a chemical responsible for mood and anxiety. As a result, ongoing levels of stress gradually wear down our ability to manage our emotions, and depression and anxiety are the result.

When students enter a classroom or school that feels safe to them, their cortisol levels will reduce. Regardless of what is happening to students at home or in the neighbourhood, if we create safe havens for them at school, they will be healthier and better able to learn. Even 10 minutes of meditation in a school day results in better outcomes both behaviourally and academically.²

But what about staff, families, and communities? Anxiety and stress look slightly different in adults – avoidance of stress in adults often presents as resistance to change or additional demands, aggression may be expressed as verbal conflict, refusal to interact/collaborate with peers, and more. The myth of resistance to change is a dangerous one. No one I know would resist a pay raise, an opportunity to travel, or other positive changes, even if there is stress involved and it requires significant effort (e.g., planning a wedding or a big trip). People resist change when they see it as overwhelmingly stressful in a negative sense, or when they

2 In the book *Teaching to Diversity*, we discussed programming to create safe spaces in which students' cortisol levels can be reduced. Programs such as Spirit Buddies, democratic classrooms, and the Respecting Diversity program all can help to reduce students' perceptions of danger in our classrooms.

believe themselves incapable of succeeding. So, how do we create safe, supportive environments on a larger scale? This is a critical question if we are truly to build inclusive schools. We will discuss this in detail in chapters six and seven, but a shift in our perspective must take place if we want to create schools of healing and well-being.

Complex Trauma

Most often we think of trauma as occurring due to a single, horrific event. However, researchers have begun to understand that ongoing exposure to high-stress events can also cause a form of post-traumatic stress that can have devastating effects on a child's physiology, emotions, ability to think, learn and concentrate, impulse control, self-image, and relationships with others. Complex trauma results in high rates of addiction, chronic physical conditions, depression and anxiety, self-harming behaviours, and other psychiatric disorders in later years.

Complex trauma results from repeated exposure to abuse, significant neglect, and fear for safety or survival on a day-to-day basis. Children who grow up in communities where food insecurity is common, where homelessness looms as a constant possibility, where domestic violence and addictions are common are likely to experience complex trauma. The constant fear results in damage to brain development, attachment and relationship skills, and more. The young of mammals naturally count on their parents to keep them safe and comfortable. When a parent cannot meet this need, a child's sense of safety and trust becomes threatened. They live their lives in survival mode, avoiding all possible triggers, and choosing survival over flourishing. We see these students in our schools on a regular basis, and wonder why they sabotage relationships, fight seemingly minor requests, and would rather be suspended than trust themselves or others. They are often very reactive to others' moods and behaviours – a teacher with a headache can result in a student reacting with aggression, because their perception of the teacher's facial expressions and tone of voice is that the teacher is unhappy or angry. In a home where an angry parent is dangerous, the survival reaction of the child makes sense. Unfortunately, these adaptations to a dangerous world often condemn students to a life of danger, because they may prevent positive relationships that would surround them with love, nurturing, and health.

Intergenerational Trauma

When trauma results from oppression over time and history, the negative consequences can be passed down to future generations. Intergenerational trauma has affected the health and well-being and the social disparities facing Indigenous peoples in Canada and other countries. In Canada, stress caused by the horrors of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop had significant impact on parenting, employment, education, and other aspects of Indigenous life and communities.

Intergenerational trauma can be seen on both individual and communal levels. For example, the trauma may be evident in a family where the parents

or grandparents were forced to attend residential schools, and each subsequent generation of that family continues to experience trauma in some form. On a communal level, intergenerational trauma can be seen when a people have been oppressed or traumatized, and, thus, culture, parenting, and more affect the community across generations.

Direct survivors and intergenerational survivors of these experiences often transmit the trauma they experienced to later generations when they don't recognize their trauma or have the opportunity to address their mental health and well-being. Many self-destructive behaviours can result from unresolved trauma, including depression, anxiety, family violence, suicidal and homicidal thoughts, and addictions. Over time, these often-destructive behaviours become normalized within the family and their community, leading to the next generation suffering the same problems.

Epigenetics

There is a new field of neuroscience that I believe will inform, and transform, education in significant ways in the years to come. Epigenetics is essentially the study of the heredity of experience – how one's life experiences affect children through the transmission of genes and their expression. It has been shown that the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors have inherited certain responses to danger signals that concentration camp inmates were exposed to (e.g., the music of Wagner, which was played over the loudspeakers in Auschwitz). Some grandchildren of survivors will show stress reactions to Wagner's music, even if they have never heard it before and don't know what it is. As incredible as this sounds, it makes sense. How does a kitten know to be afraid of a dog? We have a system of passing on "danger" to our offspring, and now we realize that trauma experiences can be passed on.

