The EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTION of STUDENTS at RISK

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Informed by institutional ethnography, and taking the problematic from disjunctures in teacher/participants’ experience between actual practice and official policy, this study is an intertextual analysis of print/electronic documents pertaining to students ‘at risk.’ It unpacks the Student Success Strategy in Ontario secondary schools as organized around discourses on risk and safety. Discriminatory classing and racializing processes construct students ‘at risk’ in ways that reproduce socio-economic inequities through premature streaming into pathways geared to post-secondary destinations: university, college, apprenticeship and work. This study questions the accounting logic that reduces education to skills training in workplace literacy/numeracy, and contradicts the official ‘success’ story that promotes Ontario as a model of large-scale educational change. The follow-up intertextual analyses reveal ideological circles that promote ‘evidence-based research’ and ‘evidence-informed practice,’ while actually gearing education to improving ‘results’ on large-scale standardized tests and manufacturing consent for government policies. Questions arise about the lack of transparency and selective use of educational research. A web of behind-the-scenes activities are made visible at public
policy think-tanks (e.g. Canadian Council on Learning; Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network), and two little-researched bodies in educational governance — the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) and OECD. Although invisible to teachers, the infrastructure for the Student Success Strategy is the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS); this web-enabled data-management technology has built-in capacity to profile students ‘at risk’ and to instigate accountability and surveillance over teachers’ work, with implications for re-regulating teaching practice towards test scores and aggregate statistics. With the intention of transforming education towards genuine equity, and linking the re-organization of social relations in large-scale reform locally, nationally and globally, this study contributes to critical scholarship on the effects of reform policies on people’s lives and extends knowledge of how translocal text-mediated ruling relations operate in education.
Acknowledgments

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# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1 Introduction: Risk and Ruling Relations** .......................................................... 1  
1.1 The Problem with Students ‘at risk’ ............................................................................ 4  
1.2 Chapter Overview ....................................................................................................... 8  

**Chapter 2 Institutional Ethnography** .............................................................................. 11  
2.1 Textual analysis .......................................................................................................... 13  
2.2 Standpoint and Problematic ....................................................................................... 18  
2.3 Recruitment of Participants ......................................................................................... 20  
2.4 Participant Interviews ................................................................................................. 20  

**Chapter 3 Literature Review: Discursive Practices Governing Risk** ............................ 24  
3.1 Meta-discourses on Risk ............................................................................................. 26  
3.1.1 Ulrich Beck’s Risk Society Thesis .......................................................................... 26  
3.1.2 Mary Douglas on Risk and Blame .......................................................................... 28  
3.1.3 Foucault’s Governmentality .................................................................................... 29  
3.1.4 Paul Slovic’s Social Amplification of Risk ............................................................. 30  
3.2 Competing Conceptions of Students ‘at risk’ ............................................................ 32  
3.2.1 The Dominant Framework of Students ‘at risk’ ..................................................... 32  
3.2.2 The Anti-Deficit Thinking Camp ........................................................................... 37  
3.3 Risk, Schooling and Work .......................................................................................... 42  
3.4 Points of Departure ..................................................................................................... 50  

**Chapter 4 The Socio-Political Context: Legislation, Reports and Policies** .................... 52  
4.1 The Canadian Context: Ontario .................................................................................. 55  
4.2 Safe Schools Act and Zero Tolerance ......................................................................... 58  
4.3 The Falconer Reports ................................................................................................. 62  
4.4 The Student Success Strategy ...................................................................................... 68  
4.4.1 Pathways ................................................................................................................ 70  
4.4.2 Learning to 18 ......................................................................................................... 71  
4.4.3 New Initiatives ......................................................................................................... 73  
4.4.4 Cooperative Education ........................................................................................... 76  
4.4.5 Credit Recovery and Credit Rescue ....................................................................... 77  

**Chapter 5 Credit Recovery: “For gods’ sakes give them credits”** ................................. 80  
5.1 The Source of Credit Recovery/Credit Rescue ............................................................. 82  
5.2 Credit Recovery in Practice ......................................................................................... 84  
5.3 Teaching Up, Not Dumbing Down .............................................................................. 87  
5.4 The 75:25 Split ............................................................................................................ 89  
5.5 Chloe’s Dilemma ......................................................................................................... 90  
5.6 Learning to 18: Co-operative Education .................................................................... 91  
5.7 The Union/Management Divide: Credit Integrity ...................................................... 94
Chapter 6 The Credit System: Pathways to ‘Success’ ......................................................... 101
6.1 The Credit System .................................................................................................. 101
6.2 The Simulacra of Crossover or Transfer Courses .................................................. 105
6.3 Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting .................................................................. 109
6.4 Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) ......................................................... 112
6.5 The TDSB Poster: Pathways to Success ............................................................... 122

Chapter 7 The Ontario Student Record (OSR) ................................................................. 129
7.1 Ontario Student Transcript (OST) .............................................................................. 131
7.2 EQAO Individual Student Reports .......................................................................... 137
7.3 Individual Education Plan (IEP): The Cheat Sheet .................................................. 139
7.4 Safety Plans and Behaviour Logs .......................................................................... 144
7.5 Off the Record: Teaching at a Youth Detention Centre ............................................ 151
7.5.1 Earning Trust ........................................................................................................ 152
7.5.2 Teaching Mathematics ......................................................................................... 153
7.5.3 Rewarding Achievement ..................................................................................... 154
7.5.4 The Unofficial Curriculum ................................................................................... 155

Chapter 8 Ontario’s Success Story?: Evidence-based Research ...................................... 162
8.1 The Student Success Commission ............................................................................ 163
8.2 Ontario’s Success Story: The Social Organization of Educational Research .......... 169
8.3 Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLNet) .............................. 175
8.4 Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) .................................................................... 178
8.5 Tri-level Reform: The Guiding Coalition ............................................................... 186

Chapter 9 National and Transnational Governance ............................................................ 192
9.1 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC): Knowledge Matters ................................................................................................................................. 193
9.2 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC): An Education Brand .......... 194
9.3 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ................. 199
9.3.1 Governing Texts ................................................................................................... 200
9.3.2 Large-Scale Tests: Testing, Testing, Testing ......................................................... 202
9.4 The Education Reform ‘Experts’ .............................................................................. 207

Chapter 10 E-governance and Data-driven Accountability: OnSIS in Ontario Schools ............................................................................................................................. 220
10.1 School Board Informants ...................................................................................... 224
10.2 Intertextual Analysis of OnSIS .............................................................................. 229
10.3 Ontario Statistical Neighbours (OSN) .................................................................. 232
10.4 The School Information Finder ............................................................................... 234
10.5 Notice of Indirect Collection of Personal Information ............................................ 237
10.6 SRB Education Solutions Inc./StarDyne Technologies Inc. ................................. 239
10.7 Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act .................................... 242
10.8 Transnational e-governance .................................................................................. 245
10.9 OnSIS and Accountability ...................................................................................... 248
List of Tables

Table 7.1: Diploma Requirements and Ontario Student Transcript ..............................136
Table 7.2: Operational Procedure PR699 Forms ...........................................................147
Table 8.1: Student Success Commissioners ..................................................................166
Table 8.2: Graduation Rates .........................................................................................172
Table 9.1: MSIP and NLS/NNS Evaluations ...............................................................211
List of Figures

Figure 6.1: Reading Course Codes ................................................................. 103
Figure 6.2: The TDSB Poster—Pathways to Success ........................................ 124
Figure 6.3: Pathways in Practice—Streaming for Work ..................................... 127
Figure 7.1: The Cycle of Problems-Policies-Procedures-Practices .................. 150
Figure 8.1: Memoranda and the Student Success Commission .......................... 166
Figure 8.2: Sources of Ontario’s Success Story ............................................... 187
Figure 8.3: Student Success Strategy: Tri-level Reform Guiding Coalition ......... 191
Figure 9.1: Translocal Ruling Relations ......................................................... 203
Figure 9.2: International, National and Provincial Large-Scale Tests ............... 206
Figure 10.1: Data Cleansing Loop ................................................................. 226
Figure 10.2: OnSIS Data Sources ................................................................. 231
Figure 11.1: Mapping the Student Success Strategy ....................................... 261
Figure 11.2: The Factory Model of Education ............................................... 262
Figure 11.3: Panopticon View in Multilayered Governance Work .................... 263
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Acronyms ................................................................. 298
Appendix B: Ontario Student Transcript ........................................... 301
Appendix C: EQAO Individual Student Report .................................... 302
Appendix D: Individual Education Plan ............................................. 304
Appendix E: Ontario Statistical Neighbours ........................................ 314
Appendix F: SRB’s OnSIS and Related Products ................................. 315
Appendix G: A Secondary School Profile ........................................... 316
Chapter 1
Introduction

This study is an extension of my research into education reform and the restructuring of teachers’ work in Ontario that began in the late 1990s (Kerr, 2006). In my earlier research that was based on focus groups conducted in 2002, teacher/participants expressed concern about students who did not fit the ‘standard’ imposed by educational restructuring. As a practicing teacher myself, I draw on my own experiences and institutional memory as a teacher for 30 years, first in England and then in Canada, where I have taught in publicly funded secondary schools in privileged and non-privileged settings. The problematic of this study arose from my decision to transfer from a position in a collegiate located in an upper/middle-class area of Toronto, to a teaching position in a detention centre; the stark contrast between these two settings highlights inequities within Ontario’s public education system. The detention centre was one of the sites within the Section 23 group of schools, and it provides a window into another world -- the world of youth relegated to the outer margins of society. Section 23 refers to special education and treatment programs for students in facilities such as hospitals, mental health centres, psychiatric institutions, detention and corrections, group homes and other social service agencies. The term Section 23 is derived from the section number of the Student-Focused Funding Legislative Grants regulation that authorizes funding for these programs.¹ Students receive their education not in regular schools but in segregated settings located in the facilities to which they have been assigned.

Working with marginalized youth brings to light the disservice of education policy toward those who fall into the catch-all category of students ‘at risk.’² The term student ‘at risk’ has entered mainstream discourse. But have policy-makers ignored the “unintended consequences” and downplayed the fallout from educational reform policies? Rather than critically reappraising the basic premises of education reform, does

¹ The term Section 23 has changed depending on which funding line number it falls onto; it was formerly Section 20, and before that, Section 19.
² Throughout this study, I use single quotes for problematized terms and double quotes for statements.
the discourse on students ‘at risk’ resort to blaming students who fail to measure up to the ‘new’ standards? Many of the students in Section 23 schools are hooked into the child welfare and criminal justice systems; they are predominantly racialized, and from poor or ‘disadvantaged’ SES backgrounds. This experience raises questions about how education restructuring undermines equity, despite official rhetoric to the contrary. Following the lead of the United Kingdom and the United States where neoliberal policies began being implemented earlier, does education reform in Ontario valorize ‘excellence’ at the expense of hard-won equity gains made since the 1960s? Drawing on my experience, I critically examine new-fangled constructions of students ‘at risk’ by academic ‘experts’ that mis/inform education policy, and investigate how inequity is exacerbated by the retrenchment of educational support services, and reform policies, such as new graduation requirements, ‘safe’ schools, zero tolerance, the Student Success Strategy, Pathways, and Learning to 18.

In contrast to the predominant “banking model” of education (Freire, 1972), in which students are conceived as empty accounts into which the educator deposits knowledge and reproduces class relations, my theoretical orientation encompasses critical/feminist theory and pedagogy that take into account the social relations of gender, race, class, and other axes of difference (Freire, 1972, 1994; Apple, 1979; Giroux, 1983; Briskin, 1990; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 2003). According to McLaren (2003), “Critical pedagogy is founded on the conviction that schooling for self and social empowerment is ethically prior to a mastery of technical skills, which are primarily tied to the logic of the marketplace (although it should be stressed that skill development certainly plays an important role)” (p. 188). To unpack the dominant Eurocentric focus in education and the sociology of knowledge production, I specifically draw on an anti-colonial discursive framework; according to Dei (1999):

‘Colonial’ is conceptualized, not simply as ‘foreign’ or ‘alien,’ but rather as ‘imposed’ and ‘dominating.’ The anti-colonial framework is a theorization of issues emerging from colonial relations, an interrogation of the configurations of power, embedded in ideas, cultures and histories of knowledge production. The anti-colonial approach recognizes the importance of locally produced knowledge emanating from cultural history and social interactions/daily experiences. (p. 399)
The decolonizing project in education challenges systems of knowledge production, the modernization project, and institutionalized power and privilege. Dei and Kempf (2006) go on to state that “[a]nti-colonial teachings should focus on and lead to, the creation of relevant knowledge, not simply reproduction of existing knowledge and practice” (p. 310).

At the outset, I declare my location as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, middle-class woman. By virtue of my personal history, I acknowledge that I am a beneficiary of privilege. Born in Zimbabwe to Irish immigrant parents, and later raised amidst the injustices of the apartheid regime in South Africa, I grew up within the context of blatant overt racism. Having graduated from teacher training in London, England, I was initiated into teaching in a ‘tough’ inner London comprehensive school that served primarily working class students, where I witnessed classism, as well as covert forms of racism. Being of Irish heritage -- the ‘white negroes’ of Europe (Ignatiev, 1995) -- with an ‘accent’ that identified me as from ‘the colonies,’ I have a sense of what it feels like to be typecast as an outsider, albeit a white English-speaking one who can pass in the dominant culture. Whereas I chose to immigrate to Canada because I saw it as the most democratic country in the world, and have by now spent most of my life here, I still sometimes have a sense of not really belonging. My profession of teaching is so integral to my life that I make no claim to neutral ‘objectivity,’ a position that is consistent with IE. My own subjective experiences and institutional memory as a student and teacher crosses national boundaries and subject areas (including mathematics, the sciences, communications technology, career studies, special education, whole-school enrichment, and guidance counselling). As a woman in a feminized profession -- and teaching in the male-dominated fields of mathematics and science -- I have experienced sexism at work. Due to migrations and dislocation, my identity is not attached to nationality or tradition, but to communities of people jointly committed to social justice and critical/feminist anti-racist praxis. Having taught in various contexts, I know first hand the joys and rewards -- as well as the trials and tribulations -- of frontline teaching work.

While my study takes the experiences of 12 practicing teachers as the starting point, and takes its direction from their relevancies, it is primarily an intertextual analysis that
unpacks the translocal text-mediated relations governing students ‘at risk.’ The purpose is not to objectify teachers and students, nor to relay individual narratives or ‘give voice’ to teachers; rather it is to make visible how ruling relations actually operate to construct and control students ‘at risk,’ and to regulate teachers’ work, through an empirical analysis of institutional texts of various kinds. Since these texts are replete with acronyms, a list is provided for easy reference in Appendix A: Acronyms.

1.1 The Problem with Students ‘at risk’

Visible minority, ESL and special education students are disproportionately labelled ‘at risk’ (King, 2002, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2003; McNally, 2003). Research on students at risk is readily supported by the business lobby via private charities (such as the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation) and think-tanks that promote school choice (such as the CD Howe Institute, Fraser Institute, and the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education) in Canada. Knowing the funding sources reveals private corporate vested interests behind the educational discourse on students ‘at risk.’ The contradiction between offering special programs and promoting school choice comes to light given that students ‘at risk’ seldom elect to attend Section 23 schools by choice.

Problems with the new curriculum were evident early on. Alan King’s (2002) definition of students ‘at risk’ refers to students unable to graduate due to difficulties in meeting the graduation requirements of the new Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) implemented by the Harris/Eves Progressive-Conservative government, with the first cohort entering grade 9 in the 1999-2000 school year. Phase 2 of Alan King’s Double Cohort Study (2002) found high failure rates in grades 9 and 10 applied courses in the new curriculum (especially in mathematics) and failure rates in excess of 20 percent on the grade 10 Literacy Test. Extrapolating from these early findings, King made the following prediction:

Graduation rates will almost surely decline in the new program in light of students’ [diminished] credit accumulation already observed for the first two years of the program. This pattern could have the effect of reducing the pool of students eligible to apply to college but not likely to university. (p. 20)
Subsequently, Phase 3 of King’s (2003) research confirmed his prediction that the casualties under the new curriculum are non-university bound students. This suggests that the new curriculum is geared to high-achieving university-bound students and not the rest. Given that only approximately 30 percent of students proceed to university education, this leaves the vast majority potentially in the category of ‘at risk.’ Moreover, King’s conclusions expose the discriminatory effects of standardization; that is, the ‘new’ curriculum jeopardizes the chances of graduating for students with learning disabilities, whose first language is not English, or who are not university-bound. These groups of students are all lumped together and labelled as students ‘at risk.’

The notion of students ‘at risk’ has entered the mainstream lexicon of education reform ‘experts’ as an abstract reified category. From a policy perspective, Ben Levin’s (2004a) literature review constructs students ‘at risk’ in individualized terms, as possessing personal psychological traits that mitigate against success; the ‘ecological’ conditions of communities or socio-political circumstances are dismissed as beyond the control of the education system. ³ Like King, Levin defines being at risk as the prediction of failure to graduate: “In broad terms a student ‘at risk’ is one whose past or present characteristics or conditions are associated with a higher probability of failing to complete high school” (p. 2). According to his argument, it is as a result of their personal attributes or circumstances that students ‘at risk’ are not making the benchmarks in outcomes-based education. The ‘experts’ do not question the standardized curriculum and standardized tests as creating at-riskness by virtue of imposing hegemonic biases that fly in the face of equity and democracy:

While ideas about equity continue to be controversial and can lead to very sharp political conflicts, looking over the long term is it [sic] clear that there is decreasing acceptance that some groups of Canadians get less of the good

³ This report entitled Students At Risk: A Review of Research was prepared for the Toronto Learning Partnership (TLP)—a lobby group that, according to its website, includes a wide range of ‘stakeholders’ in education: business, education, government, labour, policy makers and the community. The TLP purports to develop partnerships to strengthen public education in Canada. However, teachers’ unions are opposed to the operations of the TLP on the basis that it provides an avenue for private corporate interests to influence public education. Indeed, Levin’s report was supported by private funds (from the CD Howe Memorial Foundation, Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation, and Power Corporation of Canada). Ben Levin was seconded as Deputy Minister of Education in Ontario, joining Michael Fullan (Special Advisor to the Premier), and Avis Glaze (CEO of the newly established Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat).
things in life than others. We do not accept as we once did that one’s gender, ethnicity, religion, language or place of residence are determinative of life outcomes. (Levin, 2004a, p. 6)

Who are the royal ‘we’ that can afford to overlook issues of ‘gender, ethnicity, religion, language or place of residence’? The neoliberal individualism inherent in this statement foregrounds the ideological divide between policy-makers and critical-feminist pedagogues. According to Linda Briskin (1990), individualism resorts to victim-blaming and promotes “bootstrapism,” whereby it is assumed that hard work leads to success. Levin (2004a) individualizes achievement and reduces equity to ‘equal opportunity’ through presuming a level playing field and ignoring inequitable locations as differentially affected by structural and ideological barriers to advancement. Moreover, the centrality of child development psychology in education establishes narrow boundaries around what is considered ‘normal.’ It feeds into a form of discrimination referred to as “sequential developmentalism” by Short and Carrington (1992), who question “the belief that children pass through a series of qualitatively distinct and hierarchically ordered cognitive stages and can only master a given type of intellectual activity when they have reached the appropriate stage” (p. 253). Similarly, Dorothy Smith (1993) identifies the notion of the standard North-American family (SNAF) as integral to the ideological code of schooling; Alison Griffith (2005) reveals gendered assumptions in child development discourses governing education that overlook the invisible mothering work necessary to support schooling, and stigmatize single-parent families in ways that place them at a disadvantage.

Disregarding the broader context, mainstream research on risk as picked up by Levin and others, psychologizes risk as individual ‘vulnerability,’ and turns attention onto individual ‘resiliency’ as the antidote to risk, instead of focusing on how systemic barriers re-produce socio-economic inequity. The bootstrap message lies behind notions of resilience that purport to mitigate against adverse risk factors. The pathologizing of students is configured according to a dominant norm or an abstract universal standard. The discrimination inherent in standards-based education reform ignores the important distinction identified by Portelli and Vibert (2001) between the notion of “standards as measurement” and “standard as a value.” Arguably, the pursuit of ‘excellence’ through
standardized testing assumes a moralistic imperative at the meta-level of policy making, but has negligible pedagogical value at the micro-level of the classroom. Students who don’t measure up in the testing regime are labeled ‘at risk’ and targeted for special programs. As Valencia (1997) points out, the notion of people at risk relies on “deficit thinking” along three dimensions: heredity (inferior genes), culture (ignorance or poverty) and families (inadequate parenting). He links these dimensions of deficit thinking to the politics of derision in colonial discourses that configure superiority / inferiority along racial lines.

The notion of risk in education first appeared in the US report entitled *A Nation at Risk* (1983) that was commissioned under President Ronald Reagan, with substantial input from the corporate sector. Laying the ground for education reform in the US, this report mobilized a plethora of research studies on students ‘at risk.’ The slippage of risk from the nation to education coincides with the replacement of earlier derogatory terms (such as delinquents, dropouts, deviants, or disadvantaged students) by students ‘at risk.’ The shift in terminology, on the one hand, continues to carry earlier connotations of deviance and danger, but on the other, lends a deceptively beneficent connotation of ‘vulnerability’ in which elitist concessions to frailty invoke paternalistic protection, or Foucauldian pastoral power.

Whereas the bulk of research on students ‘at risk’ and outcomes-based education emanates from the US, it got picked up in UK education reforms and taken further by tying education outcomes to funding and accountability mechanisms, as overseen by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Learning from the UK, the US legislation called *No Child Left Behind* (*NCLB*, passed in 2001 and effective in 2002) as implemented by George W. Bush also ties outcomes and performance to funding and accountability arrangements under the provisions of Title 1 schools. Riding on the Texas ‘miracle’ of the Student Success Initiative and related education reforms while he was governor of that state, Bush’s controversial *NCLB* legislation expands federal government control over education, enforces accountability through standardized testing (for teachers, schools and school districts), and promotes back-to-basics education, charter schools and parental choice. However, Haney (2000) exposes “the myth of the Texas miracle” as a
public relations whitewash that misrepresented improved standardized test results while actually disregarding high drop-out rates and system failure towards marginalized youth, in particular for males of African and Hispanic descent. Critics of NCLB, including teachers’ groups, contest the claims of addressing all students and student subgroups. For example, Henry Giroux contends that this legislation should be renamed “Every Child Left Behind” to reflect the non-progressive policies associated with it. Nevertheless, the US and UK precedents influence education reforms internationally, including Canada.

I argue in this study that risk is a vague but loaded term that has proliferated under neoliberal education reforms globally. Whereas medical and health sciences, criminal justice, and social services are in large part governed by notions of risk and deploy forms of risk assessment, risk is a relatively recent and ill-conceived construct in education reform. My research draws on my own experiences working with students labelled ‘at risk,’ and is informed by the institutional ethnography (IE) of Dorothy E. Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2005, 2006).

1.2 Chapter Overview
Chapter 2 explicates IE and autoethnography as methods of enquiry, and provides the background to how the study was conducted. Chapter 3 examines four meta-discourses on risk and situates opposing conceptions of students ‘at risk’ within these meta-level discursive practices. Chapter 4 places the notion of students ‘at risk’ within the socio-historical context of Canada, and proceeds with an intertextual analysis of texts pertaining to risk in Ontario, including legislation, reports and policies, such as the Safe Schools Act (passed in May, 2000 and effective in September, 2001), the Falconer reports, and the so-called Student Success Strategy. Although the majority of texts governing education are not usually activated by teachers, the ones selected for textual analysis in Chapter 4 were referred to directly or indirectly during teacher/participant interviews for this study.

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4 The so-called Texas miracle was pulled off while George W. Bush was state governor and Rod Paige was superintendent of the Houston board of education. Under Bush’s presidency, Paige was appointed as Secretary of Education (later succeeded by Margaret Spellings, another Bush loyalist and senior official in Texas education reform). Bush’s claims to dramatically reduced dropout rates in Texas formed the basis for his NCLB legislation. Critics contest the Texan education reforms as aimed at producing workers for the high technology economy, and based on fudged numbers that disguise high dropout rates.

5 For the interview with Henry Giroux on NCLB, see Culture, Politics and Pedagogy: A Conversation with Henry Giroux (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgdVCnTTqXA; accessed October 3, 2007).
Chapter 5 identifies disjunctures experienced by teacher/participants regarding the Student Success Strategy in Ontario, as revealed during interviews. The disconnect between policies and practices are taken as markers of the operation of the ruling relations, and access points for follow-up textual analyses in subsequent chapters. Chapter 6 examines how the credit system in Ontario secondary schools works against students ‘at risk’ and reinforces socio-economic inequity by prematurely streaming students in high schools according to workplace destinations. The Ontario Student Record (OSR) is unpacked as the epitome of what Dorothy E. Smith calls “objectified accounts” in Chapter 7. In contrast to the record keeping enterprise, this chapter also draws on my experiences while working with two other teachers in a youth detention centre that reveals what cannot be captured in, and is missing from, the official record. Chapter 8 provides a window into the ruling relations of education reform as portrayed in an article by three senior government officials in education, entitled Results without Rancor or Ranking: Ontario’s Success Story (Levin, Glaze and Fullan, 2008). This chapter exposes how knowledge about education is constructed at the upper levels of educational governance, and raises questions regarding a lack of transparency and possible conflict of interest among a small ideological circle of large-scale education reformers in Canada with national and international connections. Extending the analysis from Chapter 8, Chapter 9 unpacks how education policies are coordinated translocally through the activities of two little-known bodies that are invisible to practicing teachers: the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) at the federal or national level, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at the supranational level of education governance.

Chapter 10 reveals a troubling development in Ontario that is at this time invisible to teachers and the public, although it has been in the works since at least 2004 -- the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS). This web-enabled data management system collects, tabulates and compares statistical data from a plethora of sources, but also contains personal data about individual students and individual teachers.
Throwing into question the twin technologies of risk and safety as central organizing principles of accountability in educational governance, Chapter 11 draws out the conclusions of my analysis, identifies the contributions of my study, and calls for orienting education towards critical pedagogy, rather than skills training for the workplace. To challenge the neoliberal ideology of education reform that privileges certain groups over others and reproduces socio-economic inequities, requires an ontological shift that moves beyond blaming individual students and/or teachers. Instead, systemic change is required to democratize our education system to be more inclusive, just and equitable so that students from diverse backgrounds can have a chance to realize their potential, and to lead constructive lives as full participants in a democratic society. My intention in this study is to contribute towards this project. As each year passes without substantive systemic change, more students’ lives and futures hang in the balance.
Chapter 2
Institutional Ethnography

The primary method of inquiry of this study is institutional ethnography (IE) as developed by Dorothy E. Smith (1987, 2005, 2006), and elaborated by her colleagues who practice IE (Campbell and Manicom, 1995; Campbell and Gregor, 2002; Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek, 2006). IE is conducive to critical feminist research in that it provides a method for unpacking power relations in society, referred to in IE as “ruling relations.” IE links local practices to “translocal” or “extralocal” ruling relations through texts that govern and control the activities of people in ways that accomplish social organization in advanced capitalist societies. The key concept of ruling relations in IE is described by Smith (2005) as follows:

The concept of the ruling relations directs attention to the distinctive translocal forms of social organization and social relations mediated by texts of all kinds (print, film, television, computer, and so on) that have emerged and become dominant in the last two hundred years. They are objectified forms of consciousness and organization, constituted externally to particular people and places, creating and relying on textually based realities. (p. 227)

Thus, the ruling relations are text-mediated, operating through texts, where texts encompass not only print but visual, digital, computer and other technologies as well. Elsewhere, Smith (1990b) describes the relations of ruling as “those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media. They include also the complex of discourses, scientific, technical, and cultural, that intersect, interpenetrate, and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling” (p. 6).

Two orienting touchstones in IE are the standpoint and the problematic. Standpoint does not mean a single unified identity but the location of a knowing subject’s actual activities at a particular site in relation to the institution that is invariably outside the managerial-administrative ideological framework. IE begins from the standpoint of people who are in some way implicated in the institution and whose location within it constitutes an entry into the ruling relations. The problematic emerges from the interface between everyday experiences and text-mediated ruling relations of the institution that give rise to troubling
faultlines or disjunctures. The standpoint and problematic constitute anchors or stable reference points throughout the analysis. Whereas particular standpoints and problematics may differ, they nevertheless “describe[e] different moments and aspects of the same generalizing set of relations” (DeVault and McCoy, in Smith 2006, p. 19).

This generalizing aspect of the ruling relations relies on the replication of texts to disseminate standardizing language and the ideological code or interpretive schema of the institution. Smith (2001) states:

> The replicated identical text as utterance activated by participants joins them in a situation which it names and defines, standardizing among them the terms in which they can know, understand, and evaluate it, regardless of how its naming and its terms provide for the utterance of what they are actually experiencing… . Texts provide the basis of a technology enabling, among other things, an order of facticity suppressing divergent perspectives and establishing shared and enforceable common ground, a virtual reality standardized across multiple settings. (p. 176)

Through texts, people are brought into “institutional capture” with the ruling relations. According to Smith (2005), “Institutional capture ... is that discursive practice, regulated by the institutional procedures of text-reader conversations, through which institutional discourse overrides and reconstructs experiential talk and writing” (Smith 2005, p. 119). Thus experience gets subsumed by official language as the overriding frame governing how teachers come to perceive students and go about their work. Textual analysis involves tracing reiterated terms through texts to discern the ideological circles of the institution as carried in texts. Just as texts are hierarchically organized into higher and lower order texts, ideological circles are also built into hierarchies as a property of large scale organizations, as well as being circular practices of reasoning. Smith (1990) explains ideological circles as follows:

> Characteristically such ideological circles are laid down in and inhabit organizational forms separating those who theorize, formulate, conceptualize, and make policy from the front-line workers who experience the actual ways in which the organization interrelates with its objects. Those in actual contact with those who are the objects of action are not those who frame the policies, categories and concepts that govern their work. (p. 95)
As an empirical materialist method of inquiry, IE starts with people’s subjective experiences and sets about mapping the ruling relations through actual texts of the institution. Text-mediated ruling relations operate through the activation of texts by people whose work practices are coordinated across multiple sites. Thus the social world is accomplished by an ongoing coordination of the everyday activities of people through texts, and textual analysis is central to unpacking how the ruling relations orchestrate the social. This conception of the social world requires what George Smith (in Frampton et al., 2006) calls an “ontological shift” from the dominant “politico-administrative regime” to a critical or emancipatory perspective of radical social change. The “politico-administrative regime” encapsulates both the political and bureaucratic aspects of the ruling apparatus. Here, ‘radical’ is not used in the pejorative dominant sense of extremist ‘interest groups,’ but in the sense of delving into root issues, and questioning commonsense assumptions embedded in social organization. Thus IE extends beyond simply relaying participants’ narratives to explicate ruling relations that govern their lives and of which they are a part. Accordingly, in my study, an intertextual analysis of policies and practices that govern teachers’ work and impact on the lives of students labelled at risk explicates how teachers work is hooked up to translocal ruling relations that may be outside their direct experience or awareness. As such, some texts may not be visible to teachers but nevertheless operate in an intertextual hierarchy that coordinates the activities of people across local sites and organizes the social relations of schooling.

2.1 Textual analysis

IE treats texts, language, and power as integrally interrelated. Text-mediated relations coordinate people’s subjectivities and activities, and thus constitute the basis of social organization. For Smith (2005), “institutions and the ruling relations are mediated by texts ... [as] materially replicable words or images. The technologies that make the replication of words and images independent of particular settings are foundational to the generalized forms in which the ruling relations exist” (p. 86); texts transform local particularities into “standardized, generalized, and, especially translocal forms of coordinating people’s activities” (p. 101). Hence, texts are central to mapping how the ruling relations operate across various local sites, and how they are hooked up to
translocal relations of ruling. Institutional texts and discourses operate through recursivity, where “the intertextuality of institutional texts is organized hierarchically, and changes in conceptual design and the terminology of texts are imposed” (p. 185). Institutional discourse is characterized as a “text-reader conversation” by Smith (2005): “As a reader activates a text, she or he engages with its language and also by responding to it” (p. 104). Thus texts are not inert; when activated by people, they organize ongoing practices in “text-action-text” sequences (Smith, 2006).

Taking language and meaning to be social processes, Smith draws on socio-psychological theories emanating from Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria, and the works of socio-linguists George Herbert Mead, V. I Vološinov, and Mikhail Bakhtin (Smith, 2005, p. 75). These theorists take the social as central to an investigation of language in coordinating people’s consciousness or subjectivities. Instead of starting with concepts and ideas, IE starts with activities to find those concepts and ideas that are constitutive of the social. Vološinov maintains that language creates an “interindividual territory,” where a word is a two-sided act between speaker and hearer; and Mead talks about “the significant symbol” as an organizing relation among subjects. The circle of Bakhtin is particularly influential in IE. For Bakhtin (in Holquist, 1981) language is approached not through the psychology of linguistics with its emphasis on syntax and semantics based on words and phrases, but begins with the “utterance” that constitutes the unit of meaning in social and historical contexts. Bakhtin (1986) makes an important distinction between primary and secondary speech genres: the primary speech genre refers to the informal level of direct experience expressed mostly in speech, but also in written from when the writing is based on experiential accounts in the everyday world; the secondary speech genre refers to the formal level of official language framed by disciplines (for example, the artistic, scientific, or sociopolitical frames). This distinction between primary and secondary speech genres explicates the gaps in understandings between policy makers and practitioners. It is not simply between oral and written language, nor is it class-based as between the restricted and elaborated codes articulated by Basil Bernstein. Rather, Bakhtin uses the term “heteroglossia” to refer to the multi-layered quality of language and meanings that are specific to particular subgroups within the same language or class;
it includes dialects, jargon and terminologies or turns of phrase that may be deployed differentially by the same person in various contexts. “Dialogism” is central to Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of meaning as unstable and constructed in and through social interaction between people. This is contrasted with the uni-directional quality of the “monologism” of the official sphere that is similar to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony.

Also influential in IE is Garfinkel’s (1967) notion of breaching. Breaches in interpretive trust were identified in his so-called breaching experiments to explicate breakdowns in understanding. Interpretive trust entails reciprocity of perspective that prevails when meaning is the same for both speaker and hearer in an exchange. Shared meanings leave unsaid that which is mutually understood within a social group, and also contain fundamental presuppositions. In his breaching experiments, Garfinkel showed that when interpretive trust is broken or breached, reactions range from giving the benefit of the doubt, to taking it as a joke (the mockery mode), to expressing moral outrage. As stated by Heritage (1984):

If a socially organized and intersubjective world stands or falls with the maintenance of this interpretive trust, then it is not surprising to find that it is attended to as a deeply moral matter. We should, indeed be surprised if it were not. (p. 97)

The notion of breaching explicates further how meaning is constructed in interaction and how the divide between the official and unofficial spheres -- or between policy makers and practitioners -- comes about. Moments when teacher/participants are breached constitute clues or markers to the underlying operation of the ruling relations and suggest directions for further exploration through follow-up textual analysis. Aside from differences in the meaning of language between policy makers and practitioners, there may also be differences along the axes of gender, race/ethnicity, class and so on (Henry and Tator, 1994).

My focus in textual analysis is the standpoint and problematic as defined by teachers working with students ‘at risk.’ Textual analysis includes multiple texts: transcripts of interviews; documents and forms internal to the institution; official policies and reports; websites of organizations vested in students at risk; as well as the research literature. My
analyses of interview transcripts constitutes the entry point into the operation of the ruling relations by identifying disjunctures between policies and practices, agreements and disagreements among participants, and expressions of what is troubling to teachers in their everyday work. Close attention is paid to instances that indicate ruling relations, not to themes and sub-themes as in conventional sociological approaches (although that may be useful in the initial stage). As stated by Smith (2005):

The institutional ethnographer, however, does not look for accounts of what happened or what was really going on. She or he is oriented to what the informant knows and to producing a knowledge between them of the informant’s everyday life in which her or his doings and how they are coordinated with those of others become visible. She or he is oriented toward the social organization of people’s activities. (p. 129)

In the case of documents and forms kept on file about students, my analysis examines the categories and relevancies that predetermine how students are written up in the official files of the institution that are contained in the Ontario Student Record (OSR), as discussed in Chapter 7. Linking the local context to policy documents and wider discourses on risk in Chapter 3, the research literature is treated not as ‘expert’ knowledge or ‘facts’ as in traditional research, but as data for textual analysis; similarly, legislation, reports, and polices are not accepted at face value but viewed as part of the intertextual hierarchy. In the intertextual hierarchy, regulatory texts or “boss texts” set the interpretive frame for producing and reading subordinate texts, where subordinate texts “must be capable of being interpreted/understood as a proper instance or expression of its regulatory categories and concepts” (Smith, 2006, p. 85). Thus texts operate in “intertextual circles” where circularity is apparent in the organization of texts regulating other texts and are tied to funding and institutional accountability; as Smith (2006) explains:

The circularity of intertextual hierarchies is integral to the organization of the contemporary ruling relations in general, including large scale organization and those functional complexes we have called institutions. Such intertextual circles have, for example, been developed as technologies of accountability as methods of bringing the ambiguities of the work of human services under financial control. (pp. 85-86)

Within intertextual hierarchies and circles, exploring how meta-discourses on risk are reiterated across institutional texts of various kinds makes visible the discursive practices
and theories that frame students ‘at risk,’ and highlights how translocal constructions appear in the local education context, and vice versa. Smith (2005) links institutional discourses to accountability: “So rather than view institutional discourses as prescribing actions, we might see them as providing the terms under which what people do becomes institutionally accountable” (p. 113). This raises critical questions about who is accountable to whom for what? Proceeding from textual analysis, the IE researcher maps text flows, money flows and movement of personnel to discover the web of connections across various sites. This mapping is a way of visualizing accountability circuits and the operation of the ruling relations. Mapping anchors texts in the everyday world by tracking sequences to show how texts coordinate different work processes across local sites (Smith, 2005). In this way, social relations are made visible.

In addition to Bakhtin and Garfinkel, I draw on two additional sources for textual analysis that are compatible with IE. First, is Foucault’s (1977) genealogical method for discourse analysis that takes into account the social and historical context as well as ruptures in meanings across locales and time. Rather than a quest for origins or essentialized truth, genealogy is “an analysis of descent” into documents to discover how power is constituted and institutionalized through webs of connections that comprise “governmentality.” Encompassing the dual aspects of governing others and governing the self, governmentality links state power to processes of subjectification (Foucault, 1991a). Thus domination and self-control operate in concert to achieve political rule and economic exploitation, and education is crucial in constructing the subject in the political sense. Second, is the recent work of Lakoff (2006) that complements Smith’s (2005) notion of the mis/use of words as empty shells into which meaning can be poured; he shows how terms derived by the political left are taken up and appropriated by new right discourses in the US. This fits with my earlier research which demonstrated that the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) appointed by the left-leaning NDP government constituted the blueprint for right-wing PC education reform (Kerr, 2006). To unpack contemporary policies and discourses, I draw on Lakoff’s analysis of language as politically laden with “deep framing,” to explicate how words take on meanings eschewed by the dominant political perspective (the new right), and to identify the
underlying moral political values that cut across issues. These deep frames contain inherent contradictions that make them palatable to centrists in the political spectrum (for example, the strict father/nurturing parent frame). For Lakoff (2006), deep framing operates at a more profound level than the “surface framing” of “clever spin and catchy slogans.” As he states:

Surface framing is meaningless without deep framing—our deepest moral convictions and political principles. Framing, used honestly at both the deep and surface levels, is needed to make the truth visible and our values clear. (p 12)

Similar to the ideological code carried in texts (Smith, 1987), Lakoff’s deep framing and his analysis of political language contributes the dimension of attention to the appropriation of progressive terms by the new right to accomplish a conservative agenda. According to this argument, the ascendancy of the new right in the contemporary context is achieved through controlling the language used to frame the debate, and Lakoff’s intent is to facilitate progressives/democrats in reclaiming the terms of the debate. Apple (2009) makes a related point about the changing nature of right-left politics in which the new right engages in strategic coalition building -- a leftist strategy -- to reach out to centrists and expand the base of support. Indeed, a similar blurring of the political left and right is evident in Canada as well (Portelli, 2001; Kerr, 2006) which highlights the importance of unpacking the disparate meanings attached to language; for example, the notion of empowerment takes on different meanings and achieves different ends in new right neoliberal discourses in which it connotes economic ‘choice’ rather than socio-political liberty; equity becomes reduced to token gestures towards ‘equal access’ or ‘equal opportunity’ without questioning how meritocracy operates and without bringing about substantive systemic change.

2.2 Standpoint and Problematic

My research takes the standpoint of practicing teachers working with students ‘at risk’ in Section 23 schools, or secondary public schools that offer special programs for students ‘at risk.’ Teachers in Section 23 schools are engaged in social justice work, advocating on behalf of students, and mediating between them, the education system, and the social service agencies to which they have been assigned. Beginning with the everyday experience of teachers working with students ‘at risk,’ this study takes their perspective
on the policies and practices that pertain to students ‘at risk’ under education reform. The starting point is accessing teacher/participants’ subjective experiences through individual and two-person interviews. Given that teacher/participants work in non-traditional settings with marginalized youth, they are outside the mainstream of ruling relations. It is assumed that these practicing teachers are knowledgeable about their everyday work with students ‘at risk;’ they constitute key insider informants with direct experiences of how the system actually works in practice. Since I draw on my own experience teaching in a youth detention centre, woven in is an autoethnography (Ellis, 1997; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Boufoy-Bastick, 2004) of my self-reflexive process as it unfolds in writing this thesis. In centring teachers’ experiences, my study addresses the displacement of practicing teachers from policy making. The official standpoint, on the other hand, was attained from a plethora of texts and publications (such as Levin, Glaze, and Fullan, 2008 as discussed in Chapter 8).

My problematic emerges out of teacher/participants’ -- as well as my own -- experiences with the organization of educational policies pertaining to students ‘at risk;’ that is, from the disjunctures, discrepancies or contradictions that teacher/participants experience between official policies and actual practices, or between official statements and what teachers actually do. Identification of the official policies and practices pertaining to students ‘at risk’ that teachers find troubling constitutes the starting point for follow-up textual analyses of documents that govern teachers’ work. In teachers’ everyday work, there is a tension or disjuncture between standardized system requirements and the non-standard particularities of the students they teach. My study examines how teachers’ work is affected and how students’ life chances are impacted by the stigmatization and relegation to Section 23 or other special programs for students ‘at risk.’ To unpack the constructions of students ‘at risk’ and explore how inequity is exacerbated, the study proceeds with textual analyses of education reforms policies that emerged from interviews with teacher/participants. Aside from education policy, students ‘at risk’ are also caught up in the systems of criminal justice (governed by the Youth Criminal Justice Act, 2003) and children’s aid (governed by Child and Family Services Act, 1990) and hence are enmeshed in a complex intertextuality of legislation, policies, and reports.
However, my research focuses on educational texts. These texts are not seen as active in and of themselves, but become activated by people’s actual activities and practices. The standpoint and problematic, as explained above, are maintained throughout the follow-up textual analyses.

2.3 Recruitment of Participants

Participants are practicing teachers working with students ‘at risk’ either in Section 23 schools or in special programs in secondary public schools. Recruitment began with requests for volunteers at staff meetings, and by mass mailing over telnet (internal email). This request gave a brief overview of the project and outlined what was required of participants. Through the snowball sampling procedure, teacher/participants recommended other potential participants. Although representative sampling is not required in IE, the 12 teacher/participants come from different social locations by gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. Teachers who responded to the call for volunteers were telephoned (according to protocol) and given further details. The telephone call was followed up with an Invitation to Participate letter, and an Informed Consent form to be signed by participants. Individual interviews were also conducted with guidance counsellors and school board officials based on contacts provided by teacher/participants.

2.4 Participant Interviews

Although the research plan was to conduct focus groups with teachers, that plan changed by fortuitous accident. Due to bad weather on the day of the first focus group, only two teacher/participants were able to make the appointment. Having used focus groups in my earlier research (Kerr, 2006), I discovered that two-person or dual interviews worked better, since teacher/participants engage in dialogue with each other in ways that are simpler to grasp than conversations with many voices. Thus dual interviews reap the benefits of focus groups in capturing everyday exchanges between teachers, and also the benefits of individual interviews in providing more detail, but without being oriented to research-led questioning. As in focus groups, I discovered that matching participants in dual interviews is crucial to setting the conditions for engaged and lively conversation. Participants were paired according to equivalency of position, such that one was not in a
position of responsibility or authority over the other; considerations also included years of experience or age, gender, and compatibility of the setting or program within which they practice. The sessions were semi-structured to facilitate natural exchange (Morgan 1988). Prior to the sessions, I provided some guiding questions for reflection to orient the conversation to the research topic. The questions were open-ended and designed to elicit teachers’ responses as well as give room for participants to raise issues and co-lead the direction of the proceedings. During the sessions, I acted as the moderator but allowed the conversation to flow according to the relevancies of teacher/participants. The advantage of dual interviews is in not only conducting interviews simultaneously, but gaining insights through the direct interaction and dialogue between participants that would not emerge in individual interviews. In dual interviews, agreement and disagreement, or discrepancies at different sites, emerge in the immediacy of the exchange with time for sustained reflective interaction between participants, whereas in single interviews it may be necessary to get back to other interviewees for elucidation.

The role of the moderator is to ensure an environment conducive to open discussion and exchange, to encourage even participation, and to keep the discussion on topic in terms of the overall purpose of the study. As the researcher, being an insider myself is both an advantage and a disadvantage: the advantage is familiarity with the domain that is conducive to the reciprocity of a shared “interpretive trust” (Garfinkel, 1967) and to reaching beneath the superficial level of description; the disadvantage is susceptibility to taking for granted institutionally embedded commonplaces. Being attentive to my own location as an insider-outsider during the interviews, I adopted a semi-naïve stance, requesting clarifications or asking questions to deepen the exchange. As it happened, this was not a ruse, since in a continually fluctuating policy-scape, the issues raised by teacher/participants had emerged since I took leave from my teaching position to do my research such that I was not privy to them.

Interviews were audio-taped with prior consent obtained on an Informed Consent form. The audio-recordings were transcribed by me and included non-verbal details from field notes taken at the time, such as body language, changes in tone, hesitation etc. Close attention was paid to the shared meanings and metaphors and the particular sense
associated with words and utterances teacher/participants used in making sense of their everyday world (Bakhtin in Holquist, 1981). Analyses of the transcripts focused less on identifying common themes than on discerning points of agreement/disagreement between participants, as well as on contradictions, disjunctures, and fault-lines between policies and practices that offer cues to the operation of ruling relations from the standpoint of teachers. These cues provided entry points and indicated documents as starting points for the follow-up textual analyses, such as legislation, policies and procedures, reports, internal memos, forms and other official documents of the institution. Thus, the follow-up textual analysis was guided by teacher/participants; for example, their questioning of school board official statistics as misrepresenting the reality of everyday practice.

Individual interviews were also conducted with guidance counsellors and school board informants. These interviews were informal and were arranged either by scheduled appointment or by telephone, depending on the preference and availability of the participant. Face-to-face interviews were audio-taped with prior permission, whereas during telephone interviews detailed field notes were taken at the time and written up immediately after the interview. As is well known, especially with persons in positions of authority, the presence of a tape recorder may inhibit disclosure and restrict comments to presenting the official line or public relations talk.

