



# HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN CANADA

Results From a CTF Teacher Survey



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## ||| THE UNITED NATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

The United Nations has placed a high priority on human rights education. Building on the foundation laid by the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the UN General Assembly launched the World Programme for Human Rights Education in December 2004 “as a global initiative, structured in consecutive phases, to advance the implementation of human rights education in all sectors.” (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada / Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010)

The first phase of the programme (2005-2009) focused on integrating human rights education into elementary and secondary school systems. The second phase (2010-2014) focuses on integrating human rights education in the higher education system as well as training for civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel.

According to the *Plan of Action – World Programme for Human Rights Education* (2006, pp. 2-3), human rights education

is widely considered to be integral to every child’s right to a quality education, one that not only teaches reading, writing and arithmetic, but also strengthens the child’s capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and promotes a culture which is infused by human rights values.

The *Plan of Action* advances a dualistic approach to human rights education:

Human rights education promotes a holistic, rights-based approach that includes both “human rights **through** education,” ensuring that all the components and processes of education – including curricula, materials, methods and training – are conducive to the learning of human rights, and “human rights **in** education,” ensuring that the human rights of all members of the school community are respected.

Based on international research and experience, the plan identifies five key components for successful integration of a “rights-based approach” to education in schools: educational policies, policy implementation, the learning environment, teaching and learning processes and resources, and professional development. On the importance of teacher professional development, the *Plan of Action* states that,

Introducing human rights education in primary and secondary education implies that the school becomes a model of human rights learning and practice. Within the school community, teachers, as the main depositories of the curriculum, play a key role in reaching this aim.

For the teachers to fulfil this major responsibility effectively, a number of factors need to be considered. Firstly, teachers are themselves rights-holders. The recognition of and respect for their professional status and the upholding of their self-esteem are a prerequisite for them to promote human rights education. The school management and leadership, on the one hand, and educational policymakers on the other must support and empower them to innovate in teaching and learning practices. Appropriate education and professional development of teachers and other educational personnel must be ensured. (pp. 48-49)

In response to a request from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (forwarded by UNESCO to its member states including Canada) for national reports on the implementation of phase one, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO prepared a report on the state of human rights education for Canada.

These are the key themes of the Canadian report, modeled after the *Plan of Action – World Programme for Human Rights Education* (First Phase).

**Policies and policy implementation** – This includes legislation and policies; curricula and education standards; school governance and practice. On the latter the report states that,

through inclusive education and safe and caring initiatives, many of the governance issues related to human-rights based education are addressed in the education systems of Canada. The rights of all students to learn and be supported in that learning are respected. Schools are managed as environments that welcome diversity, embrace equity, and protect their community members from discrimination, harassment, violence, and fear. (p. ii)

**Learning environments** – This includes a number of components:

- Pathways for student expression and participation
- Monitoring systems including assessment of the content and competencies of human rights education
- Inclusion of concepts closely associated with human rights education such as citizenship, multicultural education, and education for sustainable development (ESD)
- Initiatives designed to reach out to and support students with special educational needs, Aboriginal students, and at-risk and immigrant students, as well as minority language education rights – for example the report notes that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has integrated First Nation, Métis, and Inuit content, perspectives, and ways of knowing into the provincial education system; this is “made foundational in the curriculum by being reflected in the broad educational aims and curricula framework, the subject-area outcomes, instructional methods, and resources”; treaty education is also taught in the Saskatchewan curriculum.
- The contribution of civil society organizations to human rights education – examples include the Canadian Museum for Human Rights slated to open in Winnipeg in 2014; the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights named after the Canadian who was one of the principal drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, a network of organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting respect for the rights of children – one of the coalition’s goals is to provide public education materials about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and monitor implementation of the convention in Canada.

**Teaching and learning processes and resources** – This includes human rights education in the curriculum; teaching and learning methodologies; and teaching and learning resources – as one example of a teaching methodology, the report cites the use of project-based learning (described as “emphasizing learning activities that are long-term, across subjects, student-centred, and integrated with real-world issues and practice”) in a Yukon elementary school to explore human rights issues through the social studies curriculum (p. 37).

**Professional development for teachers and other school staff** – The report looks at the in-service professional development and resources provided to teachers and educational leaders in the area of human rights education by ministries of education, educational institutions, NGOs, and educator organizations. Among the examples cited is the Ontario Teachers’ Federation online bullying prevention program (Safe@School) designed with resources and proven strategies to assist teachers and other members of the school staff in addressing bullying, homophobia, racism and sexism in schools.