This is important, because it means students whose parents have experienced trauma, or who have experienced trauma themselves, can also be affected, in terms of wellness, learning, and brain structure and function. The type and number of brain cells made, the formation of neural pathways, and the release and reception of neurotransmitters at synaptic connections occur in response to children's experience and genetics (Kessels and Malinow 2009; OECD 2007). A student whose family has had negative experiences with school may be entering our buildings feeling a sense of fear or dread and *not know why*. With the knowledge that students whose parents have experienced trauma, or who have experienced trauma themselves, can be affected in terms of wellness, learning, and brain structure and function, the importance of holistic educational systems greatly increases.

Think about it:

- What does this knowledge – that parents' trauma affects their children – mean for students whose parents had a negative school experience?
- What does this mean for Indigenous students, who likely have epigenetic cultural trauma embedded in their DNA?

If we know that beginnings may be difficult, and students need to feel safe in order for cortisol to reduce, how might this change what kindergarten, September, and morning start-up look like?

Neuroplasticity

There is some good news. Research has shown that because of the ongoing plasticity of the brain, the building of healthy peer and staff relationships at school is key to promoting long-term outcomes of health and well-being (Konishi et al. 2010; Troop-Gordon and Gerardy 2012). Trauma causes significant impairment in the brain, *but caring can lead to healing*. Despite early exposure to an environment of risk, brain pathways retain their plasticity to some extent, so an enriched environment in later years can promote well-being.

We have long known the impact of enculturation, socialization, peer modelling, and so forth. Neuroscience has begun to discover physiological systems that are responsible for these social connections and influences. Mirror neurons cause us to take on the emotions, habits, and patterns of those around us. Chemicals released by one person affect another, as in the case of pheromones. All illnesses are both physical and environmental (Polderman et al. 2015). Biochemistry and environment, genetics and life experiences, stress and grief, joy and resilience all play a role in cardiac disease as much as in depression, and early life experiences affect the later development of illnesses we term both *mental* and *physical*.

Neurocognitive research investigating the links between emotions and learning has demonstrated that for students to learn, the diversity of their needs must be recognized by teachers, and then classroom learning environments created that address social and emotional well-being and belonging (CASEL 2016). According to Hertzman (2012)

Developmental systems theory is now the dominant paradigm in understanding children's development, and it is also now well established that the early experiences of children become biologically embedded. That is, experiences influence biological development (Nelson, Kendell, and Shields 2013, 241).

Youth who experience chronic stress incur changes in the structure and function of areas of the brain that then affect their ability to regulate emotions, process information, and remember. Cognitive functions, including neurocognitive processes, such as the ability to pay attention, retain in memory, and process language, are all mediated by social, emotional, and mental-health factors.

As teachers, we must be aware of our students' well-being. It is non-negotiable, and more important than any curriculum.

School-Based Mental-Health Services and Programs

Preventative programming can affect students' emotional resilience and well-being. In today's world, schools are the only institution that have access to all of our youth. Religious institutions do not, psychiatrists do not, family doctors do not.

As a result, schools are the only place where universal programming can occur. This reality has resulted in school-based SEL programs aimed at maximizing SEL while concurrently reducing the risks of maladaptive behaviours and mental-health problems. The conceptualization of what school mental health and SEL look like in application is emerging more fully, as an equitable partnership between schools, communities, and families. Unfortunately, the era of high-stakes testing and the pressure on teachers and schools to perform has often marginalized school mental-health programming. Yet, the need to create classroom environments that are safe for all students persists, and the evidence is mounting that doing so actually has more impact on academic achievement than many instructional practices do. For example, a large longitudinal study of SEL programs found that students who participated in such programs in grades 1 to 6 had an 11 percent higher grade-point average and significantly greater levels of school commitment, attachment, and completion at age 18. As well, school failure was reduced – 14 percent in SEL classes versus 23 percent of students in a control group. At age 18, students in the same study showed a 30 percent lower incidence of behaviour problems, a 20 percent lower rate of violent delinquency, and a 40 percent lower rate of heavy alcohol use when involved in SEL programming (Hawkins et al. 2005).

Improved mental well-being is associated with increased positive outcomes, including physical health, life expectancy, educational achievement, skills and employment rates, social interaction and participation, and fewer negative outcomes, including reduced health-risk behaviours (e.g., smoking and alcohol misuse), reduced risk of mental-health problems and suicide, and lower rates of anti-social behaviour and crime. Perhaps as a result, many governments around the world have proposed school-based mental health programming. In England, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence promoted comprehensive mental-health programs involving both universal approaches (aimed at everybody) and targeted approaches (aimed at children at risk or with specific difficulties).

Often educators and governments that are proponents of the accountability agenda form of schooling look to Asian school systems that score highly on international tests. At what cost? Japan's Cabinet Office recently examined the country's more than 18,000 child suicides from 1972–2013 and found distinctly larger numbers of suicides at the end of August and beginning of September, as well as during the middle of April. The former coincides with schools reopening after summer vacation; the latter, as the Japanese school year begins. Pressure on our youth to perform and not disappoint has a cost. Japanese educators and government officials are now piloting universal school-based mental-health programming in an effort to address the suicide rate.