All material from dual and individual interviews is taken up in a respectful manner that does not objectify or judge participants’ competency as teachers or as persons. Any personal information about participants that might reveal their identities, or the identities of students or schools, has been omitted. The use of pseudonyms in the transcripts and the write-up protects participants’ anonymity and confidentiality. This is particularly important in the current climate in which teachers fear personal reprisals from the administrative hierarchy that can affect their teaching assignments and opportunities for career advancement (Akande, 2008). Care was taken to quote participants own words in context, to capture their intended meaning, and to take up their concerns. Consequently, this study took a direction that was not anticipated at the outset.
The label students ‘at risk’ is one of those terms that on the surface may seem benign; however, based on teacher/participants’ accounts and my experience in Section 23, it has come to frame educational policies and practices that impact negatively on the lives of students and teachers. My study sets out to discover how ruling relations operate through texts in ways that are not necessarily visible to teachers in our everyday work; the aim is to “reorganize the social relations of knowledge of the social so that people can take that knowledge up as an extension of our ordinary knowledge of the local actualities of our lives” (Smith, 2005, p. 29).
Chapter 3
Literature Review: Discursive Practices Governing Risk

Any literature review is necessarily subjective in the sense of selecting which studies, articles, books, and so on, to include (and which to exclude). Consistent with the empirical emphasis in IE, my approach to the literature review takes research as data and not as ‘fact;’ that is, research is read “not necessarily for information, but to analyze how the work of intellectuals has helped to give shape to the topic of interest. Institutional ethnographers do not cede authority to the literature, as scholars conventionally do” (Campbell and Gregor, 2002, p. 7-8). Being oriented to everyday experience and practices rather than to theory or discourse analysis per se, IE recognizes “discursive practices” and use of language carried in texts as constituting text-mediated ruling relations. Thus, this literature review takes into account the social relations of knowledge production, and how certain work is sanctioned while other work is not. The vagueness of the notion of risk is problematic, especially when it has implications for people’s lives and pre-determines their futures. I begin with four meta-discourses on risk, and proceed to identify two divergent orientations that are prevalent in the research literature pertaining to students ‘at risk.’ Identifying discourses on risk contributes to an understanding of how the institutional construction of students at risk is hooked into the larger socio-historical context and to a particular ideological frame. Whereas classifying patients or clients according to risk has been common practice in health, social services and criminal justice for some time (Mythen and Sandra Walklate, 2006), I argue that the term accrued significance in education during neoliberal reform.

As noted above, the notion of risk as applied to education first appears in the US report commissioned under President Ronald Reagan, entitled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform (1983). Lamenting the decline of US economic supremacy, the report then turns on schools:

Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. ... the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. (p. 3)
The slippage from a nation at risk of losing its “preeminence” in the world to students at risk raises the critical question: Who and what is at risk? Equating risk with threat, the report produces a long list of “educational dimensions” of risk, predicated largely on standardized scores. This scathing indictment of US schools laid the ground for education reform in line with so-called reaganonomics, promoting tax cuts, reduced social spending, increased military spending, and deregulation of markets. Gabbard (2003) considers *A Nation at Risk* to be “the greatest lie that the state has ever produced regarding our America’s public schools … the most efficacious educational report ever issued by the federal government, judged in terms of the scope and scale of educational reforms that it engendered … [and] also a well designed and orchestrated propaganda campaign” [http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=15](http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=15) (accessed July 16, 2009). This seminal report influenced not only the Republican and Democrat administrations of Reagan and Clinton, as well as George W. Bush’s *NCLB Act*, but also education reform internationally. In a review of US federal programs, Vinovskis (1999) comments that “Title 1 was more a funding mechanism than a specific program or policy for helping at risk students” (p. 189); nevertheless, targeted funding for Title 1 schools remains a major aspect of *NCLB*. The vast majority of research into risk emanates from the US and is promoted by the corporate-business lobby, private foundations, and public policy think tanks. Moreover, Giroux (in Saltman and Gabbard, 2003) suggests who and what is at risk in US education:

> In the aftermath of the events of September 11, *Education as Enforcement* serves to remind us that collective problems deserve collective solutions, and that what is at risk is not only a generation of minority youth and adults now considered to be a threat to national security, but also the very promise of democracy itself. (p. xxii)

Fear of the other in the aftermath of 9/11 and the imposition of security measures clamping down hard on the criminal element within carried over to schools in the US, and has its counterpart in the Ontario *Safe Schools Act* of 2001 and the policies that ensue from there, as discussed further in Chapter 4. The ramifications of US events and policies permeate across borders to shape Canadian policies. To unpack how notions of risk and safety target particular populations of people for identification and intervention in ways
that ambiguously conflate ‘dangerousness’ as posing a risk to society with ‘vulnerability’ as being at risk, this chapter discusses discourses on risk.

3.1 Meta-discourses on Risk

In the corporate-business sector, risk is a central organizing principle and generates the need for risk management. Accordingly, the interconnected discourses of risk and safety have been taken up by governments and policy makers and used to frame regimes of control that are exercised through the mechanisms of surveillance, auditing and accountability. The prevailing psychometric paradigm of risk claims to be ‘objective’ and scientific, and fits with corporate notions of risk management; it dominates mainstream research and readily gets funded, picked up, and reiterated across government departments, professional bodies, philanthropic agencies, and think tanks. On other hand, the meta-discourses that follow approach risk from critical perspectives and provide alternative frames of reference for my analysis in subsequent chapters. Explicated below are Ulrich Beck’s risk society thesis; Mary Douglas on risk and blame; Foucault’s governmentality, and Slovic and colleagues on the social amplification of risk.

3.1.1 Ulrich Beck’s Risk Society Thesis

Although seldom referred to in the US or Canada, from a European sociological perspective, Ulrich Beck’s (1992) risk society thesis theorizes risk as a central organizing construct of contemporary societies that takes into account the power relations and political dimensions of risk. In the Risk Society, Beck (1992) links risk with security in the contemporary era of globalization and post-modernity. Establishing risk on the agenda of social theory with his risk society thesis, Beck distinguishes the risk society from industrial society on account of the technological changes of modernization that itself produces risks and hazards of a different order than in earlier times. Thus risks, whether environmental or social, are “man-made,” and the contemporary risk society is organized around risk. Beck centres individualization as a key process in the risk society, where individualization is a process of isolating, atomizing, and removing people from the collective such that the individual is de-contextualized socio-politically and historically, and separated from traditional support networks. As Beck (1992) states,
“Individualization means market dependency in all dimensions of living” (p. 132).
According to Beck, the logic of wealth distribution in the risk society is about the
distribution of hazards or risks, and they are not equally distributed: in wealthy societies,
Beck maintains there is an “individualization of social inequality” (p. 85) in which a
disproportionate burden of risk is laid on the poor; that is, wealth buys safety and security
from risk, whereas poverty begets risk. Taking a radical departure from Marx and Weber,
Beck postulates that the reorganization of social relations in the risk society are less about
social class or status, in that risk becomes the central axis of social identity and conflict
from which new forms of social bonds and discord arise. In the political dynamics of the
risk society, Beck maintains, “risks, risk perception and risk management in all sectors of
society become a new source of conflict and social formation” (p. 99). For Beck, the risk
society is a “catastrophic” society that creates perpetual crisis as the normal state,
subscribes to the logic of risk prevention while systemically producing risks, and uses
scientific and bureaucratic authoritarianism in ways that undermine democracy.
According to Beck (1992), “Risk may be defined as a systemic way of dealing with
hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (p. 21); or “In
other words, risks depend on decisions; they are industrially produced and in this sense
politically reflexive” (p.183).
Extending Beck’s risk society thesis of “industrially produced” risks to the knowledge
economy of education, suggests that students ‘at risk’ could plausibly be ‘educationally
produced’ to serve the labour market by securing a compliant workforce of skilled labour.
This fits with Livingstone’s (1999) thesis that increasing credentialization has produced
an oversupply of educationally qualified candidates on the job market, and that struggles
over paid work are being waged to preserve the ‘competitive advantage’ of dominant
groups over those in subordinate social positions. Moreover, In Policing the Risk Society,
Ericson and Haggerty (1997) draw attention to how police work is brokered to other
institutions. Risk management conjures up fear of the boundless threat within and without
that fosters a culture of fear and manufactures consent for enhanced measures of ‘law and
order’ and justifies extreme measures that curtail civil liberties. The contradiction
between statistics indicating that crime is down, and calls for increased public surveillance and special police powers dominate in western countries, including Canada -- a country that takes pride in being a peacekeeper and a ‘tolerant,’ ‘multicultural’ society.

3.1.2 Mary Douglas on Risk and Blame

In *Risk and Blame*, Mary Douglas (1992) also contests the proliferation and politicization of risk in the contemporary context. As an anthropologist with a social focus, she traces the origins of risk to gambling, and to maritime insurance in the 17th century for cargo vessels carrying slaves to the ‘new world.’ This raises critical questions about racism being inherent in the terminology of students ‘at risk’ when the label targets minoritized groups, especially Black students of African or Caribbean descent. Whereas risk is based on probability theory, and mathematically calculable outcomes of gains and losses, it has become associated with the intangibles of accountability and blaming. In Douglas’ words:

> My own idea of the psyche is of an intelligence that is primarily social. The social preoccupations of the person, infant or adult, would be like the control gates through which all information has to pass. Blaming is a way of manning the gates through which all information has to pass. Blaming is a way of manning the gates and at the same time of arming the guard. News that is going to be accepted as true information has to be wearing a badge of loyalty to the particular regime which the person supports; the rest is suspect, deliberately censored or unconsciously ignored. From this standpoint, the proper way to organize a programme of studying risk is to start with studying institutional design. (p. 19)

Risk is thus turned from truth or certainty to the social construction of predictions according to actuarial calculations that are contingent on political and institutional frameworks. From a cultural-symbolic perspective, by highlighting the connection between risk and blame, Douglas reframes risk as an institutionalized form of blaming the ‘other.’

Moreover, Douglas (1992) contends that the current use of risk in policy analysis is not so much about “the predictive uses of risk, but its forensic functions” (p. 27)—functions,

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6 Mary Douglas is an anthropologist whose focus is primarily social.
in this case, that are used to monitor accountability from the macro-level of national systems of education to local schools. Douglas says:

What is not true is that the same speculations are found in all cultures. In an individualist culture, the weak are going to carry the blame for what happens to them; in a hierarchy, the deviants; in a sect, aliens and also faction leaders. It behooves us therefore to try to know as much as possible about the different cultures in which the idea of risk is put to use even if it is only in order to know whether we are saying the same as everyone else. (p. 37)

This suggests keeping in mind how ‘othering’ processes organized around risk may operate in various ways according to institutional structures or ‘cultures;’ moreover, they may be articulated to multiple-levels of institutional organization, from the macro-level of transnational agencies, to meso-levels of national and/or regional governance, to the local micro-level of the classroom in Ontario.

3.1.3 Foucault’s Governmentality

Foucault’s notion of governmentality as the “art of government” or the “conduct of conduct,” as explicated in the lectures at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979, is reprinted in Foucault (1991a) as follows:

1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. 2. The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs. 3. The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes ‘governmentalized.’ (pp. 102-103; italics added)

The Foucauldian view is of power as dispersed and encompassing various technologies of sovereign, disciplinary, pastoral and other forms of power. In contemporary forms of government, power operates less through overt domination than through the formation of subjectivities, or through what Dean (1999) refers to as “govern-mentality.” Foucault’s foresight on emerging forms of governmentality, as developed further by the neo-Foucauldians, helps to explicate how neoliberalism operates. As picked up by Rose
(1990), Rose and Miller (1992), and Dean (1999), the notion of governmentality provides a means for analyzing political rationalities (that is, mentalities or know-how), and various governmental technologies of the self and technologies of domination that coordinate “the complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions” (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 175). Compatible with Dorothy Smith’s notion of everyday activities coordinated by translocal ruling relations, Rose and Miller describe the key characteristic of modern government as “action at a distance...made possible through the activities and calculation of a proliferation of independent agents including philanthropists, doctors, hygienists, managers, planners, parents and social workers. And it is dependent on the forging of alliances ... in attempts to modulate events, decisions and actions in the economy, the family, the private firm and the conduct of the individual person ” (p. 180). For example, Hacking (1991) identifies statistics as a technology for administering populations; Castel (1991) and O’Malley (1996) connect risk to rationalities that favour smaller government (for example, dismantling the welfare state) and that “responsibilize” people through techniques for leading and regulating individuals without being responsible for them. In Wakefield and Flemming (2009), O’Malley defines “responsibilization” as follows:

[A] term developed in the governmentality literature to refer to the process whereby subjects are rendered individually responsible for a task which previously would have been the duty of another – usually a state agency – or would not have been recognized as a responsibility at all. The process is strongly associated with neo-liberal political discourses, where it takes on the implication that the subject being responsibilized has avoided this duty or the responsibility has been taken away from them in the welfare-state era and managed by an expert or government agency. (p. 276)

Risks such as poverty, crime, unemployment, illness or disease, and so on are turned from a responsibility of the state, to the responsibility of the individual or community.

3.1.4 Paul Slovic’s Social Amplification of Risk

The field of psychometric risk merges cognitive psychology with decision research, and is predicated on risk assessments, risk factors, and risk management. Influenced by decision research, the preoccupation is with assessing acceptable levels of risk,
conducting cost-benefits analyses, and maximizing safety. However, Paul Slovic and colleagues question the scientific quantification of risk and the social amplification of risk in the media, and draw attention to risk perception in societies that value risk-taking behaviour and disparage risk-avoidance, yet endeavour to curtail certain kinds of ‘risky’ behaviour. As Slovic (2000) points out, there is a gap between ‘expert’ opinion and lay perception of risk, such that there are “serious disjunctures between expert and public assessments of risk and varying responses” (p. 235). He adds that “[lay] people tend to view current risk levels as unacceptably high for most activities. The gap between perceived and desired risk levels suggests that people are not satisfied with the way that market and other regulatory mechanisms have balanced risks and benefits” (p. 223). In one of their studies into risk perception, Slovic et al. conclude that the public is reluctant to insure against low probability-high consequence events (such as hurricanes and earthquakes) and instead consider high probability-low consequence events as more relevant; moreover, actuarial risk in the insurance industry makes little sense to people such that they are reluctant to buy insurance voluntarily, unless compelled to do so by banks, mortgage companies or government legislation. Indeed in Ontario, legislation ties automobile registration to having insurance against worst case scenario events. The implication of this research is that the anticipation of catastrophic events by experts has less importance in lay perception. Disrupting the apparent certainty of statistics on risk, Slovic states:

Whereas psychometric research implies that risk debates are not merely about risk statistics, some sociological and anthropological research implies that some of these debates may not even be about risk…. Risk concerns may provide a rationale for actions taken on other grounds or they may be surrogate for other social or ideological concerns. When this is the case, communication about risk is simply irrelevant to the discussion. Hidden agendas need to be brought to the surface for discussion. (p. 231)

The significance of the work of Slovic and colleagues in this context is that it points to “hidden agendas” or ideological “surrogates” behind statistical constructions of risk that may account for gaps between experts’ and lay people’s perception of risk.

Acknowledging that “there is wisdom as well as error in public attitudes and perceptions” (p. 231), Slovic calls for a two-way process to respect both sides: expert information and public “intuition.”
Each of the four critical meta-discourses above problematizes the notion of risk; each raises questions about statistics in constructing risk where mathematical calculations lend authority to mere predications or probabilities, and an aura of certainty to uncertainty. In subsequent chapters, I draw on the various processes identified: individualization from Beck’s risk society thesis, responsibilization from the Foucauldian governmentality literature, othering and blaming from Douglas, and the amplification (or exaggeration) of risk from Slovic and colleagues.

3.2 Competing Conceptions of Students ‘at risk’

In education, two major competing conceptions of students ‘at risk’ can be identified: the first is the dominant neoliberal discourse on students ‘at risk’ that is concerned with risk management originating in the US and picked up in Canada (by J. Douglas Willms, 2002; and Ben Levin, 2004a); the second deconstructs the notion of students ‘at risk’ from an equity and social justice perspective (mounted in the US by Richard Valencia, 1997; and Michelle Fine, 1995). The first conception dominates at the meta-level of policy analysis and formation in which being ‘at risk’ is cast in terms of ‘vulnerability’; the second draws on the experiences of marginalized groups most affected by policies pertaining to students at risk, and contests the categorization and labelling of students as “deficit thinking” (Valencia, 1997). Each of the two conflicting conceptions undoubtedly reflects the social location of its proponents, and depends on personal lived experience in/with the education system as students, parents, teachers or administrators. Each adheres to a different primary theoretical orientation between the extremes: the positivist realism of human capital theory, and the social constructivism of critical pedagogy. These differing ideological frames from/through which the world is viewed mean that the contrasting conceptions stand in dialectical opposition to one another.

3.2.1 The Dominant Framework of Students ‘at risk’

The dominant discourse on risk runs across public policy, including public health, social welfare, criminology, and psychology -- fields that are largely constructed around notions

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7 Willms is a professor at the University of New Brunswick and Director of the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy.
The function of risk in these fields is to monitor systems and establish accountability for workers. The new term of ‘vulnerability’ lends a deceptive tone of beneficence and evokes the need for protection by offering compensatory programs, while leaving existing societal structures largely unchallenged and intact. Within mainstream public policy making, risk is linked to psychology that individualizes risk as if the fault lay with the personal attributes and family backgrounds of individuals, without seriously addressing the larger ecological context of socio-economic inequities or the politico-historical struggles that position particular groups at the outer margins of society. This notion of risk fits conveniently with neoliberalism in emphasizing individualism -- that cornerstone of advanced capitalism that is predicated on competition, privatization, and meritocracy. The policy implications mark a shift away from the social safety net provisions of the Keynesian welfare state, to one in former British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s terms that offers a ‘hand-up, not a hand-out.’ But who has the power to hand up or out? Who defines and who are the defined? The contradiction in official national pronouncements between claims of flourishing economies in the wealthy nations (in the interest of keeping consumer confidence up) and fiscal restraint with respect to public services including social welfare, medicare and education is seldom questioned in the upper echelons of power.

Standardized risk assessment practices categorize people and determine courses of action. These objectified and objectifying practices predict a threat or risk that may or may not come to pass, and yet become the governing regulatory frames through which people are viewed and actions are made accountable. What gets lost by “institutional capture” (Smith, 2005) to dominant conceptions of students at risk is equity. Bearing in mind socio-historical context, it is useful to recall that graduation from high school was largely restricted to privileged elites as recently as the 1950s, until societal changes and the move to mass education brought about increasing credentialization, such that post-secondary qualifications are now the baseline in western countries, and the equivalent of high school diplomas in the past. By contrast, the Education for All (EFA) initiative of supranational development agencies sets the goal of completion of primary school for third world countries; this suggests a double standard in international governance: one for the first
world of the ‘developed’ global north, and another for the third world of the ‘developing’
global south.\(^8\) Is there a similar double standard within our own backyard that applies to
the third world living within the first (Swasti Mitter, 1986)?

Drawing on quantitative demographic data and the language of psychology and human
development, Willms (2002) couches risk in terms of “vulnerability” or frailty based on a
constellation of characteristics and circumstances which predispose a child to exhibit
problems in ‘adaptation.’ He conceptualizes vulnerability as follows:

> We have decided to refer to children who are experiencing an episode of poor
developmental outcomes as **vulnerable**. These children are vulnerable in the sense

> that unless there is a serious effort to intervene on their behalf, they are prone to

> experiencing problems throughout their childhood and are more likely to

> experience unemployment and poor physical and mental health as young adults.

> Then, knowing that we have identified a group of children as a great interest to

> Canadians, we proceed to look at the main determining factors of vulnerability. (p.

> 3–4)

Extrapolating from the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth (NLSCY),\(^9\)
Willms and contributors discuss the implications for ‘evidence-based policy’ in terms of
children’s outcomes and family incomes, such that the term ‘children at risk’ becomes
synonymous with ‘children living in poverty.’ Willms has developed a for-profit risk
assessment mechanism called Tell Them From Me (TTFM).\(^10\) TTFM solicits student

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\(^8\) Education for All (EFA) was originally formulated in 1990 by a coalition of national
governments, civil society groups, and international development agencies—including UNESCO and the World Bank. In 2000,
two of the EFA goals were reaffirmed and incorporated into the eight Millennium Development Goals
(MDGs) of the United Nations as priorities for the 21st century; that is, to expand and improve
comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
children; and to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and
those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education
of good quality. There remains a gap between the ‘good’ intentions of international aid agency goals and
actual gains on the ground.

\(^9\) The NLSCY is directed and funded by a partnership between Human Resource Development Canada and
Statistics Canada.

\(^10\) The website states: “We are offering TTFM Essentials to schools for $700, regardless of the number of
students to be surveyed in the school. This requires no student data upload, no software installation, and
website declares the private companies involved and the purpose of TTFM as “ramping up” the monitoring
and assessment of schools nationally and internationally; it states: “The Learning Bar is the creation of Dr.
J. Douglas Willms and Patrick Flanagan. Its activities are an outgrowth of the work historically undertaken
by Dr. Willms' company, KSI Research International Inc., and Mr. Flanagan's company that he co-owns
with his partner, Kathleen Howard & Associates, Inc. Both companies recognized the opportunities
inherent in taking standard monitoring and assessment in schools, and ramping it up to consider how
schools compare with similar schools on a grand national or international level, and made conveniently
perceptions in the form of anonymous student surveys that are comprised of 21 indicators in three domains: student engagement, student health and wellness, and school and classroom climate. Since no student information is required, this assessment tool has less to do with students than with evaluating and monitoring school performance in line with Total Quality Management (TQM). The production line approach to education reduces student learning to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic that are amenable to standardized tests. As with the research from the US, Willms turns to resiliency as the antidote to risk when he comments, “Yet this is not always the case …. We often encounter children from poor families who have been remarkably resilient” (p. 8).

Based on research at a drug addiction centre in the US, Linquanti’s (1992) definition of resiliency is often quoted as “that quality in children who, although exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to the school failure, substance abuse, mental health, and juvenile delinquency problems they are at greater risk of experiencing” (p. 9). In his collaborative model involving families and communities, Linquanti constructs deviancy and resiliency as binary opposites. Much of the literature in dominant positivist discourses is concerned with the identification of risk indicators and risk ‘factors.’ Since risk factors are deemed to be cumulative and multiplicative, the emphasis is on prevention and/or early intervention, as well as on identifying the protective factors associated with ‘resiliency’ that mitigate against adversity and enable children to thrive despite their negative circumstances. Benard (1991) constructs the difference between resiliency and deviancy accordingly to the presence (or absence) of five traits (or deficits): social competency; problem-solving skills; autonomy; religious/spiritual commitment; and a sense of purpose and future. A plethora of other typologies have been developed by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists in the international consortium of risk investigators (such as Michael Rutter and Norman Garmezy). Whereas an understanding of how students cope with adversity may offer a framework for assisting individual remediation to foster well-being, the binary opposition between risk and resilience oversimplifies the complex and contingent nature of students accessible and in a timely manner through the internet. Thus was born Tell Them From Me” (http://www.thelarningbar.com/about.php, accessed April 6, 2010).
labelled at risk. In equity terms, it can backfire on students deemed to ‘lack’ resilience. The term ‘resilience’ has also been picked up in by the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC, 2001) which notes that resiliency was adopted from the sciences of physics and later biology, but is a relatively recent concept in social science (p. 16). However, from a critical perspective, McLaren (2003) says the notion of resiliency “takes some of the sting from our guilt” (p. 177). What is problematic is the individualization of risk and resilience, both of which are attributed to personal characteristics or environmental circumstances without challenging endemic socio-economic policies that impact people’s lives.

The mainstream discourse on risk and risk assessment is constructed by two major constituencies: psychology-psychiatry and statistics-demography. Drawing on the apparent authority of statistics and actuarial science, ‘risk’ in education is a vague, ambiguous and overused term that is predicated on uncertain projections of probability from quantitative studies that are replete with problems of sampling, extrapolating from surveys, and attributing causality to correlation. Finn (2006) clusters ‘risk factors’ into three broad categories: status risk factors (SES status, race/ethnicity); academic risk factors (test scores, grades, and reading levels) and behavioural risk factors (school attendance, punctuality, and work habits). The first of these suggests the core of the problem of labelling students at risk: when students are targeted as ‘at risk’ by virtue of their backgrounds, the question of discrimination arises. Running on from there, academic and behavioural risk factors may actually be culture bound according to middle-class white standards of achievement, manners and other codes of conduct. While school underachievement should not be ignored and students left to shape up or languish on the sidelines of society, it is important to consider cultural biases embedded in so-called risk factors. Instead of risks being associated with personal attributes, what if the term were applied to systemic barriers that pose risks and affect groups differentially?

The emphasis on test scores and reading levels as indicators of academic risk typifies what Freire refers to as the “banking model” of education. In this model, students are

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11 The CSCE is a partnership between Statistics Canada and the CMEC that orients research to education indicators. This symposium received funding from the HRDC.
constructed as empty accounts into which the instructor pours information, rather than as participants in a dialogical process of liberation from oppression. To unpack the complexities and contradictions of dominant discourses on students at risk, the first step is to identify interconnected prevailing institutional discourses and processes, such as the banking model. Qualitative studies based on local, particular and subjective experiences of people can reveal what is actually going on; for example, during the move from elite to mass education, King, Moor and Mundy (1974) uncovered the differences between official and perceived realities of education that challenged assumptions and resonate today; that is, school structures and programs geared to government intentions, with “hasty measures” and elitist “concessions to frailty or ‘more practical’ studies” (p. 4).

In Alberta, Johnson’s (1997) survey of school administrators on the effectiveness of interventions for students at risk indicates general agreement on the effectiveness of early-childhood school programs, pre-school intervention programs, ESL, parental school involvement, parent-effectiveness training, community recreation facilities, heritage-pride community activities, and the integration of services (social, health, and education). Given the “vast differences” between the US and Canada, she raises the important question of why Canadian administrators generally reiterate lists of programs and initiatives derived from the US literature. She offers two possible explanations: “that the American influence has partly shaped the perceptions of Canadian personnel” or “that the nature and needs of students at risk transcend national boundaries” (p. 449). However, I would argue that Johnson’s survey does not challenge contentious interventions pertaining to discipline, suspensions and expulsions similar to those mandated under the Safe Schools Act in Ontario; such interventions emulate policies in the US and have been denounced by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as discriminatory (as discussed in the next chapter).

3.2.2 The Anti-Deficit Thinking Camp
The second conception of students at risk is the “anti-deficit thinking camp” that takes a critical perspective towards “deficit thinking” (Valencia, 1997) inherent in the dominant paradigm outlined above. This counter-discourse links the construction of students at risk to the history of colonialism, the eugenics movement, psychological testing, and
segregated schooling. Valencia discusses six characteristics of deficit thinking: blaming the victim; oppression; pseudoscience; temporal changes; educability; and heterodoxy. Drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of heterodoxy (versus doxa, or orthodoxy) to counteract class domination, Valencia calls on intellectuals to “mount a full-blown heterodoxy” (p. 250) and goes as far as saying that “full-scale war must be declared on deficit thinking” (p. 251). Militaristic rhetoric aside, anti-deficit thinking answers back to the dominant discourse on students at risk and offers an alternative explanation of school failure as systemically entrenched negative bias towards the poor and people of colour. An important contribution of anti-deficit thinking is that it traces the origins of deficit thinking to colonialist notions of genetic inferiority, and it challenges pathologizing processes that blame students and their families for school failure. In contrast to the risk-resiliency dyad in the dominant discourse, Swadener and Lubeck (1995) eclipse the entire notion of ‘risk’ (as deficits and failure) with ‘promise’ (as strengths and success); that is, they “utilize the construct ‘children and families at promise’ to convey the potential all children hold” (p. 4).

Exposing the exclusionary and discriminatory practices of schooling, Michelle Fine (1995) examines the politics of risk and the ‘dropout problem’ and contends that the notion of “‘at risk’ does far more damage than good” (p. 89) since “‘youth at risk’ is an ideological and historical construction” (p. 90). Citing statistics that African American and Latino students show up disproportionately in special education programs, suspensions and expulsions, she contends that the discourse on risk actually serves the dominant mainstream culture:

   The cultural construction of a group defined through a discourse of ‘risk’ represents a shaved and quite partial image. It is an image that typically strengthens those institutions and groups which have carved out, severed, denied connection to, and then promised to ‘save’ those who will undoubtedly remain ‘at risk.’ (p. 76)

Although Fine expresses strong advocacy, what she stands for on particular issues (for instance, keeping youths in school) is sometimes ambiguous. Nevertheless, she raises important questions: Who actually benefits from the discourse on risk? In the Canadian context, contributors to Kelly and Gaskell (1996) provide critical perspectives on the moral panic about ‘dropouts’ and youth ‘at risk;’ for example, Kelly (1996) identifies the
“safety valve” as having superseded the “safety net” under restructuring in ways that relieve the pressure but actually reinforce the status quo. The safety valve is manifest in the relegation of students at risk to separate programs or schools. Moreover, Polakov (1995) berates the opportunistic ascendency of “the risk industry [that] rests heavily on the poverty industry ... in which countless middle-class people in the human service professions have built their careers as the direct beneficiaries of poverty” (p. 268).

Largely formulated by non-teachers, the anti-deficit thinking camp unfortunately resorts to blaming teachers, without recognizing the systemic pressures induced by declining resources, increasing class sizes, eroding professional autonomy and the top-down imposition of accountability regimes (Kerr, 2006; Apple, 1986). On the one hand, locating risk within a wider socio-political and historical context that takes equity into account, the deficit thinking camp draws attention to the drag-net nature of the construction of risk that presupposes (and could predispose) failure based on a vast array of unsubstantiated risk factors. On the other hand, unilaterally affirming the ‘strengths’ and ‘competencies’ of students labelled at risk may underestimate the challenges frontline teachers face to engage hard-to-reach students in school and in society, and thus throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Based on interviews with students in transitional programs at Canadian universities, McMahon (2007) posits a ‘moral’ distinction between ‘at risk students’ and ‘students at risk.’ The confusing semantics carry meaning analogous to the language of ‘applied level students’ and ‘students in applied level classes.’ In her terms, ‘at risk students’ implies that failure resides with the student and subscribes to a deficit mentality where risk is a terminal condition, whereas ‘students at risk’ identifies the contextual nature of risk and holds schools accountable. McMahon recognizes that some students do suffer circumstances in their lives that schools need to identify and address. However, she too resorts to espousing top-down accountability by blaming teachers and bestowing administrators with the moral authority to keep ‘uncaring’ teachers in check.

Wotherspoon and Butler (1999) recognize the complex interconnections between educational underachievement and poverty, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, discrimination, and other difficulties that are part of Aboriginal people’s everyday lives,
and that marginalize them in the labour market and economic participation. Their study that includes interviews with Aboriginal (First Nations) adults suggests:

Surprisingly, given their limited educational attainments, about half reported positive experiences with their own schooling, but identified several barriers to their learning, including racism, alcohol and drug dependency, trouble with the law, pregnancy, and lack of support from parents or peers to continue their schooling.

Whereas schools do not exist in a vacuum and other influences impact on students’ lives, complex issues arise about how to reconcile affirming diverse identities and creating culturally relevant curricula and programs, while also enabling access to the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) required for higher education and occupation status (given that large-scale social transformation is a much longer-term project). Both are undoubtedly necessary to prevent the reproduction of inequities.

Reframing ‘dropouts’ as ‘pushouts’ (Dei et al., 1995, 1997) or as ‘refusniks’ (Gabbard, in Saltman and Gabbard, 2003) re-turns the gaze onto a system that is failing Black and Aboriginal youth in particular, and throws the notion of a ‘colour-blind’ education system into question. Some youth do not regard dropping out as failure, but as resistance, consciously refusing to be part of the system. When students are labelled ‘at risk’ by virtue of race/ethnicity, language, poverty, or different learning styles, then serious questions arise about inequity in Ontario schools. Whereas there is legitimate concern about students who drop out of the system, this loose definition implicitly resorts to student blaming, rather than engaging in reflexive critical analysis of an education system that takes into account axes of difference, and questions assumptions about white measures of ‘success.’ Moreover, the reliability of a prediction of failure to graduate may or may not be accurate and may not come to pass, yet the label takes on an authority that informs counselling processes regarding course selection (affecting career paths) and administrative responses regarding discipline and surveillance. Systemic bias inherent in standards-based education reform that reproduces socio-economic inequities and marginalizes ‘at risk’ students to the periphery demands a critical reappraisal that is missing in the current climate of neoliberal education reform.
Juxtaposing the dominant/hegemonic with the alternate/counter-hegemonic discourses on students ‘at risk’ highlights the major points of contestation, and shows how risk is perceived or experienced from different standpoints. Most contentious is the issue of labelling and othering: students ‘at risk’ are construed as maladjusted non-conformers to the standards, expectations, norms and values of the dominant white society. The fact that most students labelled at risk are visible minorities, learning disabled, or those whose first language is not English confirms the discriminatory effects of the label. Valencia and Fine have drawn attention to the fact that the education system is not ‘colour-blind’ but continues to perpetuate colonialist biases that have a long history. In a pluralistic society, it is important to view youth not as a homogeneous group but as heterogeneous with multiple differences to which the public education system must adjust (rather than the other way around) especially since youth are forced to stay in school longer in Ontario with the compulsory school leaving age raised to 18.

Despite the differences between the ‘camps,’ there are also commonalities. Both engage in teacher-blaming and call for school reform. Apple and Pedroni (2005) identify a trend emerging in the US that seems disturbing to progressive educators: the ‘strategic’ alliance between the conservative right, African American activists and low-income parents. Apple and Pedroni express concern as follows: “Although we have a good deal of sympathy for BAEO’s [Black Alliance for Educational Options] critique of the current functioning of public schools, we have very real worries about whether they can control the use to which their support of neoliberal policies will be put” (p. 2098).

Whereas progressive educators resist vouchers or charter schools as a form of school segregation that serves privileged white communities, the BAEO wants options. This draws attention to the importance of understanding the anger and frustration at the lack of responsiveness of school systems to marginalized communities. Are voucher schools a way to resolve dissatisfaction with public schools for marginalized groups? How can inclusive education avoid enforcing conformity to dominant socio-cultural norms and the slippery slope of assimilation? What are the implications for Canada? One contentious proposition in Toronto is the recent establishment of an Afrocentric school (Dei, 1996b) that critics argue marks a return to school segregation and may constitute a “safety value”
that leaves the status quo unchanged. Nevertheless, I would argue that if I were the parent of a Black child, I might not be willing to wait for systemic change towards equity. Moreover, the precedent exists of a separate school in Toronto for Aboriginal students, the First Nations School of Toronto.

Both conceptions of students ‘at risk’ call for involving parents and/or local communities in schools and in policy making; in mainstream circles this is cast as the ‘full service school.’ It is important to be cautious about pseudo-consultation and ‘responsibilization’ that tend to download responsibility onto local communities without making resources available. The greatest challenge for educators is to avoid institutional capture to the weight of the US research literature, to learn from past mistakes and accomplishments, to try alternatives appropriate within the local context, to counteract stereotypes, but most of all, to respond to students in their full complexity everyday.

3.3 Risk, Schooling and Work

Tracing the genealogy of discourses about schooling and work historically reveals that education and employment have become top priorities of neoliberal governments in pursuit of competitive advantage in the so-called knowledge economy. According to human capital theory, human capital is the sum total of innate and acquired skills of the population and is regarded as a national asset. Rubenson (1996) shows how human capital theory has been picked up in Canadian policy, linking education and employment to economic growth. It acquired currency as a way of assessing the value added by education and of conducting cost-benefit analyses of educational systems, as well as assessing employment and unemployment trends. Human beings are reduced to little more than containers of knowledge -- or rather skills -- that have use value in the marketplace. Since public education budgets account for a significant portion of the GDP in national expenditures, education is cast as an investment with the expectation of a return, in terms of inputs and outputs. Sweeland (1996) traces the origins of human capital theory from Adam Smith and John Mills to its emergence as a field associated with the economics of education in 1960, and notes that since 1971, five Nobel Prizes have been awarded to human capital theorists: Theodore Schulz, Gary Becker, Milton Freidman with Simon Kuznets, and Robert Solow (p. 342). Two of these prize winners
specifically connect investment in schooling with inculcating the skills necessary for economic growth. First, Schultz (1963) states:

Schooling and advance in knowledge are both major sources of economic growth. It is obvious that they are not natural resources; they are essentially man-made, which means that they entail savings and investment. Investment in schooling is presently, in the United States, a major source of human capital. (p. 46)

And second, Becker (1993, first published in 1964) states:

Education and training are the most important investments in human capital. ... [H]igh school and college education in the United States greatly raise a person’s income, even after netting out direct and indirect costs of schooling, and after adjusting for the better family backgrounds and greater abilities of more educated people. (p. 17)

Despite theoretical and methodological limitations, human capital theory is imbued with an aura of universal truth across space and time. The aim is to increase the productivity and earning power of the population so as to increase economic growth. It was promoted by the World Bank to assess progress in developing countries and is also commonly used by national governments in planning public policy based on projections for the future.12 The concept subscribes to an economic reductionism that assigns a dollar value to people as workers.

In his critique of human capital theory, Livingstone (1997) contends that the global competitiveness of private enterprises is accompanied by the degradation of communities, a process that is exacerbated by human capital theory. The analogy between private enterprise and assets, and human learning capacities should be discarded, since it reduces the complexity, versatility, creativity and resistance of the multi-faceted process of learning to an assembly-line means of production. Livingstone says: “What they [human capital theorists] generally ignore is the even larger problem that the current human capital of most citizens is depreciating from underuse” (p. 5).

From a critical perspective and drawing on Marx’s theory, Ridowski (2001) elaborates on the concept of ‘surplus value’ as central to the capitalist system and the accumulation of

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12 Recently the World Bank has shifted its emphasis onto ‘social capital.’ Human capital refers to attributes of a person that are productive in the economic context, especially educational attainment that is viewed as an investment with returns in terms of income or other forms of compensation. Social capital refers to social networks with shared norms and values that aid cooperation within and among groups.
profit by capitalists. Profit resides in extracting surplus value from the labour-power of workers by increasing productivity. Rikowski exposes the centrality of education to the World Trade Organization (WTO) agenda in Seattle in 1999 that provoked massive protests. He argues that the WTO strategy was to open up education to corporate interests, and to construct education and training in such a way as to reduce humanity to labour-power, that is, viewing people in economic terms as human capital. Neoliberal education reforms globally fuse education and training and reduce education to the production of labour-power; indeed under educational restructuring in Ontario, all levels of education and training were amalgamated into a ‘super-ministry’ called the Ministry of Education and Training, but reverted back to two separate ministries -- the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities.

Under contemporary education reform, schooling and work are inextricably connected; the purpose of schooling is seen as preparing the future work force so as to position the nation to compete in the global economy. But, developments in technology coupled with manufacturing plants moving to off-shore locations (with lenient environmental controls and labour laws and a ready supply of cheap labour) means fewer jobs at home, especially for those with limited education. Economic restructuring involves collaboration between business-corporate interests and government agencies, such as Industry Canada, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Corporate-executive calls for skilled labour come to influence school curricula through the Employability Skills Profile developed by the Corporate Council of Canada that was intended to influence education.

Statistics indicate that youth unemployment is on the rise globally. Linking education and employment -- or rather unemployment -- in the US, Finn (2006) found that non-completers (of the high school diploma) were less likely to be employed in 2000 (at 77 percent) than successful completers (at 88 percent) or marginal completers (at 86 percent). That students ‘at risk’ are deemed more likely to face unemployment accounts for why this group has been targeted for so many studies and reports by government agencies. The Rae Report to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2005) makes similar connections and ties education to income; Rae posits that youth
between the ages of 15 and 24 who drop out are almost twice as likely to be unemployed than those who graduate, and people in Ontario without a high school diploma earn almost 40 percent less than those with a trades certificate or diploma. Concerns about youth unemployment globally reached a pitch in France with youth riots at universities and secondary schools across the country, protesting labour legislation called the *First Hire Contract*; this law allows employers to fire workers under the age of 26 at will for a period of up to two years, effectively extending the period of employment probation. Put forward in early 2006, the *First Hire Contract* was presented as a measure to fight high youth unemployment (reported in the media to be 23 percent, but as high as 60 percent in suburban ghettos) to encourage the hiring of youth. However, this legislation effectively releases employers from the obligations of labour laws that protect workers, and leaves economic policies that created the problem of diminished job opportunities for youth unchallenged.

Livingstone (1999) connects education and employment policy to expose the fallacies and contradictions in the rhetoric of corporate executives blaming public education for the unsatisfactory quality of job entrants. As the riots in France attest, the corporate-executive critique levied on schools deflects attention from the lack of decent adequately paid jobs and the proliferation of low-skill low-pay jobs during the 1990s. Livingstone not only turns attention onto the economic conditions of the job market and unemployment, but draws attention to the problem of underemployment due to increasing credentialization. As the title *The Education Jobs Gap* suggests, Livingstone contends that there is an oversupply of educationally qualified candidates working at jobs below their skill level. This not only contradicts official predictions of the need for high skilled labour in the new knowledge economy, but also challenges Becker’s human capital theory assumption that more education means more income.

The notion of schooling for work dates back to the rapid socio-economic changes brought about by industrialization—a precursor to the impact of computer technologies on our time. As early as 1918, Veblen (1979) denounced the intrusion of the ‘captains of industry’ into education. In the US in the early 1900s, the state, business leaders and educators began reorganizing education to prepare the next generation of workers. With
the job market shift from agricultural to industrial work that required more specialized skills, big-business pushed for more ‘practical’ studies to keep immigrant and poor children in school longer. Thus, tracking into academic and vocational programs emerged from business sector pressure, despite resistance, particularly from unions. Under the Cooley Plan in the US, separate vocational schools were established in Illinois to prepare workers for a differentiated work market; children of professionals and managers were prepared for other higher positions in a dual track education system based on class and race. Carnoy and Levin (1985) comment on education reforms of the early 1900s as follows: “Part of the triumph of business was the standardized, tracked, “efficient” school that was segregated by class and race” (p. 11).

Around the same time, John Dewey predicted an expanded role for education, but along different lines. In the laboratory school at the University of Chicago, he spearheaded progressive education as an alternative to the traditional authoritarian school. In formulating his philosophy of experience underpinning progressive education, Dewey (1963) incorporates “discussion of the political and economic issues which the present generation will be compelled to face in the future” (p. 77); according to his idea of a democratic education based on experience, “[t]he ability to think is smothered ... by the attempt to acquire forms of skill which will be immediately useful in the business and commercial world” (p. 85). The tension between capitalism and democracy continues to this day in education.

Operating within a Marxist framework, Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) maintain that education systems reproduce the class structure of capitalist relations of production according to the division of labour. However, Carnoy and Levin (1985) see schools as set within social conflict between contradictory and conflicting forces; that is, between the “workplace and norms of a democratic society” (p. 77). Coming from the fields of comparative and international education that are aligned with neoliberal education reforms, it is not surprising that Carnoy and Levin would promote the education system as organized to shape youth into adult workers according

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to the skills and attitudes required by the labour market. However, they do shed light on
the two conflicting and contradictory forces influencing education historically: capitalist
production (reproducing unequal, hierarchical relations of the capitalist workplace) and
expanding economic opportunity and democratic rights of subordinate groups.

In his classic ethnographic study, Willis (1977) provides an insider perspective of the
everyday worlds and lives of male working class youths in Britain. They are portrayed as
active agents engaged in resistance, not just as dupes in the systemic reproduction of
class. This marks a shift from structuralist interpretations of schools to one that resituated
the school as a site of political, social and cultural struggle, and for identity formation.
Willis counters the structural determinism of Bowles and Gintis’ notion of class
reproduction through education, and contributes to understanding how capitalism works
on a human level. The working class ‘lads’ adopt an attitude of ‘antimentalism’ as a form
of resistance, seeing the world as divided between mental and manual work. He says:

The opposition is expressed mainly as style. It is lived out in countless small ways
which are special to the school institution, instantly recognized by the teachers, and
an almost ritualistic part of the daily fabric of life for the kids (Willis, 1977, p. 12).

Willis’ interviews with working class youth uncover how they construct an identity in
opposition to authority and ‘official knowledge’ that they denigrate as ‘soft
intellectualism. Their identity derives from an ethos of manual labour, is less careerist
and places more emphasis on family and leisure pursuits. Implicit in Willis’ ethnographic
account is perhaps a tendency to glorify the ‘working class hero,’ without questioning the
masculinist bias or addressing critical issues of sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia.
Subsequent unrest in Britain during the 1980s instigated pressure for Local Education
Authorities (LEAs) to develop anti-racist policies (Troyna, 1993) to counter racist
violence perpetrated by skinhead, neo-nazi, and other racist, ideologically aligned youth
groups. The rise of racist groups and youth violence coincides with competition for work
under conditions of increasing unemployment, economic recession and jobs moving
offshore. People of colour became visible targets, scapegoated as ‘immigrants’ taking
away jobs, even if born in the UK and/or descendents of families that had been there for
generations.
Revisiting his earlier study in light of the interim changes in the industrial labour market under globalization, Willis (2004) notes that as jobs for the working classes disappear, manual workers are displaced or relegated to workfare, low-wage labour, unemployment (whether interspersed or permanent), street survival, or jail. He reasserts the complex and inextricable interconnections between culture, class and politics, and the importance of understanding the counterculture in its own terms, including the practices of meaning-making in context. He says:

Through the mediations of the counterschool culture, ‘the lads’ of *Learning to Labor*, for instance, *penetrate* the individualism and meritocracy of the school with a group logic that shows that certification and testing will never lift the whole working class, only inflate the currency of qualifications and legitimize middle-class privilege. They frame the giving of their labor power in wearing circumstances without ‘career’ illusions, judging the minimum that is necessary, so avoiding the double indignity of living their practical subordination twice, once really and again in ideology. Cultural and psychic capacities so released are made available for other uses: fun, diversion, ‘having a laff’ (p. 173).

Thus, ‘the lads’ engage in both resisting and reproducing their position in society, but what separates them from the upper classes in British classist society is the possession (or lack thereof) of power and capital. Despite claims of being a meritocratic classless society (McNamee and Miller, 2004), as a former colony that retains symbolic ties with the British monarchy through the office of the Governor General, Canada exhibits vestiges of the British class structure. Power, capital and the ‘family compact’ count.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) identified a similar notion of resistance and oppositional identity formation on the part of racialized youth; to be academically successful, Black youth carry “the burden of acting white” and risk being ostracized by their communities.14 What these studies reveal is how peer pressure operates within classed and racialized communities to construct oppositional identities to white upper/middle-class society. Taking gender into account, Fine (1995) shows the differential consequences of dropping out of school for white males and females and Black males and

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14 Whereas Willis and Ogbu have both been criticized for blaming the victim, their studies on class and race (respectively) are not taken up here as ends in themselves to point fingers, but rather as contributions pointing towards self-reflexivity and empowerment in educational practice.
females; living in poverty is highest for Black females (p. 90). From her analysis, race trumps class and gender in terms of negative consequences such as poverty.

Examining educational policies geared to work and drawing on Ulrick Beck’s risk society thesis, Evans, Behrens and Kaluza (2000) compare the German and British models as two alternatives for education and the transition to employment: the structured and regulated model in Germany, and the unstructured and unregulated model in Britain. The German situation is complicated by the integration of the formerly communist East Germany with the capitalist West. West Germany has had a longstanding tradition of extended learning and training before labour market entry, with resources and public support. The German apprenticeship model involves an institutionalized ‘pacing’ of transitions through extended education. As higher education is growing in Germany (mainly in the West), there has been a decrease in applicants for apprenticeships; nevertheless, with integration, there is a backlog of applicants to enter apprenticeship programs due to applicants from the East forming the new working class. Whereas the authors focus mainly on class and ‘tracks,’ they do draw attention to gender disadvantage in both systems, but not race/ethnicity; one wonders about Turks who have lived in Germany for generations but continue to be treated as second class citizens since German citizenship is passed only through bloodlines. By contrast, Evans et al. maintain that the more ad hoc British system of vocational qualifications that emphasizes general skills over knowledge is now recognized as “a fundamental policy error” (p. 149).