The Canadian report concludes that,

...human rights education plays an important role in the education systems of Canada .... the legislative and policy underpinnings for human rights in education have existed in Canada for many years, as have content and pedagogical approaches reflective of human rights education. The expansion of human rights in education can also be seen, as more programs and supports for inclusive education are introduced, safe-school initiatives are expanded, and program and policy revisions stress concepts of active citizenship and mutual respect. (CMEC / Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2010, p. iii)

There appears to be strong public support for human rights education in our public schools. According to the 2010 CTF National issues in Education Poll, conducted online with almost 2,600 Canadian adults, respondents overwhelmingly agreed (“strongly” or “somewhat”) that public elementary and secondary schools should teach their students about values and ethical behaviour (96%); human rights (96%); environmental protection (95%); peacemaking (95%); and participatory democracy (taking an active role in democracy, not just voting in elections) (91%).

Virtually all teachers surveyed (98%) agreed that human rights should be taught in public schools, including two-thirds who “strongly agree”.

## ||| CANADIAN DEFENDERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Human rights issues generally fall within the purview of CTF's social justice work. These are some examples of recent CTF social justice-related initiatives:

- A focus on reducing child and family poverty through our involvement in the *Dignity for All* campaign for a poverty-free Canada and CTF's Hill Day lobbying activities – we believe that addressing poverty is fundamentally a human rights issue.
- The focus of 2013 Hill Day was “Supporting Canadian Families”. In meetings with MPs, Senators and senior government officials, teacher leaders from across the country advocated for a comprehensive series of federal measures intended to support low-income families, immigrant families, Aboriginal families, Francophone families in minority settings and beyond our borders, families in developing countries.
- The release in 2012 of *Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools*, the fifth publication in an educational series designed to assist teachers, administrators and counselors in understanding sexual and gender minority issues; in addition, CTF supports the “Every Teacher in Every School” Project, a national SSHRC-funded study (by the University of Winnipeg in partnership with the Manitoba Teachers' Society) to identify and make widely available the collective expertise of Canadian teachers on inclusive education practices for sexual and gender minority students.
- Providing resources for teachers and lobbying for legislation on the issue of cyberbullying; among the recommendations in the report on cyberbullying by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights released in Dec. 2012 (CTF presented a brief at a Committee hearing) was “that the federal government work with provincial and territorial governments to help establish a coordinated strategy to address cyberbullying, that is implemented in accordance with Canada's obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*”; the Committee also recommended that “the promotion of human rights education and digital citizenship be a key component of any coordinated strategy to address cyberbullying developed in partnership by the federal, provincial and territorial governments.” (p. 4)
- An ongoing focus on Aboriginal education coordinated through CTF's Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Education – a current initiative is the Aboriginal School Twinning Pilot Project being carried out in cooperation with the Assembly of First Nations. In addition, the focus of the 2013 CTF President's Forum is “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education: Seeing and Meeting Challenges”.
- Gender equity – annual women's issues symposia are co-sponsored with our Member organizations; *Ending violence against women and girls, for one and for all* was the theme of the symposium held in Ottawa in April 2013.
- “Labour Rights are Human Rights” is one of the themes of CTF's *Hear My Voice* national pro-democracy campaign launched in early 2013; CTF also recently co-sponsored with the Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW Canada) an international conference on the theme of “Labour Rights and Their Impact on Democracy, Economic Equality and Social Justice”, held in Toronto.

CTF's *Imagineaction* program, launched in 2010, is described as a "student-driven social action movement". It offers financial and other supports to teachers to engage their students in citizenship and social action activities in their communities. There are six broad social justice themes that are the foundation of *Imagineaction*, and these themes reflect issues of importance and relevance for every citizen in every community. *Imagineaction* assists teachers in several ways:

- A series of web-based professional resources are available to assist teachers in the initiation of social action projects tied to both curricular and co-curricular activities.
- Teachers may apply for funding subsidies to assist them in initiating their projects.
- Project teams have access to an electronic showcase of projects to enable them to inform others of the good work being accomplished, and to let them search for new and innovative ideas related to the *Imagineaction* program themes.
- Teachers and their students have access to a database of community experts related to each of the program themes.

On December 10, 2012 (International Human Rights Day), through *Imagineaction* the Canadian Teachers' Federation in partnership with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights launched a national human rights initiative called *Canadian Defenders for Human Rights*. This multi-year initiative aims to heighten student awareness about human rights issues, develop students' critical thinking skills, and foster social activism in support of human rights at the local, national and international level.

As the project develops, the intent is that teachers will have access to:

- a rich selection of K-12 lesson plans, links and background information to teach human rights within a contemporary context;
- a Canadian adaptation of "Speak Truth to Power", a highly acclaimed international resource developed by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights;
- a variety of learning resources, tools and prescribed curriculum on Indigenous peoples to raise awareness among non-Indigenous students;
- a digital platform to celebrate student social action at the community level in the pursuit of human rights.
- an opportunity for students to self-identify as local defenders for human rights.