In Canada, as in the United States, the delivery of mental-health services in schools has been promoted and recognized as having the potential to fundamentally enhance the number of youth engaged in treatment. However, despite significant evidence for mental-health intervention in schools, implementation remains inconsistent within school districts in North America. Schools are the first line of defence in mental-health promotion. Mental-health

concerns often first present as poor academic outcomes or behaviour in school, so teachers play a critical role in early intervention. Mandatory attendance at school and the natural setting of services may help address access issues, including transportation, time, cost, and cultural beliefs. As well, schools provide an opportunity for skills related to mental health, such as social skills, emotional regulation, and stress management to be practised, in a natural setting – for youth, school is the place where they will encounter many of the challenges socially and academically that are an everyday part of their lives, and where they will need to apply the coping skills being taught.

Traditionally, educators have debated whether their focus should be on knowledge development or on their role in the development of youth's social, emotional, and mental well-being. Modern science teaches us that this argument is moot, as cognitive function (including neurocognitive processes such as the ability to pay attention, retain in memory, and process language) are all mediated by social, emotional, and mental-health factors. Thus, even if one's goal is solely to improve academic achievement, the well-being of students has to be considered.

The challenge is that many teachers feel ill-equipped to provide universal supports or programming, let alone to recognize signs of illness. If we are to support the well-being of our youth and educators, training in and implementation of school-based mental-health programs is imperative. At the same time, teachers feel pressured to “get through the curriculum” and prepare students for exams. This reflects a lack of understanding that *investment in SEL and well-being will actually raise test scores more than another worksheet will*. Unfortunately, meeting children's mental-health needs is often viewed as the mission of some other agency. In turn, mental-health professionals do not always accept the criticism that their interventions for children must be more related to the core mission of school, which is learning. It is here where, once again, we must weave our systems of support together to best meet our vision for a holistic educational system. It may also involve the restructuring of some of our roles. For instance, psychologists are often used as evaluators, counsellors as academic advisors, and so forth rather than for their more professional skills supporting the well-being of staff and students.

Teacher Impacts

Implementation of school-based mental-health programming also affects teachers. Teachers exhibit high levels of stress and burnout compared to most other professions. Their unusually high stress levels have been linked to high incidences of both depression and anxiety. Research around the world, including in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan, have all found significant numbers of teachers meeting the criteria for having a mental-health problem – double that of the general population. High rates of languishing mental health in teachers in turn affect student learning and behaviour. A cycle of ill health is created, as factors in teachers' stress affect students. Thus, there is a need to address both student and teacher wellness in schools. Fortunately, training in school-based

mental-health programs has shown to be positive. Teachers who implement programming for students in cognitive-behavioural strategies such as problem-solving, building social support and social skills, developing assertiveness and cognitive restructuring strategies to promote positive self-perceptions have shown reduced teacher stress and improved job satisfaction. Trainers in mental health are often positively affected, resulting in changes in attitude, emotional well-being, confidence, and self-awareness. However, training requires specific supports – not just professional development, but also coaching and appropriate human resources (e.g., counsellors or psychologists) – to help problem solve or provide feedback. Tyson, Roberts, and Kane (2009) state:

With the high number of teachers seeking stress leave from work each year, and the increasing prevalence of internalising disorders in children and adolescents, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. Using teachers to run a mental-health program within the classroom could be a cost-effective way of promoting mental health for both teachers and students.

Changes in teachers' well-being might then have a positive influence on the climate of their classrooms, which, in turn, would affect students' attention, frustration levels, and acting-out behaviours.

Story 1: Ms. P

There is a heart beat underneath it all....

A few years ago I started becoming desensitized to the bad things that were happening to others. I avoided news stories that would tell of harm coming to people in the world and, in particular, children. Through all the vicarious trauma that I experienced at my old school of children going in the night and not getting that goodbye with them and being privy to CFS involvement in my students' lives, etc. In my second year of teaching, I was spending two nights a week tutoring one of my grade 5 students who was placed in the witness protection program with his family and shortly thereafter moved away with a new name and new life. I began to shut down. I know I did. In such a short time I stopped feeling deeply about not having that goodbye with my students, not being able to help them more because it was hurting too much. I placed it in a box. And it began to happen in my personal life too, but I just didn't realize it. When I did realize it the only way I could explain it to others was to say that I just wasn't feeling human. I wasn't feeling emotions as deeply as I knew I should and it was bothering me so much. This was definitely a small factor in seeking a change in schools.

I remember clearly the day that I was driving to work this year and began crying at the image of a bald child on the side of a bus. It was an advertisement for the children's miracle network and this child had clearly braved chemotherapy treatments. I realized at that moment that I had released my heart. Finally. Since then, big things and little things from world events to the feelings I have and the delight I experience from my own children have pulled on my heart.