In attempting to reconcile agency and structure, Evans et al. suggest the need to examine the interactions between individual action, institutional structures, and social support that affect school-work decisions. They remark that in both Germany and Britain, class inequality is reinforced and entrenched across generations, although “relatively few young people had crystallized their occupational goals” (p. 170). They conclude:

The findings suggest the need for comprehensive strategies which align with neither the highly regulated, segmented German model of the past nor with the unregulated, inconsistently supported and short-term market-led arrangements of England, if social exclusion and the destabilizing effects of polarizing life chances are to be countered. The development of polyvalent and more permeable structures, supported as a public responsibility and able to provide equitably for those at the
margins of the labour market as well as core workers, is the challenge of England, Germany and the wider European community. (p. 155)

The finding that the German apprenticeship system reinforces structural inequalities and is inducing a growing frustration amongst marginalized youth in that country suggests that the recent promotion of apprenticeship programs in Ontario schools is headed down traditional paths that no longer appeal to contemporary youth. The British model of vocational skills training has not worked either. Given the uncertainty and vicissitudes of labour markets—as exemplified by the dot.com collapse of recent years -- national ‘strategic’ planning that orients education to work seems a misguided enterprise.

3.4 Points of Departure
As Kincheloe (1993) has pointed out, the “uncritical orthodoxy” that prevails in the “invisible political dimension of schooling” does not foster democracy as an ideal, but provides “a mechanism for the social control and production of individuals suitable to the needs of the workplace” (p. 51). The anti-deficit thinking camp mounts an important challenge to the predominance of deficit thinking in school psychology and special education that perpetuates neo-colonial biases and socio-economic inequities; however, the anti-deficit thinking camp may resort to blaming teachers. This is similar to structuralist reproduction theory of the 1970s (such as Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). That is, there is a tendency to depict teachers as agents of cultural domination, rather than as transformative agents engaged in democratic and empowering practice. My study takes a different point of departure, seeking to make visible educational policies and procedures that mitigate against equity in education. As a challenge to the ascendancy of human capital theory in education policy, critical/feminist pedagogy offers a take on the meaning and purpose of schooling that emphasizes equity, social justice, empowerment, and self-transformation. Critical scholars who began their careers as practicing teachers (such as Paolo Freire, Peter McLaren, and Michael Apple) know the complexities of teaching practice. As a former teacher in Toronto, Peter McLaren (2003) states:

The dialectical nature of critical theory enables the educational researcher to see the school not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialization or a site of
instruction, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation. (p. 194)

Critical theory and pedagogy—embedded in the everyday relations of schools—provides a counterpoint to the economic reductionism that drives education, taking for granted existing conditions of the political economy, and perpetuating various forms of oppression. Whereas policy research is oriented to school administration, leadership, and outcomes-based education, my study takes the perspective of practicing classroom teachers, acknowledging them as professionals with expertise and firsthand knowledge about actual processes and embodied relations in the context of schools.

The emerging literature on the risk society problematizes risk as an organizing principle in health, social services, and criminal justice (Mythen and Walklate, 2006), but education is missing; my research addresses this gap by explicating how notions of risk and safety shape education policy. The four meta-discourses on risk discussed above (Beck, Douglas, Foucault, and Slovic) throw into question the prevailing risk management framework as the basis for labelling and tracking students. Beck’s notion of individualization in the risk society, and the Foucauldian notion of responsibilization in governmentality are useful to explicate the ways in which public services, including education, are being rationalized and reorganized to fit the neoliberal agenda.

Contesting neoliberal colour-blindness and outcomes-based education policies that ignore structural inequities, my study pays attention to axes of difference to unpack pathologizing and criminalizing processes (Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi, 2004; Schissel, 1997, 2006) in reporting regimes, as well as classing and racializing processes (Ng, Staton and Scane, 1995) that target students ‘at risk’ for school-to-work-programs. The data chapters that follow call into question the “uncritical orthodoxy” of neoliberal education policies by elucidating how the construction of students ‘at risk’ actually creates at-riskness, through imposing standardized curricula, standardized tests and reporting regimes that carry hegemonic biases. Drawing on critical/feminist praxis, the education system requires systemic change and radical democratization if it is to live up to the promise of multicultural inclusiveness, so that all students can benefit from public education.
Chapter 4
The Socio-Political Context:
Legislation, Reports and Policies

Over 30 years ago, in the UK, King, Moor and Mundy (1974) investigated the ‘education explosion’ at a time when increasing numbers of ‘non-traditional’ students were voluntarily staying on in full-time education beyond the compulsory school leaving age (usually 16 years). Based on their comparative study of post-compulsory education in western Europe (England, France, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Sweden), they state:

The comparative dimension of this work also served to refine the concept of ‘newness.’ Administrators and teachers looking for new ideas and methods often find that their proposed innovations are old stuff somewhere else, or that their pressing problems have already been analysed and experimented with. (p. 10)

Albeit with a eurocentric focus, that study stands out as an anomaly within the burgeoning field of comparative education in the use of qualitative, rather than quantitative, research methods. Based on extensive interviews, it found little material evidence of real change in the provision of education, although there was general consensus on the need for it.

Renaming lends a patina of ‘innovation’ and ‘moving forward’ that is often exposed by educators with an institutional memory, or by a somewhat probing examination. In the US, Alford (1975) coined the term “dynamics without change” to refer to a system’s inertia to change, and “the pervasive tendency to reproduce continuously the same problems and defects, year after year, despite reforms” (p. 266). Alford’s study of health care reform in the US may seem somewhat dated in its structuralist approach and its reliance on typologies at the expense of a more fluid, flexible and contingent understanding of social relations. However, his textual analysis highlights similarities over time in various reports that have lacked follow-through, but served as displays of apparent action to assuage public opinion. He posited possible reasons for this occurring, most notably the intransigence of dominant interests and the relative fragmentation or transience of community populations. Typologies can be useful in the early stages in
‘naming’ processes at work. Alford’s study reveals how social programs served as window dressing, and were then left to die out.

In my study, a former guidance counselor, Yvonne, who took early retirement, puts it thus: “I have been out of the system now for a year and a half and am unfamiliar with what initiatives the board has in fact abandoned and what they have in place now for at risk students.” This statement suggests that processes similar to those identified by King, Moor and Mundy (1974) in Europe and Alford (1975) in the US are occurring in education in Ontario, where new initiatives come and go, such that a year-and-a-half hiatus renders knowledge about administrative changes obsolete. Regarding education in the US, Jonathan Kozol states in an interview that “an agenda of innovation” is being substituted for “an agenda of justice” (Scherer, 1992, p. 9), whereby “savage inequalities” are exacerbated between schools in rich and poor areas (Kozol 1991). In the education system, keeping abreast of system changes is a primary responsibility of guidance counsellors, whose task it is to guide students through high school and to counsel them on academic matters. Guidance counsellors mediate students’ transitions across sectors, from elementary to high school, and from high school to post-secondary education or work; they assist students to formulate their time tables accordingly, and monitor their progress through high school. Although they are teachers, and members of the teachers’ federation and the Ontario College of Teachers, guidance counsellors are somewhat removed from the classroom and more closely aligned with the ruling relations of school administration. From their location between administrating and teaching, guidance counsellors have been the targets of parental complaints from non-dominant groups, for having low expectations of students, advising students to take low-level courses, and steering them into lower tracks. Working closely with the school administration, guidance counsellors are primary custodians of the official school records. With the benefit of hindsight and time for critical reflection, Yvonne expresses misgivings about the official emphasis on students at risk as “misdirected,” and as operating in an apparently ad hoc manner with a proliferation of rules and regulations that are constantly shifting. Each year, new initiatives are announced by the Ministry, such that Yvonne eventually found herself working longer and longer hours to keep on top of things and to manage her
responsibilities. Another guidance counsellor participant, Nicole, describes how the work of guidance counsellors has changed; it is now consumed largely with administrative functions of paperwork and computer work, such as data entry and fielding e-mails, at the expense of contact with students. This bureaucratization of guidance work would seem to be particularly detrimental to so-called students at risk, since they stand to benefit from personal contact and support to navigate their way through a system that seems to be streamlined for traditionally ‘academically inclined’ university-bound students. Nicole recognises that the system works well for university-bound students, but not so well for the ‘others,’ despite the official rhetoric about students ‘at risk.’ These guidance counsellors express a disjuncture between their work of administrative record keeping and the pastoral care of counselling.

As will become apparent in this and subsequent chapters, so-called new programs for students at risk have invariably been tried somewhere else sometime before, with varying levels of success. I draw on the term of “institutional capture” (Smith, 2005) to explicate how institutional discourses in text-mediated ruling relations frame everyday work activities and experiences when people are “conceptually beholden to the institutional discourse” and “treat institutional language as merely descriptive” (Liza McCoy in Smith, 2006, p. 122). Thus attention to language and naming is important, as well the use of “empty shells” into which meaning can be poured; such code words encompass multiple interpretations and social uses. Code words and acronyms therefore offer cues to the underlying ruling relations and call for close analytic scrutiny. To unpack the ruling relations at work, IE starts with people’s experience, finds evidence in the texts and practices of the institution, and follows money and/or information flows to map how the ruling relations are coordinated across local sites. Considering the larger socio-political and historical context helps to see through the window dressing, and to unpack the extra-local or translocal ruling relations. Amid the surfeit of legislation, reports and policies, this section identifies and analyzes those official texts governing education that emerged directly or indirectly from teacher/participants’ testimonies, in order to reveal convergences and divergences in the intertextuality of documents governing so-called students at risk.
4.1 The Canadian Context: Ontario

Unlike the US or Britain, Canada has no federal or national department of education. Education legislation and policy formation in Canada is enacted by the province or territory and is funded in large part through federal transfer grants to the provinces. My research focuses on policies and legislation in the province of Ontario. Although there are variations, education policies across the country look remarkably similar.

An early project specifically targeting students at risk in Canada was underway in the province of Manitoba in 1991, called the Manitoba School Improvement Project (MSIP). With funding from the Toronto-based Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, it began as a pilot project on students at risk. This source of funding from a private charity at the outset raises questions about the influence of wealthy families and think tanks over research production and policy making. Similar to wealthy family foundation projects in the US (such as those funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), the MSIP is a prominent example in Canada of a privately funded project that specifically targets ‘students at risk’ with the aim of influencing public policy, although it claims its mission to be “educational equity and social justice.” As the name suggests, the MSIP operates within a discourse of ‘school improvement’ and its website states:

[MSIP] was designed to develop and test a Canadian school improvement model that focused on supporting secondary school improvement projects intended to help students at-risk of not fulfilling their educational potential. MSIP has since evolved to become a self-sustaining organization that is recognized locally, nationally and internationally for its work as a change agent with schools. [http://www.msip.ca/links.html, accessed November 14, 2008]

The website goes on to state that the MSIP is “an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization which acts as an intermediary school improvement agency to provide financial, consultative and technical support to Manitoba public secondary schools engaged in voluntary school improvement and change processes” [http://www.msip.ca/about_us.html accessed November 14, 2008]. Although their

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rhetoric is about ‘giving back’ to students ‘at risk’ (by the ‘robber barons’ who are among world’s richest men), their involvement raises the question of the extent to which the information production capacities of private enterprise comes to drive policy making, subsuming the role of governments, and cherry-picking which groups are deemed at risk and therefore fund-worthy (and which are not). As the Canadian example attests, these private experiments precede and prime public policies. However, discretionary private funding processes that are tied to desired outcomes, benchmarks and goals within short time frames of fiscal cycles may not be sustained long enough to have an effect. When private-vested interests drive public policy agendas, there are bound to be areas that are overlooked and/or under-funded.

Instead, through selectively funding pet projects of its choosing, the MSIP constitutes a Canadian laboratory for education reform, with connections across provinces at the highest levels of education governance and across universities that are hooked up to international networks (as discussed further in Chapter 9). Thus Canadian ‘experts’ affiliated with MSIP have been involved in an educational reform agenda with a focus on students ‘at risk’ since at least 1991.

As I have argued elsewhere (2006), in Ontario, the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) formed the “blueprint” for education reform (Kerr, 2006). Although commissioned by the left-leaning New Democratic Party (NDP), the recommendations of the Commission were implemented under the right-wing Progressive-Conservative (PC) regime of Harris/Eaves that drastically restructured education in the Province while they were in power (1995-2003). In 1995, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was formed as the “cornerstone” of restructuring that established standardized testing and accountability in education (Kerr, 2006). With regard to students at risk, the Royal Commission had this to say:

The Commission strongly urges schools and school boards to identify students at risk of dropping out and to design innovative programs to help them stay in school. (1994, p. 197)

Thus, the Royal Commission explicitly ties risk to dropping out of school. The Harris/Eves government proceeded with an agenda in line with the Royal Commission,
and included major curriculum reform with a focus on the 3Rs, and established a new diploma with requirements specified in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements* (1999). The new curriculum was implemented for students entering grade 9 in 1999 and eligible to graduate in 2003; that is, the so-called double cohort year with students graduating under the old five-year diploma, and the first cohort under the new four-year diploma. When Alan King’s double cohort studies (2002, 2003) predicted that many students in the first cohort under the new curriculum were at risk of not graduating from high school, the Minister of Education established the At Risk Working Group in 2002 to make recommendations. Rather than questioning problems created by the new curriculum, the group’s recommendations aligned with pre-existing early reading and mathematics initiatives, and promoted ‘success’ for secondary students at risk through school-to-work programs.\(^\text{16}\) The official definition of students at risk in the final report of the At Risk Working Group, entitled *Building Pathways to Success, Grades 7-12* (2003), states:

The students who are considered ‘at risk’ from the perspective of both the At-Risk Working Group and the Program Pathways Work Group are defined as:

-- elementary students who are performing at level 1, or *below grade expectations*;
-- secondary students who would have studied at the modified or *basic level* in the previous curriculum;
-- secondary students who are performing significantly *below the provincial standard*, earning marks in the 50s and 60s, and who do not have the foundations to be successful in the new curriculum;
-- students who are *disengaged* for a variety of reasons, which tend to be reflected in very poor attendance. (p. 14; italics added)

It is clear from this definition that students are deemed to be at risk if they are not up the ‘provincial standard’ as measured on EQAO standardized tests. The “deficit thinking” (Valencia, 1997) in this document blames students for their lack of ‘success,’ rather than questioning biases in the standardized curriculum and testing regimes.

\(^{16}\) The At Risk Working Group, appointed in mid-November 2002, produced two reports: an Interim report (December 2002, within a month of its formation) and the final report entitled *Building Pathways to Success, Grades 7-12* (January 2003).
4.2 Safe Schools Act and Zero Tolerance

Under the Harris/Eves government, the Safe Schools Act of 2000 amended the Education Act with respect to students’ behaviour and discipline.\(^{17}\) Passed through the Ontario legislature as Bill 81, this Act is couched, not in terms of risk, but its flipside of safety. As Saltman and Gabbard (2003) point out, neoliberal discourses of risk and safety fed into the militarization and corporatization of schools in the US. The Safe Schools Act bestows greater authority on principals (and teachers) to suspend and expel students deemed to constitute a risk to ‘safe’ schools, and forces school boards to establish a Code of Conduct and dress code in conformity with the Act.\(^{18}\) Section 309.(1) of the Act specifies mandatory expulsions for certain infractions of students; it states:

> It is mandatory that a pupil be expelled if the pupil commits any of the following infractions while he or she is at school or is engaged in a school-related activity:
> 1. Possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm.
> 2. Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person.
> 3. Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner.
> 4. Committing sexual assault.
> 5. Trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs.
> 6. Committing robbery.
> 7. Giving alcohol to a minor.
> 8. Engaging in another activity that, under a policy of the board, is one for which expulsion is mandatory. (http://www.ontla.on.ca/bills/bills-files/37_Parliament/Session1/b081ra.pdf, accessed December 19, 2008)

Moreover, this legislation mandates principals to suspend students suspected of any of the above infractions, and the Minister is empowered to mandate boards of education to provide programs and courses for suspended and expelled students in segregated settings.

Whereas the provincial government enacts legislation, school boards interpret and administer the law by formulating policies and procedures, and schools in turn, interpret and implement school board mandates. Initially taking a particularly hard line, the Toronto District School Board’s Safe Schools Procedures Manual imposed a ‘zero tolerance’ policy on deviant behaviour, added to the list of misdemeanours, and

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prescribed police-school protocols to be followed. This suggests that the amalgamated TDSB is not as progressive as the former Toronto School Board was reputed to be. Zero tolerance emphasizes punishment for non-acceptable behaviours and suppresses discretion; it blurs distinctions between major and minor misdemeanours, and between repeat and first infractions. Whether rigidly applied or not, enshrined in this legislation is a shift to a disciplinary regime with an emphasis on consequences (punishment) for various transgressions with increased intervention of police authorities in schools. For expelled students, ‘safe’ schools are a euphemism for the resurgence of the old ‘reform schools’ for ‘juvenile delinquents’ of yesteryear. Safe schools pave the way for the criminalization of non-compliant students. Students relegated to the so-called Safe Schools program not only incur disruption to their schooling and social lives, but suffer stigmatization and encounter difficulty reintegrating back into regular schools that are anxious to protect their ‘reputations.’ Such students, who invariably have a precarious connection to school, may be flagged for close surveillance and heavily penalized for subsequent inconsequential infractions, thus reinforcing a self-fulfilling prophesy.

The ensuing public controversy and complaints following the passing of this Act exposed the detrimental impact of suspensions and expulsions on students with disabilities, since statistics are recorded for this group; in the absence of race-based statistics, anecdotal evidence suggests that a disproportionate number of Black students are also being suspended and expelled from Toronto schools, as was already documented in the US where similar policies were implemented earlier (Skiba and Peterson, 1999; the Advanced Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000). When learning disabled and minority students are disproportionately targeted for harsh treatment, equity is compromised. An analysis of this legislation uncovers how Canadian legislation recapitulates but lags behind the US, even when precedents exist south of the border that have already discredited the efficacy of similar legislation and policies. The concept of

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19 The TDSB subsequently abandoned zero tolerance, although it remained in place in other school boards.
20 For example, TDSB programs for suspended students include: Alternative to Suspension (A2S), Alternative Curriculum for Excluded and Suspended Students (ACE), Community Alternative Programming for Suspended Students (CAPSS) and SAFETY, and a program for students on limited expulsion, the Support Program for Expelled Students (SPES).
zero tolerance contradicts Canada’s official policy of ‘tolerance,’ and originates from the Reagan era of the war on drugs (Skiba and Peterson, 1999). It criminalizes students who do not conform to the devised standard and implicates schools in policing work.

Based on available statistics and anecdotal evidence, Bhattacharjee’s (2003) report prepared for the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) echoes US findings that disciplinary measures like the Safe Schools Act and zero tolerance policies impact disproportionately on minority students, particularly black students, and students with disabilities. Accordingly, the OHRC initiated a public interest complaint against the Ministry and the TDSB in July, 2005. In April, 2007, the OHRC ruled that zero tolerance policies emanating from the Safe Schools Act were in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code for having a disproportionate impact on, and discriminating against, students with disabilities and racialized students. A negotiated settlement was reached between the OHRC and the Ontario Ministry of Education.\(^\text{21}\) The agreed-upon Terms of Settlement consist of 57 clauses related to principles and actions to review the Safe Schools Provisions of the Education Act in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and to be consistent with the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA); for example, to remove the term “zero tolerance” from any Ministry documents (clause 9), consider “mitigating factors” and apply “progressive discipline” prior to suspending or expelling any student (clause 11). The terms of settlement also called for professional development in anti-racism, bullying prevention programs in schools, and data collection on suspensions and expulsions in conformity with privacy laws. Although “zero tolerance” per se was not explicitly written into the Safe Schools Act, it was instrumental in framing a provincial disciplinary regime oriented to removing students perceived to be ‘bad apples.’

Two subsequent bills (Bill 212 and Bill 157) constitute legislative amendments to the Safe Schools Act.\(^\text{22}\) Bill 212, the Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and

\(^{21}\) For the 57 clauses in the Terms of Settlement between the OHRC and the Ministry, see http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/edsettlementen (accessed April 15, 2007). Earlier Terms of Settlement with the TDSB was reached in September, 2005 consisting of 17 clauses; for those terms, see http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/Nov142005Backgrounder (accessed March 22, 2010).

School Safety) of 2007 came into effect on February 1, 2008. Following the OHRC ruling, this bill amended the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety, but did not entirely repeal provisions in the Safe Schools Act. It specifies policies, guidelines, and regulations pertaining to suspensions and expulsions, including the provision of programs for suspended and expelled students, appeal procedures, and transition procedures for returning to school. Bill 157, the Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe at School) of 2009 came into effect on February 1, 2010. It requires school staff to report serious student incidents to the principal and requires principals to contact the parents of the victims. However, there seems to be a lack of procedural clarity or available training for its implementation. It remains to be seen how these legislative changes will affect established policies and practices across the institution, and how long it will take to undo the damage of administrative policies emanating from the Safe School Act.

How are students’ lives negatively affected by various iterations and interpretations of the Safe Schools Act? Not only are students ‘at risk’ subjected to disciplinary measures under the Safe Schools Act, but those who experience trouble at home or with the law are also subject to other legislation. Many youth in Section 23 schools live in public housing projects or otherwise within limited economic means, and some live in group or foster homes; consequently, they fall under the provisions of the Child and Family Services Act of 1990. For youth between 12 and 17 years of age who run into trouble with the law, as was the case at the detention centre, the relevant criminal legislation is the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) of 2003. The YCJA replaced the Young Offenders Act (YOA) of 1985, which in turn replaced the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908; these laws show that concern over ‘wayward youth’ is nothing new. Debates over youth crime can broadly be categorized as polarized between ‘tough’ law-and-order solutions, and ‘soft’ youth advocate solutions that take into account the social determinants of crime in terms of class, race and gender. In its current iteration, the YCJA revised the YOA to reduce court time and the incarceration of youth in favour of non-court solutions that deploy
alternative measures.\textsuperscript{23} The intention of reducing incarceration seems sound, but in practice the YCJA downloads responsibility onto communities and requires an expanded social infrastructure; meanwhile there were drastic cutbacks to community centres, after school and summer programs, heritage language programs and other school and community ways of keeping youth engaged in positive social activities.

Official statistics show that violent crime is down, yet media showcasing of high profile cases induces the public perception of increasing violence. In Toronto, 2005 was dubbed in the media as the summer of the gun; the statistics and media present contradictory stories. Whether the statistics are misleading or sensationalist media reports distort the ‘facts,’ fear and public security can become charged political issues, especially at election time with reactionary calls for law-and-order, ratcheting up policing, and getting tough on crime. But a wakeup call came from the tragic death of a 14 year-old black student, Jordan Manners, in a school shooting at C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute in Toronto on May 23, 2007; it sent shock waves through the system, garnered media attention, and heightened concerns about school ‘safety’ and violence in schools.

4.3 The Falconer Reports

The Falconer Report was commissioned by the Toronto District School Board in response to the shooting death of Jordan Manners at school. The TDSB appointed human rights lawyer, Julian Falconer, to conduct an enquiry under the aegis of the School Community Safety Advisory Panel.\textsuperscript{24} The panel produced a 77-page Interim report dated August 28, 2007 and was subsequently granted an extended mandate to produce a more extensive Final report (respectively, Toronto School Community Safety Advisory Panel [SCSAP], 2007, 2008).

\textsuperscript{23} Alternative measures aim at reparation of harm that may include compensation to the victim (financial or personal service), apology (verbal or written), community service, educational programs, and essays or presentations pertaining to the alleged offence.

\textsuperscript{24} The three-person panel, in addition to Julian Falconer (lawyer for human rights and public interest) included Linda McKinnon (retired teacher, administrator and superintendent, with a focus on youth employment opportunities) and Peggy Edwards (with a Masters in Community Development and Social Planning, and involved in Jane-Finch community services). Linda McKinnon is the only panel member with teaching experience, albeit from years ago.
Based largely on school surveys (with 423 students, that is, 50 percent of the student population at C. W. Jefferys CI), the Interim report is susceptible to the usual critiques of surveys as the basis of research; however, the surveys were supplemented by public hearings, interviews (with 41 students), “consultations with other stakeholders” (including teachers), and TDSB Violent Incident forms were also accessed and tabulated. The report attributes the spread of crime and victimization in large part to the policy of “safe school transfers” under the Safe Schools Act. This policy moves students who present issues of discipline or violence to other schools, without assessment or intermediary programming, thus demonstrating a lack of care in intervention strategies. The Interim report refers to “these ‘walking wounded’ students, many of whom are safe school transfers, [who] have a disproportionately negative impact on the health of a school” (p. 23).

The Falconer report relies primarily on comparisons with Wortley and Tanner’s (2006) belatedly published data from 2000 using the Youth Crime and Victimization Survey conducted in 30 Toronto-area schools. A closer look shows the pitfalls of statistical comparisons across studies: first, the Toronto-area data is years old and dates from 2000; second, there is a problem in comparing incidents (e.g. stealing, assault, threats with a weapon) reported in the last year as in the Toronto-area study, with the number of incidents in the last two years at C.W. Jefferys CI. Yet the Interim report concludes:

The Panel stresses, however, that the levels of victimization observed in this study are consistent with the findings of other high school victimization surveys conducted in Toronto and other North American cities over the past decade. (p. 53)

The qualitative analysis, however, reveals social relations in the school around the time of the shooting: “lack of student discipline and accountability” (p. 40), disorder in the hallways, “disrespectful” student-teacher relations (mainly of students toward teachers); and “dysfunctional” relations among senior officials at the board. The Interim report states:

Some students have described a breakdown in the student-teacher relationship, ranging from students “talking back” to teachers, to instances of threats or assault. A preliminary review of the teachers’ consultations supports this view. There is a strong perception amongst the teachers that school administrators were unwilling to impose appropriate consequences for student misbehavior, and that administrators
were under pressure from the TDSB to reduce levels of suspensions and expulsions.

Moreover, the Interim report makes reference to a “confidential report” they submitted to the Director of Education regarding an earlier “serious incident” alleged to have occurred in October 2006 that was uncovered in consultations with teachers at the school. As a result, the panel’s terms of reference were amended to include a review of “the particular risks to the safety of female visible minority students that may exist within our schools” (p. 3). Following this revelation, an administrator and two vice-principals were apparently placed on home assignment with pay, pending a criminal investigation.

Having raised the incident of gender-based violence with no administrative follow through, and larger systemic issues beyond this one school that include problems of theft, drugs and weapons in the broader family of schools (the Jane-Finch community of North-West 2), the Interim report concluded that the Jordan Manners shooting was not an “isolated incident;” it states:

Put another way, the death of Jordan Manners should not be seen as an isolated incident, but rather as a disturbing harbinger of things to come if we, as a society do not put a stop to the ongoing neglect of significant numbers of our youth. It is a harbinger because the influx of guns in this city has, in the words of one or our community agency deputants created the following sad reality: “It is easier to get a gun than get a job. (p. 3)

Accordingly, the Interim report made four recommendations: the completion of a building safety audit at C.W. Jefferys; additional human resources for North-West 2; mediation between trustee and superintendent in North-West 2; and an extension of the panel’s work to other schools in North-West 2 (pp. 55-7).

The subsequent Final report, dated January 2008, consists of four volumes with over 600 pages, and an extensive list of 126 recommendations. Although generally supportive and respectful toward teachers, the report was criticized by the OSSTF for being alarmist by

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25 An unconfirmed comment by one of my teacher/participants in an informal conversation maintained there had been a cover up of an earlier incident involving a Muslim girl at C.W. Jefferys CI. The girl informed a teacher who informed the school administration about being accosted by a group of boys and forced to perform oral sex on them. Yet no action was taken by the administration, possibly to protect the reputation of the school. The Interim report concluded that the Jordan Manners shooting revealed systemic problems, and that gender violence was a concern; it states that “[c]oncern about sexual assault is much more prevalent among female students than male students” (p. 36).
creating a sense of ‘crisis’ and exaggerating the problem of violence and weapons
possession as pervasive across all TDSB schools; for digressing into a wish-list mélange
that could induce a paralysis response; and for advocating turning schools into prison-like
environments.

Recommendations 42, 43 and 44 pertain to the identification of students ‘at risk’ and
programs for them (that is, credit recovery and WRAPAROUND programs);
respectively, these recommendations state:

42. The TDSB should identify ‘at risk’ students based on two categories: (1)
students with high absenteeism rates, and (2) students who successfully complete
less than seven credits by the end of grade nine. The Panel recommends that in
secondary schools, students not attending class on a regular basis need to be flagged
by the classroom teachers and reported to an attendance counselor. A set of
procedures should be established with positive measures for encouraging students
to attend, including an advocate/mentor program for improving poor attendance.
Suspensions not should be considered a positive strategy in this case. School
procedures should include counselling to provide students with understanding and
workable solutions for attending school. (p. 42 of Executive Summary; and p. 449
of the Final report)

43. Guidance counselors should meet with students identified as having
successfully obtained less than seven credits so as to formulate a plan to obtain lost
credits, including enrollment in a credit recovery program” (p. 42 of Executive
Summary; and p. 449 of the Final report)

44. The TDSB should provide WRAPAROUND programming in schools where
there is a significant population of students who are jeopardy of falling outside of
the education system. (p. 42 of Executive Summary; and p. 449 of the Final report)

However, the “credit recovery program” had already been implemented two years prior to
the shooting of Jordan Manners (as discussed below and in subsequent chapters).

Reiterating recommendations in earlier reports that were not acted upon, the Falconer
Final report also calls for staffing schools adequately, and for “curriculum reform” to be
inclusive and in line with the TDSB’s Equity Foundation Statement. 26 With regard to the

26 For the TDSB’s Equity Foundation Statement and Commitment to Equity Policy Implementation, see
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/Equity_in_Education/docs/Equity_Foundation_Statement
.pdf (accessed March 23, 2010). It valiantly promotes curriculum and hiring practices that take into account
anti-racism and ethnocultural equity, anti-sexism and gender equity, and anti-homophobia and equity in
sexual orientation. Although the document itself has no date, it is signed by Marguerite Jackson, Director of
Education at the amalgamated TDSB during the main brunt of Harris/Eves reforms. The TDSB web page
with the link to this document shows “© 2000 Toronto District School Board”
violent incident that spurred the inquiry, this report contradicts itself; on the one hand, it states that there are some “alarming” statistics from C.W. Jefferys CI, and on the other, it concludes with baffling logic that C.W. Jefferys “mirrors” other schools and “may not be exceptional.” This would seem to normalize the shooting murder of Jordan Manners and the coercion of “female minority students” that allegedly occurred at the school, thus portraying such incidents as commonplace across Toronto schools with more “serious problems.” Given the media attention, to avoid stigmatizing the school or the Jane-Finch community of North-West 2 as a “lawless war zone” seems well-intentioned. However, assuaging public concerns by so readily downplaying such serious incidents of violence as “not exceptional” seems misguided, given the mandate of the report. In deflecting attention from C.W. Jefferys CI, the report leaves an impression that distorts and exaggerates levels of violence across Toronto schools, according to the teachers’ union.

Oriented to criminal justice/corrections schemata, some of the recommendations on school security in the Final report include placing police or para-police officers in schools, installing surveillance cameras, and using sniffer dogs. Police presence in schools is promoted along the lines of the “Neighbourhood Policing Philosophy” of Police Chief Blair. This ‘philosophy’ promotes police officers and citizens as ‘working together’ to solve contemporary community problems of crime, disorder, and neighbourhood decay. Framed as community ‘engagement,’ it amounts to community policing, in line with Foucault’s critique about instilling self-regulation. In contemporary reforms, the concepts of ‘engagement,’ ‘involvement,’ and ‘participation’ are evoked, often interchangeably, without taking power relations into account. In the absence of genuine sustainable collaboration, police priorities tend to dominate. Moreover, this is a contested issue within marginalized communities, some of whom resist police presence and the expansion of policing work into social roles in their neighbourhoods. Similarly, students who perceive teachers as police informants are unlikely to trust them, especially those who have had negative experiences with the police. The notion of community policing is nothing new; precedents in the US and UK show various degrees of

implementation failure. Nevertheless, reliance on community policing solutions seems to be the main thrust picked up by the TDSB in response to the Falconer reports.

Aside from criminal justice surveillance approaches and brokering police work to schools, the Final report does make an important call for a paradigm shift to connect safety with equity. In addressing the problems created by the Safe School Act and zero tolerance policies, it reiterates the OHRC ruling and recommends the dismantling of the “Safe School Culture” and the eradication of the “Safe Schools” moniker.

Recommendation 111 states:

The Panel recommends the dismantling of the ‘Safe School Culture’ and the removal of the ‘Safe Schools’ moniker from all of its policies and department designations. It is imperative that the TDSB send the clear message to affected communities that the vestiges of the past, in the form of safe school/zero tolerance initiatives have been truly abandoned. (p. 52-3 of Executive Summary; and p. 545 of the Final report)

The executive summary of the Final report identifies the contradictions in the TDSB public relations “boasts” of achievements in raising academic standards for engaged students, and the reality on the ground for disengaged students; it states:

The TDSB has made significant achievements in the area of curriculum and boasts a prestigious record in its ability to maintain academic standards amongst engaged youth. However, the crisis of confidence that hangs over the TDSB relates to the Board’s inability, thus far, to successfully address the needs of the more marginalized youth who are not engaged and who are not succeeding academically. It is, of course, a sad reality that these are the students who also represent the greatest safety concern as they are the students who are disengaged as a result of the failure to address their socio-psychological health needs.

27 See the UK report entitled Community engagement in policing: Lessons form the literature (Andy Myhill) at http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/community-policing/Community_engagement_lit_rev.pdf?view=Binary (accessed September 23, 2008). According to this report, similar models of “neighbourhood team policing” developed in the US in the 1970s to 1980s; in the UK, some form of community policing has always been in use dating back to the Middle Ages. The report states: “Most evaluation evidence comes from the US. In the UK, the review found only an evaluation of a neighbourhood policing experiment in London in the 1980s, which suffered implementation failure, and the recent evaluation of the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP). All major evaluations of community policing in the US have recognised some degree of implementation failure. The ability of police agencies to implement effective, sustained engagement at an organisational level remains unproven.” See also Nick Tilley, Community policing, problem-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing, in Tim Newburn (ed.) Handbook of Policing (Cullompton, Devon: Willan, 2003), pp. 311-339.

28 The TDSB response for 2007-2008 included the following initiatives: Safe Schools Accountability Framework; Empowered Student Partnerships (ESP); Public Education and Crime Eradication (PEACE); establishment of Safe Schools Committees; “lockdown” and “fire drill” practices; Safe and Caring Schools Weeks. Both ESP and PEACE involve ‘partnerships’ with the Toronto Police Service, and police officers were stationed in some Toronto schools.
In stressing TDSB ‘failure’ with respect to the socio-psychological health of students, the panel alludes to, but does not specifically address, how education reform that imposed standardized curricula and testing may constitute barriers that marginalize students. Thus the focus on mental health, discipline policies, and youth crime sidelines how conditions in schools may actually be exacerbated by education reform policies. The next section examines the “neglect of significant numbers of our youth” by explicating educational policies under the general umbrella of the so-called Student Success Strategy that teacher/participants raised as contributing to the marginalization of youth and acting-out behaviours in schools.

4.4 The Student Success Strategy

The Student Success Strategy, otherwise known as the Student Success Initiative or Pathways to Success, forms part of the Ontario Education Advantage, a key social and economic policy for the education of students from preschool through to postsecondary education. It includes: Best Start (pre-school), Every Child (JK-grade 6), Student Success (grade 7-12) and Reaching Higher (post-secondary). Under neoliberal education reform, similarly named policies were put in place in the US, Britain, and elsewhere that purport to boost student success at school, and to increase the numbers of students graduating from high school. The shift in language from ‘students at risk’ to ‘student success’ coincided with the shift in political power from the Progressive Conservatives to the Liberals in Ontario in 2003, as if to distance themselves from the previous regime by lending a positive spin to the negative connotations of risk, but without changing policies. As subsequent chapters reveal, the change is arguably one of semantics rather than substance, since the targeting of students ‘at risk’ runs through student ‘success’ documents.

The main aspects of the Student Success Strategy came into effect in 2005. However, the so-called Expert Panel on Students at Risk and the Students at Risk Work Group produced two seminal reports in 2003 that constitute foundation documents for the strategy: Think Literacy Success, Grades 7-12, and Building Pathways to Success,
Grades 7-12. Underneath the cover of ‘success’ in the titles of these texts, the first emphasizes failure, where students at risk are defined as exhibiting “failure to acquire literacy skills for learning, and as a consequence, failure to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma” (Think Literacy Success, p. 12; italics added); the second, as discussed above, emphasizes students’ deficiencies, such as being at the basic level, below the provincial standard, or disengaged from school. With the change in political power to the Liberal government, the literacy agenda continues with the numeracy agenda, and the production of Leading Math Success—Mathematical Literacy Grades 7-12 by the Expert Panel on Student Success in 2004. Despite the panel’s name change from the Expert Panel on Students at Risk to the Expert Panel on Student Success, and the purported political shift from ‘students at risk’ to ‘success for all students,’ this report describes “a vision” and makes “recommendations to help create a brighter future for Ontario adolescents who are currently at risk of leaving high school without the mathematics skills and understanding they need to reach their highest potential in the twenty-first century” (p. 3); moreover, a simple word count shows that the term ‘at risk’ appears more than 250 times in this text.

Reiterating and building on polices initiated under the former Harris/Eves regime, literacy and numeracy skills remain top priorities for so-called students at risk, as they are also in the US, UK and elsewhere. In Ontario, these priorities are actually further ensconced through the establishment of a new government department, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) established in 2004, shortly after the Liberal Party came to power, with one of the commissioners on the Royal Commission on Learning being appointed as the first Chief Student Achievement Officer and CEO.29 Despite the name change and positive spin on ‘success,’ the Student Success Strategy remains primarily geared to students deemed to be at risk of dropping out of high school that developed amidst concerns about high school drop-out rates and also rising youth unemployment. In its iteration at the time of my teacher interviews, the Student Success Strategy, as picked up by the TDSB, was comprised of the following components: Pathways; Learning to 18;

29 Avis Glaze was one of the commissioners of the NDP’s Royal Commission on Learning (1994). She held the position of CEO/CAO of the LNS until her retirement in 2008. The LNS works closely with the EQAO. Thus a similar education ideology is embraced, and continues to be implemented, across all three major political parties: NDP, PC, and Liberals.
New initiatives; and Credit recovery. As I have discovered over the course of my study, the so-called Student Success Strategy is at best a work in progress, and at worst a chimera of shifting and changing policies, with new ones being rolled out and others disappearing from the main list at the Ministry website from time to time. For example, the expansion of cooperative education was later added to the mix, and by March 12, 2010, credit recovery no longer appears on the list. Within the context of standardized curricula and testing (overseen by the EQAO), these various components are paradoxically promoted as providing ‘customized learning opportunities.’ The main components of the Student Success Strategy are explored below.

4.4.1 Pathways

It is important to distinguish ‘Pathways to Success,’ as promoted by the Ontario Ministry of Education from the community-based program called Pathways to Education that started in 2001 at Regent Park in Toronto to encourage youth to stay in school and aspire to post-secondary education. The Ministry’s Pathways to Success redefines ‘success’ with a primary focus on school-to-work transitions. A precedent was initially developed by the TDSB under the name Campaign 70 that was announced in November 2002. As the name implies, Campaign 70 aimed to address the needs of the 70 percent of students who would not proceed to university; thus, the target group was specifically non-university bound students, and the program actively promoted alternate postsecondary destinations. As later picked up by the Ministry and applied to the rest of Ontario, the policy promotes flexible ‘pathways’ in the education system to different postsecondary routes or career destinations: university, college, apprenticeship, or work. What seems to

30 The Pathways to Education Program began at the Regent Park Community Health Centre as a program for youth living in this low-cost housing project in Toronto with a high percentage of immigrant and visible minority groups. From humble beginnings with local volunteers, it has attained considerable renown for raising achievement levels of youth. At its website, a cost-benefit analysis of the Pathways program conducted by the Boston Consulting Group claims other benefits, including increases in quality of life, social cohesion and integration of immigrants, and decreases in rates of teenage pregnancy, violent crime and property crime (http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/boston.html accessed March 13, 2009). Given that the study was conducted by a private consulting firm without standards of academic peer-review, these claims must be viewed with caution. The Pathways Program has since expanded into other communities in Ontario and Quebec, with donations and endorsements from wealthy families, financial institutions and corporations (http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/donors.html March 13, 2009). Whether a trademarked program can simply be transplanted into different contexts remains an open question; however, the basic premise of local community initiatives to supplement school-based efforts is pertinent here.
be operating here is a process of ‘responsibilization’-- that is, providing information and offering ‘choices,’ and then making students responsible for decisions that have long-term effects on their lives and futures. The critical question is whether the new regime is increasing opportunities or increasing bureaucracy, as was raised with regard to NCLB legislation in the US by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (Sunderman and Kim, 2004). As in the US, Britain, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia, the choices actually amount to a push for vocational workplace training; for example, similar policies oriented to business and industry in the Australian education system are explicitly named as Vocational Education and Training (VET). The study by Evans, Behrens and Kaluza (2000) discussed in the previous chapter links learning to work in the risk society, and shows that apprenticeship programs in Germany and work programs in Britain reproduce class structures. Rather than education being a transformative process that offers a range of experiences inclusive of alternative ways of knowing and being in the world, ‘pathways’ in Ontario secondary schools may serve primarily to sort and select students; for students deemed not to be academically-inclined or university-bound, the pathways proffer skills training with an emphasis on basic workplace literacy and numeracy skills.

### 4.4.2 Learning to 18

Learning to 18 raised the school leaving age in Ontario from 16 (which it had been for 50 years) to 18 years of age. The *Education Amendment Act, Learning to Age 18* of 2006 (Bill 52), received Royal Assent on December 20, 2006. This legislation applies specifically to students who would leave high school before graduating, and not to students who graduate as expected. Under this legislation, courts can impose penalties on students over the age of 16 who are convicted of truancy; the courts can also impose sanctions such as fines on parents convicted of not sending their ‘children’ to school, and on employers convicted of hiring 16 to 17 year olds during school hours, unless they are legally excused. Moreover, school boards are required to provide a range of ‘learning opportunities’ for this age group.

Preceding the Ministry’s announcement about Bill 52, Oreopoulos (2005) of the CD Howe Institute made an economic argument for the benefits of raising the legal school leaving age to prime the public and influence government policy accordingly; thus the
push appears to have come from the corporate lobby.\textsuperscript{31} When the policy was announced in 2005, the Ministry earmarked the substantial sum of $1.3 billion to its Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative. Within the context of scarce educational resources, this raises questions: how is this money suddenly available, and where does it come from? One possible explanation lies in the larger socio-political concern about rising levels of youth unemployment; that is, to reduce youth on welfare and unemployment rolls, and to generate savings by reducing welfare payments and making parents responsible for their ‘children’ for two more years. In this legislation, a number of punitive consequences enforce students staying in school. First, students could face punitive consequences including fines of up to $1000, probation orders, and suspension of drivers’ licenses. Tying student attendance in school to drivers’ licenses requires changes to the \textit{Ontario Highway Traffic Act}. This follows some jurisdictions in US that implemented similar policies earlier, with dubious success: US research indicates similar measures in some states increased the average length of schooling by only six to eight weeks, and decreased the average dropout rate by 1.2 to 2.1 percent (Oreopoulos, 2005). Moreover, it is not possible from statistics to attribute even these small gains to a particular policy without taking into account other contributing variables.

Further enforcement measures in Ontario include imposing fines of up to $1000 on parents if their children are not in school, and on employers for hiring people under the age of 18, once programs are in place in schools for this group. These measures arguably criminalize students, and draw on families and employers as enforcers, without addressing the fundamental issues behind students dropping out of school. In this light, Learning to 18 seems to be an oxymoron: the solution to dropout problem is raising the school leaving age!

According to one of the teacher/participants in my research, despite opposition from teachers actually working with the students affected -- who advocate for 16 to 18 year olds to decide for themselves whether or not to stay on in school -- the provincial OSSTF initially supported raising the school leaving age and only belatedly retracted that position once the details of Bill 52 were released. In other legislation, a person is considered to be an adult at age 16 and therefore capable of acting as such; for example, in the YCJA. The *Learning to Age 18* legislation requires bureaucratic monitoring and reporting of attendance and involves the police and the courts in enforcing school attendance. Moreover, it appears to put the cart before the horse in enacting the legislation before programs and courses are in place. Educational programs that students perceive as relevant and appealing would encourage them to stay in school voluntarily, with no need for coercion or punitive consequences.

### 4.4.3 New Initiatives

In order to develop programs for students forced to stay in school longer, ‘new’ initiatives were encouraged in various pilot projects at school boards across the Province. Most of these involve some form of ‘partnership’ with business, industry or other education providers. The result is an amalgam of add-on programs with impressive-sounding names and acronyms that appear on Ministry and school board websites: Lighthouse projects, Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM), and dual credits. However, these new initiatives are offered at specific sites for a limited number of students and thus not accessible to all students. Whereas there is nothing new about pilot projects, such as Lighthouse projects, funding is increasingly tied to conformity with Ministry priorities and predicated on producing desired ‘outcomes’ or ‘results’ within short time frames to maintain funding.

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Launched publicly in 2006-2007, for example, Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) involve collaborating with business and community partners in an industry sector, and provide high school credits as well as certifications recognized by the sector. These programs entail bundling a minimum of six courses together that are geared to the needs of the industry sector. The first five ‘majors’ were in arts and culture, construction, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture. At the commencement of the 2008-2009 school year, the Ministry announced the expansion of its SHSM program by adding on two ‘new’ majors (Community Safety and Emergency Services, and Information and Communications Technology), bringing the total to 14. However, not all the majors are offered by all boards, and they are only offered at certain schools. Across the TDSB, which is the largest school board in the Province, only six majors are available at the time of writing. One of the two new majors announced (Community Safety and Emergency Services) is not offered by the TDSB, and is available at only two schools across the Province. This raises issues about accessibility to these programs. The fanfare of change and choice seems to be a delusion as suggested in Alford’s “dynamics without change.” Each SHSM is promoted as leading to any of the four pathways, including university; for example, health care to nursing, and construction to landscape architecture or civil engineering. In reality, the road from a SHSM in construction to civil engineering would be long and arduous, since professional certification is tied to university entrance requirements for highly competitive engineering departments, with a prevalence of grade 12 mathematics and science courses and high marks. The claims may mislead students and misrepresent these programs that specifically target students ‘at risk,’ and are intended to re-culture attitudes toward “non-traditional pathways.” The use

33 As of September, 2008, according to a web-post at the Office of the Premier, Specialist High Skills Majors are available in Agriculture; Arts and Culture; Business; Community Safety and Emergency Services; Construction; The Environment; Forestry; Health and Wellness; Hospitality and Tourism; Horticulture and Landscaping; Information and Communications Technology; Manufacturing; Mining; and Transportation (http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/Product.asp?ProductID=2429, accessed September 5, 2008).
34 The TDSB offers Arts and Culture; Business; Construction; Hospitality and Tourism; Horticulture and Landscaping; Information and Communications Technology (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/SHSMcomplete.pdf, accessed September 5, 2008).
of the term ‘majors’ more commonly associated with university programs lends status to what are effectively skills training programs.

Dual credits are promoted as allowing students to earn double credit for a course outside the school curriculum, such as a college or university course taken while at high school, thus earning both a high school credit and a post-secondary education credit. Whereas students may become inspired by reaching ahead to higher levels of post-secondary education, in practice, students who are behind in credit accumulation may not benefit from these arrangements. Various arrangements exist for dual credits with universities, colleges and other education providers. An example is the HSBC Steps to University Program at the University of Toronto. This is a partnership between the university and the TDSB, but there is also a corporate sponsor, the HSBC Bank. Steps was initially established in 1992 by the Transitional Year Programme (TYP) at the University of Toronto to provide a means for students without formal entrance requirements to make the transition to university. In the case of the HSBC Steps to University Program, students take a university course in their high school but have access to university resources, such as libraries and student facilities. In 2008-2009, this program was offered at ten Toronto high schools, as well as at the Regent Park Community Health Centre (Pathways to Education). An example of a college arrangement is that between Mohawk College and the Brant Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic District School Board (BHNCDSB), as well as the Grand Erie District School Board. These outside providers are relied upon to enrich the school curriculum in lieu of real curriculum change; they may also open the door wider to corporate intrusion in education. The problem with dual credits is a creeping privatization through outsourcing educational services to private agencies that could undermine public education. Private interests -- such as opportunities for recruitment, advertising the company name, or disseminating brand loyalty -- raise

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35 The participating schools in 2008-09 were Bloor Collegiate Institute, Emery Collegiate Institute, George Harvey Collegiate Institute, Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute, Monarch Park Collegiate Institute, North Albion Collegiate Institute, Parkdale Collegiate Institute, West Toronto Secondary School, Western Technical-Commercial School, Westview Centennial Secondary School (http://typ.utoronto.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=56, accessed March 24, 2010).
questions about who actually benefits from such public-private partnerships? What’s the rush to ‘reach higher’?