To date CTF has undertaken a full curriculum review of human rights education in every province and territory, ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 12. According to our review, many provinces and territories support curricular outcomes on the education of human rights from Grade 4 to Grade 12, mostly through Social Studies and Health Education. In secondary school human rights education is taught in History, Geography, World Issues and Civics Education. Curricular outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 3 generally do not address human rights education.

## ||| CTF TEACHER SURVEY – MAJOR FINDINGS

As part of the *Canadian Defenders for Human Rights* initiative, CTF conducted an online survey of teachers in February 2013 to obtain their perspectives on human rights education in Canadian schools. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights assisted with the development of the survey questions.

For the purposes of this survey, human rights education was defined, based on Article 26 of the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as being education directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all people, racial or religious groups, and the maintenance of peace.

Specifically, the survey sought out teachers' perspectives in the following areas:

- The delivery of human rights education in the school – whether through curricular and/or extra-curricular activities
- Specific curriculum areas with a human rights education component
- School-based human rights education projects as an extension of the curriculum
- The value placed on human rights education by various stakeholders
- Availability of resources to support the teaching of human rights education (including examples of key resources)
- Professional development related to human rights education
- Greatest success in relation to teaching a human rights issue
- Greatest challenge facing human rights education in Canada

The survey was conducted online with almost 2,600 teachers in 8 of the 10 provinces and in all 3 territories from February 11 to March 1, 2013. Due to the variety of delivery methods, the number of invitations cannot be tracked and hence a response rate cannot be calculated. Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online surveys.

The next section presents the major survey findings and concludes with some of the key messages about human rights education that we heard from teachers across the country.

## DELIVERY OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL

Teachers were asked to indicate how human rights education occurs in their school and were provided with these specific options:

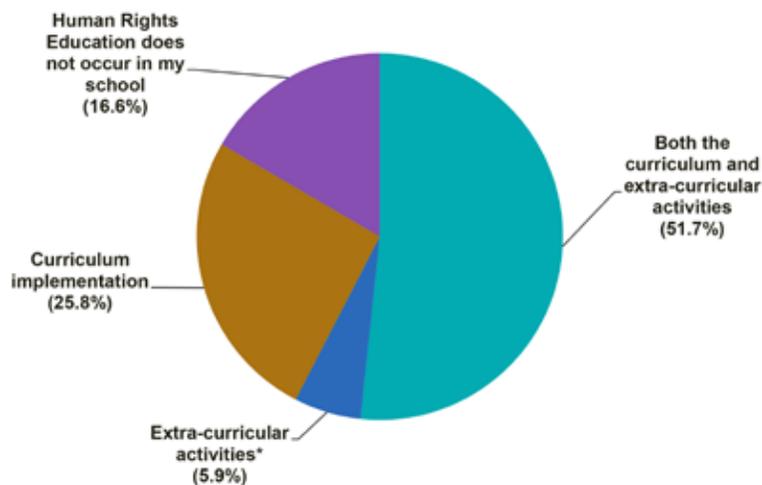
- Curriculum implementation
- Extra-curricular activities (any activities performed by students that fall outside the regular curriculum or program of courses)
- Both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities
- Human rights education does not occur in my school

Over half of teachers surveyed (52%) reported that human rights education occurs in their school through both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, while one-quarter (26%) indicated that it occurred solely through curriculum implementation.

6% of respondents reported that this form of education occurs solely through extra-curricular activities. In addition, 1 in 6 teachers indicated that human rights education does not occur in their school, ranging from 28% of teachers in a French as a first language school to 13% of teachers in an English school (including immersion). Elementary school teachers were twice as likely as secondary school teachers (20% vs. 10%) to report that human rights education does not occur in their school.

### Chart 1

Human rights education occurs in your school through:



\* Any activities performed by students that fall outside the regular curriculum or program of courses.

## **CURRICULUM AREAS WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION COMPONENT**

Teachers were then asked to identify specific curriculum areas in their school that included a human rights education component.

Over three-quarters of teachers (77%) reported a human rights education component in Social Science and Humanities, including Religious Education.

55% of teachers reported a human rights education component in English Language Arts, while at least 3 in 10 respondents indicated Health and Physical Education (36%) and Aboriginal Studies (30%). 28% reported a human rights education component in the Arts while just under a quarter of teachers cited Guidance and Career Education as including such a component.

## SCHOOL-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROJECTS

We asked teachers if they and their students had ever engaged in a school-based human rights education project as an extension of the curriculum. Only 36% of teachers reported they had been involved in such a project.