Sounds silly now, but until this point I have attributed it to the simple act of changing buildings and removing myself from the vicarious trauma I was experiencing there that I

don't experience "here". It is more than that. This change is because of the professional work that I have done with UDL, because it is always, always, always impossible for me to remove the personal aspect. Through this work I have grown as a person. I am a better mom, wife, teacher, and human. I love my kids, my husband, my students, and... I am learning to love myself more.

I have found my heart beat.

Impacts on Families and Communities

Clearly, the well-being of students affects their families. In early research, the term *family burden* acknowledged the effects a child with mental illness has on parents and siblings. Such effects included, but were not limited to, economic disadvantage (because one parent often had to stay home to be caregiver, costs associated with therapy, and potential costs related to violence or destruction), emotional stress, isolation (parents often report no longer being invited to family/community functions), and marital difficulties. More recently, the term *family impact* is being used, to remove the subjective perception of negativity inherent in the term *burden*. Families' reactions to anxiety, depression, and other mental-health conditions vary. Behaviours that one parent is distressed by and perceives as withdrawal, sadness, or nervousness, another parent perceives as sensitivity, introversion, and gentleness.

The economic costs of mental-health disorders to communities at large are estimated to be in the billions of dollars. These are in part direct costs, as when an employee takes stress leave, and indirect, as when a parent leaves the workforce, or is less productive at their job, because of the need to care for an unwell child. Social, emotional, and cultural costs are much more complex and nuanced. Socially, relationships between individuals, families, and communities may be disrupted due to languishing mental health or mental illness in individuals. Direct effects of behaviour, such as aggression or suicide, mix with indirect factors, such as disagreement over how best to respond to an individual with mental illness (e.g., jail/treatment, discipline/compassion). Families, communities, and governments must spend considerable resources responding to individuals: health-care systems, schools, police, and legal systems are all affected. One need only watch the news on any given night to witness tragedy caused by mental illness – and the impacts extend like a spider web to the doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers, and more who interact with individuals struggling with mental illness. At the same time, many of our greatest minds have at some time been touched by mental illness. It is impossible to quantify the influence of depression on Picasso's blue period or on Thoreau's writings, on Buddha's epiphanies or on Lincoln's speeches. Their impact on society is significant, despite, or perhaps because of, mental illness. Thus, while we look to reduce stress and support flourishing mental health, it is critically important we not dismiss or assume those who live with illnesses such as depression or anxiety need to be "fixed." What they *do* need is to learn how to manage these illnesses in their day-to-day lives.

Story 2: Ms. D – Resiliency in Care

School can be a protective factor in the lives of children in care. For many children who have grown up foster care, or as a ward of the Child and Family Services system, there is a recognition that school was a consistent and reliable safety net in life filled with uncertainty and tumult. Of course, for many educators navigating the complexity of the CFS system is a daunting and time-consuming task. Accessing records, getting permission slips signed, keeping track of kids after they have been moved from one home to the next, advocating for children to not be transferred out of a catchment area so that they can stay with their home-room friends and teacher; these are all difficult tasks. But as difficult as they are for teachers, they are nothing short of traumatic for children. Given the vulnerability of these children we believe that any contact between student and teacher, however short, is an opportunity to enrich their lives with those experiences that are most important to their success at school; namely belonging, care, compassion, a strong sense of efficacy and agency at school, consistency and reliability, and an opportunity to give of themselves and contribute in a meaningful way. No one knows this better than Chantelle Desorcy. Desorcy, who is currently a teacher in rural Manitoba, grew up as a child in care. Her story has very much informed the type of teacher that she has become, and is informative for us as a case study of working with children in care from a UDL perspective. As an Indigenous woman she first had the opportunity to engage with her own culture as an adult in University, something she believes children should have the opportunity to do much earlier on in life. In her own words...

Behind closed doors, there are worlds that have been shattered, truths hidden, lies, secrets, and darkness. But every door is made to be open, and eventually some light is allowed to trickle through. As I have survived and continue to live my life, I have chosen to come out beyond my room, and look back into the darkness not as a threat, but a reason to live.

As a child, you always look at life like there is another day. You don't stare watching your feet as you walk along, but you look up towards an adult, leader, mentor, or advocate. You don't understand that they may be doing the wrong thing; you look up at them to teach and to guide you, trusting your whole life to them. It is only until we grow up and look at society as a whole, do we then compare hardships, unfairness, betrayal, and morality. As a child you depend on those who are stronger than you, and those who have walked before you. You live every day knowing there will be a next, and dream of the future. My story is to inspire, not to bring hurt, anger, or pain. It is only because I once had eyes of a child, that I still survive today. With my story, I hope to remind adults of the perspectives we once had, and to remind our youth to keep our childlike focus because there is always a better future as long as we keep looking up.