4.4.4 Cooperative Education

Whereas SHSMs and dual credits may not be offered at all schools cooperative education is. The expansion of cooperative education evokes links with the world of work and business/corporate intervention in education. It seems primarily intended to offset high failure rates in the new curriculum, although framed as increasing ‘choices,’ without substantially changing the problems created by education reform and the credit system. There seem to be two countervailing tendencies: closing vocational schools, and yet expanding cooperative education; thus cooperative education is arguably the contemporary form of vocational training that fuses outsourcing education to business and industry with using schools as training grounds for the labour force. Whereas cooperative education was originally conceived by teachers as bridging the gap between schools and communities, and as providing educational experiences about various professions and/or occupations, the establishment of an official cooperative education curriculum shifts the emphasis onto instilling corporate norms and values, and providing on-the-job workplace training. In co-op, students earn high school credits by participating in job placements where they job shadow in a business while receiving in-school instruction on resume writing, practicing for interviews, studying the job market, acquiring ‘good’ work habits, and developing networks in the community for future employment. There is nothing new about cooperative education which has been included in the Ontario curriculum for course credit since 1989. However, the curriculum changed under education reform, as outlined in Cooperative Education and Other Forms of Experiential Learning: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Secondary Schools (2000). Cast as ‘experiential learning,’ cooperative education fits into the mix of other forms: work experience, job shadowing, job twinning, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and other school-work programs (p. 3); thus it is closely aligned with and feeds into the ‘pathways’ of apprenticeship and work. The expansion of cooperative

education in the Student Success Strategy means increasing the number of co-op credits that can count towards the high school diploma.

The cooperative education curriculum involves a combination of class work and work placements, with teachers and workplace supervisors jointly in charge of supervising and evaluating students. The question raised by Hyslop-Margison (2005) seems relevant here: “How can contemporary vocational study [or co-op] be integrated into public school curricula without impacting negatively on the intellectual autonomy and democratic citizenship fostered by liberal learning?” (p. 6). In his historical and philosophical analysis, it is possible to bridge the divide by integrating a traditional liberal arts education with vocational education by, for example, including an examination of the economic and corporate climate. This kind of critical democratic vocational education is quite different from skills training for the job market. Rather than a narrow emphasis on management priorities and expectations and workplace safety, it would include a history of management-labour relations, the labour movement, and worker rights. How the official curriculum gets picked up undoubtedly differs, depending on cooperative education teachers and the network of work placements that they utilize.

4.4.5 Credit Recovery and Credit Rescue

The fact that ‘credit recovery’ received a significant influx of funding under the Student Success Strategy indicates it to be a Ministry priority, with the appointment of Student Success Leaders in boards of education, and Student Success Teachers in some schools. The focus of credit recovery is on credit accumulation in grades nine and ten, a problem that was identified early in Alan King’s (2002, 2003) Double Cohort studies. The official difference between ‘credit recovery’ and ‘credit rescue’ as defined by the TDSB reads as follows:

Students may enroll in a credit recovery program designed for a group of students if one is offered at his or her school through a referral from the Student Success Team. Credit recovery provides opportunities to get a credit without repeating the entire course. N.B Credit Rescue provides support to students by way of intervention to attempt to rescue the credit before the student fails.

Thus, credit recovery applies to a credit regained after a course has been failed, that is, retrieving the credit retroactively (perhaps by students completing missing work or doing substitute work), whereas credit rescue intervenes to provide support for students struggling in a course before having failed it. Credit rescue is not dissimilar from special education support that has been in place in Ontario since the 1980s, providing resource room help to students while enrolled in a course. Credit recovery resembles upgrading courses previously offered at summer school to students who failed a course, although night school and summer school programs were curtailed by budget cuts. Whether or not a student can take advantage of the ‘new’ credit recovery program depends on whether it exists in the school. The TDSB annual report (2005 and 2006) highlights its accomplishment in closing the ‘achievement gap’ by having developed and implemented credit recovery in over 60 schools (of 108 secondary schools, excluding Section 23 locations).37 In its unequivocally positive public relations message, the TDSB gives no indication of how ad hoc credit recovery appears to be from the point of view of frontline teachers (as discussed in the next chapter).

Is the plethora of disparate programs and ‘options’ that comprise the so-called Student Success Strategy window dressing without substantive change to the education reforms of the Harris/Eves regime? When in power, the Harris/Eaves government cut courses and programs to the bare bones, cut teachers and school support staff, closed vocational and commercial schools, closed technical facilities in schools such as automotive mechanics, and closed and/or filled swimming pools with concrete. The Student Success Strategy seems geared to preventing students from dropping out — the fallout of more than a decade of erosion and restrictive policies and practices — but it continues along the same path and may actually be building on the reforms. From my intertextual analysis above, it is evident that students ‘at risk’ are embedded in an extensive web of texts in the form of legislation, reports, curriculum documents, and ministry and school board policies. As in the study by King, Moor and Mundy (1974), it would seem that the project of moving

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from traditional elite education to mass universal education remains erratic and incomplete, and that the Ontario initiatives are not working towards that purpose. Instead, notions of risk and safety – in spite of belated amendments -- remain written into official documents and policies; they arguably generate racializing and classing processes that reproduce socio-economic inequity. Subsequent chapters unpack further the ideological code inherent in policies and practices that prevent genuine change, and that present ongoing barriers to students labelled at risk.
Chapter 5
Credit Recovery: “For gods’ sakes give them credits”

My analysis starts from the experiences of practicing teachers who participated in two-person and individual interviews. From teacher/participants’ accounts of their work with students ‘at risk’ in various sites, disjunctures were identified and followed up with a textual analysis. The texts selected in the previous chapter arose directly from these interviews, and provide a context for teacher statements in this chapter. Related texts are analyzed in subsequent chapters to unpack further how the ruling relations operate.

During the following exchange between Jerry and Kwesi, fault-lines between teacher/participants’ experiences in teaching practice and official policies governing students ‘at risk’ indicate the operation of the ruling relations. In this segment of dialogue, disjunctures emerge: first, as confusion with regard to what the policy actually means; then, as discrepancies in how the policy is picked up in different contexts; and finally, differing interpretations between teachers and school administrators culminates in outright resistance. The dense segment of dialogue between Jerry and Kwesi is reproduced below:

Jerry: I think [the Student Success Strategy] is a renaming of Pathways for Success, and I would say it has to do with—there’s three parts that I can see. Not being in a regular school I don’t know how it plays out there; but where I am [in Section 23], credit recovery, credit rescue means for gods’ sakes give them credits.

Kwesi: Perfect! That’s all it is!

Jerry: So that if a kid gets 35 [percent] and above -- has failed a course -- the first thing you would do is a credit recovery, and then, for some, if they failed -- you know they had a 78 [percent] or whatever it was, and they had never completed the course -- then its called credit recovery. Or is that credit rescue? Credit rescue is what it is called. And the third part is that they’ve changed all the requirements for Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, of the compulsories, so now you can do them all in co-op.38

Kwesi: Or --

Jerry: No, they could all be co-op. They just changed it!

Kwesi: From what I see happening at our school -- I think it’s run differently in different places.

38 These Groups are subject groupings that are part of the compulsory credits required for graduation from high school. The credit requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) are explained in the next chapter.
Jerry: Oh, it may be.
Kwesi: In our school for example, a kid could be registered in my Civics course, right, which is open, and then all these things happen: they start to disappear from class, um. This kid may have done something good at a particular time of the year, and then a credit recovery person will come to me and say, “Is it possible, he has done this or that -- you know -- can you give them the credit?” And then in the end, I’ve understood, [they’re] nudging me to give them the credit. Before the kid at C.W. Jefferys [Collegiate Institute]

Jerry: Oh, [Jordan] Manners!
Kwesi: -- it was, “Give them the credit for gods’ sakes, they’re 14 years old, what’s wrong with that?” Now, they’ve changed. No rules, no accountability for students, and that’s why all these things are happening. So now, they changed their tune. So now it’s all in a way, “Can you give them work, different work?” -- that kind of thing.

Jerry: I get a mixed message -- so it is credit recovery now -- are we just trying to go from 35 to 51 [percent pass mark]? So I’ve been told on the one hand to give them a certain amount of work, that if they complete it, they all get 51, and then move on to something else. Or is it they’ve missed all this, get that [missing work done], and then they get a real mark?

Kwesi: Well they were also saying—again after the murder [of Jordan Manners]— that if the kid gave you one piece of work, and that work was really good -- I think they said a pass mark -- then you can pass them on the basis of that. They were citing the Falconer document. They were misinterpreting that document. So they were saying to us -- this is our vice principal: “If the due date was October and the kid submitted in May, you have to accept it.” Everyone said, “No way!”

This segment points to policy documents and program initiatives integral to the ruling relations: the Student Success Strategy (or Pathways), the credit system (credit recovery and credit rescue), cooperative education, and the Falconer Report. How documents get picked up or activated and practiced is central to IE. Jerry intimated that the Student Success Strategy, also referred to as the Student Success Initiative, is a renaming of Pathways to Success, which raises the question: Why the name change? As I have suggested in the previous chapter, renaming can be used to create the buzz of something new by repackaging existing policies and practices. Jerry identifies three parts of the Student Success Strategy: credit recovery, credit rescue and the expansion of cooperative education. As explained in the previous chapter, the Student Success Strategy is the keystone of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s policy for students ‘at risk.’ However, teacher/participants raise questions about what student ‘success’ means. Similar to the relevant US documents, subsequent chapters show that ‘success’ in Ontario policies is limited to ‘outcomes’ measured by performance on standardized tests and graduation
rates. Based on their day-to-day relations with students, these teachers bring a different view than officials far removed from the classroom. For them, a student ‘at risk’ is not an abstract reified category or a mere statistic, but a person and an interpersonal relation that is integral to their everyday world. Teachers’ defiant resistance to the vice-principal’s directive is taken as a marker of the operation of the ruling relations, as registered unequivocally in Kwesi’s comment that everyone said, “No way!” Where does this fit? How is it hooked up with the ruling relations?

5.1 The Source of Credit Recovery/Credit Rescue

In the exchange between Jerry and Kwesi above, teachers at Kwesi’s school challenged the activation of the document, known as the Falconer Report, by the vice-principal. Having described the tension between the school administration and teachers about the source of policies pertaining to credit recovery, Kwesi went on to state the follow-up action of teachers, and to articulate their alternative interpretation, which contradicts the interpretation of the administration:

Then some of us decided to take up the official document. [We said], “Okay, let’s see what this goddamn document says.” And then, two of us volunteered to analyze the document itself. We came back and we told them, “This document says you can set a due date for your assignments; this document says you don’t have to pass them; and what’s more important, this document leaves everything to the discretion of the teacher. So, if anybody’s trying to tell you otherwise, they are following some other message that they got somewhere else.

Differing interpretations of the Falconer Report show how documents get taken up from different standpoints. In the account cited above, tension arises between the vice-principal’s interpretation, that frames teacher flexibility as giving students free rein with indefinite deadlines, and teachers’ interpretations, that flexibility is left to the teacher’s discretion and depends on the circumstances. These contradictory interpretations not only demonstrate the hierarchical divide between frontline teachers and school administrators, but also teachers’ protection of professional autonomy with respect to marks and classroom management. Teachers assess and award marks in their courses, and marking constitutes a significant part of teachers’ backstage work (Kerr, 2006). Amid an excess of reports and rules, it is not surprising that teachers would contest an apparently arbitrary mandate from an unknown source when it affects an integral part of their everyday work,
both inside and outside the classroom -- one that changes the rules governing student assessment and evaluation.

As explained in the previous chapter, the Falconer Report consists of an Interim report and a Final report. At the time of my interview with Kwesi and Jerry (on December 8, 2007), only the Interim report (dated August 28, 2007) had been released; the Interim report looked into circumstances surrounding the shooting death of Jordan Manners at school three months earlier. It drew attention to the problem of school discipline, painting a picture of students running the school and administrators abdicating their responsibility for imposing “appropriate consequences” on students; it identified lack of administrative support as undermining teachers’ authority. In the case of teachers working in regular schools with some students ‘at risk,’ this supports Kwesi’s interpretation of the importance of clear boundaries or limits, being consistent, and holding students accountable for their work. My reading of both Falconer reports (as described in the previous chapter) is consistent with Kwesi’s interpretation that teachers’ professional discretion is respected, and there is no mention whatsoever of teachers having to accept assignments whenever students choose to submit them.

In another dual interview with teacher/participants (Melanie and Caroline), Caroline posits a different source of credit recovery, that is, the idea came from what Section 23 teachers were already doing. She believes it is a good idea but poorly implemented by the TDSB across the system for teachers in regular schools. Based on her experience with credit recovery in Section 23 schools, she comments:

I think credit recovery came out of people like us at Section, who were doing modules. And I think that’s where the Board got turned on to the idea, that we could recover [credits]. You could start with [one teacher] and it could continue with [another teacher], and then be finished up by, you know, Bob. And be valid [as a credit]. ... And we worked in tandem quite a lot around the kids.

Caroline and Melanie concur that credit recovery cannot work in a one-size-fits-all model, mandated from above; as Melanie puts it, “people aren’t okay with this.” A teacher-led initiative that grew out of the context of Section 23, with smaller classes and flexible schedules, cannot be transplanted into regular schools, with large classes and fixed periods.
The actual source of credit recovery/credit rescue policy announced in 2005 is unpacked in Chapter 8 through tracing Ministry texts which show mismanagement at the upper levels of educational governance. In this light, it is not surprising that teachers (and administrators) might be confused about the source and the official interpretation of the policy.

5.2 Credit Recovery in Practice

According to the official definition outlined in the previous chapter, credit recovery applies to supports for upgrading a course that a student has already failed, whereas credit rescue provides supports for students experiencing difficulty while they are enrolled in a course. As explained there, credit rescue and credit recovery are not new. What is new is a credit recovery/credit rescue regime that amounts to a mechanism for salvaging credits, summed up by Jerry as “for gods’ sakes give them credits.” However, teachers see it differently: “teachers don’t give credits; students earn credits;” this distinction is important for students’ to have a sense of accomplishment, to discover what they can do, and to engage actively in the process of learning. Moreover, another teacher/participant says, “Success means different things to different students; it does not mean a B average for everyone.”

Across teacher/participant interviews, there was confusion regarding the official distinction between credit recovery and credit rescue such that the terms are often conflated or used interchangeably. This confusion may indicate miscommunication to teachers about the policy. There also seems to be considerable variation in how the policy has been picked up across different sites. Whereas teacher/participants agree in principle with the notion of credit recovery as enabling students to obtain credits, they disagree with how the policy was implemented. Alluding to the constant onslaught of ‘new’ policies that are inadequately thought through from the standpoint of practitioners, Caroline asserts the need for local decisions by teachers in how credit recovery is implemented; she says, “Teachers need to put their foot down and say, “this [credit recovery] is a neat idea, slow down and let us do it!”
As previously stated, the problem of students falling behind in the accumulation of credits in grades 9 and 10 was identified early on under Ontario’s new curriculum, in King’s (2002, 2003) *Double Cohort Study*. Rather than questioning the new curriculum or the credit system, credit recovery focuses on ‘helping’ individual students to accumulate credits in grades 9 and 10 subject areas. As such, it appears to be a stop-gap measure without making any real systemic adjustment to the original plan. The irony is that while curricula were tightened and placed under centralized control, credit recovery promotes a contradictory tendency towards loosening objectives and ‘standards’ through ‘flexible programming.’ This band-aid solution seems to be a flashpoint for teachers/participants. The issues raised about “real” marks (Jerry, above) and “valid” credits (Caroline, above) suggest that teachers find themselves caught between conflicting obligations: passing students in their courses, versus upholding institutional standards of credits.

Teachers seem to be objecting to such a policy for several reasons: first, assignments are not only ‘outcome’ evaluation tools for marks but more importantly, graduated learning experiences such that if a student falls behind, then subsequent assignments would likely suffer as well; second, learning to manage time and deadlines is necessary for students to pursue higher level courses and post-secondary education; third, an institutionalized double standard of deadlines for some but not others flies in the face of fairness, with implications for classroom management; and finally, the devaluation of teachers’ work disregards the reality that accepting assignments at any time not only involves extra work for classroom teachers, but also interferes with their ability to pace their own work and to meet their obligations of reporting at designated times.

As an experienced visible minority teacher, Kwesi insists on high expectations for students and values professional discretion for teachers. Rather than slipping into laissez faire, teacher discretion might mean taking mitigating circumstances into consideration on a case by case basis. This is consistent with the position of parent advocates of students ‘at risk’ who lobby for teachers upholding high expectations and being fair.
From his location teaching in a Section 23 school, Jerry expressed confusion over which is which with regard to credit recovery/rescue, and then got the two terms the wrong way around in terms of the official definition. Jerry’s confusion may indicate the meaninglessness of the distinction in practice within Section 23 contexts, where credit recovery/rescue involves cobbling together credits from incomplete or failed courses in past years, as well as courses interrupted mid-year due to students’ withdrawal from regular schools and entry into a Section 23 location. In regular schools, whether or not a student can take advantage of the credit recovery program depends upon whether it exists in the school. The TDSB annual report (2005 and 2006) highlights its accomplishment in closing the ‘achievement gap’ by having developed and implemented credit recovery in over 60 schools (of 108 secondary schools, excluding Section 23 locations).39 The positive spin given to credit recovery by the TDSB conceals how ad hoc the policy appears to be from the point of view of frontline teachers.

Arguably, the “mixed message” Jerry hears indicates hasty policy implementation and a breakdown in communication with teachers when the policy was introduced. In the absence of a clear distinction, it seems that the policy has been picked up and implemented differently in different contexts.

As Kwesi deduces, in the absence of clarity, credit recovery appears to be “run differently in different places.” As a teacher in a small Section 23 location, Jerry performs that work himself, in addition to his regular teaching duties, whereas larger schools serving students ‘at risk’ may have a Student Success Teacher, or what Kwesi calls a ‘credit recovery person,’ assigned specifically to enact the policy. How the additional resources provided for credit recovery/credit rescue are utilized depends on the local context. Melanie refers to the “Success Room” in her school that seems similar to what used to be called a detention room for students when they are sent out of class. Rather than being a punitive space, however, Melanie describes the benefit of Success Room as a counselling space for students to ‘recover;’ she says:

When I’m sitting in Success Room, I’ve got grade 12s. I had a grade 12 girl who came in today and she’s out of her class for two classes to recover, because she’s got such conflicts going on with her teachers. ... That’s what’s so beautiful about the Success Room here at the school; you do get that time to spend with three or four kids where you can all interact. Actually, when I end up talking with that one kid one-on-one, it ends up being that often the other two or three will s-l-o-w-l-y make their way into the conversation, because again, you’re sort of giving advice and kind of opening up the conversation ... Many of the kids are never asked an opinion. You know, like [students wonder], “What do you mean you actually want me to participate? Okay, I’ll participate in this conversation”—and they’ll jump right on it. I mean their jump is a bit less of a jump and more of a circuitous route in, but it’s still this desire to participate. This suggestion that all at risk kids are apathetic, I mean that is so wrong. But they have to be given the opportunity to talk. And it often doesn’t come in a classroom.

To both Jerry and Melanie, the official distinction between credit ‘recovery’ and ‘rescue’ seems artificial in practice. Melanie’s account centres teacher-student relations in schools and teaching practice. She seizes a teachable moment that arises out of the immediacy of interaction in which students actively engage and participate. Taking students’ concerns seriously about what is going on in their lives, Melanie describes the situation as one of both teaching them and also learning from them: “That’s what I feel I’m unpacking every day, is my own learning with them of how to be present and authentic and true.” For her, teaching is a relation predicated on trust and caring, rather than delivery of a pre-determined curriculum, or the production of results. This defies arbitrary distinctions between instruction and counselling, curriculum and pedagogy, and teaching and learning.

5.3 Teaching Up, Not Dumbing Down

Based on their day-to-day relations with students, these teachers bring a different view than officials far removed from the classroom. A student ‘at risk’ is not an abstract reified category or a mere statistic, but a person and an interpersonal relation that is integral to their everyday world. Both Caroline and Melanie focus on encouraging students to believe in themselves; they ‘teach up’ to students by bringing a passion for their respective subject areas and adapt the curriculum to be both challenging and relevant to students’ experience. For example, Melanie talks about how she gradually introduces Shakespeare to students in her grade 9 applied-
level class, with the expectation that they are capable of the academic challenge of language analysis. She describes the process as follows:

I’m taking up a couple of periods before I move them into Shakespeare, because I know I need to psych them for that. ... Teaching Shakespeare to grade nine applieds -- you don’t want to dumb it down for them; you’re wanting them to feel like they’ve experienced something that is as academically challenging as anybody else, so that they come out feeling smart. Because they know smart people do Shakespeare in English. ... So basically you give them the plot of the whole play, but it’s about language analysis. So really does it matter that they don’t actually read the whole thing? No, as long as they know what it is to actually delve into the Shakespearean language. So you take bits, you take maybe four or five soliloquies from the play, and for the very first experience, you have to walk them through it; by the last one they’re actually having to take it apart themselves and figure out what it means. But, they already know the plot, and they already know the characters, and they’ve already seen the movie, and all that stuff, but they’re still having to dissect the language. And from, you know, step A to step D, they’ve gone through it with the hand-holding, and then less, then a finger and a nail, and by the end, they’re on their own. And doing that in a one month period, they come out feeling that they’ve experienced A Midsummer Night Dream at an applied level, probably with a better understanding of the play than a grade 9 academic student, sort of struggling along on their own in the old ways.

If students come away “feeling smart,” because “they know smart people do Shakespeare,” then they stand to gain confidence to pursue a future quite different from the one predicted and mapped out for them by ‘pathways.’ Rather than dumbing down, Melanie provides access to ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) through Shakespeare, while also linking the traditional curriculum to students’ lived experience of popular culture, such as rap lyrics. As any teacher knows, hooking students into the joy of learning for its own sake, and making a difference in students’ lives, are intrinsic rewards of teaching, despite the trials and tribulations of classroom teaching practice and top-down administrative control.

Caroline takes a similar approach that math and science blocks are due to not understanding the words, or jargon, rather than lack of ability. Based on a similar language/arts approach of teasing out three or four main ideas or concepts, she finds that students at risk can -- and do -- rise to the challenge, because “they [students] want to know they did real math and science.” Rather than the mainstream view of bringing students at risk up to ‘standard,’ these teachers take a different approach of finding ways
to awaken students’ curiosity so that they can experience genuine success that matters in their own terms.

5.4 The 75:25 Split

Standardized curricula that may work for straight-ahead high-achieving students do not work for all students; teachers working with troubled, discouraged or otherwise marginalized students use their discretion in responding to particular students and contexts. The same curriculum or lesson simply cannot be repeated with different groups, such that teachers “have to work a bit harder” by responding to the particular context of students in the class. Caroline says:

We’re busy as hell. We are super-busy. At risk teachers have to work a bit harder than our colleagues, because I can’t give the same lesson I gave yesterday. When I did credit recovery at summer school, I had a morning class and an afternoon class. And there was no way I could teach the same curriculum [to those two different groups].

Working harder involves the self-reflexive practice of finding creative ways to enliven curricula for the particular students in a class, but also coping with additional bureaucratic reporting procedures and paperwork. Rather than using the language of ‘at risk’ students, some teacher/participants refer to themselves as ‘at risk’ teachers, as if they find themselves at odds with the mainstream system. Similarly, Chloe considers herself at times “at risk of a meltdown;” she describes how a student excused to go to the washroom escalated when the student got caught by a hall monitor, who brought in the school administrators, who embroiled her in paperwork:

One morning this week, I had in the hall monitor who called the principal, the VP came down with subsequent paperwork, and I received two phone calls from hall monitors. I am at risk of a meltdown sometimes.

Instead of the school administration dealing with the incident in the hallway and leaving Chloe to teach her class, she faced distractions with phone calls interrupting the class; when teachers lose focus, the class goes array.

Being at odds with the mainstream system and in the absence of administrative support, teachers rely on each other as a “support system.” Melanie says, “Well, you can’t work in school with ‘high needs’ ‘at risk’ kids—whatever label it ends up being—if you don’t
have a pretty strong support system.” However, teachers are not a monolithic group. Caroline sees herself as an advocate and part of a community of teachers working with students at risk, in what she refers to as a 75 to 25 percent split; she explains:

I would say that 75 percent of us work together in support of the kids, ’cause these are really fragile kids, and then about 25 percent [of teachers] that are flippant and seem to have this attitude that [the students are] not going to go anywhere, so why try all that hard? -- they don’t teach up, they don’t give them opportunities to sort of succeed, they watch movies with them, give them junk food, and so on.

Melanie concurs: “On our staff, I would say it’s about the same: 75, 25. That’s a pretty good [estimate] -- which is probably what every school is really.” Seeing themselves as working with “fragile kids” requires extra attention and care, such as carefully choosing words so as not to reinforce negative self-defeating messages that students receive from parents, guardians, and the 25 percent of “flippant” teachers. Recognizing that no one is perfect all of the time, Melanie explains:

That whole idea of having to be so careful with your words, I mean people get tired, right. We’re human beings, obviously teachers can’t be perfect every minute of every day, but the awareness that if I am careful, it will come back to me in spades you know (laughs), because if you do take care, the kids respond!

As described during the exchange, the distinction in the 75:25 split is between teachers who orient their practice to authentic caring student-teacher relations, and those who orient their practice to delivering standard curriculum and marks. For the former, standard curricula, marks, and reports are viewed less as absolute directives, but in and through self-reflexive practice that forefronts the impact on students’ lives. Rather than subscribing to the ‘deficit’ mentality, these teachers hold onto hope and the promise of bright futures for the students they teach, and exercise professional discretion in their work. In so doing, a tension across teacher/participant interviews emerges that revolves around reconciling objective ‘standards’ with care for students’ lives.

5.5 Chloe’s Dilemma

Rather than objectifying students, Chloe describes the ethical dilemma she faces in reconciling her concern for a student with professional obligations towards reports and ‘standards.’ After receiving a staff memo pertaining to early interim reports for students at risk, she deliberates between boosting a student’s morale early in the course, and
alerting the student (and the administration) to signs that she may not pass the course in the end. As risk discourses intimate, predicting the outcome ahead of time and acting according to that prediction belies the reality on the ground that is less certain about ‘outcomes.’ In Chloe’s words:

> Ironically, yesterday, I sat looking at a memo to staff from our school indicating that early interim reports for students in grades 10 to 12 need only be issued to at-risk students. I sat there thinking, “Does that mean those with indicators of weak attendance (which could lead to lack of ‘success’ i.e. failure) or those who, due to low levels of literacy may not be at grade level? Do I de-moralize the student who is making the effort but is misplaced level-wise in terms of her capacity to read and write? Do I mark her ‘unsatisfactory’ -- she [being a] student who is trying hard? Or, do I mark her work ‘satisfactory,’ but find a comment that would indicate her area of weakness?” I did the latter and probably this suggests that I am likely to pass her despite the fact that she may not come close to grade level. That’s me, my decision based on my belief system... . Is it ethical?

This segment illustrates teachers’ struggles to reconcile system reporting requirements with students’ needs and aspirations. Early interim reports flag students predicted to fail a course as “unsatisfactory.” In her deliberations, Chloe’s decision is oriented to giving the student the benefit of the doubt so as not to “demoralize” her early in the course. However, not flagging the student has consequences; if the student does not pass the course, the teacher may be held accountable for not having identified the ‘problem.’ The implication of her decision is that she will likely have to pass the student at the end of the course, though the student may be ill-equipped to cope with the next grade level. Chloe’s dilemma highlights an inherent contradiction in the professional ethics of the Ontario College of Teachers, between a duty to students and upholding externally formulated standards; it is a particularly poignant example of the tension between an ‘ethic of care’ and ‘accounting logic’ (Kerr, 2006).

5.6 Learning to 18: Co-operative Education

In the opening exchange (above), Jerry drew attention to cooperative education as the third part of Student Success/Pathways used to increase credit accumulation rates along with credit recovery and credit rescue. Thus, he identifies the expansion of cooperative education as part of the regime to salvage credits. Caroline questions the Learning to 18 part of the Strategy which extended the school leaving age in Ontario to 18 years (as
discussed in the previous chapter). Caroline says that she personally challenged the union leadership for supporting Learning to 18 against the wishes of “all of us trying to teach ‘at risk’ students” because the fallout will be on teachers, especially in the absence of stimulating and relevant courses and programs for youth. She says:

> All we’re going to end up with are kids who failed five times now, being angrier. So statistically, this year, right now, they’ve [Ministry] come out with a statistic that we have a higher graduation rate and greater success in literacy, and that it’s working. No! This is just statistics -- they didn’t solve the problem. [Students] are staying longer because it’s the law, and they’ll be fined.

Instead of being optional, raising the legal school leaving age forces students to stay in school longer, and this was actively opposed by teachers of students ‘at risk;’ moreover, the validity of recent statistics of “higher graduation rates” and “greater success in literacy” are called into question. Aside from fines, teacher/participants mention “truancy officers” who “find kids and bring them back [to school],” but laugh at there being only one truancy officer assigned per quadrant in the TDSB who is responsible for a cluster of several schools. At Caroline’s school that serves students ‘at risk,’ programs are “geared to employment—there’re no academic courses there,” and “we have working programs at our school; we pay the kids to do certain types of jobs.” These working programs, she says, are run by a teacher “from industry, with a tech certificate” who has a different approach to education than teachers who have graduated from university programs.  

Whereas credit recovery is oriented to grades nine and ten, it seems that for 16 to 18 year-olds, education is reduced to workplace training that involves various kinds of school-industry arrangements. In order to keep students ‘at risk’ busy and accumulating credits in the higher grades, one of ways to “solve the problem” is the expansion of cooperative education.

As a teacher in an alternative school, Tessa also discerns the ascendancy of co-op as a means used by a Board that “just wants to get graduation rates up.” She recommends that someone should do a study of Board statistics on the so-called success rate, which she

40 Caroline’s reference to a “tech certificate” means an alternate teaching credential that qualifies people without a university degree but with work-related experience to teach in specific vocational or technical skill areas, such as machine shop or automotive mechanics.
contends creates a false impression; in her experience, the success rate seems to be “no better than years ago.” Thus, Tessa questions the validity of the statistics as not reflecting her experience. This disjuncture marks the operation of the ruling relations; the issue raised by teacher/participants about statistics is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Tessa laments the phasing out of alternative schools that were started and operated collaboratively by teachers, and were founded on a philosophy that offered “real alternative programs” and different pedagogies for “high needs kids” who do not fit in regular school programs. Tessa questions the educational value of co-operative education and maintains that the expansion of cooperative education is popular because it provides “full funding, though students are not in school, and co-op teachers visit work placements after about 20 hours of class work.” In particular, she criticizes the “push for full-time co-op.” Tessa says:

Students can now get half their credits in co-op. If co-op led to apprenticeship or something, okay, but most lead straight to low-level jobs in the workplace. ... The curriculum [specified] in Discovering the Workplace, and Navigating the Workplace has some good aspects, but it’s mostly trivial; they’re mickey-mouse programs! So now there’s also ‘full-time co-op,’ and ‘paid coop’ -- which is even worse because employers, like Shoppers Drug Mart and Value Mart, think that if they’re [students] paid, they can ask them to do whatever they want, like moving boxes around.

In Tessa’s view, cooperative education is a disservice to students because, she contends, “they are not getting an education.” Like other teacher/participants in this study, Tessa aspires to provide students with an education beyond skills training for the workplace. As a long-standing teacher in alternative schools, she finds the pressure towards cooperative education an anathema; co-op delimits education to vocational training, and holds low expectations of students. However, Tessa maintains that a vocational orientation need not preclude a critical and democratic education. As Tessa emphasized, forcing the existing cooperative education curriculum on alternative schools goes against the grain of their philosophy to such an extent that she may be forced into early retirement.

From teacher/participants’ experiences in practice, it seems that the Ministry policies paradoxically on the one hand, raised the school leaving age to 18 years of age, and on the other, incorporated on-the-job training into schooling through the expansion of
cooperative education, in order to increase graduation rates under its Student Success Strategy.

5.7 The Union/Management Divide: Credit Integrity

Just as Jerry and Kwesi (above) deliberated over whether or not credit recovery represents a “real” mark, Melanie and Caroline, questioned whether a credit ‘recovered’ can be justified as valid. The question of whether a credit recovered should count the same as a regular credit was a recurring issue for my teacher/participants. The tension arises in reconciling placing students first, and taking professional responsibility for course credits. Pressure on high schools to uphold standards also came from universities, where some spokes-people criticized schools for producing poor quality or ill-prepared students; one possible explanation for this may actually be that universities have not adjusted to the four year diploma such that students enter university with one year less of high school than they did prior to education reform. Nevertheless, in the context of regular classrooms, a double standard applied to students flies in the face of fairness: for some, maintaining high expectations, valid credits, and real marks; and for others, being pressured to be ‘flexible’ by lowering expectations and/or evaluation criteria. This double standard pertains broadly to ‘successful’ students in the one hand, and students ‘at risk’ on the other.

In order to reconcile competing obligations, one suggestion is to have separate credits or course codes for credits recovered. In Caroline’s words, “The provincial OSSTF, they’re pushing to have credit recovery credits, not ESN C1P [regular course codes]—whatever. And it should be signaled on the transcript that it was a credit recovered.” The credit system in Ontario is discussed in the next chapter.

Indeed, my follow up textual analysis shows that the OSSTF opposed credit recovery. They pointed to the confusion created by the Ministry when it announced the credit recovery initiative in 2005, before making guidelines available (in 2006). This lag would account for teachers’ confusion and fogginess about what credit recovery and credit rescue mean, thus leaving a vacuum to be filled by teachers’ and/or schools’ interpretations. Differing interpretations seem to have placed classroom teachers at odds
with the school administration and/or the student success teacher, as happened at Kwesi’s school. The OSSTF raised concern about an adversarial climate created in schools by the credit recovery policy, suggesting that the problem is widespread. In public, the OSSTF shied away from confronting the Ministry about their obsession with accountability and better-looking retention and graduation rates; instead, they promoted the concept of “credit integrity” as a positive alternative, and formed a Credit Integrity Work Group. In February 2008, this group produced a final report that emphasized distinguishing between “real” and “artificial” success, and itemized the following guiding principles:

- All credit courses shall be taught by certified teachers with access to board-employed, specialized professional support staff to improve school success;
- All marks, grades, and credits shall be true and accurate indicators of student achievement;
- The Subject Teacher shall have the right and responsibility to give a failing grade, including zero, to a student when warranted;
- The Subject Teacher shall be respected and supported by school administrators as the primary evaluator of student achievement; and
- The Subject Teacher shall be consulted when school administrators are considering a mark change for a student.

These principles amount to an unequivocal re-assertion of teachers’ professional expertise in student evaluation. The OSSTF report also clarifies the relationship between the credit recovery teacher and the subject teacher, by quoting from a Ministry Memorandum which states: “both the Subject Teacher and the Credit Recovery Teacher should be encouraged to consult with each other as needed in order to provide the maximum support for the student. It is understood that this [consultation] is voluntary and will be in direct relation to the availability of time and resources.”

In response to a series of articles on credit integrity that appeared in the OSSTF on-line journal, Education Forum,41 Ben Levin (2008a) responds to the teachers’ union

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position. Levin venerates extra-local large-scale standardized tests, citing as a reliable source of data the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) overseen by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Levin states:

Moreover, other countries—and some Canadian provinces—do better than Ontario in this area. Several provinces have graduation rates above 80 per cent from four-year high school programs. Many countries have secondary school graduation rates of 85 per cent or more. Most of these countries—Germany, Norway, Ireland and Denmark, for example—fall well below Canada in the literacy and numeracy performance of students at age 15 on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). If Canadian students are among the very best in the world at age 15, should we not also expect to have one of the highest graduation rates in the world? Yet we don’t. (http://www.osstf.on.ca/Default.aspx?DN=7416,7367,493,355,365,Documents, accessed October 19, 2008)

Comparing Ontario unfavourably to other jurisdictions based on PISA rankings, but without providing substantiating citations, Levin makes explicit the Ministry’s goal of increasing graduation rates as the incentive behind credit recovery and credit rescue. This article overlooks the broader context of problems arguably created by the education reforms of the former Harris/Eves regime; those policies involved educational restructuring to raise ‘standards’ through introducing new standardized curricula, and instating province-wide standardized testing as the cornerstone of educational accountability under a new agency, the EQAO (Kerr, 2006). However, the EQAO is not mentioned in Levin’s article; a possible reason for this conspicuous absence may be to deflect attention from its inflammatory history, especially in a journal for teachers, who opposed the establishment of the EQAO from the beginning. Instead, Levin identifies a discrepancy between PISA results and high school graduation rates. Rather than questioning the validity and reliability of these measures, the inconstancies between them, or the incomparability of these data that assess different things, Levin proceeds to discredit the “reliability” of teachers’ day-to-day evaluation; he claims:

Research has shown that school assignments and marks are subject to error; ... Tests, exams and grades may also lack reliability—that is, students’ marks would

However, his article did open dialogue on the complex issues involved and the competing obligations of teachers. At the time, Cowans was vice-president of OSSTF District 13, Durham.

42 At the time of writing this article, Ben Levin had returned to his academic position at OISE/UT, having been a former deputy minister of education working under Ministers Gerard Kennedy, Sandra Pupatello and Kathleen Wynne. He was the deputy minister responsible for credit recovery as explained in Chapter 8.
differ significantly if they did the same work on more than one occasion. (ibid; italics added)

However, there would seem to be a logical explanation for why student marks might differ on different occasions: learning over time and through practice. In berating teachers’ evaluation work, Levin relies on the stock phrase “research has shown,” without citing any sources.

Using intertextual analysis to track down the sources for his claims, an earlier related comment was found, where Levin (2005) states: “We also know that many of the tests teachers use to award marks are of doubtful validity (Black & William [sic], 1998)” (p. 86, italics added). Following up on the source cited, Black and Wiliam are primary authors of the ‘black box’ series emanating from King’s College in London that influenced assessment and evaluation reforms in the UK and elsewhere. Black and Wiliam (1998) emphasize incorporating “formative assessment” to supplement “summative evaluation.” Formative assessment refers to providing helpful advice, comments, or diagnoses to facilitate the learning process, whereas summative evaluation refers to quantitative grading based primarily on formal timed tests. Black and Wiliam set about determining what was happening inside the so-called black box of the classroom, as a mysterious space about which policy-makers have limited knowledge. In line with organizational theory and managerial systems engineering, inputs fed into the box are expected to generate outputs in terms of improved test results. Control over the ‘black box’ became the object of educational reform, to standardize teachers’ evaluation.

However, Black and Wiliam do not go so far as to discredit teachers’ marks as of ‘doubtful validity;’ rather, they propose greater use of formative assessment to raise standards of achievement. Instrumental in devising the reform frame of ‘raising standards

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43 Paul Black is professor emeritus, Department of Education and Professional Studies, King’s College, London. Dylan Wiliam is currently the director of the Learning and Teaching Research Center at the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the US (discussed further in Chapter 9, section 9.3.2). Prior to his position at the ETS, Wiliam was a professor at King’s College, and then Deputy Director and Professor of Educational Assessment at the Institute of Education, University of London (see http://www7.nationalacademies.org/bose/Dylan_William_Bio.html, accessed February 26, 2010). The King’s College Formative Education Group was instrumental in developing educational assessment theory, policy and practice internationally. This King’s College group produced the ‘black box’ series on improving student learning through formative assessment (see http://shop.gl-assessment.co.uk/home.php?cat=383; accessed November 19, 2008).
of achievement’ through testing regimes, Black and Wiliam paradoxically impugn national assessment policy in England and Wales for obstructing the learning function of formative assessment; they assert that the political emphasis on high-stakes external testing has induced an over-emphasis on summative marks and grades, and an under-emphasis on formative assessment. However, an ideological circle of circular reasoning is evident in which the conclusions are built into the presuppositions; formative assessment is geared to improving summative evaluation, such that testing regimes trump learning in the broader sense and become the raison d’être of education reform.

The cited article of Black and Wiliam (1998) contains two references to validity; the first reference states: “Indeed, the conditions under which formal tests are taken threaten validity because they are quite unlike those of everyday performance. An outstanding example here is that collaborative work is very important in everyday life but is forbidden by current norms of formal testing” (p.148); and the second reference states: “Directions for future research could include a study of the ways in which teachers understand and deal with the relationship between their formative and summative roles or a comparative study of the predictive validity of teachers’ summative assessments versus external test results.” (p.148). In other words, the particular study cited calls for more research into the ‘predictive validity’ of teachers’ evaluations, rather than declaring them to be lacking in validity, as Levin surmises.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, the severe consequences and sanctions that can ensue over marking when differences arise between teachers and officials is nowhere more glaringly portrayed than in the tragic suicide of Keith Waller in England in 2007.44 In this widely-publicized case, an issue over marking became construed as a reflection of general incompetence, and Waller felt that he was subjected to bullying and victimization from senior government officials in the school and from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), such that he took his own life. The equivalent to the national testing regime and league tables in Britain is the EQAO in Ontario that administers standardized

tests, and monitors the education system. However, unlike Ofsted, the EQAO itself does not yet conduct direct school inspections or have contact with teachers, but operates from afar through the publication and dissemination of standardized test data. These relations of ruling will be unpacked further in Chapters 7 to 10.

A question arising from my analysis of the disjunctures between everyday teaching and official texts is how academic research gets picked up and re-circulated internationally as ‘expert’ authority in ways that appear to be out of step with the experiences and institutional memory of teachers on the ground. Selective reliance on the authority of research in Levin’s writing (2005, 2008a) effectively turns the blame onto teachers and their faulty marks for the lack of ‘success’ of the Ministry’s new curriculum that was implemented under education reform. Whereas the purpose of formative assessment in providing non-evaluative learning opportunities and feedback seems worthy, in my experience, students have internalized the overemphasis on marks in the credit system to such an extent that marks have come to constitute a form of currency; thus, like unpaid labour, students are reluctant to do work for which marks are not assigned, especially students deemed to be at risk. If the allocation of educational funds can be taken as indicative of which priorities are valued, then there is a contradiction between rhetoric and reality. For all the talk about formative assessment, government funds have not been dedicated to it; rather, money has poured into standardized testing conducted through the EQAO (Kerr, 2006). In his effort to bring teachers on board with the Ministry’s policy of credit recovery, it seems rather doubtful that Levin (2008a) is cognisant of the day-to-day relations in the black box of the classroom, or the increased workload on teachers, when he cajoles them to remember the purpose of their “higher calling” amidst the “pressures of daily life.” Given that teaching is largely a feminized profession, this carries a disconcerting ring of gendered condescension.

The controversy over credit recovery raises questions: What is the purpose of evaluation and assessment? What are ‘true’ or ‘accurate’ measures of student learning? Policy-makers seem to be pushing for contradictory tendencies: on the one hand, standardizing credits and evaluation; and on the other, loosening up in the interests of improving the system-wide optics of credit accumulation and graduation rates. The next chapter
proceeds to unpack the credit system and graduation requirements to discover how students are written up in the official records of the institution, and how the credit system in Ontario works to stream students into one of four destination ‘pathways.’
Chapter 6
The Credit System: Pathways to ‘Success’

In the previous chapter, teacher/participants raised concerns about credit recovery/rescue and cooperative education policies of the Student Success Strategy as salvaging credits in ways that create a tension for them between care for students and upholding academic standards. Jerry characterized the credit recovery/rescue as “For gods’ sakes give them credits.” For teacher/participants working with students ‘at risk,’ maintaining high expectations is important in order not to delimit students’ future options in life, and this requires exercising professional discretion on an individual basis. This chapter proceeds to unpack institutional barriers to diversity through a textual analysis that explores how the credit system actually works to sort and stream students.

6.1 The Credit System

Since students ‘at risk’ are officially defined as those who have fallen behind in credit accumulation, it is helpful to unpack how the Ontario high school credit system actually works, and how it may work against students labelled at risk. The credit system is explained in the TDSB annual publication, Choices. The title of this document suggests adherence to rational choice theory that is dominant in microeconomics and promoted by think tanks such as the RAND Corporation; it implies that individual students are equipped and able to exercise unfettered free choice in the marketplace of course selection. However, as explained below, courses are bound by restrictions and hooked up with post-secondary institutions or workplace destinations; the credit system is to a large extent driven by the rules and regulations of university and college entrance requirements, or by the essential skills deemed desirable by the employers, as defined in the Conference Board of Canada’s Employability Skills Profile. The assumption is that early in high school, students have a clearly defined career goal that governs course selection. But not all Ministry courses are offered in all schools. For a course that is

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45 At the time of writing, the current version of Choices 2008-2009 was posted on the TDSB website at [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/course_descriptions_secondary_school/docs/understanding.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/course_descriptions_secondary_school/docs/understanding.pdf) (accessed October 2, 2008).
offered at a particular school to run, a minimum number of students must enrol in that course, and a course may be closed due to over-enrolment. Thus, choice may be restricted by a range of managerial administrative decisions that are tied to school funding.

In Ontario, a course credit is defined as 110 hours of instruction in a Ministry-approved curriculum which carries a Ministry-approved course code. A final mark with a passing grade determines whether or not credit is awarded for a particular course. A Ministry-approved course is identified by a 6-digit code, for example, MPM2D1 as shown in Figure 6.1: Reading Course Codes. From the course code, one can read the subject area and course title, grade level, course type (or level of difficulty), and certain special program designations. The first three positions are normally letters and are referred to as the course descriptor. The first character identifies the major subject area, while the second and third characters identify the course title. In the example, MPM identifies the course as in the subject area of Mathematics, and the course title as Principles of Mathematics. Thus subject disciplines constitute the first order of categorization in course descriptors. This vestige of traditional academic disciplines runs counter to a major shift brought about under education reform, towards competency-based skills training as amenable to measurement and favoured by employers.

The fourth position indicates the grade or language level. For grade level, 1 means grade 9; 2 means grade 10; 3 means grade 11; and 4 means grade 12. Language level designations use the letters A, B, C, D or E, for levels 1 to 5 respectively. In the example, 2 indicates grade 10. The fifth position identifies the course type, and some course type designations differ for the junior and senior grades. The most common types for grade 9 and 10 are: P for applied and D for academic. In the example, D indicates that the course type as academic. For grades 11 and 12, however, the most common types are: U for university; M for university/college; C for college. Other course types apply at any grade

47 The Ministry controls a “Trillium List” of Ministry-approved textbooks that interpret curriculum documents for use in schools. The lucrative market of the textbook industry is an integral part of the intertextual circle and is governed by “rigorous evaluation in accordance with the criteria specified in Section 4 of Guidelines for Approval of Textbooks” (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/trilliumlist/, accessed April 9, 2010). Since textbook production is a competitive financially speculative activity with high rewards, writers are unlikely to diverge from the regulatory curriculum documents that govern evaluation and approval processes.
Figure 6.1: Reading Course Codes

Ministry approved course title
M=Math
PM=Principles of Math

Grade or language level
1=regular credit course
2=Grade 10

Course type
D=Academic

Credit differentiation
1=regular credit course
level to courses that carry little to no weight for most post-secondary education institutions. These types tend to be referred to as “bird courses” and are tied to the apprenticeship or work streams; for example, O for open; E for workplace; N for non-credit; K for alternative non-credit; and L for locally developed compulsory courses.