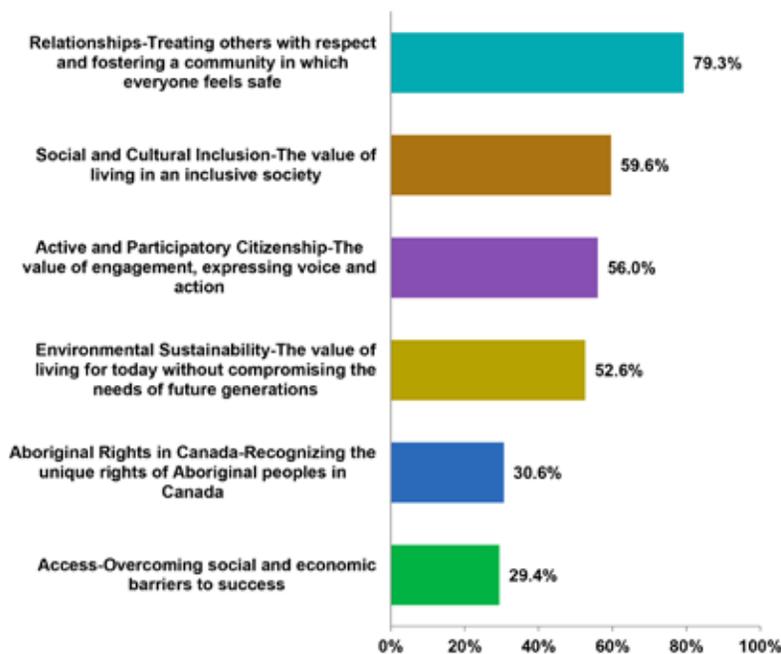
Among those who did participate, the project themes most commonly reported by respondents were as follows:

- Relationships – treating others with respect and fostering a community in which everyone feels safe (79% of respondents)
- Social and Cultural Inclusion – the value of living in an inclusive society (60% of respondents)
- Active and Participatory Citizenship – the value of engagement, expressing voice and action (56%)
- Environmental Sustainability – the value of living for today without compromising the needs of future generations (53%)

Nearly a third (31%) of respondents reported Aboriginal Rights in Canada (recognizing the unique rights of Aboriginal people in Canada) as a project theme. Also, 29% reported the theme of access – overcoming social and economic barriers to success.

### Chart 2

Select the theme(s) that best correspond(s) to the school-based human rights education project that you and your students were engaged in:



Fewer than half (45%) of those who participated in a school-based human rights education project indicated that their project involved a community partner.

Teachers were also asked if they would be interested in participating with students in a future community-school partnered human rights education activity if an opportunity was available. Half of the respondents indicated they were interested; however, 39% were undecided.

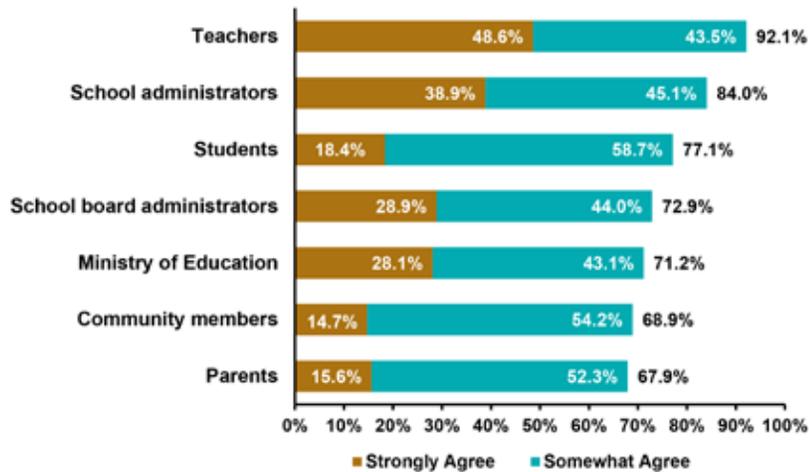
### VALUE PLACED ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that human rights education was valued by a range of groups including teachers, students, parents, school administrators, school board administrators, ministries of education, and community members.

Over 90% of teachers agreed that teachers value human rights education, including nearly half (49%) who “strongly agree”. 84% of teachers believe that school administrators value human rights education, including 39% who “strongly agree”. 77% of teachers agreed that students value human rights education, including only 18% who “strongly agree”. Over 7 in 10 teachers agreed that school board administrators and ministries of education value human rights education.