I have no recollection of womb memories, but the story goes that I was beaten out of my birth mother four months premature. I was less than 30 centimeters long, and weighed 3 pounds. My birth father was violent, and affiliated with a Filipino gang, and my birth mother coped with cigarettes and alcohol. The effects on my physical body were noticeable, but my eyes were opened to life the moment I was born.

As we all get second chances at life, my mother had the same opportunity. Unfortunately she grew up in the system, and, well, history has a way of repeating itself.

At six and a half months, my two-year-old brother was pleading to 911 for help, for himself and his baby sister, because our mother was laying on the floor not far from me, bleeding, because she had been stabbed by one of our father's gang-affiliated friends. She ran out of chances, we ran out of time. We were permanently admitted into CFS.

As I turned 1, then 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, life is faded. Memories are gone except the few that taught me some critical lessons. Lessons that I never learned in school but in the wee hours at night when everyone else was sleeping. Here, in this moment of my life, I can look back as a teacher and understand what happens when you say to the student at the end of the day, "Bye, see you in the morning! Have a good night!"

As a child in the system every *bye* feels like the last time because you just may end up looking at your foster parent the wrong way – and get beat for it so bad you have to wait at home until the bruises lighten, or sent to another home. You hold onto the "see you in the morning!" because you get to have a chance to become a kid, a student, someone who can be a child, free... oh ever so free the next morning. And when you say – "have a good night", those words can help a child hold on in those late nights of being sexually abused, beaten, locked in a room with no food. Those end-of-the-day goodbyes are a child's lifeline for kids in care.

As a teacher, after a long day, you get caught up thinking about the child who chooses to crawl on the counters in the classroom instead of listening to the 100th different way you have shown them to do simple addition. As you sit and stare into the distance that night, on the couch, of why this student punches another student, or tries to bungee jump off the school play structure, or touch adults inappropriately, or says things that are just so not funny... You scream into your mind and wonder... *Why can't this kid be normal!!!* How much time and energy can we put into these children who just seem like they don't want to be there??? After so many ways of showing them how to read, or write, or do simple math, *how do they not get this!!*

And as any great teacher, after our poor-me, my-life-is-so-hard-as-a-teacher rant, you start to self-reflect. You start to question, "What am I doing wrong? What can I change to make this child change?" We start to blame ourselves and miss the big picture.

That child fights with their fists because that's all they've been taught how to communicate. The child lunges off of any play structure or plays life-threatening activities because they have never been taught how to have fun – how to play and what that even looks like. That child touches or speaks inappropriately because they have not processed what inappropriate looks like because they have not yet been shown what is appropriate. Touch to them is love, not dirty, sick, or sexual. And lastly, that child does not want to focus about how you can get 2 plus 2 in 50 different ways, orally, pictorially, symbolically, and with manipulatives because *they know*.

They have learned how to ration food because they don't know where the food will come from next. They don't need to understand money, because they will do whatever it takes to survive, to make their younger sibling happy, to get a gift for a friend because everyone else's parents bought brand new presents for a class party and, well, their cupboards may very well have a lock on them at home. That child knows what they need to survive, and in their perspective, to survive is the best knowledge you will ever need in life, and well, school – let's just say it is not a priority to get top marks, to earn a scholarship when they graduate, to win a paper award for good behavior.

School, for these children like myself, was a vacation and a chance to be a part of society. A place where I could have the chance to be who I wanted to be, or experiment

with who I wanted to be like. And this is the reason why I chose this path to be an educational leader. I chose to be that one adult in that child's eyes that I can connect with. I can be that one adult, who says I look forward to seeing you in the morning – because I do. I want them to hold on, and I will make sure – everyday, that in the few hours with them, I can show them the light at the end of the tunnel. With my past, I can understand the path these children walk after school. I can make their time at school relevant because I know what is behind closed doors. Even today, as I do not walk in those shoes anymore, I find, on those really hard days when I am asking the same questions, and come to realize: Never once, as a child did my role models ask to change who I was, but modeled a life in which I could live. They modeled how I was supposed to be treated, how I should act in public, how to play and use my imagination. Today, after my educational degree, having two children, and being a teacher, I still suck at math. But I always look towards tomorrow as another day, and hope to see that child in the future, as successful as I am.

I remember my past through the eyes of a child. It has helped me survive today and will help me to help students tomorrow. You see, if I look back on my past through my eyes now, it stops me from living my life to the fullest. It steals my courage to move on. With eyes of a child, you see nothing but the future. You walk the circle of courage, seeing belonging and generosity in someone or anything, no matter what the situation is. You learn independence and you strive for mastery just so you can reach the next step. You never give up. Every day is not about survival but adventure and hope.