The sixth position indicates some special designation, such as the program, credit differentiation, or focus of the course. It may be a number or letter. The most common is 1 which means a regular single credit course, as in the example, and most courses in the Ontario curriculum are worth one credit, unless otherwise stipulated. Other special designations include the following: 2 means introductory; 3 means enriched; 4 means extended French; 5 means French immersion; 6 means gifted; 7 means International Baccalaureate; 8 means ESL; 9 means special education; 0 means advanced placement; A or B mean Part 1 (0.5 credit) or Part 2 (0.5 credit) respectively towards a single credit. In the case of health and physical education courses, F means female, M means male, and 1 means co-educational.

It is clear from a perusal of these course designations that course codes from grade 9 onwards are closely tied to the main post-secondary destination pathways of university and college, through fifth position codes of D and P (in grades 9 and 10), and U, M or C (in grades 11 and 12). The word ‘pathway’ should not deflect attention away from the effect of traditional streaming that is actually encoded in the credit system, as explained above. Whereas the former credit system streamed students into academic, general, and basic (or vocational) courses based on level of difficulty, in the new credit system, streams are explicitly defined by future post-secondary destinations. Moreover, it is not the ‘academic’ stream, but the lower status streams that have been re-named, perhaps to make them more palatable to the public. The special designations (in the sixth position) seem to single out particular programs or exceptionalities that tend to be associated with especially positive or negative connotations; differentiation codes exist mainly for programs revered for academic success, high standards and status (e.g. International Baccalaureate or gifted), and those commonly stigmatized as having lower standards and status (e.g. special education or ESL).
The rigidity of regulations entrenched in the high school credit system appears to emulate the structure and complexity of undergraduate university calendars, leaving little freedom for students to explore and discover themselves at this early stage in a lifetime of learning. Many courses have prerequisites that are specified as pre-conditions for enrolment and must be completed before commencing a course, especially in mathematics and science. Course prerequisites mean that entry into U courses in grade 11 normally requires having taken a D course type at the academic level in grades 9 and 10. For example, MCR3U (Math, Functions and Relations, grade 11, university) has the prerequisite of MPM2D (Math, Principles of Mathematics, grade 10, academic). A student who took MFM2P (Math, Foundations of Mathematics, grade 10, applied) would not have the prerequisite necessary for admission into MCR3U. Thus, the streams are quite discrete and become increasingly differentiated throughout high school, through the background knowledge deemed necessary for success, as specified in prerequisites, co-requisites, or recommended preparation courses. For students to plan ahead in terms of their graduating courses, they are expected to work backwards from the long term goal of a career destination. This means that streaming for life begins in grade 9.

6.2 The Simulacra of Crossover or Transfer Courses

It is possible for students to switch destination-related streams by taking upgrading courses, referred to as ‘crossover’ or ‘transfer’ courses. This may appear to offset criticism of ‘pathways’ as being the equivalent of streaming. To switch streams from grade 9 applied to grade 10 academic, it may be recommended that students successfully complete a ‘crossover’ course of up to 30 hours of Ministry-defined extra course work. To switch streams between grades 9 and 10, the crossover requirement is not mandatory; however, the approval of the principal is required. Transfer courses are required to switch destination-related streams between grades 10 and 11, and between grades 11 and 12, and are assigned partial credit values of 0.25 or 0.5. Since most courses in the Ontario curriculum are assigned one full credit value, the problem with these partial credits is that they cannot be topped up to count towards a full credit with other courses on the student’s transcript; thus they do not contribute towards meeting the graduation requirement of 30 course credits. For example, if a student wishes to transfer from grade 10 applied English
to the grade 11 university preparation English course (for which grade 10 academic English is a pre-requisite), he/she is required to take a transfer course to upgrade to the academic level: ENG3K (English Transfer, College Preparation to University Preparation), with a credit value of 0.5. Social studies courses tend to be less specific in terms of prerequisites, such that any social studies or English course at any level of difficulty may suffice. The obstacle occurs in English, mathematics and science courses, which are the ones most frequently stipulated in university entrance requirements. Thus university ‘preparation’ begins in grade 9. According to media reports, the pressure on parents to steer their children in the right direction seems to be filtering back even earlier, to elementary school.

In practice, transfer courses in mathematics (and science) are more difficult to achieve because of the assumed cumulative nature of the subject matter, constituting an impediment which becomes amplified at each successive grade level. Without senior level mathematics and science credits, students limit their options in terms of applying to many of the more competitive university programs. The fact that the Ministry advertises transfer courses, complete with course codes and course materials, creates the illusion that switching streams remains a possibility and is flexible throughout high school. However, the actual availability of these courses reveals a different reality. For a course to run in school requires a minimum number of students because of funding arrangements. On-line courses can be another route for some students to obtain these credits. However, in my experience, not all students function well in the absence of face-to-face instruction and support, or possess the independent work habits or technological know-how to succeed in the go-it-alone vacuum of an on-line environment. Moreover, not all students have ready access to a computer. These courses may be offered intermittently. For example, the only crossover or transfer course offered in 2008-2009 by Virtual High School (Ontario) is ENG3K.48

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48 Virtual High School (Ontario) is a private school that offers courses from grade 9 to 12 at a cost of $499 (or $399 for a transfer credit). It boasts of some 33 on-line teachers ([http://www.virtualhighschool.com/vhs_calendar/index.asp](http://www.virtualhighschool.com/vhs_calendar/index.asp) accessed October 18, 2008). Functions normally performed by a guidance counsellor are apparently performed by a ‘secretary,’ including applications to post-secondary institutions.
Thus the simulacra of course codes for crossover and transfer credits in Ministry documents conceals barriers in terms of actual accessibility and practicality; students get stuck in the destination-stream determined upon entry to high school in grade 9, thus restricting their post-secondary options. In short, supreme effort and persistence are necessary to switch streams and overcome the barriers imposed by the credit system. A small percentage of underachieving students may be touted as ‘success stories,’ when they are able to muster such ambition and determination. But in my experience in Section 23, tentative or discouraged students find the obstacles too much to undertake; more rebellious students balk at a system of ‘dummy’ courses, dead-end ‘O’ courses, and partial credits designed for them. Refusing to play along, these are the students likely to drop out of school, either passively or actively, if they are not provided with graduated, well-paced, and challenging curricula that afford opportunities to experience success and gain confidence. Melanie’s description in the previous chapter shows how she achieves this through her approach to Shakespeare in her English grade 9 applied classroom. A guidance counsellor teacher/participant with pseudonym Nicole explains that in her experience, changing streams happens only rarely after grade 9. She says:

So what I see in terms of changing streams, in grade 9, if you’re taking a grade 9 applied English you actually can take the grade 10 academic English, without having to do a transfer course in the summer. Not for the math. But by grade 10, if you are in the applied stream, in English, math or science, then you must take the transfer course. In grade 9 it’s only for the math. It’s not recommended that they do it [switch without the crossover course], but they do have the right to. So a student -- let’s say had a 95 percent average [in applied] -- teacher suggests to student, “Oh, I think you would be successful in the academic stream; it will be a little bit more demanding, but you’re responsible, you’re committed, you’re going to come up to the challenge.” We let the parent know, and the kid will go in the academic stream and try.

I don’t have a lot of changing paths after grade 10. I have seen some kids going from applied 9 math or English [into grade 10 academic], but it’s mostly 9 to 10, here [at this school], not 10 to 11. So I suspect that at the end of the day, the kids who are in applied will remain in applied and go to college ... Those who’ve made — let’s call it -- a decision that was not the proper decision for them in grade 9, it [the change] would happen in grade 9 right away. After that, I don’t think there’s a lot of movement in between. A lot of kids know they want to go to college and that’s fine. There’re a lot of good programs at college.

That those students who did not make “the proper decision” in grade 9, especially in mathematics, may be stuck with the decision suggests that determinism is built into the
credit system. While acknowledging that not all students may be interested in pursuing the academic route of university, and college programs offer a variety of practical hands-on educational opportunities, the question arises as to whether the ultimate destination of ‘choice’ can be put down to ‘appropriate’ placement in grade 9, or to barriers along the way; for example, the increased difficulty of changing streams as time goes on; or low expectations of peers, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and significant others; or inherent biases in Ministry-approved courses. In any event, this analysis of the credit system suggests a destination-driven approach to education that streams students upon entry to high school with little movement thereafter. In this system, without a clearly defined long range career goal, students may be placed at a distinct disadvantage in making the deliberate plans and choices that are expected of them. A credit system tied to ‘pathways’ suggests schooling for work as a top priority of Ministry policies. Given these reforms, it would not be surprising that students internalize this priority. However, it is unlikely that well-informed students would ‘choose’ the destination ‘pathway’ of work that may be headed toward low-status, low-paid work, with little inspiration to grow and learn, and little opportunity to discover emergent interests, capabilities, and potential throughout their years in high school. As recorded on the student transcript, credits with high-status codes, and high marks attached to those credits, become the main raison d’être of schooling.

Nicole differentiates between “school success” and “personal success;” for her, school success means graduating from high school no matter how long it takes. Based on her experience, Nicole says:

Math is problematic, for some reason. I’m not a statistics person; I’m more of a process person. But people who are in the applied stream have less of a rate of success than people in the academic stream, in terms of accumulation of credits, passing the grade 10 literacy, and so on and so forth.

Thus those who experience “school success” as organized under the new credit system, are academically-inclined, university-bound students. This implies that the school credit system best serves the university stream with modified or add-on programs for the rest. A high proportion of students ‘at risk’ come from lower SES backgrounds and minority groups (King, 2002, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2003; McNally, 2003), and they tend to be
steered towards applied level courses and skills training for the workforce. This exposes the credit system as a classing and racializing process. The fundamental academic-applied or university-college split between streams presupposes that intellectual stimulation and hands-on experiences are mutually exclusive, rather than mutually enriching. Thus, streaming into distinct ‘pathways’ means that all students, including the university-bound ones, may be deprived of a holistic, well-rounded, and democratic education for its own sake.

6.3 Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting

Whereas according to official policy, the school principal awards credits and has the power to change marks, in practice, principals seldom exercise that power without consulting with and obtaining consent from the teacher. A final mark is awarded at the end of a course for a credit, 50 percent being a passing grade. Teachers collect marks during a course for tests, assignments, projects, experiments, presentations, etc., and may also include a final examination. Marks are recorded on the student report card at midterm and at the end of the course. The final mark assigned at the end of the course appears on the student transcript. A copy of the final report card for each year (or each semester in semetered schools), and the latest student transcript is kept in the student’s OSR. In my experience, a student with a final mark of 47 to 49 percent could be raised to 50 percent at the teacher’s discretion, to give students the benefit of the doubt and/or to avoid contestation over marks. A mark at or below 46 percent is usually deemed to be ineligible for being raised. A mark raised to a passing grade would be recorded as 50 percent, whereas an earned mark of 50 percent is raised to 51 percent to differentiate between these two situations. Evaluating student work and awarding marks is a time-consuming aspect of teachers’ work that is done outside classroom teaching time.

Education reform placed inordinate emphasis on instrumentalizing and objectifying teacher assessment and evaluation, and promoted mandatory sessions to be delivered to teachers at staff meetings. At that time, ‘rubrics’ came into vogue across the country. For example, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education defines a rubric as follows:

From the perspective of student assessment and evaluation, a rubric is simply a scoring guide for evaluating student work. A rubric lists the important criteria on which a product or a performance will be judged and specifies the levels of quality
for each of those criteria. As the educational community has become increasingly interested in the use of assessment to support the learning process, rubrics have become instrumental in informing students about ‘what counts’ in completing a particular task. Rubrics clarify learning goals and outcomes for students and support them in making choices and decisions with respect to improving the quality of their work (Andrade, 2000; Montgomery, 2000; Jamison, 1999; Popham, 1997).49


The references cited as the authority on ‘rubrics’ locate the sources as emanating from the educational leadership literature that operates within a Total Quality Management (TQM) paradigm, and accentuates perpetual school improvement and professional development. In evaluating student work, it is common practice for teachers to use marking schemes, among which the so-called rubric might be considered a generic form, although nothing new. For example, a rubric comprised of five criteria, or outcomes, for a particular ‘product’ or presentation might each be rated on a scale of one to five in order to generate a mark. Of course, rubrics can be one way of making evaluation more transparent, so that students know how they are assessed and how a mark was derived; however, they are not the only way. In the ruling relations of educational leadership, rubrics operationalize and instrumentalize teacher assessment along the single dimension of a numeric mark. They create the illusion of objectivity through rating scales, whereas subjective judgments are inevitably part of assessment processes; for example, deciding whether the organization of a presentation or poster is worth a 3 or 4 out of 5. Integral to the discourse of education reform, rubrics enforce ‘objective’ standards-based evaluation within an accountability framework.

Aside from individual marks on a single assignment for a particular student, report cards record individual student’s mark as a percentage grade on a course across a number of assignments; the report card also shows the class median for the course, and the student’s

average for all courses taken in the reporting cycle.\textsuperscript{50} Thus teachers’ marks and pass rates in their courses can be monitored by the administrative apparatus and comprise a significant part of the accountability framework. In the absence of contextual information, quantitative evaluation of students only tells part of the story, yet marks are valued above all else in the reporting regime.

Marks can be a source of conflict between teachers and students, parents, and administrators -- all the more so since the imposition of accountability systems, and competition for spots in post-secondary institutions. This preoccupation with marks filters down to the lower grades. Since they have exchange value, marks have an importance beyond merely providing feedback to a student. As quantitative measures, they affect a student’s future, offer a ‘measure’ by which administrators can assess what is going on in a classroom, and they reflect on the reputation of the school, especially marks in the senior grades. For example, schools advertise their ‘success’ in terms of the number of students accepted into universities, and the number of Ontario Scholars they generate. The most recent version of Policy/Program Memorandum No. 53 (dated April 14, 2009) defines who may be designated as an Ontario Scholar. It states:

A student may be designated an Ontario Scholar if he or she satisfies both of the following requirements:
-- He or she obtains an aggregate of at least 480 marks in any combination of ministry-approved courses listed below that provide a total of six credits, as defined by Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999 (OSS) and/or Ontario Schools, Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7–12/OACs): Program and Diploma Requirements, rev. ed., 1989 (OSIS).\textsuperscript{51}
-- He or she has been recommended by the school principal for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) in either the current school year or the previous school year. (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/53.html, accessed March 10, 2010)

This means an average of at least 80 percent in six grade 12 courses. Where do students ‘at risk’ figure in this equation? Marks arguably constitute the currency of education systems. Moreover, marks combined with the types of courses offered, become a

\textsuperscript{51} As explained below, OSS replaced OSIS.
mechanism by which schools claim to be ‘good’ schools that attract ‘good’ students and demonstrate that they are on the road to perpetual improvement.

One of teacher/participants questioned the notion of ‘success:’ “People might argue, is it student success at all costs? What is the price to pay for student success?” She went on to explain how her school became a “success story,” having reinvented itself by setting up an arts-based program. It also became a “very safe school” where most students proceed to university. However, she clarified that improvement was not in terms of serving the population better; rather, the population changed. What was previously an ethnically diverse school that served one of the poorest communities in Toronto became largely a white middle class school. When I asked where the displaced students go now, she threw up her hands and said, “I don’t know!” The credit system of courses, codes, and marks is the basis upon which high school diplomas are awarded to students, but also how school reputations are made through an upward drift. Could it be that the pressure for perpetual improvement is more about school ‘success’ on the record than about student ‘success’?

6.4 Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

Under education reform, the old diplomas were phased out and replaced by a single high school diploma, the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The first cohort to study under the new four-year curriculum entered grade 9 in September 1999, and graduated with the new diploma in 2003; this was the so-called double cohort year in which students graduated under both the old and new diplomas. Since then, the OSSD is the main high school graduation diploma that constitutes the de facto requirement for university entrance, with varying prerequisite courses and cutoff marks for different post-secondary institutions and programs. The rules and regulations governing the new OSSD are specified in the Ministry document entitled, *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-

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52 Prior to the new diploma, and since 1983-4, there were two high school diplomas: the Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) awarded upon completion of grade 12, and the Secondary School Honours Graduation Diploma (SSHGD) that included six Ontario Academic Credits (OACs). Whereas the SSGD could be completed in four years, the SSHGD was required for university entrance, based on the six best OAC marks, and it normally took five years. When universities decry the quality of high school graduates, they overlook the fact that students are graduating younger and with one year less of high school education.
In this document, Section 5.5 deals with “Early Identification and Intervention Strategies for Students at Risk,” and Section 7.11 specifically covers “Programs for Students at Risk.” The latter section makes reference to other relevant sections on “Locally Developed Courses” (7.1.2); “Specialized Programs” (7.4) including “School-Work Transition Programs” (7.4.3); and “Cooperative Education and Work Experience” (7.5). Thus, considerable emphasis is placed on workplace training for students ‘at risk.’

The total number of credits required for graduation under the new diploma is 30, of which 18 are designated as compulsory and 12 as electives. The compulsory courses for the OSSD listed in Diploma Requirements (1999) are: 4 English, 1 French, 3 mathematics, 2 science, 1 Canadian geography, 1 Canadian history, 1 physical education, 1 art, 0.5 civics, 0.5 careers, and one each from Groups 1, 2 and 3. These groups specify subject areas as follows: Group 1 -- an additional English, or a third language, or social science, or Canadian and world studies; Group 2 -- health and physical education, or business, or an extra arts credit; and Group 3 -- senior science, or any technology credit.

According to Ministry statistics (discussed further in Chapter 8) the graduation rate plummeted under the new diploma, as could have been anticipated from the findings of King’s early Double Cohort studies. The essential structure of the new OSSD as instituted under the Harris/Eves regime in 1999 remains intact, indicating the same ideology of education prevails across political parties. Yet, multiple revisions to the diploma requirements are reflected in Policy/Program Memorandums (PPMs) that I take as a marker of fundamental flaws in the original conception. For example, the English and French compulsory language requirements (which are reversed in French schools) reveal a bias toward the dominant languages of the two ‘founding nations,’ excluding aboriginal First Nations’ languages and culture, and disregarding the multicultural mix of Canadian society. Whereas it is reasonable that students need to learn to communicate in a shared national language, the language requirement raises the issue of pervasive biases

carried in other curriculum documents that privilege not only English/French history and culture, but ways of knowing as well. What are the implications for students from non-dominant or minority cultures? Rather than opening up and expanding the curriculum to reflect the pluralism of contemporary Canadian society, the revisions in PPMs indicate remedial measures or easy credits. As Jerry intimated in the previous chapter, cooperative education was indeed subsequently added to the list for each group by PPM 139 dated September 1, 2005.54 This PPM 139 also adds certain special education and guidance courses to the list for Group 1. These adjustments may make it easier for students to graduate, but without revising the original structure or developing more wide-ranging, enriching and challenging courses. In addition, the number of cooperative education credits that can be used towards the OSSD increased; according to the TDSB publication, Choices 2008-2009, the maximum number of cooperative education credits allowed to be used as compulsory credits towards the OSSD is two, and there is no limit of cooperative credits that can be used as elective credits towards the diploma. As Tessa stated in the previous chapter, what this means in practice is that students are “not getting an education,” but being fed “mickey-mouse” courses and trained as workers for low end jobs.

Some revisions actually tighten the rules and regulations in ways that displace teachers’ professional discretion. For example, locally developed courses were originally interpreted to mean what the name suggests, namely, teacher-developed courses designed for specific students within the local context. However, ‘locally developed compulsory’ courses now appear as standardized in curriculum documents. As Choices 2008-2009 states: “There are very strict guidelines for the development of such courses, and all local courses require Ministry approval” (p. 27). Thus, teacher discretion to develop customized curricula predicated on reflection-in–action has been removed; in its place is a laborious bureaucratic approval process for a pre-scripted course that must be applied for ahead of time. This belies the point of adapting course material in situ. Instead, prescribed ‘locally developed’ courses (with the course type code L) in English and mathematics for grades 9 and 10 were added to the official curriculum as substitutes for

compulsory courses in those subjects; they are specifically geared to students falling behind in credit accumulation, that is, students ‘at risk.’ Rather than broadening the curriculum to be more inclusive, diverse, and challenging, ‘dumbed down’ courses are arguably used as stop-gap measures to move students through the school system and to prop up a faulty credit system.

As shown in Table 6.1: Diploma Requirements: Osis (1989) v. OSS (1999), comparing the old and new diploma requirements sheds light on education reform priorities. First, high school was reduced from five to four years, and Ontario Academic Credits (OACs, or grade 13) abandoned, although the total number of credits required for graduation remains the same. Thus, the new diploma condensed curricula and the time for students to obtain 30 credits. For example, calculus, which used to be an OAC course, is now taught in grade 12 (albeit in less detail). This compacting reverberates down through the grades, especially in academic courses; students face more difficult subject matter earlier, and enter university younger and less prepared than under the old diploma. In general, there is less curriculum spiraling, that is, where topics may be repeated or reviewed in subsequent years, so that students who did not catch on the first time around stand a chance of doing so later. If students fast-track to graduate in four years, they have less flexibility in rounding out their program, or including spares in their timetables. In my experience as a guidance counsellor at an academic high school, most students take four-and-a-half to five years to graduate, in order to relieve the pressure and raise their marks. However, students ‘at risk’ are most likely to suffer from curriculum compression and accelerated pacing.

Second, choice was reduced by increasing the number of compulsory credits, and the number of mathematics and science requirements. The number of compulsory credits increased from 16 to 18, with one extra mathematics and one extra science course added over the requirements of the old diploma. These are subjects in which Black, Aboriginal, and Hispanic students have not performed well historically, suggesting that these groups would be most negatively affected by the new diploma. Concomitantly, the number of electives was reduced from 14 to 12. Additional mathematics and science credits, combined with the omission of the requirement of a senior social science from the new

<table>
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<tr>
<th>OSIS ‘Old Diploma’</th>
<th>OSS ‘New Diploma’</th>
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<tr>
<td>Compulsory credits (16):</td>
<td>Compulsory credits (18):</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 English</td>
<td>4 English</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Math</td>
<td>3 Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Science</td>
<td>2 Science</td>
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<td>1 French</td>
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<td>1 Canadian History</td>
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<td>1 Canadian Geography</td>
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<td>1 Art</td>
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<td>1 Physical Education</td>
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<td>1 Business studies/ technology*</td>
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<td>1 Senior Social Science</td>
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<td>1 Group 1 (language/social science)</td>
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<td>1 Group 2 (PE/business/art/)*</td>
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<td>1 Group 3 (senior science/technology)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.5 Civics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.5 Careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Elective credits</td>
<td>12 Elective credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>[✓ ] Literacy Test</td>
<td>[✓ ] Community Service (40 hrs.)</td>
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<td>30 TOTAL CREDITS</td>
<td>30 TOTAL CREDITS</td>
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diploma indicates the ascendancy of mathematics, science and technology and the marginalization of social studies in high school curricula.

Third, is the addition of two brand new compulsory half-credit courses in grade 10: Civics and Career Studies. The Civics course emphasizes citizens’ responsibilities to vote and to engage in their local communities. The micro-macro shift from the local to examining global injustices glosses over injustices at home, as if injustice happens in distant places. In the Careers course, students are expected in grade 10 to choose their future career destination, and to plan their high school credits accordingly. The course is shaped around the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system developed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). and the Employability Skills Profile developed by the Conference Board of Canada. Carrying this corporatist bias, student projects include building a ‘Career Portfolio’ in readiness for work. An examination of the Civics and Careers course materials shows that they operate to produce the ‘ideal citizen’ and the ‘ideal worker,’ respectively (Antonelli, 2003; Francis, 2005). This penchant for social engineering seems to be advancing further through the recent introduction of “character development” across the curriculum in Ontario, in accordance with the Ministry’s (2008) Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12, that ties it in with official Board and School Improvement Plans. The trouble with educational models of this kind is that they aim to inculcate so-called

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55 See Leo Plue, Warren Palmer, Cheryl Karakokkinos, Careers: Today and Tomorrow (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 2000). At the time of writing, this is one of the Ministry-approved textbooks for the Careers course. I can speak from personal experience having taught this course using this textbook.

56 The authors of Finding Common Ground are three senior Ministry bureaucrats with limited or no experience in classroom practice. They are: Avis Glaze (Education Commissioner and Senior Advisor to the Minister, and former Chief Student Achievement Officer and CEO of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat); George Zegarac (Assistant Deputy Minister, Elementary and Secondary); and Dominic Giroux (Assistant Deputy Minister, French Language Education). Prior to the publication of this document, or the TDSB announcement about the inception of character education in 2008, the Ministry had already spent over $3 million on the initiative in 2006 and 2007, presumably for ‘consultations’ and reports. The amount of over $3 million was derived from Jeff Stickney and Jim Lang’s course description for Special Topics in Philosophy: Character Education and Its Critics (TPS1465, Winter 2009); they apparently discovered this in documents acquired through Access to Information. Despite criticism towards the notion of character development as reminiscent of military training and homogeneous private schools, the so-called Character Development Initiative is proceeding, with system compliance ensured through official Board and School Improvement Plans.
universal attributes and morals in the context of multicultural societies that purport to respect difference and diversity.

Finally, the new diploma program introduces two non-academic requirements: the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT, usually called the Literacy Test), and 40 hours of Community Service. Satisfaction of each of these requirements is registered as a checkmark on the student transcript; the importance assigned to them is such that even if a student has completed all the academic requirements for courses, he/she cannot graduate without the two checkmarks. The fact that failure to satisfy either one of the two non-academic requirements for the OSSD can bar students from graduation raises the question: Why is so much importance accorded to them?

The Literacy Test is a standardized test administered by the EQAO annually that is normally taken in grade 10. A pass on both parts of the test is required for the checkmark; hence, this is a high-stakes test for graduation. The test, or part of the test, can be written more than once. ESL and LD students have difficulty with the Literacy Test. When it became apparent that some students were unsuccessful after the second attempt and would therefore be unable to graduate, the Ministry instituted the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) as a stop-gap measure for students in grade 11 or 12 who failed the Literacy Test twice. The Literacy Course, instituted in the 2003-04 school year, remains a work in progress across schools and boards; for example, the TDSB provides on-going professional development for teachers of the Literacy course, “to help teachers identify and apply a fair and consistent pass/fail standard for this high-stakes course”

(http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/eqao_results/docs/LiteracyFactSheetJune2009.pdf, accessed March 10, 2010). The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board’s course of study outline for the Literacy Course (with course code OLC4O) states, “Regardless of their post-secondary destination, all students need to realize that literacy skills are employment skills”

(http://www.wecdsb.on.ca/232/Pages/Grade%2012/OLC4.pdf, accessed March 10, 2010). From these school board statements, it is evident that rather than cancelling the EQAO Literacy Test as an obligatory requirement for graduation, the Ministry’s “high-stakes”
Literacy Course was intended to get around the obstacle of the high-stakes Literacy Test, and that “literacy skills” are reduced to “employment skills.” This is a far cry from critical-democratic notions of multiple literacies as processes of discovery embedded in social relations (Freire, 1972, 1994; Darville, 1995, 2001; McMahon, 2003). Multiple literacies recognize that traditional forms of literacy are hooked into historical colonial power relations as well as current forms thereof; for example, Darville (2001) distinguishes between “literacy that serves as people’s own resource, to carry their knowledge and projects” and “literacy that carries other people’s power, and so stands apart from people’s own aims and shaping” (p. 1). The construction of literacy around employment skills, as promulgated in the Literacy Test or course, “carries other people’s power,” or the power of the employer in a market economy.

The other non-academic requirement is Community Service. On the surface, few would argue against community service, or doing volunteer work in the community, as a societal value. But there is an inherent contradiction in making volunteer work mandatory for graduation. Not only does clocking hours for acts of generosity seem somewhat self-serving, but it institutionalizes a bureaucratic process that consumes guidance counsellors’ time to monitor, track, tally and record the hours sporadically for every high school student across the Province. Moreover, ‘community service’ is one of the alternative measures for youth in trouble with the law to avoid the court system, and as such it may carry certain punitive connotations. Similar to charity, the middle-class assumption behind community service is having the luxury of time, whereas some students need to work to help support their families. The top priority placed on inculcating community service and volunteer work through education could indicate a longer term strategy of filling the gap created by the retrenchment of public services by downloading responsibility onto local communities. This fits the neoliberal agenda, but raises ethical questions about unpaid work, or cheap child labour, as well as taking away entry level positions from those whose survival depends on paid work. Thus the two non-academic requirements of the Literacy Test and Community Service, combined with the new Career Studies and Civics compulsory credits, provide clues to the ideological code
of education reform as oriented to producing compliant workers and citizens for the neoliberal state.

According to *OSS, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*, the Minister of Education and Training grants diplomas and certificates on the recommendation of the principal. In addition to the OSSD, this document specifies requirements for two lesser school leaving certificates: the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC; for those unable to meet the requirements of the OSSD), and the Certificate of Accomplishment (for those unable to meet the requirements of the OSSC).\(^{57}\) Moreover, two alternate routes for mature students over 18 years old are also specified. First, the Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate (OHSEC) applies to students aged 18 or older and who have been out of school for at least one year. The OHSEC involves independent study towards taking the five international General Educational Development (GED) tests, which consist almost exclusively of multiple-choice questions. The OHSEC is widely promoted as equivalent to the OSSD, although the Independent Learning Centre, which administers the GED tests, states, “However, the Ministry of Education cannot guarantee that the certificate will be accepted by employers or post-secondary institutions or trainers in every instance” ([http://www.ilc.org/GED/GED_handbook_e.pdf](http://www.ilc.org/GED/GED_handbook_e.pdf) accessed December 19, 2008; p. 6). The second alternate route for mature students is the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program for mature students. However, these certificates may not be valid for entrance into university or most college programs.

Subsequent to *OSS, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*, when the problem became apparent that a significant number of high schools students were not graduating under the requirements of the OSSD or the lesser requirements of the two certificates, yet another certificate was added to the mix, namely the Employability Skills Achievement Certificate (ESAC); this certificate was apparently developed in partnership

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\(^{57}\) The OSSC requires a total of 14 credits: 7 compulsory and 7 optional credits. The compulsory credits are: 2 English, 1 Canadian geography or history, 1 mathematics, 1 science, 1 health and physical education, and 1 arts or technology. The Certificate of Accomplishment may be issued by the principal to acknowledge a student’s participation in a school program, but who have not earned the credits required for an OSSD or OSSC.
with the Conference Board of Canada.\textsuperscript{58} Given the proliferation of high school credentials with a myriad of rules and regulations, and the involvement of the private sector in the latest addition, the question is raised: Are public schools and funds being used to subsidize the training of workers for private business? The OSSTF announced its position is that there should be one diploma only for \textit{all} students, with the possible exception of a separate credential for developmentally challenged students.

A hierarchy of value exists between the various credentials in terms of the stringency of requirements and the opportunities opened -- or closed -- thereby. This structuring of the credit system may actually reproduce socio-economic inequity. Acutely aware of the systemic racism and classism that is part of their experience, it is not surprising that rebellious students -- or those that Gabbard refers to as “refusniks” (Saltman and Gabbard, 2003) -- are not motivated to work towards second-rate certificates when they perceive the credential as useless and hardly worth the paper it’s written on. Yet, teachers and guidance counselors have to explain and negotiate constantly shifting convoluted rules and regulations, and to recommend courses of action to students; this is especially difficult for teachers oriented to equity and social justice when they disagree with policies that they are professionally obligated to reinforce, as epitomized in Chloe’s dilemma (in Chapter 5, Section 5.5).

Band-aid solutions, such as the escape valve of the Literacy course, the institution of ‘locally developed compulsory’ credits and the expansion of cooperative education, as well as the proliferation of high school credentials, may contribute to the appearance of increases in graduation rates from high school, but without any real systemic change to the curricular reforms of the Harris/Eves regime.

\textsuperscript{58} The ESAC requires four years of high school with 30 credits, usually focused on life skills and employability skills. According to a memo about a pilot program in Alberta emulating the ESAC, this credential was developed by the TDSB in partnership with the Conference Board of Canada.\hspace{1em}(http://www.epsb.ca/board/march24_09/item06.pdf, accessed March 21, 2010).
6.5 The TDSB Poster: Pathways to Success

As explained above, the credit system of course codes is tied to destination ‘pathways.’ My analysis proceeds with a textual analysis of a TDSB poster as a visual representation of how ‘pathways’ were represented in schools and promoted to the public by the TDSB.

Figure 6.2: The TDSB Poster—Pathways to Success, shows the four destination pathways of university, college, apprenticeship, and work depicted as colourfully braided strands in purple, orange, green and blue (respectively). The braided strands with fuzzy boundaries, weaving and wrapping around one another, give the benign impression of interchangeable pathways throughout high school. The poster exhorts students to “begin with your destination in mind.” However, the “YOUR future” destination zone looks decidedly foggy, and in my experience this is indeed the case for many students at 12 to 13 years of age. But, how then can students be expected to ‘choose’ courses affecting their lives in the absence of clarity about what they want to be when they grow up?

As indicated by the logos at the bottom of the poster, it was produced and/or condoned by the TDSB, Pre-Apprenticeship Program, OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program), CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce), and Cooperative and Career Education. Also at the bottom of the poster is a statement that indicates the key departments overseeing the pathways campaign, which says, “For more information, contact Guidance, a Cooperative Education teacher or a Technology teacher.” The apprenticeship stream is fore-grounded, with green as the dominant colour, running over the work and university streams, and alternately over and under the college stream. Promoting apprenticeship appears to be the main message conveyed in this poster. However, there is not an established tradition of skilled trades and apprenticeship in Canada as in Europe, such that the promotion of apprenticeship in schools may be putting the cart before the horse. A teacher/participant, Alice, in my previous study said:

There is absolutely no stigma about going to a technical school [in Switzerland]. So you are going to be a plumber. But you know what? A plumber earns more than I do! And you’d better not try to get a plumber on the weekend, because he has a certain status over there. He’s a professional in his job. Nobody else can do it. The kid who goes to the commercial school might be the guy who punches your ticket on the train. But I can’t go and take his job because he’s been trained in that. And he’s gone through a very rigorous curriculum, including a lot of language teaching because he’s up front representing the country on trains, and he has to speak some
English, some Italian, some French, some German, whatever. But his curriculum is not a dumbed-down, watered-down program. It’s your chosen course. That kind of change I think would have been wonderful! [In] those kinds of trades you’ve got nobody working here—you can’t get a plumber, an electrician, a marvel granite worker.  

Rather than “dumbed-down, watered-down” programs, Alice advocates “a very rigorous curriculum” of study.

However, unlike the university and college streams, there do not appear to be codes explicitly tied to apprenticeship courses as such, but rather various codes that do not count for admission to post-secondary educational institutions, such as co-op and open credits which also apply to the work stream. Whereas cooperative education is promoted in Ministry documents as “experiential learning,” teacher/participants such as Tessa question its reduction to workplace skills.  The TDSB publication, *Choices 2008-09* states:

> Cooperative education is a unique program for students, integrating academic study with practical experience in business and industry. This learning experience helps all students make informed decisions about future careers. Students also develop the work habits, attitudes and job skills necessary for a successful transition from secondary school to the workplace or post-secondary education. (p. 18; [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/course_descriptions_secondary_school/docs/specific.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/course_descriptions_secondary_school/docs/specific.pdf), accessed March 13, 2010)

Indeed, the underpinning of destination-driven education appears to be the blue-coded stream of school-to-work programs that runs underneath all others in the TDSB poster. In the foggy destination zone, blue (work) and green (apprenticeship) rise to the top. These kinds of subliminal messaging are intentional, as my follow-up textual analysis shows.

The text entitled *Educator’s Guide to Pathways to Success: Put Your Foot Down -- A Communication Plan to Support Student Success* (Grand Erie District School Board, 2005) reveals the plan to promote Pathways to Success and to “persuade and change

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59 This quote is cited in Kerr, 2006, p. 56.

Figure 6.2: The TDSB Poster—Pathways to Success
attitudes” towards the two lower streams. It coincides with, and received funding from, the Learning to 18 initiative that forces students to stay longer in school. In a public/private partnership arrangement with the private company, Studio Blueprint, this pilot project at one school board outlines a “systematic marketing and communication strategy,” as follows:

Systematic marketing and communication strategy to key stakeholders – students, parents, educators, and community partners through radio, newspaper, website, video, multimedia presentation emphasizing the Four Steps to Success and underscoring the value of all destinations—Apprenticeship, College, University, Work (p. 3).

In line with its original mandate, the report promotes a “‘Clean-sweep’ of student service areas to promote all destinations equitably” (p. 3) through “re-messaging” schools (p. 10), as if equity could be reduced to making lesser pathways more palatable. In this light, who is putting whose “foot down?” The marketing strategies promoted in the report are evident in the TDSB poster; for example, using “less text and more graphics” with “colour codes” associated with each of the four pathways to “raise awareness” of the destinations. Redolent of a media campaign to promote unpopular *No Child Behind Left Behind* policies in the US -- especially targeting African Americans -- it would seem that proponents of education reform elide raising the profile of low-status education routes with equity for students, without regard for how discrimination in the curriculum operates to sort minority groups into low-status streams, thus reproducing socio-economic inequality.

In practice, decisions made in grade nine stream students prematurely into destination pathways that pre-determine post-secondary options. For example, university admission requirements call for six grade 12 courses with U or M codes; college admission requirements vary considerably due to the range of programs offered. In both cases, however, high school course codes are linked to university and college entrance requirements for specific institutions and programs. The Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) and Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) process
applications for entrance into these post-secondary institutions across Ontario. Under the usual computerized processing of post-secondary applications, students without the requisite course codes would automatically be excluded. The second consideration is students’ marks on requisite high school courses that must meet or exceed cut-off marks which change from year to year for each institution and program, that show a general upward drift for high-demand programs.

Regarding the first criterion of course codes, the high school credit system of course codes and prerequisites means that students who did not begin grade nine in academic courses may find it difficult to switch streams, especially in mathematics and science, and this becomes increasingly difficult as students move up through the grades. As Nicole says (above), decisions about courses happen in grade nine, and changing streams “would happen in grade 9 right away. After that, I don’t think there’s a lot of movement in between [streams].” Thus placement upon entry to high school in grade nine is crucial, and by grade ten it can be determinative of future career options. In practice, these key decisions are made at the transition from elementary to high school. Although parents may have input, individual student’s placement in grade nine courses is based on the recommendation of the elementary school, such that the streaming process may actually begin earlier. This long-term goal-oriented ‘destination in mind’ practice of sorting and selecting students into streams trickles down to elementary schools, creating anxiety among parents when their children are rated as performing ‘below’ grade level expectations.

Accordingly, my version of the TDSB Pathways poster reflects how pathways work in actual practice and it looks quite different, as shown in Figure 6.3: Pathways in Practice—Streaming for Work. The ‘pathways’ are not a neutral matter of individual ‘choice,’ but an entrenched form of streaming that is colour coded in the different sense of racializing and classing processes that sort and select the ‘best and brightest’ from the rest. My version reflects the hierarchical organization of society in which the university route carries the most promise for upward socio-economic mobility on the one hand, and the school-to-work stream is most likely headed towards low-status, low-paid precarious

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61 See the OUAC website at [www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca), and the OCAS website at [www.ocas.on.ca](http://www.ocas.on.ca).
Figure 6.3: Pathways in Practice—Streaming for Work
work on the other; this is what Springer, Roswell and Lum (2006) refer to as “pathways to homelessness” for black youth. In practice, crucial course placement decisions made prematurely in grade nine are determinative of life ‘outcomes,’ and the pathways diverge rapidly during the high school years. Moreover, my version draws attention to the grey zone between the streams where so-called students at risk fall between the tracks.
Chapter 7
The Ontario Student Record (OSR)

The previous chapter examined changes to the Ontario credit system and the diploma requirements for graduation from high school, through an analysis of official texts that govern secondary education. It focused on how the credit system works and shows how it affects students ‘at risk’ by streaming them early in high school into school-to-work ‘pathways.’ This chapter extends that analysis by examining how individual students are written up in documentary forms that constitute the official records of the institution. The second part of this chapter gives an account of my experiences teaching in a youth detention centre with two other teachers. The contrast between objectified institutional forms and my subjective experiences working with the most marginalized students -- that is, those who have fallen between the tracks -- brings into view what is missing from, or cannot be captured in, these official records.

Individual student records are held in the student’s OSR (Ontario Student Record). It is a manila folder containing hardcopy documentary forms and reports for every student from kindergarten to grade 12. The OSR is kept at the school that the student attends, in a secure location (usually guidance office or principal’s office). Each student OSR is identified by name and student number, and filed alphabetically. The OSR follows the student throughout the school years, from school to school across the Province. It is retained at the last school attended for five years, but a stripped-down version is retained for 55 years. These paper records are accessible only to teachers and administrators at the school. Upon written request, parents or guardians can access the OSR, and can request particular documents be removed from the file. The contents of the OSR show how students are written up in the official records of the institution.

Whereas teachers are expected to read the OSRs of every student in their classes, in my experience as a secondary school teacher of regular classes with about 180 students per semester, I referred to them on an as needed basis unless I received an alert about a particular student. Instead, I relied on face-to-face interactions with students and
conversations with colleagues for my reading of students. However, OSRs are readily activated by non-classroom teachers in special education and guidance, and school administrators who rely on paper records to ‘read’ students; for example, in formulating Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students, in counselling sessions, or school team meetings. Principals and vice-principals may read OSRs when discipline issues arise. Under the funding formula, administrators may also access OSRs to look for students with special needs and apply for additional targeted resource funding. Thus, student records contain documents that serve purposes beyond being a purely academic record of student credits.

The front inside over of the manila folder lists in tabular form all schools attended with entry and exit dates. The back inside cover has attached passport-size photographs of the student taken throughout his/her schooling by official school photographers, if the student opted to purchase this service. These images constitute a photographic record that may be used to identify and track down students involved in school incidents. Documents contained in the OSR include: registration form/s; ‘appropriate’ immigration information; the most recent Ontario Student Transcript; Provincial Report Cards throughout elementary and high school; and EQAO Individual Student Reports. In the case of ‘exceptional’ students, there is a documentation file folder inserted into the OSR that contains psycho-educational reports; Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) reports; suspension/expulsion reports; disciplinary letters (such as letters of trespass, cease and desist), and so on. The OSR may also contain additional inserts, such as samples of student work, awards, letters to or from parents, custody instructions, or special medical alerts, for example about epilepsy or food allergies. Although the OSR and its contents are confidential and protected under privacy legislation, they may be activated in school team meetings, school board appeal processes, or legal cases with requisite permissions. As such, the contents serve not only as a record of individual students, but are hooked into the institutional accountability regime. There is some ambiguity about whether the courts can subpoena OSR documents or access the contents indirectly by issuing subpoenas to teachers, guidance counsellors or principals. For example, under the Child and Family Services Act, a court may order a principal to
produce a student’s OSR. An Ontario Superior Court of Justice Divisional Court decision in 2006 provides some clarification, that only with “limited exceptions” can the actual contents of the OSR be entered as evidence in court proceedings, without the written permission of the student (if an adult), parent or guardian, and that no person is required to give evidence about the contents of the OSR. As a special education teacher and guidance counsellor, I was extremely careful about any documentation that I entered into the OSR because of possible extraneous uses that have consequences on students’ lives. In an increasingly litigious environment, the question arises: to what extent are documentary process and forms stored in the OSR oriented to collecting information as evidence in case of appeals or lawsuits? In any event, the OSR is a kind of dossier that stands in for actual students. Due to documentation that accrues and amasses on students ‘at risk,’ their folders can be an inch thick with information. This chapter proceeds with a textual analysis of certain documentary forms contained in the OSR.

7.1 Ontario Student Transcript (OST)

The Ontario Student Transcript (OST) epitomizes what Dorothy Smith refers to as an objectified account of how the student is written up in the official records of the institution. The OST is a provincially standardized document that is a cumulative record of courses taken, marks achieved, and credits earned by the student, an example of which

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62 See K.B. v. Toronto District School Board, 2006 CanLII 14411 (ON S.C.D.C), heard in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice Divisional Court. The statutory framework for judicial review in cases involving youth is clarified in paragraphs 16 to 23, in terms of the Education Act and the YCJA. With respect to the OSR and referring to Section 266 of the Education Act, para. 17 states: “an Ontario student record (known as an OSR) is ‘privileged for the information and use of supervisory officers and the principal and teachers of the school for the improvement of instruction of the pupil.’” Para. 18 states: “Moreover, subject to limited exceptions, the OSR ‘is not available to any other person’ and is ‘not admissible in evidence for any purpose in any trial, inquest, inquiry, examination, hearing or other proceeding,’ without the written permission of the parent or guardian of the pupil or, when the pupil is an adult, the written permission of the pupil.” Moreover, para. 19 states: “Section 266(9) provides that, except where the OSR is introduced as provided in s. 266, no person shall be required in any trial or other proceeding to give evidence in respect of the content of the record.” Although providing clarification of the legislation in principle, ambiguity remains about what the “limited exceptions” are, and to what extent teachers or administrators called as witnesses may rely on OSR documents to jog memories of events. For the ruling in this case, see K.B. v. Toronto District School Board, 2008 CanLII 6875 (ON S.C.D.C.). The case involved an application for judicial review of a TDSB decision to remove two students from a school under the Safe Schools Act. The application was denied. The OHRC report (discussed in Chapter 4) was submitted to support the defendants’ case of discrimination; however, para. 75 of the decision dismisses the OHRC report as “not proper evidence in this case, given that it is a report prepared by a consultant on the basis of anecdotal information and perceptions” that lacks “a comparator group.” I would argue that this case points to an important distinction between rectifying systemic discriminatory practices, and holding individuals accountable for acts of violence in schools.
is shown in Appendix B: Ontario Student Transcript (with identifying information removed to protect the anonymity of the student, school and board). The transcript is monitored at the local school in electronic form usually by guidance teachers, using a computer program, such as Trillium™ Student Information System (produced by SRB Education Solutions Inc.). Each year, a hardcopy version of the most recent transcript is placed in the student’s OSR and the one from the previous year removed, and students can obtain copies on request. Student identification data and course data are generated by school administrative processes of timetabling and enrollment reporting. The data entered on the OST about course marks is generated from computerized provincial student report cards that are filled out and submitted by teachers for each student in their classes, documenting the mark assigned, attendance, and computerized comments. The student’s final report card, assembled from teacher reports for each course, is also filed in the OSR, but only the final mark for the course appears on the OST. Whereas the report card is the formal instrument for communicating with parents about student achievement, the OST is the official institutional record of the student’s credit standing indexical to the diploma requirements. Thus the OST co-ordinates textually mediated institutional relevancies of official requirements and reporting processes.

As Appendix B shows, the header carries the official logo of the Ministry of Education and identifies the document type, date of issue, and page number. The second line identifies the student by surname and given names, the Ministry’s official Ontario Education Number (OEN; a nine-digit number), local student number, gender and birth date. Identifiable by institutional numbers, the OST constitutes “the institutional representation of a person; its properties are read back into the actuality of the person it represents” (Smith, 2006, p. 86). The next line identifies the student’s current school placement by the name of the district school board and number, and the school name and number, and the date of entry at that school. The local school site and school board held accountable for the record is thus specified, although only the current school attended is shown on the OST. The next line gives the column headings for the data entered on the OST: date (year/month) a credit was awarded; course grade level, course title, course
code, percentage grade (or mark), credit (value), whether or not the credit is compulsory (indicted by an ‘x’ or not for each entry), and a Note column.