**Chart 3**

To what extent do you agree that human rights education is valued by:

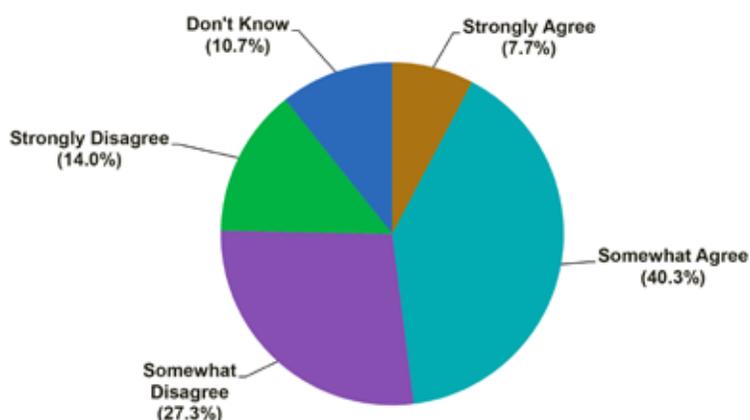


## AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Teachers were asked about the extent to which they agreed that there are sufficient resources in their school to support the teaching of human rights education. Interestingly, despite the fact that the majority of teachers reported that human rights education occurred in their school, fewer than half (48%) agreed that there are sufficient resources in their school to support it.

### Chart 4

To what extent do you agree that there are sufficient resources in your school to support the teaching of human rights education?



Specifically,

- 62% of teachers who reported that human rights education occurs in their school through both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities agreed that there are sufficient resources in their school to support the teaching of human rights education. This compares to a share of 46% among those teachers who reported that human rights education occurs through curriculum implementation only, and 34% where it occurs solely through extra-curricular activities.
- 7 in 10 respondents who reported engaging with their students in a human rights education project as an extension of the curriculum agreed (“strongly” or “somewhat”) that resources are sufficient, compared to just under half of respondents (48%) who did not engage in such a project with their students.
- Two-thirds of teachers (65%) who participated in some form of professional development activity pertaining to human rights education agreed that resources were sufficient, compared to 42% of those who did not.
- Among those who participated in related professional development activities, two-thirds of those who were satisfied (“very” or “somewhat”) with their professional development agreed (“strongly” or “somewhat”) that resources were sufficient compared to just over one-third (35%) who were dissatisfied.
- 62% of school administrators agreed that resources were sufficient, compared to just under half (48%) of classroom teachers.
- 55% of secondary school teachers agreed that resources were sufficient, compared to 44% of elementary school teachers.

- A majority of teachers (53%) in English schools (including immersion) agreed that resources were sufficient, compared to 1 in 3 teachers in French as a first language schools.
- 53% of male teachers agreed that resources were sufficient, while 46% of female teachers expressed the same view.
- Over 6 in 10 teachers (63%) in large schools with 1,000 or more students agreed that resources were sufficient, compared to 44% of those teaching in schools with less than 250 students.

Teachers were also asked to list the one additional resource they believe is most important in supporting their ability to teach human rights education.

Access to speakers was cited most frequently by teachers as being the most important additional resource. Respondents felt that human rights education was best taught through the voice of experience – from those who have lived through and survived human rights abuses and those who are activists in support of victims.

Other frequently cited primary resource needs (listed from most popular to least popular responses) include the following:

- Additional time
- Online resources
- Curriculum resources
- Community partners and community activities in support of human rights education
- Supporting videos
- Age or grade appropriate materials
- Teacher training
- Funding
- Support for the Arts (i.e. music, drama) and for History as it relates to teaching about human rights
- The need for engaging resources and activities including the need for books and storytelling for students in the younger grades

Some teachers made specific reference to the need for additional information about the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as the *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Some respondents indicated that support from the school administration was a critical component when initiating a human rights project in their school.

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

On the issue of professional development, teachers were asked if they had participated in any professional development activities such as knowledge acquisition opportunities or skills development training pertaining to human rights education.

The majority of teachers surveyed (75%) indicated they had not participated in professional development related to human rights education. Among the 25% of teachers who had participated in PD activities, over 9 in 10 of these teachers indicated that they were satisfied the PD they received met their needs.

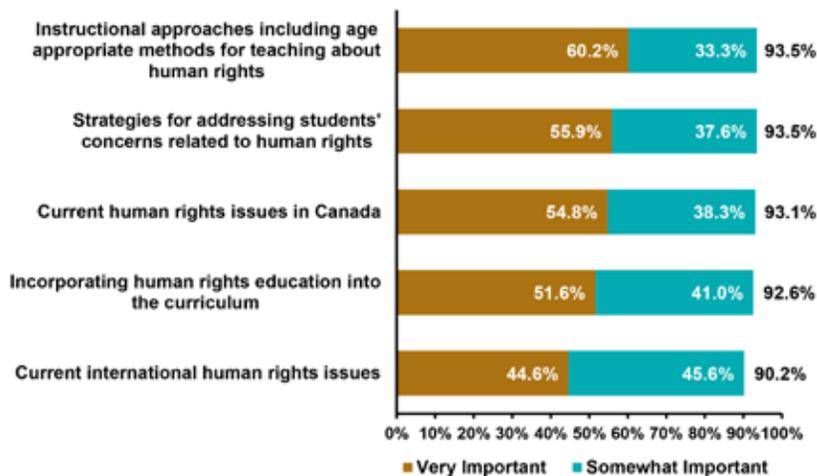
Teachers were also asked about the importance of acquiring additional knowledge or skills training in the following areas related to human rights education:

- Current human rights issues in Canada
- Current international human rights issues
- Incorporating human rights education into the curriculum
- Instructional approaches including age appropriate methods for teaching about human rights
- Strategies for addressing students’ concerns related to human rights

Over 90% of teachers reported that each of these five areas was important to them (“very” or “somewhat”) in terms of acquiring additional knowledge or skills training. Most notably, 6 in 10 teachers reported that additional knowledge and skills training with respect to instructional approaches, including age appropriate methods for teaching about human rights, would be “very important”.