Chapter 3

The TRC and Indigenous Worldviews of Education for Well-Being

When European settlers to Canada decided they needed to “do away” with Indigenous cultures, we all lost opportunities – an opportunity to live in peace and harmony, an opportunity to learn from and with each other. There was, and is, much Indigenous cultures can teach us, and some of the problems we now face with the environment, the role of women, and the loss of community could have been avoided. To move forward with reconciliation, we must all educate ourselves about the mistakes of the past so that we can avoid making them again, and so that we, as educators in a country so very much in need of reconciliation, can work together with forgiveness and healing as our goal. Justice Murray Sinclair, commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has said forgiveness is not a necessary requirement to begin reconciliation work, as this might put unfair expectations on survivors of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and so forth. We recognize this truth, while continuing to work toward reconciliation and healing as our goal, in the hope that this communal work will create a better Canada for all.

While the TRC is a Canadian undertaking, the story of colonialism, discrimination, and residential schools, and the need for change and healing is a global one. The word *Canadian* or *Canada* can be substituted with the names of many other countries in much of what follows. One thing that separates the Canadian experience (or sets the Canadian experience apart) is the nature and legal effects of our treaties with First Nations. Understanding these treaties is necessary for efforts toward reconciliation in Canada.

Context and Relationship

On June 2, 2015, the TRC released its 94 Calls to Action as part of its final report to the people of Canada.³ Participants in Ottawa witnessed many events and celebrations that drew Canadians together from across the country in a spirit of reconciliation. It was a powerful, inspirational experience. Here were people of all backgrounds and all faiths raising their voices in support of the survivors of Indian residential schools and their families. Here were people whose families originated

3 See <<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>>.

connection. It's understandable, but harmful. Educational assistants need to be part of the classroom team, and connected to the teacher and resource teacher, who are also part of the team.

Supporting Teacher Professional Learning

Like our students, teachers learn at different rates, are ready for different knowledge and skills at different times, and learn best in different ways. Leaders, therefore, need to consider:

- the need to give everyone a vision of where we are trying to go
- an acceptance that not everyone will start at the same time or place, proceed at the same rate, or need the same supports along the way

Leaders need to recognize who the true leaders are among their staff and support them as they begin the change process. As with the change curve we discussed in chapter 4, it is a mistake to focus on the teachers who are not yet ready or willing to change in the beginning. Start with the early adopters and early majority. Provide all the supports and resources they need to be successful in piloting new programming. When other teachers see the results and hear about what is happening, they will slowly come on board. It also means leaders will have to consider how to differentiate the professional learning. Research tells us there are a few common structures that work best, and some that do not (Desimone 2009).

- One- or two-day workshops don't work. Teachers require at least 30 hours of training in any new innovation, spread over the year. If you have the budget to release teachers for 50 days, you are better off releasing 10 teachers for five days (30 hours), than 25 teachers for two days. The latter will not result in sustainable change; the former will.
- Teachers learn in different ways. Some need to "see it," and some need to "do it." To support this, cover classes so teachers can visit each other. Spend the money to bring in a knowledgeable facilitator to work with the first group of teachers. Have the facilitator co-teach with your teachers, demo teach, and debrief. Later, they will become your coaches and you won't need to spend anymore. However, the first group of teachers will need intensive support, as they are first ones to try the new practice. With no one else to support them, they have no one to turn to.
- Identify your teacher leaders. Sometimes these are your early adopters, and sometimes not. If you can convince one leader that this change is important and will help to support teacher well-being, as well as students, they will become your most powerful advocate. When teachers see "Gail is doing it," the majority come on board. You must not only support them to increase their knowledge; you also have to help them develop as leaders.
- Find ways to give these leaders the chance to influence change. Let them lead a PLC. Buy the books and support a book club. Release them from

Teacher leaders don't only need knowledge of the innovation.

They also need training in peer coaching and consulting.

one block of teaching, or one afternoon a week, and let them co-plan and co-teach with others.

Finally, Make It Fun!

Teachers need to create classrooms where students want to be, engage, and learn. School leaders need to do the same. Check in with your staff: How are they doing? What do they need? When a teacher is going through a difficult time, put extra supports in. Let them know you have their back. Get staff together socially, not just at winter holidays. Go on retreats, extend lunch hour one day and bring in a surprise buffet. Create a team and join a pick-up league in a sport. Offer wellness activities before school, at lunch, or after school (e.g., bring in a yoga teacher, or an artist, or anyone who inspires, builds collegiality, and leaves teachers feeling renewed.)

Conclusion

A Story of Hope

As we have invited teachers to think about wellness in inclusive classrooms, and the importance of reconciliation for all Canadian students, I am reminded of the optimism I feel every time I speak to a school community – be it the students, staff, or families. As we have already acknowledged, we as Canadians have inherited the wreckage of broken relationships between Indigenous peoples and the state. Canadian children today are growing up in a country where there still is not equity or genuine fairness for all Canadians, where there remains a desperate need for reconciliation. The signs are all around them: poverty, marginalized communities, crime, and racism. Experience has taught me that many Canadians are desperate for solutions, and to find a way to contribute to these solutions. This is especially true with young people. Every time I speak to a school community, the willingness I find to embrace and work toward reconciliation is uplifting. It fills me with a hope that sustains me when the work ahead may otherwise seem insurmountable.