Below the list of the students course credits to date is a row that gives the Summary of Credits (in terms of total number of credits earned, and the number of compulsory credits towards the OSSD). The next line contains the check boxes for the two non-academic requirements: “Community Involvement” and “Provincial Secondary School Literacy Requirement” (that is, the OSSLT/Literacy Test). There is provision for “N/A” in case of administratively approved exceptional circumstances exempting the student from this requirement. In this example, the student has not completed his/her community service of 40 hours, but has “Successfully Completed in English” the Literacy Test. The final line indicates the Diploma or Certificate awarded, with its date of issue, and Authorization (signature). In this example, since this student has not yet graduated, this section is blank. In the footer is the form number. For a graduated student, the school that awarded the diploma appears on the transcript.

The course credit data indicate that this student is likely labelled at risk since he/she is behind in credit accumulation with marks in the 50 and 60 percent range. In grade 9, he/she has seven credits, whereas eight would be expected. In grade 10 he/she has earned five credits, although eight would be expected. We do not know from the transcript what courses may have been failed in grades 9 or 10; however, he/she did not earn the full eight credits that would be expected for each year. The compulsory credits for English in grades 9 and 10 may have been taken in summer school (as indicated by the date of July of 2006 and 2007, respectively), both at the academic level; the ‘U’ in the 6th position of the course code (e.g. ENG1DU) differentiates it from regular courses with similar codes (e.g. ENG1D1). The compulsory credit for mathematics in grade 9 may

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63 Marks of 50 to 60 percent are one of the criteria of students ‘at risk’ as listed in the Ministry document *Building Pathways to Success* (2003b), p. 14.

64 Grade 9 (7 credits): BT1O1 (technology/open); GLE1O9 (learning strategies/ special education, open); PPL1OM (physical education); CG1P1 (geography, applied); SNC1P1 (science, applied); ENG1DU (English, academic, summer school); MPM1DU (mathematics, academic, summer school).

Grade 10 (5 credits): BB2O1 (business, open); CHV201 (Civics, half credit); CHC2P1 (history, applied); MFM2P1 (mathematics, applied); ENG2DU (English, academic, summer school); GLC2O1 (Career Studies, half credit).

Grade 11 (1 credit): ENG3U (English, university, [failed]); GLE3O9 (learning strategies/special education, open); HZB3O1 (philosophy, open, [failed]).
also have been taken in summer school (as indicated by the date of July, 2006 and the U code). Summer school is a way for students who failed a course to upgrade their marks without having to repeat the year. The student switched from academic to applied mathematics in grade 10. In grade 11, the latest entry (being the end of the first semester of 2008), he/she took three courses but earned only one credit in the Learning Strategies course, which is a special education credit. Full disclosure of failed courses begins in grade 11, and can negatively affect post-secondary admission into competitive programs. Marks of 50 percent indicate that this student’s marks were raised to a passing grade in three credits out of the total number of 13 credits earned so far towards the diploma, 12 of which are compulsory credits. However, it is in grade 11 that the student appears to be floundering; on the official record in this example, the student failed two credits rather badly, which would indicate something going on the student’s life; however, the OST contains no contextual information. As Kwesi says, “The grade 11 and 12 [classes] -- they’re always large. So once those students who need special help move on to grade 11, that’s when they get lost.” This student’s transcript confirms the watershed of entering grade 11 as an obstacle for students coming from smaller classes in grades 9 and 10 into large classes at the senior level starting in grade 11. Teacher/participants report as many as 35 students in their classes, and large classes mean teachers have less time to spend with individual students. By contrast, the Finnish Board of Education – a ‘success’ story on PISA tests -- claims to have a maximum class size of 20 students at all grade levels and aims to further reduce class size across Finland.

The OST is indexical to the compulsory, elective and non-academic requirements of the OSSD discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the curriculum documents governing courses. The Summary of Credits columns of the OST track the total number of credits earned, and the number of compulsory credits earned towards the OSSD. My analysis of the OST example in Appendix B is shown in Table 7.1: Diploma Requirements and

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65 The example is a transcript for a semestered school, where up to four credits may be earned in the first semester dated February, and four credits in the second semester dated June.

66 Timo Lankinen, director general of the Finnish National Board of Education, presentation entitled Conversations: The Student Success Journey - Finland and Ontario at the Ontario Ministry of Education in Toronto on February 5, 2010. Finland is considered a ‘success’ story in terms of consistently being ranked in the top three on international PISA scores.
Ontario Student Transcript. An ‘x’ in the Compulsory column of the OST (Appendix B) can be compared with a ‘√’ in Table 7.1 to discern which courses count as compulsory credits in terms of the diploma requirements (and/or which remain to be earned).

In the example transcript (Appendix B) each of the special education courses in Learning Strategies (grades 9 and 11) has an ‘x’ in the compulsory column; although these courses were not part of the original compulsory requirements, Learning Strategies was subsequently added to Group 1 by PPM 139 (as discussed in the previous chapter). For Learning Strategies (grade 9), the ‘x’ in the Notes column indicates that the student was possibly granted a ‘substitution’ of this course for one of the compulsory credits. Although it is not clear on the example transcript which compulsory was waived, it is likely to be French which is normally taken in grade 9. In my experience many special education students have difficulty with the second language requirement, in this case French, as do many ESL students for whom it is a third language. Even though the French compulsory credit presents a barrier to graduation for students in special education and ESL programs, it remains a compulsory credit in line with the national bilingual agenda, with substitutions possible if approved.

The example transcript shows a student struggling to meet the requirements of the OSSD, and a slowing down in credit accumulation that could portend dropping out of high school. Repeating courses during the summer with no break may contribute to running out of steam. As this analysis reveals, the structure of the credit system replete with codes and numbers, has a part to play in the process. Stop-gap measures, such as substitutions, do little to sustain students’ self-confidence and optimism about their futures; this student has not taken advantage of cooperative education course credits, and seems to be trying to stay the course. Based on this example transcript alone, the student would have to muster supreme effort to persevere in the face of ‘failure.’ Hooked up with post-secondary education institutions, the OST forms the primary, if not exclusive, referent for admission. Eligibility for scholarships and bursaries is also largely dependent on marks. Hence, the student transcript has considerable weight in determining the student’s future possibilities.
### Table 7.1: Diploma Requirements and Ontario Student Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>OSS ‘New Diploma’</strong></th>
<th><strong>Grade 9</strong></th>
<th><strong>Grade 10</strong></th>
<th><strong>Grade 11</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 English</td>
<td>√ ENG1DU</td>
<td>√ ENG2DU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Math</td>
<td>√ MPM1DU</td>
<td>√ MFM2P1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Science</td>
<td>√ SNC1P1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 French</td>
<td>√ * GLE 109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Canadian History</td>
<td></td>
<td>√ CHC2P1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Canadian Geography</td>
<td>√ CGC1P1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Physical Education</td>
<td>√ PPL10M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Group 1 (language/social science)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>** GLE309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Group 2 (PE/business/art/)</td>
<td>√ BTT101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Group 3 (senior science/technology)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 Civics</td>
<td></td>
<td>√ (0.5) CHV201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 Careers</td>
<td></td>
<td>√ (0.5) GLC201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[√] Literacy Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[√]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[√] Community Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(40 hrs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory (18)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives (12)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (BBI201)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CREDITS (30)</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Possible substitution of Learning Strategies (GLE109) for French
** Presumed use of Learning Strategies (GLE309) for Group 1
7.2 EQAO Individual Student Reports

Also contained in the OSR are Individual Student Reports of EQAO standardized test results that purport to measure student learning of the provincial curriculum. The EQAO oversees and administers standardized tests in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10 to every student across the Province in those grades. In the case of secondary schools, passing the OSSLT is a graduation requirement in Ontario as discussed in the previous chapter. Aside from the Individual Student Report, there are also EQAO School Reports and school board reports generated from the same test results that track progress over three years; these EQAO results are posted at school board websites and the Ministry’s School Information Finder website, as discussed further in Chapter 10. Thus the aggregate of student results on EQAO tests constitute a means for judging schools and reading the system as a whole.

The relevance of the reports on individual student achievement is misleading. An example of an Individual Student Report in the student OSR is shown in Appendix C: EQAO Individual Student Report, which is for the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, 2003-2004. This Individual Student Report is a two-page form, yet the only personalized parts are the contents of the Student Information box, and a symbol in the Overall Achievement Level under Achievement Summary. In all other respects, this so-called individualized report is actually a standardized form that looks identical for every student.

The Student Information box contains identifying information: student name, student number, Ontario Education Number (OEN), school name and number; and board name and number. It also identifies the particular test under Program Information, in this case “Academic, First Semester,” which distinguishes this result from the Applied level test, and also from the second semester version and the non-semested versions of the test. Every student across the Province enrolled in grade 9 academic or applied level mathematics writes a designated test at the designated time. However, there is no EQAO mathematics test for students enrolled in locally developed mathematics courses, thus erasing them -- as well as otherwise “exempt” students -- from the public record, and from meta-level EQAO test data that may be put to the purposes of planning, or public communications.
The only individual data provided on the Individual Student Report is a small mark in the form of a grey/black/grey rectangle ( ), where the black symbol “represents the student’s achievement level on the test,” and the grey region presumably indicates the confidence interval. On the same line is a statement of the number of questions answered out of the total number of questions on the test; in the example, 47 out of 48 questions; the number 47 would relate to the student whereas the total number of questions of 48 would be standard for all students tested. The placement of the black symbol ranks the student against the so-called Provincial Standard according to “four levels:” Level 1 (50-59%), Level 2 (60-69%), Level 3 (70-79%) or Level 4 (80-100%), with an add-on category of Below Level 1. In the example, the student is categorized as Level 3, which is the so-called Provincial Standard.

On the bottom of page 1, the EQAO acknowledges, “The result reported here is a snapshot of this student’s achievement on the days of the assessment and is only one indication of how this student is learning mathematics.” Nevertheless, the footer of page 2 states:

EQAO ensures greater accountability in Ontario’s public education system by providing students, parents, educators, and the public with information on students’ achievement measured against curriculum standards. Ontario’s large-scale assessment program is one important element of a culture of capacity building and learning improvement.

Scarce educational funds are diverted to expenditures for designing, administering, evaluating, marking, analyzing, and reporting on EQAO standardized tests, although raw data are not accessible to independent researchers, and total expenditures estimated to be about $60 million per year remain elusive. Time delays in analyzing and publishing the results render them useless for all practical purposes in teaching individual students since students have moved on to another grade with a different curriculum by the time the results are made public. Moreover, comparability is questionable given different versions of the tests administered at different times of the year, that is, comparing student achievement with different numbers of days of instruction in the curriculum. Nevertheless, individual students are ‘rated’ relative to the provincial standard.
The EQAO Individual Student Report is geared to administrative-managerial relevancies and objectified accountability processes that have negligible value in practice, whereas the classroom teacher can provide more than a “snapshot” with a broader sense of individual student learning in context based on everyday face-to-face contact.

7.3 Individual Education Plan (IEP): The Cheat Sheet

Aside from academic reporting of marks by classroom teachers, special education teachers are required to fill out Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students in special education programs. Since students identified as ‘at risk’ are likely receiving special education services, most of them will have an IEP. The IEP is completed by the special education teacher, signed and approved by the principal and parent or student (if over 16), and a copy is retained on file in the OSR. As a special education teacher, Jerry describes the time-consuming paperwork of filling in IEPs as “brutal,” such that he uses a “cheat sheet” to satisfy the reporting requirements; he says: “I’ve spent a lot of time on those [IEPs], although I’ve started getting it down to a little system with the cheat sheet from the consultant.” That the ‘cheat sheet’ is disseminated by a consultant in the education hierarchy indicates that it is sanctioned by, or serves the purposes of, administrative management. For Jerry, filling in the IEP FileMaker template boxes on the computer for every student is time-consuming work that has negligible value in his everyday work with students, and so it is convenient to have an easy way of doing this paperwork. Although the ‘cheat sheet’ of standard phrases in official language enables him to satisfy the administrative reporting requirement efficiently, the teacher’s utterances are subsumed by officially sanctioned ones chosen from the list. So, what is an IEP and what purpose does it actually serve?

The IEP is a textual requirement for students with learning, behavioural or physical disabilities. The document entitled The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide (2004) constitutes the Ministry’s instructions for IEP templates; it defines an IEP as follows:

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67 This version replaces the earlier version of this document that was titled Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation (2000), referred to as the Standards document, with only minor changes.
A written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student’s strengths and needs – that is, the strengths and needs that affect the students ability to learn and to demonstrate learning (p. 6).

Appendix D: Individual Education Plan shows a sample of an IEP from this document. It is a multiple-page form (in the example, six pages long). On page 1, the first section calls for a checkmark entry indicating the “Reason for Developing the IEP,” as either “identified” or “not formally identified but requires special education program/services.” The second section is the “Student Profile” indicating the student’s name, gender, date of birth, OEN, principal (by name), school, grade, school year, most recent IPRC date, exceptionality, and the IPRC placement decision. This refers to the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee that makes decisions about students’ placement in special education programs as well as the kinds of supports allowed. The third section documents “Assessment Data” in terms of various psycho-educational reports on file (also in the OSR), documenting the source, date and a summary of results. The fourth section lists “Student’s Strengths and Needs” as identified by the special education teacher. The fifth section calls for a yes/no checkmark for “Health Support Services/Personal Support Services,” with a line to specify those additional required supports. The information on this page seems primarily to serve administrative funding purposes, constituting evidence of eligibility for the Special Education Grant (SEG) that provides additional funding for students who need special education services. The ministry-approved list of categories of exceptionality are: “behaviour, autism, deaf and hard-of-hearing, language impairment, speech impairment, learning disability, giftedness, mild intellectual disability, developmental disability, physical disability, blind and low vision, multiple exceptionalities” (Ministry, 2004a, p. 21).

On page 2 is academic information about courses requiring extra help, documenting current achievement, and the type of program adaptation, as either “Modified,” “Accommodated” or “Alternative.” Modifications refer to substantial change in curriculum content, level of instruction, or evaluation criteria, whereas accommodations involve

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68Base-line funding is allocated to school boards through the Foundation Grant based on enrolment. It is topped up by these and other ‘special purpose grants’ that require laborious processes of application and reporting.
adapting how the student accesses information or demonstrates learning, such as extra time on examinations. The category of Alternative refers to alternative expectations. Also specified is whether a compulsory credit course “substitution” is order, and the diploma or certificate towards which the student is working. The last section indicates whether “Accommodations” or “Exemptions” are ordered on “Provincial Assessments,” that is, EQAO tests; thus standardized tests enter the student record on the IEPs as well. But this entry also serves the audit function of regulating what administrators can and cannot do, thus curtailing local discretion.

Page 3 comprises multiple consecutively numbered pages (in the example, a to e) with one for each subject listed on page 2. These pages document the “Special Education Program,” specifying for each subject, the “Annual Program Goal/s” in statements, as well as three columns listing “Learning Expectations,” “Teaching Strategies,” and “Assessment Methods” organized according to the three foci of education reform. This is presumably the section to which the ‘cheat sheet’ would presumably apply. There is a disconnect in the language called for in the IEP and that used in course curricula.

On page 4, the first section lists “Human Resources,” specifying the “type of service, initiation date, frequency or intensity, and location,” in italics for emphasis. The second section on “Evaluation” specifies “Reporting Dates,” and “Reporting Formats,” the latter by checkmarks for “Provincial Report Card” (normally mandatory) and/or “Alternative Report.” The third section for “Transition Plan” specifies under what conditions a plan applies: “If the student is 14 years or older and is not identified as solely gifted, a transition plan is required (see page 6).” This means all special education students except those designated as ‘gifted’ and without other psycho-educational diagnoses must have a transition plan. The fourth section identifies people and documents that inform the IEP. It calls for a list of “Staff Members” and his/her “Position” who were involved in developing the IEP -- the so-called IEP team -- as well as “Sources Consulted” by checkmark: IEP Statement of Decision, Provincial Report Card, Previous IEP, Parents/Guardians, Student, Others. In the example, the first five are checked, indicating that these may be required. The last section specifies the “Date of Placement in Special Education Program” by checkmark and confirmed by the precise date printed below it,
and the “Completion Date of IEP Development” (within 30 days following the date of Placement).” Since an IEP must be completed within 30 school days of the date of a student’s placement, the special education teacher may have limited first-hand knowledge of the student when writing up the IEP and would need to rely on the documentary record, and translate it into the accepted format and language. As part of the official record, the IEP should match up with IPRC recommendations and other documentary reports in the OSR. As well, consultations with classroom teacher/s, teacher’s assistant, other professionals, student, parent/s, and so on are called for. This would seem to occupy a considerable amount of special education teachers’ time in the first 30 days (especially if IEPs are required for a number of students) and to subordinate focused attention on students to the documentary record and its frame of reference.

On page 5, the first section is a “Log of Parent/Student Consultation and Staff Review/Updating” by date, activity and outcome. The second section calls for dates and signatures of the Principal, and Parent/Guardians or Student (if 16 or over), with two lines allowed for comments from parents and students. Given that special education teachers resort to a cheat sheet to comply with the categories and jargon rather than using plain language, how can parents or students be expected to understand what they are signing onto?

On page 6 is the “Transition Plan,” reiterating the student’s name and OEN, with a statement of “Specific Goal(s) for Transition to Post-secondary Activities” and three columns listing “Actions Required,” “Person(s) Responsible for Actions” and “Timelines.” The Transition Plan links the IEP to post-secondary destinations. As early as 14, the ‘goal’ driving the process is where the student will be slotted into the world of work and contribute to the economy in future, according to the four destination ‘pathways’ (discussed in Chapters 4 and 6); a noted exception to the rule is ‘gifted’ students, who do not require a transition plan.

The IEP template constructs students according to prescribed categories, and psycho-educational discourses that pathologize students. In practice, IEPs become reiterative, repeating official language used in previous versions, and thus satisfying ‘consistency’
across the student’s OSR documents, and across local sites. However, the IEP is effectively a contract. Since the school principal must sign the IEP (in accordance with Regulation 181/98 of the Education Act), he/she is legally responsible for ensuring that it is in compliance with the regulations, IPRC recommendations, and Ministry standards. Given teacher-participants’ objections, it seems that the IEP is less a pedagogical device that serves students than a bureaucratic data gathering and accountability mechanism that may be activated in applications for special funding, and in case of a school audit. It implicates teams of people in its making, thus displacing individual teacher discretion. Being goal-oriented toward objectives that specify at the beginning of the year (or semester) what will be achieved by the end, it is in line with outcomes-based education reforms. In practice, special education teachers respond to student needs as they emerge in real time over the course of the year. Rigid adherence to a predetermined plan erases students as real young people who are growing, emerging, and encountering difficulties and setbacks along the way.

Communication -- or rather, miscommunication -- emerged in interviews as a crucial issue for teacher/participants, not only with the Ministry or board of education and administrators, but also paper forms seems to be replacing informal communication, even between teachers across different departments within the same school. In addition, reporting on students is increasingly documented in writing and becomes part of the official record. Special education teachers also rely on communication with each student’s classroom teachers. Kwesi identifies this as a major change in communication within the school between special education teachers and classroom teachers. Whereas communication in the past took place informally as “talking” to one another other directly face-to-face, it is now mediated through “prepared forms.” Having an institutional memory, Kwesi locates the social relations in school in historical context when he says:

They [special education teachers] never come to the classroom anymore. And even if they ask me, it’s through some prepared form – can you please comment on these questions as far as policies are concerned -- that’s what I get in my mailbox. Coming, visiting, observing, the talking doesn’t happen now with my colleagues from the special ed program. As opposed to 10 or 15 years ago, when these things happened: I was able to send them the work; I was able to find out how they’re [students] doing in that room while I’m having my regular class; I was able to talk [to the special education teacher]; they were able to come and talk to me. None of
that is happening now, because everything has been downloaded to them too. With the reduction of staff, they have a lot more to do. That periodic report they have to write -- it’s taking all their time.

The “periodic report” referred to is the IEP. Classroom teachers experience these text-mediated relations between classroom teachers and special education teachers as standing in for “talking.” Not only do special education teachers have to fill out an IEP for each student, but regular classroom teachers are required to report to special education teachers in writing on prepared forms using institutional psycho-educational discourses that frame how students are constituted and what can be communicated about them. Textual reporting systems written up in prescribed forms substitute for direct interaction between teachers about students, and the schema through which teachers see students. The IEP is described as “taking up all [special education teachers’] time” as the focus of their work. How can this be called ‘student-centred’ learning?

7.4 Safety Plans and Behaviour Logs

Additional forms that may constitute part of the official record for students ‘at risk’ document student behaviour. For privacy reasons, these forms may not necessarily be filed in the OSR, but they nevertheless become part of the official records of the institution. A teacher/participant, Caroline, traces Safety Plans to school boards’ legal liability for criminal negligence, and recounts an example of a student; she says:

These recent changes happened around when health and safety became criminal. So this would be three years ago when the board started Safety Plans. ... Safety Plans were a way of protecting themselves. So if you have a kid -- I’ll use the example of a student who urinated on a teacher ... and then went to the subway and pulled a false alarm. This was a student who had been in Section and then was fully integrated [in a school] although he was autistic. I think it was just that the teacher didn’t know how to help him manage his triggers, like his ticks. And then he just went off! So he was one of the first students I was involved in a Safety Plan for, but the expectations were impossible to be met. So it kept him on the roll but out of the school. ‘Cause I think the board didn’t want to be held responsible.

Whereas teacher-participants do not condone violence, and assert the need for teachers to know about students in their classes who may be threat to themselves or others, they express concern about some students being unfairly targeted as behaviour problems, such as those diagnosed as suffering from Asperger’s Syndrome or Tourette’s Syndrome (for
whom symptoms may include unusual but relatively harmless behaviors over which they have no control). Caroline describes the Safety Plan and Behaviour Log as follows:

It [Safety Plan] deals with crisis and it deals with escalation. So there’s two parts: when things are bad, bad, bad—what to do; and when things [are less serious]—warning signs, I guess. ... all clear, mapped out. It has to have a Behaviour Log—you know, [recording] duration and intensity and frequency [of misbehaviour], and you have to keep a log for three months. And you have to have clear triggers, clear antecedents, clear behaviour, clear outcomes.

My follow-up textual analysis did not locate any Ministry documents governing the Safety Plan per se; it appears that the responsibility is downloaded onto school boards and is indeed tied to workplace safety. The TDSB’s Operational Procedure PR699, *Students with Special Needs: Management Process for Risk-of-Injury Behaviours*, was adopted May 24, 2006 and has since been revised twice (December 14, 2009, and March 1, 2010). It follows Policy P.044: Code of Conduct. The current version at the time of writing defines the Safety Plan as follows:

A Safety Plan (SP) is the emergency response plan implemented when risk of injury to staff and/or students is imminent. A Safety Plan must be written for students whose behaviour poses a safety concern. **Students who have a Safety Plan must have an IEP.** The SP documents emergency, non-physical prevention and intervention strategies, and the physical intervention required to prevent or minimize injury, if and when appropriate and necessary. (p. 3; bold italics in original)

The use of the word “must” emphatically asserts that any students deemed to pose a risk to safety must have a Safety Plan, and that they must also have an IEP, which is further emphasized in bold italics. Operational Procedure PR699 is tied to a multiplicity of forms for documenting behavioural misconduct (the 699 series of forms) that include the Violent Incident Form (699C), Report of Accident/Injury (699D), Behaviour Log (699H, previously 699I), Safety Plan (699J), and so on. Formal reporting on these forms flags students ‘at risk’ for closer scrutiny, triggers further forms and processes that may stigmatize and criminalize students -- especially racialized students and those with

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disabilities -- and as well as impacting on schools’ reputations. Once a student is flagged as a risk to school safety, a documentary process of surveillance ensues in which teachers or administrators have to record every infraction in the Behaviour Log, in numeric and linear terms (duration, intensity, frequency; antecedents, triggers, outcomes). Over the course of my research, the number of forms has increased and they have been revised. At first, there were forms A to M (to the Safety Plan Data Summary), but this increased to the letter Q, and then to letter T, that is, to a total of 20 forms by March 27, 2010. Table 7.2: Operational Procedure PR699 Forms shows the list of forms as posted at the TDSB website on April 18, 2008 and on March 27, 2010. It shows the increasing bureaucratization of forms and instructions. Some revisions or new forms can in part be explicited as compliance with legislative changes to the Safe Schools Act, the OHRC ruling, and Falconer reports (discussed in Chapter 4). These forms cover a range of incidents involving accident and injury to students and teachers, as well as recording incidents of physical restraint of students. The newest forms are checklists pertaining to expelled students, that is, “Safe Transfer of Special Education At-risk Student.” Table 7.2 also shows a progression that starts with Notification of Risk of Injury (699A), for example, a bloody nose from a fight, through to safe school transfers. Emanating from the Safe Schools Act, school board policies and procedures and the accompanying documentary forms may set in motion a cycle, as follows:

  misconduct (form) → disciplinary action/punishment → [surveillance] →
  further misconduct (form) → suspension (form) → [surveillance] →
  further misconduct (form) → expulsion from school (form) …

Whereas it is important that teachers are kept informed about incidents in school in order to prevent bullying and to handle discipline fairly by recognizing student’s triggers and so on, the documentary processes in place mean that an infraction that might otherwise be handled informally enters an official record. As the cycle escalates, more and more documentary forms accumulate, until the student may be suspended, expelled from the school, or even expelled from all schools in the board. Surveillance focuses attention on negative behaviours and is problematic in the sense that this increases the likelihood of finding fault or misconduct. Moreover, documentary forms come to constitute ‘the facts’ in school team meetings, school board appeal processes, and may enter into court cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>April 18, 2008</th>
<th>March 27, 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>699A</td>
<td>Notification of Risk of Injury – Memo to Principals Sept. 2004</td>
<td>Notification of Risk of Injury, Students With Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699B</td>
<td>Special Education Student Violent Incident Form</td>
<td>Special Education Student Violent Incident Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699C</td>
<td>Joint Health and Safety Committee Violent Incident Reporting Form</td>
<td>Joint Health and Safety Committee Violent Incident Reporting Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699E</td>
<td>Health and Safety Concern Form</td>
<td>Health and Safety Concern Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699F</td>
<td>Health and Safety Concern Form Instructions</td>
<td>Health and Safety Concern Form Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699H</td>
<td>Special Education Risk Review Request [***]</td>
<td>Special Education: Behaviour Log/IEP [*]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699I</td>
<td>Behaviour Logs [*]</td>
<td>Special Education: Management of Risk of Injury Summary [***]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699J</td>
<td>Safety Plans</td>
<td>J1Special Education Student Safety Plan J2 Special Education Student: Sample Safety Plan NEW! [****]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699K</td>
<td>Functional Behavioural Assessment</td>
<td>Functional Behavioural Assessment (A brief overview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699L</td>
<td>Denial of Access Documentation [**]</td>
<td>Principal's Action Plan [**]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699M</td>
<td>Safety Plan Data Summary</td>
<td>Safety Plan Data Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699O</td>
<td>Guideline for Classroom Audits</td>
<td>Guideline for Classroom Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699P</td>
<td>Special Education Risk Review Summary [**]</td>
<td>Transfer/Promotion, Placement to Another School of a Student With Special Needs [**]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699Q</td>
<td>Use of Unplanned Physical Restraint Summary</td>
<td>Use of Unplanned Physical Restraint Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699R</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sending Principal Checklist for Safe Transfer of Special Education At-risk Students NEW! [****]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Receiving Principal Checklist for Safe Transfer of Special Education At-risk Student NEW! [****]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699T</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact Checklist NEW! [****]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* form number order change  
** title change  
*** order change and name change  
**** new forms
involving judicial review of suspensions and expulsions under the *Safe Schools Act*. Not only are the forms hooked up and oriented to providing a record in case of legal proceedings, but also insurance claims against the Ontario School Boards’ Insurance Exchange (OSBIE). The Special Education Student--Safety Plan (Form 699J) that documents the behaviour of students deemed to constitute a risk to school safety in seven pages has been revised at least twice in recent months (in September 28, 2009 and March 1, 2010).

The Special Education Student--Safety Plan Data Summary (Form 699M) is a one-page summary that shows safety plans are hooked up to funding arrangements and a chain of command. The student is not identified by name or number on 699M, but only by date of birth, gender, exceptionality, and grade or program. However, the yes/no checkboxes specify whether or not the safety plan is tied to an “SIP Claim.” This refers to the Special Incidence Portion of special education funding that if approved, provides up to $27,000 per year per student with “extraordinarily high needs,” eligibility for which rests on health and safety criteria. Form 699M is to be sent to the “Supervising Principal of Special Education” (in capitals for emphasis). The line between private information and privileged information seems to get blurred here: even though the student is not identified by name on the form, the school principal alerts officials higher in the administrative hierarchy; the legitimacy of claims presumably must be established, as well as the precise amount allocated. Given that the maximum amount is almost three times as much as the base per-student funding amount, it seems likely that decisions would involve extensive deliberations. As stated over the pages in Operational Procedure PR699, it is the Director of Education for the board who is ultimately responsible for school safety and risk management in accordance with an array of legislation including the *Education Act* and *Safe Schools Act*, as well as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the Criminal Code, the *Child and Family Services Act*.

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Aside from the plethora of forms pertaining to safety within schools, there are additional operational procedures and forms pertaining to the suspension and expulsion of students from schools, as specified in Operational Procedure PR.522 SCH *Suspension Appeals and Expulsion Hearings*. It follows two policies -- Policy P.051: Safe Schools, and Policy P.044: Code of Conduct. Procedure PR522 deals with procedures pertaining to school transfers, and re-admission protocols for students from expulsion/suspension programs and Section schools. Related forms include Student Action Plans (SAP or E-SAP) for suspended and expelled students (as well as students re-entering regular schools from Section 23) that specify objectives as conditions to be met for readmission to schools. These conditions may be difficult if not impossible to meet, thereby extending suspension or expulsion periods (as Caroline suggests), thus making it increasingly difficult for students to re-integrate back into school. Predicated on the management of risk and safety, documents such as Safety Plans, Behaviour logs, Student Action Plans and so on, emphasize negative behaviours that are regulated through multiple interrelated procedures and policies, and documented in a growing number of official forms. The kinds of behaviours and attributes that are singled out for attention encompass behaviour, speech and dress, as written into policies governing codes of conduct and dress codes, as legislated under the *Safe Schools Act*. Figure 7.1: The Cycle of Problems-Policies-Procedures-Practices shows how the identification of problems induces legislation by members of parliament, which the Ministry interprets and relays to boards of education in Policy/Program Memoranda and other directives, which school board interpret and formulate policies and operating procedures, which in turn influence teaching practice. In this case, the problem of students at risk to school safety led to the *Safe Schools Act* and multiple amendments. It mandates school boards to develop codes of conduct policies (such as Policy P.044) and operating procedures (such as Operational Procedure PR699) to be followed in the case of violations of policy. My analysis reveals various revisions and a proliferation of bureaucratic procedures that suggests problems in the original conception and/or conflicting interests in the reporting enterprise. Moreover, it shows that

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Figure 7.1: The Cycle of Problems-Policies-Procedures-Practices
a system of punishment -- as well as reward -- is intrinsic to meritocracy in education. Similar suspension/expulsion regimes in the US have been called a “school-to-prison pipeline.”

7.5 Off the Record: Teaching at a Youth Detention Centre

By now, the reader is surely exhausted by the accounting logic of the various record keeping regimes governing students ‘at risk’ and school safety. For a different perspective, I turn to embodied everyday experiences and relations that are outside the purview of official records; that is, my own teaching experience working with students who are at the far end of the ‘school-to-prison pipeline.’

As a Section 23 teacher in a detention centre, I did not have access to every student’s OSR; they were either kept at the head office for Section schools in a different location, or retained at the student’s home school. With students moving around, there were time delays moving OSRs with them. However, we did request the OSRs of students on longer stays in detention. For the most part, instead of relying on the documentary record, teaching was geared to engaging with students directly to get them back on track with their education, as well as working towards course credits.

Prior to the start of the school year, I visited the school. What stands out was a moment in the stairwell, when ‘inmates’ were being escorted in line by guards carrying walkie-talkies from the gym up to the units upstairs where they sleep. Standing aside as the line ascended the stairs, I noticed that almost all inmates were Black or other minoritized groups. In that moment, I was at first taken by surprise at the racialization of youth in detention that was clearly evident in the line ascending the stairs; and then realized that, of course, this is exactly what minority groups say -- that they are unfairly targeted by the criminal justice system. In that moment, I experienced my whiteness, excruciatingly as a privileged person who has not had to endure racial/ethnic profiling or harassment. At the

75 These OSRs, along with teachers’ records, were kept a locked filing cabinet in the teachers’ staff room that was also locked within a secure zone of the detention centre with limited access. There was an incident in which the locked filing cabinet containing OSRs was broken into. Although nothing went missing, this was a legal breach of student privacy. Consequently, the school authorities were alerted, but an explanation of who was actually responsible and what they were looking for was never provided.
detention centre, there were three teachers; one each in English, mathematics, and physical education. Literacy and numeracy were integral to the program, but in a broader sense than the official one. While each of us was responsible for teaching the curriculum in our respective subject areas, we also worked together on developing a cross-disciplinary program in genuine collaboration. In what follows about the program at the detention centre, credit is shared for how it evolved, since we all worked together collaboratively, of our own accord. The program arose out of the particular students in the detention centre, and the experiences that each of us as teachers brought to the situation. Our shared focus was a commitment to equity and social justice in education.

On the first day of classes, I caught myself making assumptions of how ‘low functioning’ the students were, and the bias inherent in such a derogatory categorization. What I had been doing for the past several years would have to go out the window, and I had to start from where the students were at. Although it may seem ironic, the experience that I mostly drew on was from teaching ‘gifted’ students and facilitating whole-school enrichment, that is, working outside the ‘normal’ peer group and beyond baseline ‘standards’ of curricula. Being a facilitator rather than an instructor means offering individualized attention and pacing, and guided independent learning experiences; for example, by posing achievable challenging and enriching problems that arouse students’ curiosity, based on their location, interests and aspirations rather than the priorities of the institution.

### 7.5.1 Earning Trust

Especially for youth who have had negative experiences at school and with authority figures, earning and maintaining their trust is key. Early on, I went through a rite of passage at the detention centre, in an exchange in class that went something like this:

Student: Where you from?
(in confrontational tone of voice and body language)
Me: I’m from Africa.
Student: Yeah, right! Where in Africa?
(looking disbelieving, quizzical and confused, as if trying to put my whiteness together with being from Africa, and assuming that only black people can come from Africa).
Me: Zimbabwe. Do you know where that is?
Student: No---
Me: Okay, let’s get the globe and see who can find it.
(Students having located Zimbabwe on the globe, and my birthplace of Harare, the dialogue continues)
Student: Can you speak African?
Me: There are lots of different languages and cultures in Africa. I can speak a little....
Student: Say something then!
Me: Humba gash’li. It means, ‘Go well, friend.’
Student: Humba gash’li.
(Students all repeat “Humba gash’li” spontaneously and in unison).

In that exchange, the differences between us collapsed on a human level. I later overheard students saying to new arrivals at the detention centre, “She’s OK, she comes from Africa.” Though that was not the appropriate time to unpack colonial relations in Africa, I had earned their trust. Humba gash’li became our greeting to each other.

7.5.2 Teaching Mathematics

As the teacher of mathematics at the detention centre, I encountered the challenge of overcoming resistance to the subject. Almost without exception, students at the centre ‘hate’ mathematics and had experienced little, if any, success in it. I recall the following exchange with a male student:

Student: I ain’t doing this s**t.
Me: Why not?
Student: It’s too hard.
Me: OK. You shoot hoops, right?
Student: Yeah!
Me: Like basketball, math is just a game, with numbers. Learn the rules of the game and then practice. Practice makes perfect.
Student: SO!
Me: Well, doesn’t shooting hoops make you better at it? It’s the same with math. Anyone can do math with practice and get smarter at it. Just as exercise and practice makes your muscles stronger, exercising your brain in math makes you smarter.

Some days later, the student approached me and announced: Hey Miss, I’m getting smarter!

Not only did I feel touched by his announcement, but it marked a huge breakthrough for the student because he had learned something about himself and what he could do if he tried. Through using a simple analogy that the student could relate to, he bought in to
participating in math class as the first step. The single most difficult hurdle is moving a student to want to try. As his confidence gradually increased, he progressed at his own pace to the point of experiencing the intrinsic rewards of his own efforts with practice.

Another girl-student was similarly resistant to math. She had internalized racial stereotypes; her logic, as explained to me, ran something like this: “Black people are stupid; I’m black, therefore I’m stupid.” Moreover, like so many of the female students at the centre detained on prostitution charges, she presented herself in a sexualized way as if her identity hinged on it. Once she bought in and gained confidence, she was able to help the boys get going in math class. Her sense of pride in showing boys how to do math altered relations with them, and brought an end to sexual innuendos and/or epithets uttered by the male students. She attained a new ‘respect’ in the group, not as a sex object but as smart and capable in a subject that is associated with being ‘too hard.’ Another example was with a boy; while I was busy helping another student, he asked one of the guards to help him with a math problem of factoring trinomial. When the guard was not able to help him, the student’s sense of self-esteem was tangible—he was not doing ‘dummy stuff,’ and he approached his work with renewed determinism, as if in so-doing he could supersede his oppressors. When students are released from detention, we teachers do not know how their lives unfold; one can only hope that they have been able to hang onto that fragile awakening of confidence in their capabilities that they began to experience while at the detention centre.

7.5.3 Rewarding Achievement

As any teacher can see, reward works better than punishment. However, students in detention who are not positively disposed towards school have invariably been disregarded by the usual reward system in schools and have experienced limited success; sitting and watching others walk up to receive trophies while they are excluded inevitably leads to discouragement and marginalization. Yet these students respond to stars and certificates that notice and recognize their achievements. It came as a surprise to me that ‘tough’ students respond to stars, since I had assumed that they would regard that as ‘kid’s stuff.’ However, the important aspect is that the rewards be meaningful, specific and authentic, in students’ own terms; platitudes, such as ‘most improved student’ are not
enough. This means careful and close attention to accomplishments, big or small, every
day. Each week, we gave out and posted certificates on the school wall of
accomplishments for that week, and held an awards ceremony at the end of each term in
which each and every student received recognition, with no one left out. It was not a
competitive process with their peers but with themselves. Reframing ‘success,’ student
achievement was tied, not to institutional priorities or in competition with others, but to
individual personal accomplishments within the school program. For example, one 17-
year-old student who had been in and out of detention received a certificate
commemorating the accomplishment of reading his first novel. Student efforts were
rewarded with small gifts associated with the actual accomplishment -- such as a book,
diary, or calculator -- that the students could take with them upon release. We purchased
these gifts in part out of our school budget, but topped it up with teachers’ contributions.
For many students in detention, this was undoubtedly their first experience with receiving
an award or certificate for academic achievement, and they took tremendous pride in
them.

We also held talent shows, to which the corrections staff and management were invited,
where students performed as musicians, rap artists, comedians, magicians, dancers, and
actors in short plays written and produced by them. Not only did students learn how to
collaborate to put a show together, but this event shifted the emphasis among the
corrections staff at the detention centre from punishment for students’ misdemeanors to
applause for their positive social contributions. This should not be misinterpreted to mean
racial stereotyping of black students as entertainers for white audiences, but as part of a
wider curriculum of social and academic learning. Expecting the best of students, based
on where they are at, brings out the best in them in other areas as well.

7.5.4 The Unofficial Curriculum

Reinforcing societal norms and values are integral to schooling; they are carried in
curriculum content, as well as part of the hidden curriculum of rules and regulations.
Education involves socialization to school rules that reflect social values such as
punctuality, respect, getting along with others in the school community, meeting
expectations for schoolwork and deadlines, and taking responsibility for the
consequences of misbehaviour or mistakes. As teachers, we endeavour to embody positive values and to broach contentious issues with sensitivity to and awareness of the particular students present in the classroom. Values are transmitted through interpersonal interaction. How the teacher interacts with students communicates values; being authentic, respectful, and fair—and being perceived to be fair—provides active role modelling for students. Seizing teachable moments in student-student interactions in the immediacy of a situation can be more effective than any prescripted lesson. This entails constant self-reflexivity towards curriculum materials as well as the interpersonal dynamics in the classroom.

Across time and place, for disenfranchised people -- whether based in race, class, gender, or other axes of difference -- social justice is not about abstract speculation but fostering respect and human dignity in their lives at school. The students at the detention centre are embodiments of marginalized youth. As alternatives to standard notions of socialization, Freire’s critical pedagogy of conscientization offers a framework for education that incorporates the political, respects students’ experiences, enhances agency, and transforms people’s lives towards equity and social justice. This does not mean that the teacher hands over her authority in the classroom, but that she asks critical questions, practices self-reflexivity, and encourages students to do likewise.

Contrary to the notion that youth in trouble with the law are of ‘deficient’ character or lack values, working in a detention centre brings into plain view that detainees do subscribe to a value-system. The values of the dominant culture, such as competitive materialism, are internalized to an extreme and combined with the code of the street, where personal worth is measured by possessions — brandishing brand-label clothes and shoes, jewellery, cell-phones and so on — the acquisition of which by illegal means is often the reason for running into trouble with the law. Traditional masculinist values of the ‘tough-guy’ carry over into cultivating an exaggerated angry and unpredictable persona that instills fear in others, and generates ‘respect.’ In the code of the street, respect is construed as deference to those higher in the hierarchy, as in the military and police force; showing disrespect (or dissin’) in the wrong quarters risks reprisals. Honour pertains particularly in gender relations. On the one hand, an insult towards the mother or
sister evokes strong retaliation to protect the honour of the family; on the other hand, unaffiliated women/girls are treated as sex objects. The slang expression “bros before hoes” epitomizes the ethos of the male-brother bond over male-female relationships; this alpha-male machismo also carries over into homophobia. Loyalty and courage tend to be owed to a small social group (or gang) among whom snitching is the ultimate transgression. Revenge features writ large as vigilante-style justice to settle scores. Undoubtedly connected with negative experiences with the police, detainees do not see the police as protecting their safety. Recognizing the experiences and values of youth at the detention centre was the starting point for collaboration on developing an unofficial curriculum that centred values, positive social relations, and building confidence.

From my perspective, we had devised a cross-curricular approach as a site-specific self-reflexive response in accordance with critical pedagogy. Having tried it, we found the values education package promoted by the TDSB at the time to be inappropriate, since it was based on white middle-class values, with no relevance for minoritized youth from poor communities; for example, the presenter from the TDSB opened her presentation with a question: “Who likes white-water rafting?” No response. Little did she know that youth from housing projects in and around Toronto do not have the privilege of such leisurely pastimes, or that their life-experience is often limited to their ’hoods (neighbourhoods). She lost them at the outset. Secondly, we found the reductionist definition of values as interests, preferences or likes and dislikes to be oversimplified. Instead, drawing on our own joint resources, we worked out an integrated coordinated approach. Our approach is not presented here as a prescriptive formula to be transplanted elsewhere, but to show how a program can be worked out on a daily basis through teacher-student and student-student relations: how we model respect towards student/detainees (and expect the same from students) and how we model fairness and pay attention to equity. Bear in mind that this approach was devised within a context where teachers are accorded flexibility and discretion beyond that allowed in a regular public school. It ran counter to the predominant corrections mentality of the facility and required asserting the school program as having a degree of separation from the norms and values of the detention centre.
First, it acknowledges and respects students’ experiences and youth subculture. For example, students were presented with the seven principles of Nguzo Saba,76 invited to choose one, and to make it their own by making a personalized bookmark for themselves. The cultural relevance of African values formed a starting point, and students responded by requesting to keep their bookmarks and to take with them when they left the facility. The use of Swahili words and associated symbols no doubt provided a form of code valued by street-involved youth as manifest in tagging practices, but reframed it in a positive way. The bookmark tied in with the silent reading program, in which students choose a book from two or three carefully selected options relevant to the particular student’s age, reading level, life experience, and personal issues. A literary approach to values education is not new;77 it affords a means for perspective taking through taking the perspective of another that is conducive to developing empathy. An initial challenge for teachers to engage students who are disinclined towards reading is a mismatch between reading level and content; youth refuse to read what they perceive as ‘kid stuff’ or ‘dumb stuff.’ The key is familiarity with the genre of youth literature, as well as with the student, to enable a good match such that the student can identify in some way with the characters, story or narrative, and the values conveyed. The bookmark not only marked their place and identified the book as theirs for use in school and in their units beyond the school day, but also brought values into the foreground in reading.

The regular physical education curriculum of fitness, basketball and other sports was expanded to include yoga. Initially resisting and disparaging yoga as ‘soft stuff,’ students came to experience directly the benefits of deep relaxation as a counterpoint to being constantly on the alert and watching their backs, such that they requested more time for yoga. The embodied learning of yoga is conducive to wellbeing, feeling centred, calm and peaceful. This ancient practice not only provides techniques to self-regulate stress,

76 For the Seven Principles of Nguzo Saba, Swahili words and symbols, see http://www.us-organization.org/nguzosaba/NguzoSaba.html
77 A literary approach to values education that uses literature to explore values has long been practiced in schools. Beginning with young children, stories and storytelling invariably convey moral messages; for example, The Hare and the Tortoise (Aesop Fables) or Why Anansi Has Eight Thin Legs (Anansi Tales from Africa). Cultural relevance is a key factor in student engagement with reading, though we can also all learn from stepping outside our own culture.
anger and fear, but develops a mind-body-spirit connection that enables students to access a reality beyond their immediate existence, and to experience themselves as part of a larger whole. The transformative effects of yoga postures and breathing were palpable in students calming down and opening up from guarded offensive/defensive posturing to an open receptive way of being. Soft styles of martial arts such as Tai Chi, or African drumming, could be equally beneficial, with qualified teacher-instructors.

In a similar vein, an important element of the program was to expose students to people and situations outside their immediate experience. In lieu of field trips, visiting speakers from black and minority communities were invited as role models from the outside world in various professions and capacities; for example, entrepreneurs, a lawyer, a dramaturge, and former gang members from the Canadian pilot program called Breaking the Cycle.78 One could have heard a pin drop when a former gang member described his own experience of struggling with the difficult and risky decision to leave the gang after his friend was shot, and how he reconstructed his life. For many adolescents and especially those in trouble with the law, hearing first hand from a peer’s authentic experience is more effective than the proselytizing of authority figures. The visiting speakers program gave students exposure to people like themselves who have achieved ‘success’ in various ways, thus providing hope for alternative life courses to a life of crime.

Game playing was used to develop social skills, since it involves interaction in negotiating and interpreting the rules of the game, and then abiding by them. For the game to continue requires agreement on rules, and conflict arises over breaking the rules, or cheating, that may end the game unless new rules can be established. Thus games opened dialogue as to why we need rules. Through playing a game that students had not encountered before -- the ancient African stone game of Mancala -- students learned on one level about strategy, planning moves and anticipating the outcomes. However, the focus was on social learning processes that occur through rule-making and achieving

78 For the Breaking the Cycle Project, see http://www.cantraining.org/BTC/docs/Referral%20and%20Inquiry%20Information%20Sheet%20revised.pdf.
group consensus, and understanding fair play as abiding by democratically established rules.

The influence of popular culture and media on youth violence cannot be underestimated, including television, film, videogames, and the internet. Popular culture and new technologies are often cited as causes of youth violence – from the 1950s when the moral corruption of youth was attributed to comics and rock and roll music, to contemporary complaints about rap music, reality shows, films, videogames and the internet. It is important not to condemn popular youth culture outright, but to discern constructive and destructive forms. Not all rap music and not all videogames valorize violence; for example, gangster rap and first person-shooter videogames are distinct sub-genres within the larger genre. Critical literacy provides youth with the tools to think critically about what they are exposed to in the media.

Drawing on contemporary popular music, rap lyrics provided a starting point for student writing, through reframing gangster rap as sound poetry and a legitimate art form. Self-reflection and self-reflexivity in writing rap lyrics were encouraged, with no prohibition on the use of slang or patois. However, there were clear restrictions on swearing, misogynistic or homophobic messages, ethnic or racial slurs, and references to weapons or violence. Minimizing the restrictions to respect for social values acknowledges the protest origins of rap music, leaving space to speak out against injustice and keeping it real. Student writing was celebrated in performances to the entire group, from which they gained affirmation and self-confidence.