**Chart 5**

Importance of acquiring additional knowledge or skills training in each of the following areas:



## GREATEST SUCCESS IN RELATION TO TEACHING A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Teachers were asked to respond to an open-ended survey question regarding what they considered to be their greatest success in relation to teaching a human rights issue. The following sample comments from teacher respondents illustrate some common themes and issues emerging from an analysis of this qualitative data.

### Aboriginal issues

Respondents commented on a range of issues related to Aboriginal rights including raising awareness of Aboriginal issues (with some references to the “Idle No More” movement) and teaching about treaty rights and land claims.

*I teach primary students, so teaching the root causes affecting human rights is important to me. Creating an awareness of Canadian Aboriginal issues is where I have concentrated my efforts.*

*Intérêt envers la campagne “Idle No More”.*

Some respondents made specific reference to teaching about the history and impact of the residential school system in Canada.

*I teach about Residential Schools in my Canadian history classes. It helps kids to have a different perspective on current aboriginal issues.*

### Bullying

Respondents recounted instances of progress being made in addressing bullying in terms of raising awareness and reducing incidents of bullying. They emphasized that everyone has the right to a safe and caring learning environment.

*Our inclusive school has a safe and caring schools program designed to eliminate bullying and promote everyone’s right to a safe environment.*

*Dans une situation d’intimidation, j’ai élaboré sur le respect et surtout la liberté individuelle... la tolérance. Certains élèves ont réagi positivement comme s’ils venaient de découvrir quelque chose.*

### Inclusive education

Respondents talked about the need to build inclusive schools and classrooms as an important aspect of human rights education.

*Student awareness about FNMI [First Nations / Métis / Inuit] cultural inclusiveness through a creative writing activity in which the class wrote a novel using story telling techniques of First Nation People.*

*Inclure toute forme de famille (même avec deux parents de même sexe) dans mon enseignement. Montrer que l’homosexualité fait partie de la vie et que c’est commun!*

### Raising student awareness about human rights

Many respondents talked about their success in raising student awareness about human rights through for example the utilization of approaches that provide opportunities for more classroom discussion and debate. One teacher simply remarked, “Everyday classrooms as living environments of respect.”

*Having students get actively involved in a conversation and [being] visibly moved by the discussion and material that we are treating. I felt I had opened some eyes.*

*Éveiller la conscience des élèves à l'égard des crises humanitaires de partout dans le monde.*

*I developed a social justice committee at our school, and their role is to increase awareness in the student body regarding human rights issues.*

Heightened awareness about human rights can sometimes translate into changed attitudes and values as well as student engagement, as these respondents observed.

*Greatest success = the kids attain their own views and feelings on world issues and want to make a difference themselves.*

*Que des élèves débutent le semestre avec des préjugés divers qu'ils n'ont plus à la fin du semestre. Aussi de réussir à faire accepter l'homosexualité par plus de jeunes.*

*We began a “Me to We” club at our school this year, and we had well over 100 students at our first meeting, and most continued to come. They care.*

### Fostering democratic rights and principles

Respondents made various references to democratic rights and principles such as voting, citizenship rights, individual vs. collective rights, and freedom of speech.

*School wide participation in “Student Vote” for several elections; public candidates’ forum and voting by the students for actual candidates.*

*Toucher dans le programme d'études les droits et les responsabilités des citoyens canadien. C'est le programme de la 3<sup>e</sup> année.*

Some respondents cited human rights instruments such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* as topics they were studying in their classrooms.

*The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the effects it has had on Aboriginal Land Claims.*

*Charte canadienne des droits de la personne étudiée avec le vocabulaire des enfants dans le fascicule « question de droits ».*

### Specific social justice issues

Respondents remarked on teaching about a wide range of human rights and social justice issues related to gender inequality, violence against women, poverty, children's rights (including the right to education), homophobia and the rights of LGBTQ persons, racism, disability rights, and environmental sustainability among others. Not surprisingly many schools are also involved in volunteer and fundraising activities for diverse social causes, both domestic and international.