Certainly, there remains much work to do. Canada is a nation that continues to wrestle with a difficult history and its impact on its citizens and children. There are many who grew up hearing only one story about First Peoples. There are those who still don't understand the need for reconciliation, or who believe that Indigenous peoples are unfairly advantaged in Canada. Racism continues to persist. Schools are going to have a central role to play in undoing much of this misunderstanding. Where schools in Canada were once used as weapons against Indigenous peoples, the inclusive schools of reconciliation will be places of healing, empowerment, and hope. Children today are growing up in a nation where more than ever we have the opportunity to hear each other's stories and recognized the commonalities of our shared humanity. It is in these relationships where reconciliation flourishes.

Years ago, I was told a story about my own Anishinabe ancestors. A story about my Kookum's and Mishomis' (Grandmother and Grandfather's) peoples, set long ago in the Anishinabe communities of Manitoba prior to contact with Europeans. It is a story about a drum.

I am told that in those days, in the old days before the *zhaganashi* (English speakers) came, there would often be a ceremony when the people would gather together to see off the hunters who would leave the community in hopes of bringing back enough game to keep their families thriving. Of course, Manitoba is a beautiful province. It is a beautiful expanse of prairie land and Canadian

Shield rich with thousands of lakes and stunning vistas. As beautiful as it is, it is also a place that can be very harsh on its people. Anyone who has lived through a Manitoba winter understands only too well how treacherous the shortest outing can be in the middle of January. I am told that as the people of the communities watched their hunters head out into the Manitoba wilderness, it was the responsibility of someone in that community, an Elder or a Knowledge Keeper, to sound a drum and keep a rhythm until the hunters returned.

As the story goes, it was believed that if the drummer sounded the drum in the right way, in a good way, and if the hunters listened in a good way, they would hear the drum no matter where they were. In this way, they would always know what direction home was.

I suppose that there are many ways to receive a story such as that. In today's modern world, it might be easy to reject the notion that a hunter could hear the sound of a handheld drum while kilometres away from home. To a Western scientific mind, the idea of such a small drum being audible above the howl of winds or the roar of rushing waters is absurd. Others may hear a story such as this and take a more generous position. They may accept that others might believe in such a notion even if they themselves don't share the same conviction. Such people allow for another's belief system as being part of a diverse world filled with diverse people, all of whom are entitled to their own stories. Still others may collect such a story, study it, and categorize it according to anthropological principles and cherish it as an artifact of the past. For our purpose, I will suggest another possible way of understanding such a story – one much more in line with the goals of reconciliation as I understand them.

Sometime after I first heard this story of the drum, I was driving on a highway back toward Winnipeg from a wedding I had attended in Ontario. I received a phone call from my mother regarding my cousin's husband. Like many Canadian families, ours has seen some of its own travel overseas to serve in Afghanistan. Corporal Christopher Klodt was an accomplished and seasoned soldier by the time I received that phone call about him from my Ma. As I watched the highway disappear behind me on the dark stretch of road, she explained to me that Christopher had been on patrol near Kandahar when a firefight broke out between our Canadian forces and the Taliban. As the fighting began, the Canadian soldiers crouched down behind the stone walls of an orchard and began to return fire. I am told that in situations where our forces cannot see the enemy they are trained to watch for the muzzle flashes of enemy fire as an approximation of their position. Christopher raised his head to do just that, when, for him, suddenly everything went black.

My family in Winnipeg received the call while he was in transit, being airlifted from Afghanistan to Germany, which is Canada's closest ally in that region with hospitals capable of responding to such injuries. A bullet had passed through his neck, and his life was in peril. When I finally pulled off that highway, which in those hours of not knowing whether or not Christopher would survive seemed to stretch on forever, I attended my grandmother's church, where the family had

gathered. The church's priest had opened the space for us to be together. As a family, we prayed and lit candles in hopes that my cousin's husband, the father of her unborn child, would survive and return home one day.

Looking back on those memories, I can't say whether or not any of us really believed that the act of lighting candles would bring Christopher back home safely. But I don't think that was the point. I think that the point of us gathering and performing that ritual was about hope. It was about bringing a family together and offering comfort through ceremony in moments when everyone felt helpless and afraid. I believe all of us can relate to needing hope sometimes. It is a universal human experience.

When I think about the stories of Anishinabe communities that would gather to hear the sounding of the drum, I believe another way to interpret that story is that the sounding of the drum was all about hope. Manitoba can be a treacherous and dangerous place. I imagine that watching loved ones head out into that unforgiving landscape must have been terrifying. The sound of the drum, that beautiful rhythm kept by a trusted leader who kept vigil while singing and praying, probably offered hope to people who felt helpless and afraid.