Hollywood action films that youth are exposed to romanticize the outlaw-hero and venerate violence. Film was used not as entertainment but as a springboard for discussion about values and violence, with preparation before and debriefing after viewing a film. For example, we used the film *John Q* (2002) to open a dialogue about ethical dilemmas. The film was selected because it was relatively current, centred on a black middle-class family, there was no violent shoot out, and no-one was physically harmed in the film. It features the protagonist (John Q, played by Denzil Washington) whose son faces death without a heart transplant that is not covered by medical insurance. With time running out
and after multiple efforts to find a legal solution, John Q resorts to taking hostages to force the hospital to perform the operation on his son. Some of the toughest detainees were moved to tears over the father’s care and love for his son, which many (not all) had not experienced in their lives. The dramatic tension captured students’ attention, and stimulated engaged discussion. Similar to Heinz’s dilemma, it raised the ethical dilemma of conflicting values, and discussion about what social justice means in a democratic society predicated on the rule of law. Juxtaposing the for-profit values of the medical insurance industry and hospital management, with the value of human life, the film opened up dialogue about what to do in the face of injustice, and it raised issues of taking action to oppose unjust policies and accepting the consequences of breaking the law. It is important to emphasize that a crucial aspect of the debriefing process -- given the context of a detention centre -- was disabusing students of the idea of hostage taking as a means to get one’s own way.

From my experience teaching in a detention centre, then, it is apparent that affording teachers room to initiate site-specific educational programs requires respect, time, and resources to diverge from the standard curriculum. It inspires experimentation and generates multiple ways to engage students in school and with their own learning. Critical pedagogy enables students to formulate their own values and discover their own potential through genuine experiential learning that includes encounters with teachers as well as peers, parents and community. Critical pedagogy offers an alternative approach to values in education that centres equity and social justice as ideals worth striving for. Genuine and effective education emanates from and is geared to the particular life experiences of students, as well as the interests, passions and expertise that teachers bring with them into the classroom. This kind of student-focused learning is over-ruled in standardized curricula and reporting, and rendered invisible in standardized EQAO test scores.
Chapter 8
Ontario’s Success Story?:
Evidence-based Research

Beginning with the experience of people, IE unpacks how the ruling relations work through texts that coordinate the activities of people across local sites. Across the interviews, teacher/participants recounted the dilemmas they face in the reporting regime, including report cards, IEPs, behaviour logs, and School Safety Plans, that were unpacked in the previous chapter. During dual and individual interviews in Chapter 5, teacher/participants also challenged the policies implemented under the Student Success Strategy and raised a number of questions. Tessa questioned the expansion of cooperative education and official claims of increases in graduation rates. Caroline questioned Learning to 18 for forcing students to stay in school and making them “angrier.” Nicole questioned the notion of ‘success,’ whether it is about “student success” or “school success.” Across the interviews, credit recovery/credit rescue was identified as a key plank of the SS Strategy. As noted previously, teacher/participants speculated about the source of the credit recovery policy; some teachers at Kwesi’s school challenged the Falconer Report as the source of credit recovery and related evaluation policies; Caroline thought the idea of credit recovery came from Section 23 teachers. Differing interpretations and practices across local sites, and within the same site between teachers and administrators, suggest the operation of the ruling relations.

Based on teacher/participants’ questioning of the SS Strategy, this chapter picks up on credit recovery and proceeds with a textual analysis to find out where the policy came from and how it is hooked up with the ruling relations of education reform. As noted in Chapter 4, along with the government changeover in 2003 from PC to Liberal Party rule came a name change from ‘students at risk’ to ‘student success,’ as if to disassociate from the former regime. Despite the positive spin on ‘success,’ official texts indicate that the SS Strategy specifically targets students deemed to be at risk of dropping out of high school. There is a disconnect between the official rhetoric and what teacher/participants experience in their classrooms. My textual analysis began with the Student Success
Commission, and continued with an article by Levin, Glaze and Fullan (2008) entitled Results without Rancor or Ranking: Ontario’s Success Story. This text portrays the official story as promoted by these three senior government officials, and provides an entry point into ruling relations in Ontario education. Whereas classroom teachers experience a haphazard “change of tune” in policies that govern their everyday work, Levin, Glaze and Fullan depict a virtually seamless strategy of ‘success.’ My intertextual analysis of related research activities reveals how knowledge about education is socially organized, how social relations are orchestrated across local sites, and how research practices in education operate. It traces an extensive network of ruling relations controlled and regulated by an ideological circle of education reformers, far removed from everyday practices in classrooms.

8.1 The Student Success Commission

The official policy of credit recovery can be traced to a memorandum from the Ministry of Education: Policy/Program Memorandum No. 137 (PPM 137), on the subject of “Use of Additional Teacher Resources to Support Student Success in Ontario Secondary Schools,” and issued on June 27, 2005. This memo predates the Falconer reports by at least two years. The proposed additional teacher resources to be located in each school are so-called Student Success Teachers. PPM 137 revokes the contentious Teacher Advisor Program (TAP) imposed under the former Harris/Eves regime. TAP downloaded guidance responsibilities onto classroom teachers, without allotting teachers time to do the work, while cutting guidance counsellors and other paraprofessionals in schools (Kerr, 2006).

79 For some background, see the Research Integrity Report entitled The State of Research Integrity and Misconduct Policies in Canada (2009) at http://www.caut.ca/uploads/Report_SRIPC.pdf (accessed November 22, 2009). This report was commissioned by the Canadian Research Integrity Committee and prepared by Hickling Arthurs Low. It examines the issue of questionable research practices mainly with respect to public-private partnerships (P3s) in medical and pharmaceutical research, in which unregulated research falls outside the jurisdiction of the Tri-Council Policy Statement—Statement on Integrity in Research and Scholarship (TCP-IRS).

80 A copy of the PPM 137 sent to the upper echelons of school governance (Directors of Education, Secretaries/Treasurers of School Authorities, and Principals of Secondary Schools) can be found at http://www.tcdsb.org/academic_it/ntip/files/pdf/ppm137.pdf. It was later posted at the Ministry website.

81 TAP was mandated by an earlier Policy/Program Memorandum No. 126 in 2000.
PPM 137 states that boards are expected to use the Ministry’s Student Success Teachers to improve student success and offer more programs for students. From the list of courses/programs specified and the duties of Student Success Teachers, it is clear that the target group is students at risk, despite official insistence that Student Success applies to all students; PPM 137 states:

Student Success teachers [are those] who know and track the progress of students at risk of not graduating; who support school-wide efforts to improve outcomes for students struggling with the secondary curriculum; who re-engage early school leavers; who provide direct support/instruction to these students in order to improve student achievement, retention, and transitions; and who work with parents and the community to support student success. These teachers may be assigned to areas such as alternative education, cooperative education, guidance, and learning resource centres. (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/137.html)

Not only is the list of duties expected of one additional Student Success Teacher per school a tall order, but there are strings attached that hook credit recovery into additional bureaucratic processes of reporting, and regulate the activities of teachers in the classrooms. PPM 137 goes on to state:

Beginning in 2005–06, each school board will be required to report on their use of additional teaching staff and the achievement of improved student results on their Annual Student Success Action Plan and Report. These reports will be required in addition to any other reporting that will be required by the Ministry of Education.

From teacher/participant accounts, schools used the resources of PPM 137 in various ways according to the needs of the particular context. As one teacher/participant put it, “That’s how it should be. Each school situation is different.”

However, the Ministry released “guiding principles” for Student Success Teachers subsequent to PPM 137 -- that is, a year after these additional teacher ‘resources’ were made available to schools and after they were already in place. The confusion at local sites seems to have ensued from placing the cart before the horse, with Student Success Teachers being utilized as schools saw fit, and guidelines for their use being stipulated by the Ministry later. The following textual analysis of policy documents pertaining to credit recovery reveals a process of retrofitting policy, or mismanagement and miscommunication among the various levels of educational governance, involving the Ministry, boards of education, and school administration.
The Ministry’s subsequent guidelines for PPM 137 can be traced to two memoranda from Deputy Minister Ben Levin, to Directors of Education, in the last couple of days before the summer holidays; the first, dated June 28, 2006 is on the subject of “Credit Recovery;” and the second, dated June 30, 2006 is on the subject of the “Student Success Commission Report on Student Success Teachers” (see Figure 8.1: Memoranda and the Student Success Commission). The first memo consists of two pages (plus a five-page attachment), and the second memo consists of one page (plus an eight-page attachment). The first memo states, “All school boards will need to review their current Credit Recovery programs to ensure alignment with the direction stated in this memo” ([creditmemo.pdf](http://www.tcdsb.org/academic_it/ntip/files/pdf/creditmemo.pdf)). The second memo uses similar wording but imposes a deadline; it states:

> All school boards will need to review their current Student Success Teacher programming to ensure alignment with the direction stated in this memo. ... Full implementation of the attached endorsements is expected to occur no later than September 2007. ([264228.pdf](https://ospace.scholarsportal.info/bitstream/1873/1802/1/264228.pdf))

The authority for the policy and guidelines is stated as the Student Success Commission Report, and alignment means compliance with its recommendations. In my attempts to find out about the Commission, I located two separate lists of members: one from an Ontario newswire announcing the formation of the Commission that “began meeting on March 30 [2006];”82 and another in an article reflecting on the experience by one of the commissioners, Helen Reid (2008). As shown in Table 8.1: Student Success Commissioners, a comparison of these lists reveals that there were 12 commissioners, comprised of six managers and six union representatives. The largest contingent was also the most senior level of management on the Commission, viz. three directors of education. Moreover, there was a 50 percent turnover among union representatives, whereas management remained stable throughout the entire 24 month period of the Commission (from 2006 to 2008). Whether or not this turnover suggests conflict between union and management, it seems unlikely that union representatives would have been

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Table 8.1: Student Success Commissioners

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry List (May 29, 2006)</th>
<th>Helen Reid List (Summer 2008)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moe Jacobs (Executive Lead/Ministry)</td>
<td>Elaine Todres (Facilitator)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pierre Coté, OSSTF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth Dawson, ETFO</td>
<td>Ruth Dawson, ETFO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernard A. Ethier, AEFO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Heximer, OECTA</td>
<td>Jeff Heximer, OECTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise d'Amour, Director CSPGNO</td>
<td>Louise d'Amour, Director CSPGNO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale Leckie, OSSTF</td>
<td>Dale Leckie, OSSTF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pierre Leonard, AEFO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamie McCracken, Director OCDSB</td>
<td>Jamie McCracken, Director OCDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy Palermo, Principal TDSB</td>
<td>Randy Palermo, Principal TDSB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan Perry, OECTA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helen Reid, Principal LDCSB</td>
<td>Helen Reid, Principal LDCSB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Reith, OSSTF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha Rogers, Director UDDSB</td>
<td>Martha Rogers, Director UDDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Thurston, Superintendent YDSB</td>
<td>Ken Thurston, Superintendent YDSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Trafford, OECTA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
equal participants, given the learning curve required to catch up with the core management group.

Having conducted an extensive search to locate the actual report of the Student Success Commission, I discovered that a report, as such, does not exist at the Ministry. Moreover, one of the union commissioners whom I interviewed did not know of its existence. Based on field notes taken during an interview with one of the union commissioners, the term ‘commission’ is a misnomer for what was actually an “advisory group.” The first year of group meetings were “more difficult” than the second, when a professional facilitator was assigned. The process of reporting, as described, was that the facilitator wrote “letters” summarizing the discussions and submitted them to the Ministry; union representatives on the commission were not always privy to the content of those letters, and their main role was to advise the Minister on labour-management issues in the interests of maintaining “peace and stability.” Thus, what got picked up from the discussions and relayed to the Ministry appears to have been filtered through the perspective of the facilitator.

83 I attempted to contact Helen Reid using the address provided in her article (above); however, she is apparently no longer a principal at St. Mary’s High School, and my email was not able to be delivered, suggesting that she may no longer be with the London District Catholic School Board either. I contacted the teacher union. An email communiqué (received March 31, 2009) from a representative of one of the teacher union affiliates states that the Report of the Student Success Commission “was not made public” and that union members of the commission “did not receive a copy.” I contacted the Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Training and Evaluation Branch of the Ministry to request a copy of the report of Student Success Commission on Student Success Teachers. No-one at the Ministry was aware if its existence. Ironically, on April 1st (April fools day!), a representative from the Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Training and Evaluation Branch called back to advise me that his search (including consultations with other departments, such as publications, media, etc.) had not located this publication; this led him to assume that it “has not been released.” After an extensive search, it appears that a report as such, indeed does not exist. Coming up empty-handed on a report so seminal to the Ministry’s SS Strategy felt to me at the time as if I’d discovered a deflated hot air balloon. Why the lack of transparency? Who has access to the report, if neither the Ministry nor the commissioners do?

84 According to a union representative, the facilitator assigned was Elaine Todres, originally from Manitoba, and with experience in health/ hospitals. Further exploration reveals that Elaine Todres served as an Ontario deputy minister for various portfolios, but not education, spanning a decade or more (including under former Premier Mike Harris as Deputy Solicitor General during the Ipperwash incident). Thereafter, she founded and is the CEO of Todres Leadership Counsel, a private consulting firm on corporate governance and leadership. See www.todresleadership.com. The Ontario Newswire lists the first ‘executive lead’ as Moe Jacobs from the Ministry; further exploration reveals that he joined the Ministry after working as a bargaining negotiator for the OSSTF.
Through my analysis, I eventually discovered that the so-called report of the Student Success Commission is indeed the eight-page attachment to the second memo to Directors of Education, from Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education, dated June 30, 2006, on the subject of the “Student Success Commission Report on Student Success Teachers.”\(^85\) But this report seems unusual on several grounds: first, it seems extraordinarily short for so authoritative a designation as a ‘Commission report;’ second, the process seems unusually expedient in that the report gets picked up as a directive from the Ministry within weeks of the establishment of the Commission; third, the close relations described between the Ministry and the Commission during the process seem to verge on conflict of interest. The second memo of June 30, 2006 states that “the Commission explores, advises and endorses the government’s implementation of student success initiatives. The Commission, in consultation with the Ministry, identified Student Success Teachers as its second task.” In fact, student success teachers were mandated by PPM 137 in June 27, 2005; that is, they were already in place before the Commission was established, and a year before the ‘report’ was sent to the boards of education. Thus, my textual analysis reveals an ideological circle in which endorsement of the Ministry’s initiatives were a foregone conclusion for the advisory group, and a fait accompli for the ‘commission.’

The preamble of the report states: “One of the main thrusts of the Student Success initiative is to change the very micro-interaction, that is, the relationship, between students and teachers so that students have the best possible opportunities to learn” (p. 1). This statement exemplifies the dominance of a management perspective, and makes visible the strategy of controlling day-to-day relations between students and teachers translocally, through a re-culturing process at the school level and at the board level. In schools, re-culturing is led by a newly-appointed School Success Teacher and the formation of a School Success Team, and at the board level by newly-appointed School Success Leaders. It seems unlikely that teachers would apply for or be appointed to these new positions unless they subscribed to the ideological circle. Thus, the notion of “tri-level” education reform is enforced through a “guiding coalition” of key positions in

\(^85\) This was subsequently confirmed through my application to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office.
government, boards and schools to lead the process, with actual people carrying the ideology into local sites, and keeping senior officials informed.\(^{86}\) Reiterated across the writings of the Ontario reformers is the oxymoron of a “balance of pressure and support” for teachers. Considering how social relations are orchestrated, this so-called balance seems to tip in the former direction of pressure and micro-management.

The way credit recovery was implemented indicates a top-down process of policy implementation through “boss texts” that arouse resistance from teachers with an institutional memory of the Harris/Eves regime.\(^{87}\) It also exposes the problematic of institutional capture on the part of Student Success Teachers/Leaders, and the social organization of promotions to high profile positions and secondments to the Ministry. The lack of transparency and empty authority behind the initiative raises questions about the social organization of policy knowledge: How are students being framed and targeted as ‘at risk’? What does student ‘success’ actually mean? What counts as ‘evidence’? How do public relations operate to manufacture consent for the ruling agenda?

8.2 Ontario’s Success Story: The Social Organization of Educational Research

As distinct from the messy haphazardness of ruling directives that teacher/participants experience on the ground, Levin, Glaze, and Fullan (2008) paint a rosy picture of Ontario’s success story as a made-in-Canada model for large-scale education reform. As I have pointed out, this disconnect between frontline teachers and the official story marks the operation of ruling relations. Moreover, Ontario’s success story published in a US-based journal conveys a much more optimistic picture than the one in a local journal article by Levin (2008a) addressed to teachers (discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.7) that depicts Ontario as lagging behind other provinces and countries. These incompatible pictures undoubtedly contribute to the “mixed message” teacher/participants receive. The purpose of this section is not to single out individuals, but to show how the ruling

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\(^{86}\) For the idea of a guiding coalition, see Levin and Fullan (2008). A guiding coalition is comprised of “key leaders at various levels, both politicians and administrators, [who] all understand and articulate the strategy in very similar ways, so that leadership at all levels is mutually reinforcing” (p. 294); it has use value “to spread and be consistent” (p. 300) with the message. The model of tri-level change was rolled out earlier in Michael Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance* (New York: Routledge, 2003) —a reference that the Ministry and reformers seem to avoid using, perhaps due to the inflammatory title.

\(^{87}\) Dorothy Smith uses the term “boss text” to refer to higher-order texts in the textual hierarchy. In this instance, it applies to a textual directive from the Ministry that over-rules other texts.
apparatus operates to bring about institutional capture to the ruling ideology. Consistent with IE, the premise is that the educational system is sustained by coordinating the activities of people across local sites. The ideology of the ruling apparatus is carried into local sites through texts that regulate the activities of people, in this case, teachers. Texts are broadly interpreted not just as print, but visual, electronic and other forms of communication as well. Through this inter-textual analysis, it becomes apparent that education in Ontario is orchestrated by a small self-reinforcing inner circle of education reformers. The article by Levin, Glaze, and Fullan (2008) constitutes a window into extra-local ruling relations to begin an inter-textual analysis, where the research literature is taken not as ‘fact,’ but as data for further analysis (below) to unpack how ruling relations operate.

Levin, Glaze and Fullan refer to the Student Success Commission as integral to the strategy, “to prevent disputes at the local level” (p. 276), that is, to pre-empt teacher union opposition to Ministry initiatives. Although credit recovery was a major initiative of the SS Strategy between 2005 and 2008 (with funds attached), the authors make no reference to it. Instead, they base their claims on increases in “graduation rates” and “credit accumulation” in high school as constituting evidence of ‘success.’ They state:

The indicators for high school improvements are also positive. Graduation rates are rising—from 68% to 75% in 2006-2007, meaning that each year some 10,000 more students are graduating than was the case five years ago. Results on the provincial 10th grade literacy test --- not a particular focus of the changes — have improved substantially. Credit accumulation in grades 9 and 10, which strongly predicts graduation, is also improving, so there should be further significant improvements in graduation rates in the next few years. Here, too, an independent evaluation has confirmed positive results. (p. 279)

Although it may impress system managers that students are being processed efficiently through the system, the ‘indicators’ and numbers are misleading."88 Given that

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88 For the indicators used in Ontario, see George Zegarac and Richard Franz, Secondary school reform in Ontario and the role of research, evaluation and indicator data (Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 11, 2007). Available at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/SSreform.pdf (accessed April 21, 2009). The nine original indicators of success were: credit accumulation; pass rates in compulsory courses; completion of the literacy graduation requirement; workplace preparation course selections; college preparation course selections; locally-developed compulsory credit course selections; guidance and career education and ‘co-op related’ courses; annual school leaver rate; grade 7 and 8 students at risk. The two additional indicators
teacher/participants questioned official statistics as misrepresenting what they experience on the ground, these statistics warrant further analysis. First, the graduation rate increase from 68% to 75% may seem dramatic; however, the start date is not mentioned. My follow-up analysis of statistics from Ontario Newswires and Alan King’s (2005) Phase 4 report is shown in Table 8.2: Graduation Rates. According to these sources, there was a graduation rate of 78% in 1998 (prior to the implementation of the new four-year curriculum), 68% in 2003-04 (when the first cohort graduated under the new curriculum paradigm), and 71% in 2004-05. As compared with subsequent years, Ministry statistics indicate that the biggest increase of 3% occurred between the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years, that is, prior to the main thrust of the SS Strategy. More to the point, the graduation rate of 75% in 2006-07 as stated by Levin, Glaze and Fullan remains below Ministry statistics for a decade earlier, prior to education reform. Taking the low point of the 2003-04 year as the baseline glosses over the dramatic drop in graduation rates under the re-organized curriculum, thus leaving the ‘new’ paradigm unchallenged. Instead, Levin, Glaze and Fullan create the impression of a dramatic increase since the Liberal Party took power in Ontario. Furthermore, there is no mention of the extent to which rising graduation rates can be attributed to the addition of other high school graduation certificates with lesser requirements than the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), as discussed in Chapter 6. Placing the numbers in socio-

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90 It could be argued that the statistics from 1998 are not comparable due to differences between the old and new diploma requirements, and to ‘advancements’ in record keeping, data analysis, and statistical methods since then. Under the old diploma students could graduate through either a four or five year program. However, in my experience, under the new four year diploma program, many students take longer than four years to graduate; moreover, as discussed in Chapter 6, the total number of credits required for the old and new diplomas is the same.
Table 8.2: Graduation Rates

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>57 (4 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(no year stated)</td>
<td></td>
<td>70 (5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11 goal</td>
<td>(85)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
historical context is important here to unpack how statistics get picked up, assigned simple causation, and relayed as ‘truth’ within the dominant quantitative paradigm.

Second, the unspecified “improved” results on the “10th grade literacy test” require elaboration. This refers to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) that is a standardized test administered by the EQAO. As explained in Chapter 6, the OSSLT is a high-stakes test in the sense that it is a requirement for student graduation under the OSSD; OSSLT results also affect individual school profiles, and are used by the Fraser Institute to rate and rank schools.91 When high failure rates became apparent, as I have indicated earlier, the Ministry instituted a new literacy course as an alternative to the test — the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) --- thus removing students who either have been unsuccessful on the test, or otherwise unable to complete the test, thus skewing the pass rate on literacy test results in year-over-year comparisons.92 Similarly, improvements in EQAO Grade 9 mathematics assessments (in academic and applied courses) gloss over the fact that scripted locally developed mathematics courses were introduced, and that students enrolled in those courses are excluded from the provincial mathematics tests. Despite these omissions and exclusions, statistics generated by the EQAO constitute the means by which system managers read what is going on system-wide. The ‘success’ of schools and school boards is judged by the extent to which they measure up to provincial standards and meet their improvement ‘targets’ on EQAO tests.

91 Test results on OSSLT (as well as the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics) are part of a secondary school’s profile posted on school board websites. Each school’s profile compares the school with board and provincial averages. See for example, TDSB school profiles posted at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/schools/school_profiles.htm. These profiles affect school enrollment which in turn affects funding. The Ministry also posts school board profiles that include student achievement (based exclusively on EQAO results) and financial information at http://esip.edu.gov.on.ca/english/profiles/quick_info_Comps.asp?ID=B66052 (accessed April 9, 2009). This system of top-down ‘profiling’ is integrally linked to funding. However, the information posted by the Ministry is three years out of date; the most recent information available to the public in the 2008-09 school year is from the 2005-06 school year.

92 Principals have discretion to defer students from writing the OSSLT and to approve students taking the OSSLC. The OSSLC curriculum states: ‘Students who have been eligible to write the OSSLT at least twice and who have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to take the course. If they are successful on the test, they are not eligible to take the OSSLC (except under special circumstances, at the principal’s discretion)’ (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/english12curr.pdf, accessed April 4, 2009).
Teacher/participants’ dispel myths perpetuated by statistics on graduation rates; their concern is that students who do not ‘fit’ in the school system are “not getting an education” but being funnelled into watered-down school-to-work training programs and cooperative education courses. The teacher/participants in my study advocate for high expectations and diversified, challenging courses for students. Placing graduation rate statistics in context over a longer time frame makes it apparent that the graduation rate plummeted under the new curriculum and the new OSSD. These problems go undiscovered and unaddressed by simply manipulating credit accumulation through credit recovery and lowering expectations for students ‘at risk.’ A critical perspective suggests that Ontario’s success story is geared to improving the optics of statistics to gain public confidence for education reform policies. In the sense of instituting damage control measures, student success policies such as credit recovery, seem reactive rather than proactive, and may actually be obfuscating and building on the mistakes of the Harris/Eves regime’s education reforms.

The references that Levin, Glaze and Fullan cite as the authority for their claims about the success story are two reports from 2007: The Impact of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat: Changes in Ontario’s Education System; and the Evaluation of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Student Success Strategy, Phase 1 Report. These reports are evaluations of strategies implemented while Fullan was Special Advisor to the Premier and to the Minister of Education; Ben Levin was Deputy Minister of Education; and Avis Glaze was Chief Student Achievement Officer and CEO of the new Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) that was established by the Ministry in late 2004. Both evaluations were conducted not at universities, but by two new policy research think tanks: the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNet), and the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), respectively. My inter-textual analysis thus proceeds with locating and analyzing these two reports.

8.3 Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRNet)

The CLLRNet was established in 2001 under Industry Canada's Network of Centres of Excellence program, and given $14.2 million for research programs through to 2008. As part of an extensive network of Centres of Excellence, it brings together scientists and ‘partners’ in the private sector to conduct applied research. The branch of CLLRNet contracted to conduct the LNS evaluation is “hosted” by the University of Western Ontario. The website indicates that CLLRNet was formed by a group of “leading Canadian researchers” with a scientific interest in language and literacy, and dedicated to producing or translating “evidence-based” research into best practices, to be readily applicable for educators, practitioners and policy makers. The integrated network of which CLLRNet is a part extends across a vast array of partners in federal and provincial governments, and industry (http://www.cllrnet.ca/about). Posted at the website is a list of 173 researchers -- that is, a “white list” (House, 2005), as opposed to a blacklist, of sanctioned researchers.94 CLLRNet recruits, selects, and grooms researchers through its 3rd Year Undergraduate Summer Research Assistanceship program, or the Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) award. To qualify for membership in the Student Network, a student must either be involved in a Network project or be a recipient of the HQP award. Thus a pool of up-and-coming researchers are drawn into institutional capture by the ruling relations, and made readily available for large-scale research projects.

Launched in 2007, the Encyclopedia of Language and Literacy Development disseminates research findings from the CLLRNet website. Since a search at the CLLRNet website did not turn up the evaluation of the Impact of the LNS, I began a wider search that led to a dead-end; this report was not published. The email trail of my search reveals how the ruling relations operate to restrict access to and control the dissemination of knowledge about education. I received an email communiqué from CLLRNet saying, “Because CLLRNet was contracted to do the evaluation that lead to the report you requested, it is the property of the LNS and not CLLRNet, and thus theirs to

94 The name of the lead researcher of the CCL report, Charles Ungerleider, appears as one of the researchers on the CLLRNet list as well (http://www.cllrnet.ca/contact/researchers). Among the ‘Knowledge Initiative Partners’ listed are the Ontario Ministry of Education, HRSDC and CCL (http://www.cllrnet.ca/knowledge/partners).
give and not ours” (April 7, 2009). The same day, I received an email communiqué from LNS in response to a separate request to them made a week earlier; it states, “Although the 2007 report was not published, we expect that the final report will be available in May 2009. The Secretariat will be happy to provide you with the specific web link upon its release. The report will be posted on the Ministry of Education's website at www.edu.gov.on.ca” (April 7, 2009). Thus, the 2007 report cited by Levin, Glaze and Fullan will not be released; however, a follow-up ‘final’ report may be released at the discretion of the LNS sometime in the future.

This report was conducted with public funds, yet it is not available for scrutiny by outsider researchers, teachers, or the public at large. In this case, evidence-based scientific research conducted by CLLNRNet under contract was vetted and controlled by the contractor (the Ministry of Education) and a time-lag of two years occurred before the findings were worked up and made acceptable for public consumption. A report with the same title, but dated 2009, was subsequently posted at the Ministry website. However, the 2007 report was never released. And it is the 2007 report that is supposed to support the claims of Levin, Glaze, and Fullan’s (2008) about the impact of the LNS in Ontario’s success story. In contrast, the ETFO and OECTA resisted LNS initiatives, such as the imposition of the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) of so-called self-assessments by schools and districts. Like teachers in other jurisdictions in Canada and elsewhere, the ETFO takes the position that school assessment “should be collaborative and not directed by administration or board staff” and that “indicators selected by schools should represent broader categories rather than focusing narrowly on literacy, numeracy, and EQAO results” (http://www.etfo.on.ca/AdviceForMembers/SEF/Pages/default.aspx, accessed April 8, 2009). In addition, OECTA protested the increased workload imposed on teachers by LNS initiatives, including “critical friends” and “diagnosticians” in the Ontario Focused

95 Ironically these emails arrived within hours of each other, although I had instigated my request for the report at different times a week earlier. An attachment to the CLLNRNet email indicates that there was communication between the CLLNRNet and LNS. A second unsolicited email communiqué to my initial request to CLLNRNet arrived six days later; it states: “To clarify, the final report for the evaluation of the Ontario LNS is still under review. As The Network was contracted for this evaluation, the final report will be the property of Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) not The Network. Our understanding is that the LNS will be making the report public, however, distribution will be at the discretion of the LNS” (April 13, 2009).
Intervention Partnership (OFIP) ([http://www.oecta.on.ca/aboutoecta/history06-07.htm](http://www.oecta.on.ca/aboutoecta/history06-07.htm), accessed April 9, 2009). This ‘partnership’ program labels schools that do not measure up to the provincial standard on EQAO reading tests as OFIP 1, OFIP 2, or OFIP 3 schools, and dispatches “student achievement officers” to enforce compliance with the LNS’ literacy and numeracy agenda.

The LNS presides over and monitors Ontario elementary schools. It tracks school and board progress through the recent establishment of Ontario Statistical Neighbours (OSN), a database of all elementary schools across the Province. Overseen by the LNS, in conjunction with the Ministry’s Information Management Branch and other ‘partners,’ OSN merges data from three main sources: the Ministry of Education, EQAO, and Statistics Canada. Demographic ‘contextual’ information is derived from 2001 Census data that is out of date by at least seven years (at the time of writing), and EQAO test results also lag by a year.

Based largely on claims of taking the broader context into account, the inner-circle of education reformers in Canada differentiate their initiatives from the contentious NCLB in the US. However, the LNS Ministry document entitled *Ontario Statistical Neighbours: Informing our Strategy to Improve Student Achievement* (2007) ambiguously states:

> By doing this, we recognize that context matters. However, context is not an excuse as schools can and do make a vital difference and can overcome barriers through the teaching and learning they provide to help every student succeed.


Ruling out context as no excuse, OSN data and EQAO tests arguably amount to ‘evidence-based’ surveillance tools to monitor school performance, to develop school and board profiles, and to exert pressure for perpetual improvement of test results, as in the US. The declared intention of the LNS is for OSN data to be used by boards and schools to inform strategic decision making regarding policies and/or programs geared to improving student achievement on standardized tests. It appears that the LNS’ mission is to re-culture schools towards statistics-driven practices that are disembodied from the living realities of day-to-day relations in local schools. The early responses of ETFO and OECTA to LNS initiatives indicate a disjuncture between system-managers’ reified
reading of statistics translocally, and frontline teachers’ experiences in classrooms across the Province. During the course of my research, however, links to critical articles from the teacher union affiliates are no longer active, which could suggest that union leaders have changed their minds. There does seem to be a falling off or erosion of critical dialogue as teacher/participants suggest. Has the teacher union leadership been brought into institutional capture by ruling relations?

8.4 Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)

Created in 2004, the CCL was established by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and provided with $85 million for five years. The CCL operates five “knowledge centres” across the country to address their five key priorities: Aboriginal learning, adult learning, early childhood learning, health and learning, and work and learning. The CCL claims to be an “independent, non-profit corporation” that promotes and supports “evidence-based decisions” and research to improve lifelong learning through “knowledge exchange to ensure that success stories are shared and repeated” (http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/, accessed March 19, 2009). Claims to independence belie the extent to which the CCL is hooked up to a network of national government bodies that subscribe to a common goal of orchestrating a market-driven ideology of education, most notably the HRSDC, as discussed in the next chapter.

The CCL report cited by Levin, Glaze and Fullan (2008) is indeed posted at the CCL website and the Ministry website. Thus, unlike the reports of the Student Success Commission and CLLRNet, the CCL report is accessible to the public. There are in fact two reports entitled Evaluation of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy, both of which were produced by lead researcher Charles Ungerleider, prior to Levin, Glaze and Fullan’s article; the first is a Stage 1 report and the second is a Final report.

96 This overview of the CCL is derived from its website at www.ccl-cca.ca.
97 According to the University of British Columbia website, Ungerleider is on leave from his position as professor of the Sociology of Education in the Faculty of Education, to serve as Director of Research and Knowledge Mobilization for the CCL. See his book, Charles Ungerleider, Failing our kids: How we are ruining our public schools (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 2003). The alarmist title of the book creates the impression of a crisis in education in which public schools are damaging/damaged. This kind of rhetoric not only paves the way for the education reformers, but could also fuel the privatization agenda by
However, Levin, Glaze and Fullan refer only to the Stage 1 report, and they also emphasize the strengths but not the ‘challenges’ or ‘vulnerabilities’ outlined in the Stage 1 report, thus giving a positive spin to the SS/L18 Strategy. A Memorandum from the Ministry to Directors of Education and Student Success Leaders, dated January 15, 2009, announces the posting of the Stage 1 report at the Ministry website (that is, a year and a half after the completion date of July 2007). The memo states:

> We would also like to encourage you to use this report in combination with the fine examples of Student Success initiatives that you may have in your board to raise the strategy’s profile in your community and with your local media. If you are planning some communication around this report, please engage Amanda Tisi at amanda.tisi@ontario.ca, or 416-325-2098.


It is clear in this memo that the Ministry actively promotes using the CCL report to manufacture consent and garner public support for the SS/L18 Strategy. Consistent with IE, in my analysis to follow, I treat the report as data for unpacking how the ruling apparatus operates, to show what gets picked up, and what is missing in the text-mediated ruling relations of education reform.

The Stage 1 evaluation report contains “preliminary” descriptions and observations/analysis, based on 39 interviews with respondents from the Ministry and boards of education, and four focus groups with Student Success Leaders--that is, all upper echelon stakeholders in education. The criteria for the evaluation are explicitly limited to Ministry objectives and the extent to which outcomes are met in terms of improved EQAO test results and graduation rates, thus ruling out consideration of any broader implications of the policy. Although the SS/L18 Stage 1 report does include a qualitative section covering the views of informants in the Ministry and boards of education, it excludes practicing teachers. Moreover, a particularly quantitative bent towards qualitative methods is evident in representing only the “dominant view of those interviewed” (p. 8) in the report. This works to slant the report in favour of informants undermining confidence in public schooling (though the latter was certainly not Ungerleider’s intent). Similar catch phrases are readily picked up and deployed by right-wing think tanks across the US and Canada that favour school choice (such as the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute).
drawn into institutional capture by the administrative-managerial apparatus, and to marginalize dissenting views.

A statement in the Stage 1 report that comes closest to revealing the social relations in schools is not problematized, in which a Former Student Success Teacher is quoted as stating:

> When I first started as a Student Success Teacher, *the others* used to stop talking when I walked into the work room or the staff room. And the *good news* is they’ve started talking again when I walk in. And people have started approaching us and saying, “Sam ... I’m just not sure what to do with Sam. I’ve tried everything I know how and I can’t figure it out. Can you *help me*? What might work with Sam?” (p. 22, italics added).

In my experience, there is nothing new or unusual about teachers’ consulting one another about students. However, the representation of teachers in general as helpless and dependent on the superior know-how of the appointed Student Success Teacher rubs the wrong way. Where is that ‘former’ Student Success Teacher now? Do Student Success Teachers come and go, using the position as a stepping stone for promotion? Who are the ‘others’? What does the reticence of teachers in the staff room mean? The flippant turn to positive ‘good news’ glosses over the complex social relations of using Student Success Teachers in schools to orchestrate the ‘re-culturing’ process.

Similar to the contentious *NCLB*, and in compliance with Ministry prescriptions of the scope of the report, SS/L18 frames the problem as low achievement on standardized scores and asserts the mission of closing the so-called achievement gap, without questioning how socio-economic inequality might be socially organized in education through standardization regimes. The word equity is mentioned only once in the report, but left outside the purview of the evaluation:

> Coherence or the ‘knitting together’ of the various programs under SS/L18 Strategy was identified as needing attention, as well as putting these pieces together within an *equity* perspective. One respondent at the Ministry suggested that the Ministry should produce a “strategy map of how all these pieces fit together.” (p. 43, italics added)

The education reformers’ “equity perspective” does not mean addressing structural differences; instead, an equity strategy means “knitting together” disparate programs, and
promoting equally all ‘pathways’ (university, college, apprenticeship and school-to-work). Appropriating liberation language, the education reformers frame their agenda as being opposed to elitist education and the status quo, without considering who gets streamed into lower status ‘pathways.’ The SS/L18 evaluation is colour-blind to issues of race and ethnicity of which there is no mention. At the time of this evaluation, complaints about ‘zero tolerance’ policies of the TDSB were being heard by the Ontario Human Rights Commission on the grounds of discrimination against visible minority students, students whose first language is not English or French, and students with learning dis/abilities. It could be argued that the separate Falconer and McMurtry reports encompass those concerns. However, the Falconer report was limited to Toronto schools and focuses on suspension and expulsion policies; the McMurtry report deals with youth violence in general. None of these reports unpacks the effects of SS/L18 policies that are specifically geared to students ‘at risk’ as possibly linked to disenfranchised students acting out in rebellion or frustration.

In the CCL Stage 1 report, enthusiasm among Ministry staff swirls around the evidence garnered from the new data base, OnSIS (Ontario School Information System), and from MISA (Managing Information for Student Achievement). The perspective of senior management is expressed in the Stage 1 report as follows:

Ministry staff spoke a great deal about the role of data and evidence. This is not surprising given the government’s investment in OnSIS, MISA and interest in having educators use locally-generated data with professional purpose. There is a real sense of a culture shift with regard to the use of data, both at local and provincial levels. A sense of excitement and energy connected with the strategy, a sense that there was a renewed sense of purpose for public education and teaching was expressed by most of our respondents. (p. 24, italics added)

In this report, the strategy seems intent on orchestrating a “culture shift” towards data and evidence-driven management by the Ministry. What counts as evidence is heavily reliant on statistics, an abstract and reified representation that is removed from the everyday world of teaching practice. As I have emphasized, this marks a fundamental disconnect for teacher/participants and is linked to their resistance to credit recovery as a key plank of the SS/L18 Strategy.
Levin, Glaze and Fullan (2008) fail to mention the CCL Final report on SS/L18 which is dated September 2008, and thus preceded the publication of their article in December. The Final report is considerably less enthusiastic and positive than the preliminary Stage 1 report, since it does include the views of teachers and students from surveys and focus groups. The Final report states:

Notwithstanding the strengths identified in Stage 1 of the evaluation, the evaluation team considered the SS/L18 Strategy was vulnerable and faced *challenges on a number of fronts*. The widespread and deep penetration of the spirit of the Strategy (representing a change in culture at many levels) within every school, reaching principals, teachers, students, and members of the community in the province was identified as a challenge that would require a long-term commitment and sustained resources to overcome. This was seen as especially relevant given staff and student transience and the fact that implementation of a number of programs inherent to the SS/L18 Strategy (e.g. Credit Recovery, Dual Credit) remain contentious. At the time of completing Stage 1, the evaluation team identified the danger posed by the perception that, in a desire to ensure success of all learners, standards would be relaxed or perceived to have been relaxed, which would ultimately undermine key stakeholder commitment and public confidence in quality. (p. 7-8, italics added)

A contradiction is identified between standards-driven reform and relaxing standards for students labeled at risk. Teacher and student surveys reveal “challenges” on many fronts to the SS/L18 Strategy, and recognize some of the concerns expressed by teacher/participants in my study (as discussed in Chapter 5). Credit recovery and dual credits are cited as two “contentious” examples; indeed my teacher/participants object to the double standard of credit recovery, whereas dual credits are seen as peripheral since they are only available to very few students attending schools that have special arrangements with post-secondary institutions (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3). However, the challenges to the SS/L18 Strategy are downplayed in the proposed solution of building public confidence--that is, to stay the course, stick to the message and promote the policies more effectively through marketing the policy. For example, needs are identified for promotion to ensure the “viability” of the strategy (p. 53); social marketing to parents/community by “maintaining signal continuity (the consistency and duration of the core message)” (p. 10); “focused communication” for teachers and students (p. 81); and “ensure the tailoring of messages to specific subgroups within secondary schools” (p. xiv).
From the public relations campaign proposed in the Final report, it is apparent that it is not only teachers who challenge the SS/L18 Strategy and require convincing, but also students, parents, and the public at large. In particular, the challenge posed by a “lack of awareness” on the part of students is identified, but glossed over. The Final report states:

One challenge facing the SS/L18 Strategy is a relative lack of awareness of the Strategy and its different components. The vast majority (81.1%) of students who responded to the on-line survey were not aware of the terms ‘Student Success Strategy’ or ‘Learning to 18.’ This finding could reflect a general lack of awareness of the overall Strategy, or could reflect the fact that students are unfamiliar with the terms ‘Student Success’ or ‘Learning to 18.’ When students were probed further during the focus groups, however, it was apparent that they were not aware of the Strategy as a whole. (p. 41)

Even though public relations/communications releases from the Ministry create the impression of wide-ranging offerings of the SS Strategy, the report finds that 81 percent of student respondents are not privy to the benefits. An in-depth enquiry could have revealed that students may be unaware of the strategy “as a whole” since not all components are offered in every school; new initiatives, such as Lighthouse projects and High Skills Majors, are only offered at certain selected schools in the Province, and thus not accessible to most students (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Not only are the “challenges” to SS/L18 glimpsed through the qualitative analysis in the Final report downplayed, but they are eclipsed by the quantitative analysis show-casing increased graduation rates and improved test scores on EQAO results. The challenges posed by teachers and students are treated merely as objections to be overcome. The proposed public relations campaign ignores the possibility that other ‘stakeholders’ raise legitimate substantive concerns, and that they may not share a belief in the basic premise of improving large-scale standardized test scores as the main purpose of education.

In the Final report, problems with validity and reliability of the quantitative statistical analysis are mentioned in passing remarks or in footnotes, but then set aside. One example is the very low response rate to surveys: less than 2 percent for students, and less than 6 percent for staff (CCL Final report, p. 19). More than half of the teacher responses are from new teachers with less than ten years experience. This lack of an institutional memory may have skewed the results of the teacher survey, since recent teacher
graduates who underwent pre-service teacher training under the new regime are more likely to be oriented towards it. Moreover, not all boards are represented in the surveys, thus throwing into question claims to province-wide generalizations. Another example is the lack of comparability of data because of different collection methods, indicators, and record keeping practices used by different schools, boards and the Ministry. Furthermore, as noted previously, taking the year 2003-04 as the baseline for statistical data conceals the impact of education reform policies on school success rates, as compared with the previous high school curriculum. A new era of education is construed as beginning in 2003-04, when the first cohort of students graduated under the new high school curriculum. This lack of an historical and political context frames the evaluation of the SS/L18 strategy narrowly, according to its own terms of reference, and precludes a broader and deeper analysis of the consequences of the strategy.

Despite such caveats, statistics from the Ministry on graduation rates and EQAO test results are presented as legitimate evidence of ‘success.’ EQAO results are taken at face value without analyzing possible test biases, or investigating how results may be manipulated by setting easier tests, adjusting evaluation and marking practices, or lowering the threshold for the provincial standard. In the absence of a critical analysis of standardized testing practices that generate the results, statistics acquire a disembodied aura of absolute truth. Neither report mentions their punitive consequences on schools and boards (whose survival depends on meeting “targets” and showing perpetual improvement), especially those in low-income areas; or how schools may have a vested interest in withdrawing students unlikely to succeed on tests because the results affect their profiles, which affects school enrolment, and hence impacts on school funding. In the CCL reports, people disappear behind statistics that acquire the status of objective unbiased ‘facts,’ disconnected from inscribed values, or the vested interests of a burgeoning educational testing and reporting industry.

Further inter-textual analysis of the reporting enterprise reveals an extensive web of vested interests, and shows how it provides an opening for the corporate-business lobby to influence education. At the time of the SS/L18 evaluation, the CCL was itself
undergoing an external evaluation by the Centre for Public Management Inc.. This business-type report traces the history of the establishment of the CCL, and evaluates its performance midway into its original five-year mandate with the HRSDC. The evaluation of the CCL is expressed in less than glowing terms, as “reasonable.” Since the CCL would have been under pressure to justify its continued existence and funding, it would have stood to benefit from a ‘success story’ to share in order to fulfill its founding mission. According to this Public Management evaluation, the CCL was founded based on a decentralized “hub-and- spoke” model as outlined in the 2003 proposal entitled *Consultations on the Government of Canada’s proposal to establish a Canadian Learning Institute*, that was put forward by Benjamin Levin and Shirley Stewart from the Canadian Labour and Business Centre. According to what remains at the Canadian Labour and Business Centre website, it closed on September 28, 2006 due to funding cuts after a 22-year history (http://www.clbc.ca/home.asp), and morphed into the Working and Learning Knowledge Centre of CCL, the largest of the five divisions of CCL (http://www.clbc.ca/Work_and_Learning_Knowledge_Centre.asp). These connections raise serious questions regarding how knowledge about education is being shaped by translocal ruling relations through education reformers with ties to corporate-business organizations and oriented to new public management accountability practices. A close reading of the Public Management report, and comparing it with the CCL reports, reveals how the new public management practice of surveillance reporting has been picked up and carried over into education: beginning with a general description, identifying strengths and challenges (or vulnerabilities), giving a positive spin, and making recommendations for improvement within the framework of pre-determined parameters.

Moreover, the independence of the CCL’s evaluation of the SS/L18 Strategy hardly stands up to any standard of impartiality. For example, strong pre-existing links between the CCL chief evaluator and one of the main architects of the program under evaluation point to the lack of an arms length relationship: Charles Ungerleider served as a Deputy Minister of Education in BC from 1998 to 2001, and his term overlapped with Ben

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Levin’s term as Deputy Minister of Education in Manitoba from 1999 to 2002. Prior to the CCL evaluation, not only did their mandates overlap as deputy ministers of education (and therefore, were connected through the Council of Ministers of Education [CMEC]), but they also published and presented papers together, and refer to each other’s work. From the partisan standpoint of deputy ministers, each has written an article about the politics of government-media relations in getting the ‘right’ message across; complementing an earlier article by Levin (2004b), Ungerleider (2006) elaborates on the strategies and tactics of government to influence the media’s treatment of educational issues, such as sticking to and not deviating from the “message box.” These articles raise the prospect of media manipulation in public relations campaigns to manufacture consent for government agendas. Could it be that similar strategizing and spin-doctoring are under way around Ontario’s ‘success story’?