*Poverty awareness student-led project that included fundraising for community groups that support homeless youth.*

*Droit à l'éducation pour les filles dans d'autres pays.*

*Getting kids to stop using GAY in a derogatory manner.*

*Souligner la journée contre l'homophobie et la transphobie et parler de transsexualité en salle de classe (que plusieurs élèves ne connaissaient pas).*

## GREATEST CHALLENGE FACING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN CANADA

The final open-ended survey question asked teachers to describe what they considered to be the greatest challenge facing human rights education in Canada. Again the following sample comments from teacher respondents illustrate some common themes and issues emerging from an analysis of the qualitative data.

### Aboriginal issues

While teachers reported some successes (as noted in the previous question) with respect to teaching about Aboriginal issues, they are also acutely aware of the many challenges – inside and outside the school – including discrimination, poverty, the gap in education quality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and underfunding of Aboriginal education.

*I think one of the greatest challenges facing human rights in Canada is how the government caps education spending in reserve schools.*

*Lack of understanding about First Nations issues.*

*Reconnaître les droits des populations indigènes dans la grande famille canadienne.*

*Lack of age-appropriate resources when researching Canada's treaty violations with North American Aboriginal peoples.*

### Time stress and workload

As we have found in previous CTF teacher surveys on other topics, time stress and workload emerged as a significant challenge for teachers.

*I already have so much to teach and so little time. I don't know how I would implement this.*

*Nos programmes d'études sont tellement immenses, c'est difficile de tout faire. J'aimerais plus de temps pour pouvoir discuter des droits de la personne.*

*Tying it into the curriculum in meaningful ways. Time then becomes the major factor. Having the time to plan units of study that are meaningful given the time we have.*

*Not enough time in an already full teaching day – but it needs to be done!*

### Lack of resources for human rights education

The lack of information and resources – relevant, engaging, high quality, accurate and unbiased, age/grade-appropriate, easily accessible and available in different media formats – was a common response. As one respondent remarked, given the nature of human rights education we need to make it a “living” subject.

*Not enough resources to use to teach the students, especially at primary level, which is where we need to start before bias sets in.*

*Le plus grand défi sont les ressources, elles sont rares. Il faut tout inventer et ceci décourage les profs.  
De plus, les ressources papier-crayon, c'est dépassé.*

*Having students interact with people who have lived human rights violations so that the subject becomes  
LIVING vs. just print or electronic/media based [resources].*

### Curriculum-related issues

As could be expected there were numerous curriculum-related issues and concerns. Many teachers believe that human rights education is subjected to various pressures – for example, too many expectations in the existing curriculum (“the bursting curriculum”) and curriculum integration issues. One respondent noted that human rights education “is such a broad and complex issue – where does a teacher begin? It needs to be addressed at all grade levels.” Another stated that: “Que tous les intervenants s’en responsabilisent et qu’on ne laisse pas passer les gestes qui lèsent ces droits!! Ça devrait faire partie intégrante de l’approche pédagogique de chacun.”

*Curriculum is a mile long and an inch deep, too much to cover and not enough opportunity for expansion.*

*Les curriculums sont tellement chargés que nous n’avons pas le temps d’animer de simples conversations  
révélatrices et courageuses.*

*Seamlessly integrating human rights education into the curriculum while meeting the demands of ‘other’  
curricular agendas.*

Another concern was a tight focus on the areas of numeracy and literacy combined with provincial testing programs.

*Bias of parents/administration away from holistic humanities in favour of technocratic math/science skills;  
[the] difficulty of shifting from traditional curriculum limitations to create more flexible structures to  
facilitate cross-curricular approaches.*

### Teaching controversial issues in schools

Some respondents commented on the challenges they face teaching controversial issues and topics related to human rights education in public schools in the context of a pluralistic society.

*The public perception that schools are teaching values, and that schools are becoming too politicized with  
regards to such issues.*

*Les particularités religieuses et culturelles de certaines communautés qui font en sorte que nous devons  
« marcher sur des œufs » en abordant le sujet des droits de la personne.*

### Professional development

Some respondents cited a lack of professional development and training (subject knowledge, pedagogy, etc.) in the area of human rights education.

*Educating the educators must be the first area to address – “we don’t know what we don’t know” and until that is addressed, very little will be accomplished.*

*Je ne suis pas assez connaissant par rapport aux droits afin d’aborder de nouveaux sujets ou des projets.*

*More PD in this area would be fantastic, and opportunities to learn about how to approach this subject with young students who can begin making a difference beginning in Kindergarten.*

### Parental / community support

Respondents expressed the need for parents and other community members to place more value on human rights education, and to take more responsibility for raising children’s awareness about human rights issues.

*The greatest challenge would be convincing parents that human rights issues are important for their children to understand. I think many teachers may feel burdened by yet another responsibility.*

*Si le travail fait à l’école n’est pas soutenu à la maison, nous ne pouvons rien changer.*

*Fear of upsetting parents/community members who have very staunch beliefs about the way things should be.*

### Reducing apathy by fostering empathy

Respondents commented on the sense of apathy among students and others for human rights issues, and the need to counter this by fostering empathy and understanding.