Such is the task before us. As educators we have the opportunity to help young Canadians find the commonalities in our shared humanity. We have the opportunity to accomplish what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action refer to as education for "intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect." We have the opportunity to contribute to reconciliation in inclusive classrooms where *all* students see themselves as transformative, of having the tools and compassion they need to help our nation heal and reclaim its identity as a Treaty nation.

Kevin Lamoureux

Appendices



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Rubrics for Treaty Education

Early Years Treaty Education Rubric

Beginning	Approaching	Meeting	Exceeding
Defines a treaty as a “deal”	Recognizes that the early settlers who came to Canada were helped by Indigenous peoples, and made a deal with them to give back	Describes Canadian treaties as an agreement between two nations that agreed to cooperate and share the land and resources	Proposes solutions to reconciliation of the treaties (developmentally appropriate)
Identifies Indigenous peoples as being the First Peoples of Turtle Island/Canada	Recognizes that the early settlers who came to Canada were helped by Indigenous peoples, and made a deal with them to give back	Explains the promises made to Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government (healthcare, education, and a share of the land and resources in exchange for land and resources for the settlers)	Proposes solutions to reconciliation of the treaties (developmentally appropriate)
Recognizes that Indigenous cultures were an oral culture	Explains the differences between Indigenous law (your word), and British law (your signature on a contract)	Analyzes the different perspectives of the two groups, and explains the resulting conflict in beliefs about what was agreed on	Proposes solutions to reconciliation of the treaties (developmentally appropriate)
Identifies the feelings of Indigenous peoples regarding broken promises	Explains why it is important to “make it right” – i.e., reconciliation	Gives opinions about how to honour the treaties, which are still law in Canada today	Proposes solutions to reconciliation of the treaties (developmentally appropriate)

K example

“The prime minister should share all the money and the parks with the Indigenous people.” – *Exceeding*

Grade 2 example

“Indigenous peoples were here first, but then we came and now we’re here.” – *Row 2, Beginning*

Grade 1 example

“We promised them good schools and good doctors and good places to live so that wasn’t fair when they had to go to reserves and couldn’t leave.” – *Row 2, Meeting*

Grade 3 example

“The Indigenous peoples thought the settlers promised but the settlers tricked them cause they didn’t write it down and sign it, so they didn’t think it was a promise.” – *Row 3, Meeting*

Middle And Senior Years Treaty Education Rubric

Beginning	Approaching	Meeting	Exceeding
Defines treaties as agreements between two groups	Describes the nature of Indigenous and settler government structures	Evaluates how governments negotiate treaties, and pass laws, on behalf of the people of their nation	Proposes methods of ensuring Indigenous peoples rights are respected going forward through government structures (e.g., new laws, structures)
Recognizes that many Indigenous nations existed in Canada before it was Canada	Describes government systems employed by Indigenous nations in their region	Compares and contrasts various Indigenous government systems, and the processes they used to negotiate treaties between groups (e.g., ceremonies, gift exchanges) and settler formats (business deal)	Evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of the different government structures, treaty processes, and values inherent in the process
Recognizes that Indigenous cultures were an oral culture	Explains the differences between Indigenous law (your word, a gift exchange) and British law (your signature on a contract)	Infers how the power hierarchy affected the outcomes of treaty negotiations in relation to what was legally binding (e.g., only what was written in English carried weight)	Examines the nature of minority rights in Canada today, proposes possible enhancements to protect against future power inequities
Describes basic properties of local treaties	Explains the promises made to Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government (healthcare, education, and a share of the land and resources in exchange for land and resources for the settlers)	Questions the intentions, moral ramifications, and values underlying the treaties, both in the past and in terms of modern-day responsibilities	Makes connections between the issues of the TRC and democracy, humanism, and well-being
Recognizes that Indigenous peoples have been discriminated against by Canadian law, society, and people	Describes the nature of disempowerment and the removal of human rights of Indigenous peoples in Canadian history (e.g., Indian Act, residential schools)	Empathizes with the sense of betrayal and trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples, analyzes modern-day efforts at reconciliation	Proposes new or additional processes/ ideas to move reconciliation forward

Grade 6 example

"I think the Indigenous ways of making treaties was better, because men and women were involved, and it was done with a "win-win" mindset, rather than one group trying to do better than the other."

– Row 2, *Exceeding*

Grade 9 example

"It seems to me if Canada caused Indigenous peoples to experience all kinds of trauma, that the only way for reconciliation to happen is for Canada to undo the trauma. We promised healthcare and schools, so we should be sending psychologists and counsellors to all their communities. They should get free training in mental-health literacy and mindfulness using the four spirits. We should build special schools, with environments that look and feel different from how schools normally feel, so they don't get triggered. And their Elders should get a certain number of positions in government, like a council of Elders, to advise the government." – Row 5, *Exceeding*

Grade 11 example

"Well, the treaties seem fair to me. Indigenous peoples shared their land, and settlers helped them with schools and hospitals and stuff." – Row 4, *Beginning*

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