*Developing empathy and understanding in students.*

*L’indifférence des gens qui ne sont pas sujets aux inégalités en ce qui concerne les droits.*

*Apathy (“it’s not happening to me, why should I care?”).*

*Que nos élèves développent de l’empathie et se sentent responsables pour changer le monde : qu’ils n’acceptent pas, ne tolèrent pas les injustices.*

## ||| THE TEACHER VOICE ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION – KEY MESSAGES

The majority of teachers we surveyed told us that human rights education is indeed occurring in their classrooms and schools, mainly through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. In terms of the curriculum, a majority of teachers reported a human rights education component in Social Sciences and Humanities (including religious education) as well as in English Language Arts. Smaller proportions of teachers reported a human rights education component in the areas of Health and Physical Education, Aboriginal Studies, and the Arts.

Only a minority of teachers had engaged their students in a school-based human rights education project as an extension of the curriculum. Of those who did participate in such a project, fewer than half indicated that it involved a community partner. However there does appear to be considerable interest among teachers in participating in a future community-school partnered human rights education activity if such an opportunity were to become available.

Teachers place a high value on human rights education and believe that school administrators do as well. Teachers also believe that students value human rights education but to a lesser extent.

While the majority of teachers reported that human rights education takes place in their school and that they highly value it, fewer than half of the teachers we surveyed believe there are sufficient resources in their school to support it, with variations among different groups. For example, school administrators were more likely to agree that resources were sufficient compared to classroom teachers. Teachers who engaged with their students in a human rights education project as an extension of the curriculum, as well as those teachers who participated in some form of professional development activity pertaining to human rights education, were also more likely to agree that resources were sufficient.

Most teachers reported that they had not participated in professional development related to human rights education. The majority of teachers indicated an interest in additional professional development, particularly with respect to instructional approaches including age appropriate methods for teaching about human rights.

Teachers also talked about their greatest success in relation to teaching a human rights issue. A number of themes emerged from the responses:

- Issues related to success in teaching about Aboriginal rights including raising awareness of Aboriginal issues (with some references to the “Idle No More” movement) and teaching about treaty rights, land claims, and the history and impact of the residential school system in Canada.
- Success both in raising awareness about bullying and reducing incidents of bullying, recognizing that everyone has the right to a safe and caring learning environment.
- Building inclusive schools and classrooms as an important aspect of human rights education.
- Success in raising student awareness about, and respect for human rights by among other approaches providing opportunities for classroom discussion and debate.

- Teaching about democratic rights and principles such as voting, citizenship rights, individual vs. collective rights, and freedom of speech – heightened awareness about human rights can sometimes translate into changed attitudes and values as well as student engagement.
- Teaching about a diverse range of human rights and social justice issues related to gender inequality, violence against women, poverty, children’s rights (including the right to education), homophobia and the rights of LGBTQ persons, racism, disability rights, and environmental sustainability among others.
- Volunteer and fundraising activities for diverse social causes, both domestic and international.

Teachers also described what they considered to be the greatest challenge facing human rights education in Canada. Again a number of themes emerged from the responses:

- Teachers observed that there is a general lack of knowledge about First Nations, Inuit and Métis issues. They are aware of the many challenges regarding Aboriginal rights in Canada – inside and outside the school – including discrimination, poverty, the gap in education quality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and underfunding of Aboriginal education.
- Time stress and workload emerged as a significant challenge for teachers.
- There is a lack of information and resources on human rights education – relevant, engaging, high quality, accurate and unbiased, age/grade-appropriate, easily accessible and available in different media formats.
- Human rights education is subjected to various pressures – for example, too many expectations in the existing curriculum and curriculum integration issues. Another concern was a tight focus on the areas of numeracy and literacy combined with provincial testing programs.
- Teaching controversial issues and topics related to human rights education in public schools can be challenging in the context of a pluralistic society.
- There is a lack of professional development (subject knowledge, pedagogy, etc.) in the area of human rights education.

As teachers prepare students for the challenges of an increasingly complex and diverse globalized world, we believe that education for and about human rights needs to be part of the important conversation about how we define the concept of 21st century learning. The importance of human rights education in creating more equitable, empathetic and sustainable communities and societies, and the role of education systems in this regard is highlighted in this quote by Louise Arbour and Koïchiro Matsuura in their foreword to the *Plan of Action – World Programme for Human Rights Education*:

...the education system plays a vital role in fostering respect, participation, equality and non-discrimination in our societies. For the education system to play such a role, a comprehensive approach to implementing human rights education, addressing not only educational policies, processes and tools but also the environment within which education takes place, is needed.

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