8.5 Tri-level Reform: The Guiding Coalition

Ontario’s success story promotes the education reformers as international ‘experts’ on large-scale change, and brands a made-in-Ontario model for school improvement. Figure 8.2: Sources of Ontario’s Success Story summarizes the sources cited as evidentiary proof of ‘success.’ But from my textual analysis above, the claims of Levin, Glaze and Fullan (2008) appear to be based on flimsy evidence; that is, a non-existent report per se (Student Success Commission), an unpublished or suppressed report (CLLRNet), and selected pieces from Stage 1 but not the Final report of the CCL. As with NCLB in the US, the shift to evidence-based decision making raises concerns about how research is constructed in policy think tanks by white-listed researchers, with restricted access, limited critique, and positive spin-doctoring. Tight control over research and information flows displaces dissenting views and/or alternative ‘visions’ of education such as traditional liberal education, progressive-democratic education, or critical pedagogy. As

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99 For example, see Charles Ungerleider and Ben Levin, Accountability, Funding, and School Improvement (in Tony Townsend, ed., International Handbook of School Improvement and Effectiveness, Springer, 2007), pp. 411-424. This collaboration would have preceded the CCL report, especially given the timelines of publication for edited books. Clearly, both authors are on the same page with regard to ‘school improvement.’ In this chapter, the authors paradoxically recognize the limitations of large-scale tests, yet standardized test results continue to constitute the main ‘evidence’ presented by the education reformers. But in more self-reflexive moments, perhaps they too struggle with the contradictions inherent in institutional capture to the ruling apparatus. For a second example, see Charles Ungerleider, Paul Ramsey and Ben Levin, Future Direction in Education Policy (Paper presented at CSSE Conference, 2004).
Figure 8.2: Sources of Ontario’s Success Story
in the US, these policy think-tanks are not held accountable to the public but to the vested interests from which they receive funding. I argue that the ideological circle is anti-democratic and discounts alternative approaches to education, while appropriating and reinterpreting progressive-democratic language for a different purpose (for example, equity, engagement, empowerment).

Erasing or discounting institutional memory and establishing the baseline year of 2003 as the dawn of a new era casts the reformers as being on the forefront of the latest wave of the future -- that is, of a particular ‘vision’ or version of the future. What counts as evidence are quantitative measures and large-scale standardized tests, with a focus on showing ‘results.’ What cannot be easily measured disappears off the radar and is made invisible, as do alternative explanations. As the CCL evaluation shows, when the evidence does not support the strategy, the reformers cast blame elsewhere and redouble their efforts at public relations — to shore up belief in the strategy — rather than taking pause for self-reflexive critical appraisal. Branding and marketing techniques turn education into a commodity and/or enterprise rather than a complex process that is worked out in the context of day-to-day relations and activities in classrooms. This marks the disconnect for teacher/participants in my study, who question where the policies and statistics come from, and who do not share a belief in the truth-value of official reports on graduation rates or standardized tests.

Whereas the actual policies of the SS Strategy (such as credit recovery) appear haphazard to teachers, what has become visible through this analysis is a highly orchestrated strategy of “capacity building” that encompasses two main aspects of coordinating social relations in education: the first aspect is “re-messaging,” predicated upon knowledge generated from so-called evidence-based research conducted by unaccountable policy think tanks. Despite insubstantial evidence, flaws, and inconsistencies in the research as uncovered in my analysis, this research is selectively drawn upon in public relations campaigns to manufacture consent for the policies. These problems with the social organization of knowledge production explicate teacher/participant Jerry’s sense of “mixed messages” (in Chapter 5); that is, contradictory policies or policies that fly in the face of the day-to-day realities of teaching practice.
The second aspect is “re-culturing” through the notion of “tri-level change” that coordinates social relations at all three levels of the education system: government, school boards, and schools. As shown in Figure 8.3: Student Success Strategy: Tri-level Reform Guiding Coalition, tri-level reform begins at the highest level of government by establishing new Ministry departments, headed up and staffed by handpicked personnel with the right mindset, such as the Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation Training and Evaluation Branch (for the secondary level); and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (for the elementary level). It proceeds with forming a “guiding coalition” to lead change by strategically placing Student Success Leaders in school boards, and Student Success Teachers and Student Success Teams in schools (or Student Achievement Officers in elementary schools).

Arguably, the bio-medical model of so-called evidence-based research is now being picked up to change teaching practices towards evidence-informed practice. Not only do teacher/participants doubt the value of the research, but they resist domination by remote statistics-driven policy. Instead, teachers rely on empirical experience from teaching practice, in day-to-day face-to-face interaction with actual students. In the meanwhile, millions of dollars are consumed annually on an expanding superstructure and bureaucracy to maintain remote accountability regimes of standardized tests, program evaluations, monitoring, record keeping, databases, reports and so on.

With a focus on social relations, a different reading of the “education culture” prevalent in schools preceding the shooting of Jordan Manners appears in Zanana Akande’s (2008) report prepared for the Falconer Final report. She concludes that “a culture of fear and silence” pervades the TDSB:

The culture of silence in the TDSB has become so normalized by time that it is maintained by some staff members who would not even identify it. Influenced by fears of harassment from trustees and administration, colleague isolation, student reprisal, involvement in lawsuits, negative reporting from unidentified sources, and imposed career limitations or alterations, staff effect their roles and conduct themselves through their days without attracting attention. They thereby increase the opportunity to achieve promotion or, for the differently ambitious, to exist in peace. Yet such peace gained though selective silence in a system where vigilant observation and timely reporting are needed may leave students vulnerable;
ambition realized through selective silence in a system requiring the creative ideas of everyone and open communication to prune and perfect those for early implementation cheats the system of its opportunities and leaves students wanting, vulnerable and unsafe. It is my belief that in order to achieve school safety, the culture of fear and silence must be aggressively and overtly devalued. (p. 9-10; http://www.schoolsafetypanel.com/pdf/AppendixE.pdf, accessed April 2010)\(^{100}\)

Imagine how different the public education system could be if, instead of the reiterative “pressure and support” to bring teachers into institutional capture with the accounting logic of data-driven instruction, attention were paid to social relations, listening to teachers, and caring about actual students. Then administrative activities could be redirected to more substantive change, such as reducing class sizes, expanding curricula to be more inclusive, and reinstating authentic on-site resources to free teachers’ time to attend fully to their everyday work with students in classrooms.

\(^{100}\) Zanana Akande, formerly a school principal and member of parliament, is a community activist with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.
Figure 8.3: Student Success Strategy: Tri-level Reform Guiding Coalition

Ministry

SS/L18 Implementation Training & Evaluation Branch

Litarcy & Numeracy Secretariat

Board

SS Leaders

School

SS Teacher

SS Team
Chapter 9
National and Transnational Governance

Unlike the US or Britain, Canada has no central federal department of education. Education falls under provincial jurisdiction, and is funded through federal transfer grants to the provinces. However, textual analysis in the previous chapter brought to light a somewhat invisible national forum for all levels of education (elementary, secondary and post-secondary) that operates as an inter-provincial body and exists at the rank of ministers and deputy ministers of education: the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Another little-known body also came to light that operates at the transnational level and co-ordinates education policy across nation-states -- the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

In order to unpack the complex ruling relations going on behind teachers’ backs in multi-layered governance work, I draw on Jacobsson’s (2006) explication of three types of governance activities: regulative, inquisitive, and meditative. First, regulative activities pertain to “formal laws, and directives and penalties for their violation. ... However, there are highly authoritative and influential rule-makers that regulate only through voluntary rules” (p. 206). Thus, regulative activities encompass traditional hard forms of legislative regulation as well as soft rules, that is, from laws and directives, to agreements, standards, and open methods of coordination. Second, inquisitive activities require states, or provinces, “to open up for others to examine and critically judge what they are doing” (p. 207). This includes auditing, comparisons, rankings, evaluations, monitoring of practices, as well as data collection, research and reporting practices. Third, meditative activities may not have official rule-making or enforcement authority, but operate “as arenas where all kinds of experiences can be transmitted and compared, where ideas are generated and shared” (p. 208). These include various discussion arenas, forums, symposia, conferences, meetings, task forces, commissions, and think-tanks. Meditative activities rely on the credibility of experts to generate discursive practices and frameworks.

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101 An exception is First Nations education, over which the federal Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has certain jurisdiction, in conjunction with the provincial ministries of education.
To make visible how the re-orientation of education and teachers’ work is accomplished, it helps to identify new forms of governance activities that overlap with older traditional forms, and to explicate how these activities are coordinated across local, national, and transnational sites. This chapter proceeds to further unpack the translocal ruling relations.

9.1 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC): Knowledge Matters

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Canadian Council on Learning that produced two evaluations of the Student Success Strategy receives its funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Its name change from HRDC to HRSDC provides the key shift to ‘skills’ as the operative word gearing federal policy and education to skills to meet perceived future demands of the economy.102 Under the former name of HRDC, this federal government agency produced a green paper entitled *Knowledge Matters* (2002) that arguably constitutes a seminal document orienting education to economic planning across Canada. Based on demographic analysis, the green paper predicted a looming shortage of skilled labour, due to an aging population, declining birth rate, and second generation Canadians aspiring to higher status occupations than their immigrant parents. Immigrants are seen as a source of a ‘skilled and adaptable workforce’ to be the ‘providers’ of goods and services for Canadian ‘consumers.’ *Knowledge Matters* states:

> Immigrants bring with them a diverse set of talents, abilities and skills that help to enrich Canada. Over the next few decades, immigration will play an even greater role. Because of our ageing population and low birth rates, meeting Canada’s needs for a skilled and adaptable workforce, including enough highly qualified people for key sectors and industries, will require improved efforts to attract and select immigrants with particular skills. (p. 49)

Aside from the social engineering of neo-colonial relations through immigration policy, *Knowledge Matters* singles out education to prepare the workforce for positioning Canada as a leader in the knowledge economy, with an emphasis on literacy and lifelong learning. These priorities are picked up by the education reformers to shape education to

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102 The federal department of HRDC/HRSDC has changed names twice within the last few years. The former Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) was first renamed Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and in December 2008, the name changed again to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, with the same acronym.
meet the needs of the economy. Sources of data for the predictions in *Knowledge Matters* are derived from three federal agencies: Statistics Canada, the Conference Board of Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Informed by business interests and coming from a human capital theory perspective, these federal agencies equate learning with skills for the labour force.

Since the 1990s, public policy think tanks have proliferated in the private sector, but also under the aegis of government. The HRSDC homepage provides links to other federal agencies; for example, the Policy Research Initiative, the core mandate of which is to coordinate “research in support of the Government of Canada’s medium term agenda” and “ensure the effective transfer of acquired knowledge to policy-makers” ([http://policyresearch.gc.ca/homepage.asp?pagenm=root&langcd=E](http://policyresearch.gc.ca/homepage.asp?pagenm=root&langcd=E), accessed March 19, 2009).

Policy research geared to the government’s agenda often seems to be conducted in collaboration with university researchers. Under funding pressures, universities are increasingly pressured to form partnerships for research, thereby relinquishing their institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The research findings of these ‘independent’ policy think tanks are thus protected from peer review by the larger university community where more diverse theoretical and methodological orientations may prevail. This raises critical questions about vested interests influencing public policy, by determining research problems, guiding research agendas, choosing particular researchers, and disseminating/withholding research findings selectively.

### 9.2 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC): An Education Brand

Jointly funded by the federal government and the provinces and territories, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) is hooked up with HRSDC and Statistics Canada nationally, and with OECD and UNESCO internationally. The CMEC is a venue for ministers, deputy ministers, or designated representatives from each of the 13 provinces and territories. The precursor of the CMEC was the Standing Committee of Ministers of Education of the Canadian Education Association (CEA). Founded in 1967 as a separate entity from the CEA, the CMEC operates as a national clearing house for educational data and coordinates educational policies across the country from its office in Toronto. Although it has no federal legislative power, the CMEC provides national
'leadership' through formulating ministerial mission statements and agreements, producing reports, and disseminating 'fact sheets' about elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. A review of the website reveals that the CMEC commissions research as directed by the ministers of education. What is selected as relevant and disseminated about education is influenced by a policy perspective, and framed in terms of human capital theory. Among the publications on issues of interest at the CMEC website, one of the categories listed is “At-risk students.” It is mostly quantitative research that is coordinated in partnership with Statistics Canada, via the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), and/or the HRSDC. The two main programs promoted by CESC --- the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) and the Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda (PCERA) --- coordinate and orient education research to performance indicators.

The connection between the CMEC and CCL is particularly relevant in light of the CCL reports evaluating the SS/L18 strategy in Ontario discussed in the previous chapter. At the 2005 meeting of Ministers of Education, the CMEC adopted a set of principles governing a potential relationship with the newly created CCL in order “to leverage value in education in Canada and expand its reach worldwide” (http://www.scics.gc.ca/cinfo05/860499004_e.html, accessed April 17, 2009). This statement makes visible the explicit intention to hook up with the CCL in order to expand the reach of Canada in education globally. This expansionist reach for educational leverage has recently extended to marketing a Canadian brand of education. A CMEC Fact Sheet dated September 23, 2008, and entitled A Brand for Education in Canada, reveals a campaign to create a ‘national education brand’ as an umbrella for provincial and/or institutional brands. The essence of the brand is bilingual education. The brand is thus formulated around the two official languages of French and English, and the two dominant founding nations, without regard for aboriginal peoples or other racial/ethnic

103 An official news release on the 74th meeting of the CMEC in 1998 states: “At the close of the meeting, the vice-Chair of CMEC, the Honourable Roger Grimes, Minister of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador, stated that the ministers of education had discussed the potential for cooperation among CMEC, HRSDC, and Statistics Canada in future international assessments. Such assessments would provide indicators to help improve education in Canada” (http://www.scics.gc.ca/cinfo98/86038026_e.html, accessed March 16, 2009).
groups that contribute to the multicultural diversity of contemporary Canada. The contract awarded to a private company (Bang Marketing of Montreal), called for devising ‘essence’ symbols, and taglines to promote the brand. Costs of branding are shared by the federal government and the provinces/territories, including the initial cost of $1.5 million for creating the brand, as well as ongoing costs for maintaining “brand integrity,” and monitoring and policing “to ensure its correct replication and authorized use” (http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/128/brand-information.en.pdf, accessed April 17, 2009). The CMEC proposes using the internet to provide authorized access to documents and resources. The trade-mark is presently owned by the federal government, which is authorized to issue licenses to eligible institutions. However, legal consultations continue over who will own the brand, with the possibility of having “the CMEC named co-owner or be awarded a master license.” These kinds of arrangements cast education as a marketable commodity globally with protection under the WTO’s Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). This branding and trade-marking marks a decisive turn toward the commodification of knowledge about education. Not only does branding portend the standardization of education across provinces and sectors in accordance with the national brand, but it also orients education policy towards the profit motive through licensing agreements and restricting access to authorized institutions.

Although the federal government/CMEC brand appears to be geared primarily to university recruitment of international students, a precedent exists of trade-marking and copyrighting elementary and secondary school curriculum materials through a pan-Canadian agency called Curriculum Services Canada (CSC). This organization began in the early 1990s, under its former name of the Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse (OCC), as an electronic network service for teachers to share resources across local sites province-wide, through utilizing developments in computer technology and the world wide web. The Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) withdrew its membership in 1998 when the OCC moved towards a corporate model with corporate ‘partners,’ and it got taken over as a management tool to ‘reach’ teachers and distribute vetted learning
products and programs. The renamed CSC became an ISO-accredited corporation in 2000 as the official clearinghouse for curriculum materials. Analogous to the US Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse, CSC regulates teacher practice through funding selected projects, disseminating officially approved curriculum materials, and providing web-based professional development. A visit to the CSC website reveals the significant presence of the LNS and the extent to which it disseminates information and communicates with teachers via this venue, using web-casts and corporate-style on-line coaching by a private company, among other means. Unlike the original founding premise with OTF participation, however, communications are largely uni-directional and top-down. Thus, CSC endeavors to strategically leverage and shape teachers’ work-related knowledge through institutional capture to the goals, priorities, and language of education reform. Under the motto ‘Excellence is our standard’ and complete with its seal of approval, the CSC has expanded its ‘client group;’ epitomizing the commercialization of curricula, it now promotes and sells its ‘quality-assured’ learning products and programs nationally and internationally.

The CSC disseminates the CMEC brand of education and spreads the message through its technologies. For example, the CSC website posts a webcast of a “pan-Canadian forum” hosted by the CMEC and the LNS titled Unlocking our Children’s Potential: Literacy and Numeracy as a Foundation (November 24 and 25, 2005), that shows meditative activities coordinated by the CMEC, CSC, LNS, Ministry, and international agents of literacy. At no less a prestigious venue than the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, the

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104 For a history of the evolution of the CSC, see [http://www.curriculum.org/csc/CSChistory2008.pdf](http://www.curriculum.org/csc/CSChistory2008.pdf) (accessed March 16, 2009). This history reveals how teachers lost control over this venue to share curriculum materials amongst themselves when it got taken over by officials to disseminate Ministry-sanctioned materials. The website states, “The Curriculum Foundation provides at least three $2000 grants every year to fund new learning resources developed by teachers. CSC also provides mentoring and support for the projects we fund” ([http://www.curriculum.org/csc/about.shtml](http://www.curriculum.org/csc/about.shtml), accessed March 16, 2009). For a list of CSC projects and partners, see [http://www.curriculum.org/csc/projects.shtml](http://www.curriculum.org/csc/projects.shtml). A review of projects reveals that CSC initiatives are standard-driven, and conform to prevailing notions of student success and literacy as promoted by the Ontario Ministry of Education. From its inception in 2005, the LNS has featured prominently at the website, and Michael Fullan is an Honorary Patron. CSC is hooked up with Nipissing University which apparently conducts evaluations of its operations every two years.


featured keynote speakers are Michael Fullan, Sir Michael Barber (former Chief Advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and the chief architect of NLS and NNS), and Carmel Crévola, an international literacy consultant. Driving large scale education reform is cast as a “movement” that shares “a moral purpose” to spread literacy with missionary zeal. In his keynote address, Barber maintains that knowledge is not power, but that you have to combine knowledge with the capacity to think, and the confidence to act, and this is the “essence of literacy;” the rhetoric of the international ‘experts’ is replete with slogans and weasel words that it can mean anything and nothing.

The priority of literacy is evident in the CMEC ministers’ joint declaration of April, 2008 in a thin three-page document entitled Learn Canada 2020. This document specifies the three key priorities of Aboriginal education, postsecondary education (or lifelong learning), and literacy; and it lists eight activities geared to achieving the priorities, which include formulating performance indicators and a data and research strategy. The shaping of education to serve economic development is explicit in the declaration which states, “Ministers recognize the national interest in ensuring a healthy economy and the importance of education for economic development”


Apart from meditative activities, the CMEC also engages in its own inquisitive activities through conducting randomized national standardized tests. The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) replaced the earlier Student Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) which was in place from 1995 to 2004. These tests rate provinces in relation to the national average. In keeping with its quantitative preoccupation, the CMEC also coordinates international assessments with organizations such as OECD, IEA and UNESCO. Thus the CMEC constitutes a conduit for policy flows to and from these international organizations, as well as across the provinces. At the translocal level of the

107 From Australia, Crévola promotes data-driven literacy instruction and claims to have been involved in large-scale school reform in Australia and the US, with a focus on aligning systems assessment, leadership and instructional practices. With Michael Fullan and Peter Hill, Crévola co-produced the book Breakthrough, which is accompanied by a multimedia kit for professional development. The first chapter of the book --“The New Mission for School Systems”-- is revealing.
CMEC, the website reveals a dizzying array of abstract, disembodied acronyms and statistics which constitute central reference points for ministers and/or their representatives in formulating a national consensus on education policy.

9.3 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The translocal ruling apparatus in education extends far and wide. International organizations arguably drive educational agendas globally through coordinating and publishing statistical indicators and the results of international tests that rate and rank countries. Reiterated in the preamble across OECD publications, Article 1 of its Convention from its founding in 1960 is cited which makes explicit an allegiance to economic growth and expansion that is consistent with free-market neo-liberalism. The OECD preamble repeatedly states:

Pursuant to Article 1 of the Convention signed in Paris on 14th December 1960, and which came into force on 30th September 1961, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shall promote policies designed:
-- to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy;
-- to contribute to sound economic expansion in Member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development; and
-- to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

Unlike the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the OECD lacks financial clout or regulatory power; however, it exerts influence through a range of inquisitive and meditative activities in concert with high ranking national officials in departments of finance (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Mahon and McBride, 2008). Not long after its establishment, attention seems to have turned on education as a driver of the economy with the formation of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) in June 1968, and later, in 2002 a separate Directorate of Education was created to coordinate education across member states. Although the OECD is not a monolithic organization, Rubenson (2008) argues that the Directorate of Education is more oriented to neoliberal economic policy making than other departments.
9.3.1 Governing Texts

The ascendancy of OECD’s influence and the displacement of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in educational policy can be traced to the 1990s, with a flurry of publication activity. It is also evident in the extent to which terms and constructs from OECD publications get picked up and reiterated across national policies, and how the OECD registers as the pre-eminent international authority of ‘experts’ that identify problems and propose solutions. The use of educational performance indicators, the emphasis on literacy/numeracy and lifelong learning, and workforce ‘pathways’ are examples of educational frames reiterated across student ‘success’ strategies in Ontario that can be traced to OECD “boss texts.” Foremost amongst these is the OECD series, *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*; these periodic publications rate and rank countries based on OECD ‘indicators’ and results of large-scale tests. Among the poorest regions in the global economy, sub-Saharan Africa consistently ranks lowest on the list, suggesting an inherent bias against the global south that is also evident in other transnational governance bodies. Within OECD countries, attention accordingly turns on the third world within the first, to indigenous peoples as ‘at risk’ and in need of development. Texts include several volumes that identify the ‘problem’ of students/families ‘at risk,’ for example, *Our Children at Risk* (OECD, 1995), and *Children and Families at Risk* (OECD, 1998), the latter being a series of papers presented at a conference hosted in Toronto, by policy makers from Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, UK, and USA. Thus, Canada engages in the meditative activities of the OECD in formulating international policy directions. The ‘problem’ of students dropping out and youth unemployment and the ‘solution’ of destination pathways to vocational training appear earlier, for example, in *Pathways for Learning: Education and Training from 16 to 19* (OECD, 1989). According to the OECD, factors contributing to poor life ‘outcomes’ include low levels of literacy/numeracy. These observations then become emphasized across member states.

Two other seminal texts by OECD that influence education policy internationally are: first, *Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey* (1995, produced in conjunction with Statistics Canada); and second, *Lifelong
Learning for All (1996). The two constructs of literacy and lifelong learning have been adopted by education ministers across the OECD countries as the strategic framework of education and training policy for the 21st century; they are reiterated in international, national and provincial policy documents as panaceas for economic advantage in the global marketplace. The first text on Literacy draws on the results of the OECD’s International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALS) which commenced in 1995. This report considers the cut-off between ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’ to be a “moving target,” where literacy is defined as “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community” (OECD, 1995, p. 46). It is subdivided into three areas: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy (or numeracy). Raising the overall level of literacy in a country in this discourse is causally linked to improved productivity, increased GDP and economic prosperity; hence, the OECD definition of literacy entered the lexicon of policymakers as a central construct in education organized around very basic life/work skills. A subsequent text entitled Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society was also co-produced with a Canadian federal agency (OECD and HRDC, 1997). Whereas few would argue against reading, writing and arithmetic as useful skills in society, it is the reduction of education to the so-called 3 Rs that is considered problematic by progressive-democratic educators. Broader conceptions of education recognize multiple literacies, including critical literacy as integral to participation in society. Richard Darville (2001), for example, distinguishes between “literacy that serves as people’s own resource, to carry their knowledge and projects” and “literacy that carries other people’s power, and so stands apart from people’s own aims and shaping” (p. 1). The conception of literacy derived from the OECD’s IALS is of the latter sort, reduced to workplace literacy that seems to have shaped national literacy/numeracy agendas and become an organizing construct for administrative control across education sites.

The second text on Lifelong Learning places priority on increasing participation in the knowledge economy by creating a flexible and adaptable labour force, learning and mastering new skills throughout the life span. As picked up by policymakers, it calls for strategies to develop general and/or adult training and retraining programs to serve the
needs of the economy. Whereas there may be agreement in principle that lifelong learning is a worthy pursuit, the underlying assumption of OECD is that people are economic units (‘homo economicus’) to be molded by education/training to fit into the way bureaucracies and workplaces operate: applying for work, getting to work, managing money from work, retraining for work. People are construed as passive consumers operating within economic parameters, rather than active participants in social organization.

As summarized in Figure 9.1: Translocal Ruling Relations, the text-mediated ruling relations of the so-called Student Success Strategy in Ontario discussed in the previous chapter extend to texts coordinated at the national level of the CMEC and at the transnational level of the OECD. Thus, higher order regulatory texts in the textual hierarchy emanate from and are produced through the meditative and inquisitive activities of the CMEC in concert with the OECD; that is, from locations far removed from the everyday social relations of teaching practice, and instead oriented to macro-economic priorities.

9.3.2 Large-Scale Tests: Testing, Testing, Testing

Aside from the IALS, since 2000, the OECD has been administering the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in reading, math, science, and problem solving, with the focus on a different domain in each cycle. A consortium led by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) beat out Statistics Canada and other competitors in the bid for test development of PISA — undoubtedly a lucrative contract. A giant in the testing industry is the Educational Testing Service (ETS) that claims to be the largest private educational testing and measurement company in the world, with its headquarters in Princeton in the US. Among its other standardized tests, the ETS produces the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) that assesses verbal, mathematical, and writing skills and is a precursor for admission to college or university in the US. A public-private partnership between the EQAO and ETS (Canada) develops the EQAO
Figure 9.1: Translocal Ruling Relations
The scope of activities and influence of the ETS is apparent from its website which states:

A Voice for Reform---ETS is a leading voice in debates and discussions on education policy in the United States and around the world.
In addition to creating educational products and services, ETS conducts research on issues related to policy — from access, accountability and equity, to teacher quality and factors outside the school that affect student performance. [accessed November 20, 2008]

It is apparent that the education testing industry is part and parcel of large-scale education reform.

The OECD’s PISA test is administered every three years to 15 year olds, although the time for statistical analysis means delays of two to three before publication of the results; for example, the results of PISA 2000 were not available until 2003 (OECD, 2003). For ‘contextual’ data, the testing process includes student and school questionnaires.
Displacing other international tests, such as the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted by the IEA, PISA seems to have become the international ‘gold standard’ for measuring countries’ progress in education, and rating and ranking them accordingly. Morgan (2006) posits a “harmonizing effect” of PISA on educational policy across OECD member and non-member countries as “national governments adopt similar practices and tools for measuring and evaluating the performance of their educational systems” (p. 1).
Indeed, my textual analysis confirms an intensification of alignment with the OECD as the CMEC’s PCAP test, first administered in 2007, is modelled on and dovetails with PISA. As Muzzin (2005) points out in the case of TIMSS, there are “complex societal- and international-level differences in power that underlie the differential performance of various social classes, sexes, nations, and races” (p. 100). PISA is no exception in perpetuating neo-colonial deficit myths about nations and peoples, from the presumed

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108 See [http://www.eqao.com/pdf_e/09/TechnicalReport_final_English.pdf](http://www.eqao.com/pdf_e/09/TechnicalReport_final_English.pdf) (accessed March 4, 2010). Large-scale testing also creates a sub-industry of companies preparing students to write the tests; for example, Kaplan Inc. and Princeton Review for SATs. For a critical perspective, see Miller, Jeremy, The Tyranny of the Test: One Year as a Kaplan Coach in the Public Schools (Harper's Magazine, September 2008), pp.35-46. Similar companies are beginning to show up to ‘help’ schools to enhance students’ performance on EQAO tests.
‘superior’ knowledge of the global north. The increasing emphasis on EQAO scores in school and board profiles suggest the proliferation of the testing regimes. Just as international large-scale tests (e.g. PISA) pit countries and regions against each other, and national tests (e.g. PCAP) pit provinces against each other, provincial tests (e.g. EQAO) pit school boards and schools against each other. As summarized in Figure 9.2: International, National and Provincial Large-Scale Tests, ideological alignment across levels of education governance converges around a fundamental belief in, and allocation of resources to, large-scale tests.

Despite the plethora of large-scale tests and statistical analyses, the single most reliable predictor of student achievement is deemed to be the socio-economic status (SES) of the family. This finding has been cited by right-wing think tanks to persuade the public to divest from public education in favour of privatization. Contrary to a belief in education as the great leveller, according to the argument developed by these think tanks, if education does not make a difference to students’ SES status, and if family SES status is the best predictor of life outcomes, then it makes no financial sense to invest in public education, but instead to promote private schools, charter schools, voucher systems, and other forms of ‘choice.’ Aside from the question of who has the means to take advantage of the full range of educational choices, this argument glosses over the question of bias in standardized tests; if students from high SES family backgrounds perform better on large-scale tests than those from lower SES family backgrounds, then what is actually being measured? How are performance ‘indicators’ culturally biased? How does test bias affect results and frame policy? More importantly, how does it affect people’s lives?

A central conduit in these relations is the CMEC--hooked up nationally with Statistics Canada, Industry Canada, and HRSDC, and internationally with OECD--education is construed as an investment, and the priorities are controlling educational expenditures and leveraging the greatest economic return in terms of cost-benefit analyses. The results of international, national and/or provincial standardized tests constitute measuring sticks for comparing nations, provinces, school boards and schools. Large-scale standardized tests now arguably replace the highly contentious intelligence tests of the past as pseudo-scientific measures of the capacities of the population.
Figure 9.2: International, National and Provincial Large-Scale Tests
Education reform globally shows two contradictory trends: centralization of legislation and policy, coupled with decentralization, in terms of downloading responsibility onto local schools to show results (Kerr, 2006). Contradictions arise between these opposing tendencies: on the one hand, chastising decentralized and atomized schools/teachers for failing to meet targets, and on the other, presenting Canada as a bastion of ‘success’ in education (as exemplified in Levin, Glaze and Fullan, 2008 in the previous chapter). The evidence selected and the spin given arguably depend on the audience. From the activities and operations of the CMEC as publicized at its website, it is apparent that this federal body co-ordinates provincial policies, represents Canada internationally in education, and is actively creating a national brand of education to position Canada as a world class education system.

9.4 The Education Reform ‘Experts’

What unites the ‘experts’ on education reform is an epistemological fundamentalism that assumes the truth value of quantitative measures such as standardized test results, graduation rates and other statistical mechanisms, and that reduces education to back-to-basics skills training for the marketplace. The Ministry’s prolific production of in-house and out-sourced quantitative research is indeed impressive. However, actual evidence and ‘facts’ seem less important than belief and persuasion. This is made explicit in the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat’s Unlocking Potential series edited by Campbell, Fullan and Glaze (2006). This series uses case studies as proof-by-example, cherry-picking ‘exemplary’ turnaround schools or boards and promoting their ‘best practices’ to shore up a centralized communication strategy. In one of these case studies, Maggisano and Campbell (2006) conclude: “‘Never stray from the vision, stick with it, and believe in it’— this starts at the central level and filters all the way down the system” (p. 31).109

109 See Carmen Maggisano and Carol Campbell, Case Study Report: Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (in Carol Campbell, Michael Fullan and Avis Glaze, series eds., Unlocking Potential for Learning: Effective District-wide Strategies to Raise Student Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy, 2006). This case study is posted at several websites: Ministry (http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/16000/265875.pdf); Michael Fullan (http://www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles_06/CaseStudyKeewatin.pdf); and the US Math and Science Partnership Network (MSPnet) (http://hub.mspnet.org/index.cfm/13878). Connected to the National Science Foundation and the Center for School Reform, the mission of MSPnet is to implement the NCLB vision for K-12 education (http://hub.mspnet.org/index.cfm/home). The preface in this series is by Ben
Furthermore, Levin and Fullan (2008) disclose “the three secrets of effective communication---repetition, repetition and repetition” (p. 299). Any teacher who practices critical pedagogy would challenge the appropriateness of applying this marketing mantra as model for communication or teaching; moreover, it epitomizes the fallacy of *argumentum ad nauseam*, that is, if the same thing is repeated often enough, people will believe it. These statements assume that selective evidence and repetition make wrong-headed policy decisions right. This type of communication emulates corporate marketing persuasion techniques; emanating from senior government officials, however, it seems disconcertingly redolent of indoctrination techniques.

In Chapter 4, I traced the idea of developing a school improvement/educational change model in Canada, with a specific focus on students at risk, to Manitoba in 1991. It began with private funds from the Toronto-based family foundation—the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation—which evolved into the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). The province of Manitoba was apparently chosen by the Foundation because its Ministry of Education was favourable towards such private initiatives. Ben Levin (1995) states that he was a “National Advisory Committee member for the Secondary School Change program of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation” (para. 3), that is, from the early days of the MSIP and prior to assuming the position of deputy minister in that province. A visit to the MSIP website indicates that the program is now ‘self-sustaining’ and continues to be an education reformist hub. From this experimental laboratory for programs geared specifically to students at risk, the education reformers from Canada and elsewhere engage in inquisitive and meditative activities: selecting projects to fund, evaluating programs, convening at workshops and conferences, or presenting papers as keynote speakers. For example, Charles Ungerleider, Andy Hargreaves and Louise Stoll were keynote speakers at the 2006 MSIP conference.\(^\text{110}\)

While in the development phase, commissioned program evaluations of the MSIP were conducted by a team of researchers from another reformist hub called the International Centre for Educational Change (icec) at OISE/UT: Fullan, Lee and Kilcher (1995); Earl and Lee (1998); and Earl, Torrance, Sutherland, Fullan and Ali (2003).111 In the final evaluation report, Earl et al.(2003) state:

The founding Education Advisory Committee suggested supporting school-based, self-defined projects that were intended to help students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential and held the promise of expanding to influence the whole school. (p. 21)

Replete with the language of risk, they also state:

The intractable nature of schools was particularly evident in our conversations about “students-at-risk.” The culture of many of the schools was still predominantly driven by university entrance requirements and program structures, with little evidence that this focus was changing, even though there was a recognition that the students may need something different from what schools were offering. (pp. 83-84)

Thus students ‘at risk’ seem to have been used as leverage for the school improvement enterprise, despite resistance from the school “culture” and “little evidence” of change. Undeterred, Earl et al. claim to be ready to forge ahead on a larger scale:

The cumulative knowledge base about school and system improvement based on initiatives like MSIP is considerable. It is now time to put this knowledge to greater and more systemic use by designing reforms that incorporate all levels of the system. (p 9)

System-wide change was already under way in Britain under the New Labour government of Tony Blair, with the establishment of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in 1998 and 1999 (respectively). Commissioned this time by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in Britain, the team of education reformers from icec at OISE/UT conducted three annual evaluations of these strategies between 2000 and 2003, under the general title of Watching & Learning:


> It is more difficult to draw conclusions about the effect of the Strategies on pupil learning. ... Much of the increase [on annual national assessments] occurred prior to the introduction of NLS in 1998 and NNS in 1999, while English and mathematics results have changed little since 2002. (p. 3)

Although downplayed, even within the education reformers’ frame of reference, the final report reveals less than convincing evidence of the ‘success’ of large-scale change in the NLS and NNS strategies, since the initial gains identified in the second report were not sustained in the third and final report. The final report also mentions that the emphasis on targets and testing “may have had unintended negative consequences, such as narrowing the curriculum” (p. 7). Yet these observations seem to have been overshadowed by the reform consensus on large-scale tests. The summary of these texts as shown in Table 9.1: MSIP and NLS/NNS Evaluations, indicates that these evaluative reports are produced by a relatively small ideological circle of people based in Ontario who adhere to a common ‘vision’ of large-scale education reform and who are hooked up nationally and transnationally.

Other ‘unintended consequences’ not mentioned in the evaluations are coroners’ reports that link teacher suicides to Ofsted inspections, and pupil suicides to the pressure of

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Table 9.1: MSIP and NLS/NNS Evaluations

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<th>Manitoba School Improvement Project</th>
<th>National Literacy/Numeracy Strategy</th>
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testing. These suicides show tragic consequences in the lives of teachers and pupils who find themselves at odds with the accounting logic of the ruling apparatus.

Nevertheless, the precedent of the British literacy and numeracy strategies seems to have inspired the formation of the new Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat in Ontario in late 2004, with Avis Glaze appointed as the first CEO; she had been one of the commissioners on the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) which formed the blueprint for education reform in Ontario under the Harris/Eves regime (Kerr, 2006), including calling for the identification of students ‘at risk’ (as discussed in Chapter 4).

My intertextual analysis reveals that the reformers cite each others’ work, promote each others’ accomplishments, publish together in various combinations, attend and present papers at similar conferences, and reiterate similar language. Common language reiterated in and across publications of the ideological circle are “leadership” and “capacity building.” The term ‘capacity building’ can be traced to the neo-colonial discourse of ‘sustainable development’ promoted by international development organizations (such as the World Bank and IMF) and private foundations (such as the Ford Foundation) that provide financial aid to developing countries to enhance the skills, competencies, and performance of the population in compliance with western priorities. The term originates from the UN Development Program’s Delft Declaration (1991) that dealt with water resources management, and has been picked up in global policy as the basis for orchestrating local, national and international action. The Delft Declaration defines capacity building as follows:

> Capacity building consist of three basic elements: creating an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; institutional

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As I have noted previously, coroner’s reports of teacher suicides indicate that the pressure of Ofsted school inspections is a key factor in teachers’ stress. In Britain, research by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Teacher Support Line cite additional related factors, such as long working hours, excessive workload, unnecessary bureaucracy, and being overwhelmed by new initiatives.
development, including community participation; and human resource development and strengthening of managerial systems. (http://www.unesco-ihe.org/About/50-years-of-wise-water/Water-for-a-Changing-World-Enhancing-Local-Knowledge-and-Capacity/Background-Documents-Reference-Documents (accessed April 24, 2009)\textsuperscript{114}

As picked up by governments and corporations, capacity building becomes a catch-all weasel phrase that encompasses a range of activities related to organizational management and governance, strategic planning, leadership, partnerships, and program development. The origin of the term raises questions about neo-colonial relations being carried into, and perpetuated through, education policy. Without acknowledging the source, the notion of capacity building has been picked up as a central organizing linchpin that is reiterated across texts by the Canadian education reformers. For example, in a text in the Ministry’s \textit{Unlocking Potential} series, Campbell and Fullan (2006) appropriate the term as follows:

\begin{quote}
  The government undertook to proactively use the change knowledge – what we call ‘capacity building with a focus on results’—to achieve major results within a short period of time. (p. 9)\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

In this 32-page text, the term appears no less than 24 times as it takes on multiple meanings that in one way or another connect capacity building to knowledge management. Fullan appears to have acquired celebrity status in the education reform movement internationally, with such catchy phrases as “capacity building,” “sustainable change,” “tri-level reform,” “six secrets of change,” and a myriad of point-form lists and


menus. In my experience as a teacher, these easily digestible maxims oversimplify the complexity of teaching practice; I would not bother to read these texts if it were not a necessary part of unpacking where education reform policies come from, what they are actually about, and how they are articulated to teaching practice. Rather than being informed by pedagogy, the education reform strategy is pitched to policy-makers and managers of education systems; it draws on Peter Senge’s notion of corporations as “learning organizations,” and the Six Sigma theory of organizational change. Throughout *The Six Secrets of Change*, Fullan (2008) draws on the auto-manufacturer, Toyota, as a model for improving performance system-wide, however, the international recall of defective Toyota vehicles in 2010 gives pause to reconsider this factory model of educational change, predicated on producing quality ‘outputs’ while keeping costs down. The key so-called secret is capacity building, and the slogan of reform repeated ad nauseum across texts is “capacity building with a focus on results.” Elsewhere, Fullan (2005) defines capacity building in a way that reveals how it works with accountability:

> Capacity building is defined as actions that lead to an increase in the collective power of a group to improve student achievement, especially by raising the bar and closing the gap for all students. Capacity building synergizes three things: new skills and dispositions; enhanced and focused resources; new and focused motivation or commitment. One can think of capacity building at any of the sub-levels [school district, state], but here I am stressing the overall tri-level capacity of the system. ... a capacity building agenda within an accountability framework results in success that is politically attractive to the public, leading to successive opportunities to do even more which is additionally politically valued. Not to mention that it is the right thing to do in terms of moral purpose. ... System transformation won’t happen unless the state takes responsibility for leading the way. (http://www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles_04/2004-Tri-Level_soln/2004_Tri-Level.html, accessed May 23, 2009)

Eschewing empowerment, frontline teachers are extolled to exercise “collective power” and come up with solutions to generate government-defined results that are tied into an

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116 This strategy for change follows the business model of learning organizations. Fullan’s six ‘secrets’ are let out in each chapter: love your employees; connect peers with purpose; capacity building prevails; learning is the work; transparency rules; and systems learn. My intertextual analysis of Levin, Glaze and Fullan’s (2008) sources in the previous chapter reveals how the ‘secret’ of ‘transparency’ actually operates in ruling relations.

117 This article appears in an on-line journal that is produced by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE), a charity located in Kelowna B.C that according to its website, “was founded in 1996 to provide non-partisan education research and information to policy-makers, education planners and the public” and to “develop knowledge” about school performance, improvement, change, and effectiveness” (http://www.saeec.ca, accessed May 23, 2009).
“accountability framework.” Government leadership in capacity building is believed to be morally right and politically expedient; “raising the bar and closing the gap” are construed as “politically attractive to the public.” Coupling the contradictory tendencies of centralization with decentralization, government-led capacity building and policy making downloads responsibility onto local networks of people working across various sites to accomplish the reform agenda.

The surface public appeal of ‘raising the bar and closing the gap’ may account for the ubiquity of the slogan internationally, including the US and Britain, and for its proliferation across official texts. Encapsulating Lakoff’s (2006) strict father/nurturing mother frame, these paradoxical goals constitute the cornerstone of the agenda of change in Ontario. Redolent of NCLB in the US, the Ministry text entitled Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education (2008) stipulates the three “core priorities” for the next four years: “high levels of student achievement;” “reduced gaps in student achievement;” and “increased confidence in publicly funded education” (p. 4). Whereas these priorities may seem laudable at face value, Lakoff’s insight into the operation of surface and deep framing as a political strategy (as discussed in Chapter 2) suggests the need for a closer examination. My critique is in the way slogans get taken up in policy, and how they regulate practice. As shown in the previous chapter, student ‘achievement’ is invariably constructed in terms of performance on standardized tests; the selective release of reports and evaluations raises questions about transparency, and how research knowledge is mobilized to manufacture ‘public confidence.’

Given a lack of evidence that large-scale change has managed to deliver the sought-after results, what remains elusive to the education reformers is how to control what goes on “inside the black box” of the classroom (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Switching from policy to practice, Levin (2007) maintains that the “real focus of a school improvement strategy must be changing and improving teaching and learning practices in large numbers of schools” (p.14). But, how is this accomplished? Conflating pressure with support, and implying that teachers are somehow incapacitated, Maggisano and Campbell (2006)

118Although the author is not mentioned, this Ministry document is also posted under his publications at Michael Fullan’s website (http://www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles_08/EnergizingFull.pdf).
assert a re-direction process of “supporting teachers to change their practice with support ‘at the elbow’” (p. 30). Armed with knowledge and research data, the aim is to shape classroom practices towards data-driven practice. In line with evidence-based medicine, the new buzzword of “evidence-based decision making” turns into “evidence-informed practice.” To challenge or critique the reform agenda lays teachers open to pejoratives, such as being ‘negative,’ ‘old-school,’ ‘nay-sayers,’ ‘reluctant to change,’ ‘resistors’ (rather than contributors) to the cause of school improvement. Re-culturing schools is geared towards changing perceived obstacles to the reform agenda, such as “the secondary school culture of resistance to change” (Reid, 2008) and “veteran staff” (Levin, 1995). Levin states:

Secondary schools have a very high proportion of teachers with many years of teaching experience, usually in the same subject and often at the same school. Many advocates of change see this veteran staff as a major obstacle to change. (http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/benlevin.html, accessed April 5, 2009)

In line with a common theme running through education reforms everywhere, the ‘experts’ not only exhibit distain towards teachers, but ageism towards experienced teachers; apparently, experience does not count. In their terms, ‘respect’ amounts to treating teachers as bargaining units of workers to be cajoled into compliance, rather than as professionals with expertise. In the US, the Secretary of Education (Ronald Paige) went as far as maligning the largest teachers’ union (National Education Association, NEA) as a “terrorist organization” for actively challenging NCLB. It seems that what the Canadian reformers have learned is that large-scale change is impossible without institutional capture of the teachers’ unions into the ruling apparatus.

Common among the education reformers is belief in and reliance on data from standardized test results. In Ontario, the EQAO was established to oversee standardized test results. In Ontario, the EQAO was established to oversee standardized

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119 These pejoratives are compiled from actual texts by the education reformers.
testing across the province, with Lorna Earl appointed as the first director of assessment of the EQAO. In British Columbia, Charles Ungerleider was Deputy Ministry of Education when the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests were introduced across that province in 2000. However, the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) recently took a stand that teachers would not administer nor mark the FSA tests, and mounted a campaign across the province for parents to withdraw their children from taking the tests because of the negative impact on Aboriginal children in particular.121 In Ontario, there is no public reporting on EQAO test results of the First Nations School of Toronto, purportedly because of the small number of students; hence, they disappear from the public record, along with any criticism. The example of the BCTF stand shows that racialized biases in standardized tests that defy equity are an anathema to teachers. In Manitoba, standardized tests had already been implemented prior to Levin’s appointment as Deputy Minister; however, he extended the testing regime by imposing the controversial ‘teacher-directed’ Grade 3 Assessment in literacy and numeracy (Levin, 2005). Teachers in that province objected to the test on the grounds of it being time-consuming, burdensome, and of limited value. The example of the Manitoba Grade 3 Assessment epitomizes government pressure to bring teachers into institutional capture with the testing regime.

Casting standardized testing as protecting the public interest, a familiar retort of the ‘experts’ to teacher resistance towards standardized testing attributes it to self-serving motives, thus deflecting attention away from equity issues about the harmful effects on students, and the waste of time and resources. In shaping public opinion, a particularly troubling recent development is the so-called Facts in Education project under the auspices of the Research Supporting Practice in Education (RSPE) program at OISE. An email Backgrounder/Advisory from this entity -- on official university letterhead -- puts

121 Under president Irene Lanzinger, the BCTF stand against FSA tests was quashed by an order of the Labour Relations Board that forced teachers to comply with the tests that year. See March 2009 issue of Teacher Newsmagazine 21 (5) at http://www.bctf.ca/publications/Newsmag.aspx?id=17622; and http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Teacher_newsmag/archive/2008-2009/2009-03/IndexMarch.pdf (accessed April 2, 2009). Nevertheless, the BCTF has re-launched its media campaign about the issues schools face, called “When will they learn” (see http://bctf.ca/WhenWillTheyLearn.aspx , accessed April 6, 2009). Perhaps picking up on communication strategies of the education reformers, this evocative slogan turns attention to the intransigence of education reformers and points to the problem of who is negatively affected by standardized tests, viz. Aboriginal children.
the news media on notice that a panel of Canadian ‘experts’ will be monitoring media reports to correct factual errors according to the “real Facts in Education.” The question is who presumes to be in possession of the ‘real’ facts? A review of ‘experts’ listed on the Backgrounder shows a preponderance of former senior government bureaucrats and/or research chairs aligned with education reform, most of whom have come to light during the course of my research. This marks a decisive turn on the part of education reformers towards controlling media reports and curtailing public debate in ways that resemble strategies deployed by totalitarian regimes.

My analysis of texts and testing regimes reveals the involvement of private vested interests. It makes visible a pattern of senior government officials launching spin-off companies that offer services in the burgeoning and lucrative international education industry; for example, Michael Fullan Enterprises Inc., Aporia Consulting Ltd., and Edu-quest International Inc. Following the website links of the education reformers in Ontario shows consulting activities that extend internationally, with a global reach across Canada, the US, the Caribbean, Britain, Europe, Australia, Africa, and Asia. ‘Improving’ educational achievement worldwide seems akin to an expansionist colonial ‘civilizing’ mission. Although keeping relatively low profiles locally -- at least with teachers -- Levin and Fullan (2008) declare:

122 See the Backgrounder/Advisory at http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/UserFiles/File/Backgrounder%20Facts%20in%20Education%20January%202010.pdf (accessed January 27, 2010). The Canadian ‘experts’ listed on the Backgrounder/Advisory are “Ruth Baumann, Gerry Connolly, Lorna Earl, Sue Ferguson, Michael Fullan, Kathleen Gallagher, Avis Glaze, Joan Green, Sue Herbert, Bill Hogarth, Ken Leithwood, Ben Levin, Penny Milton, Karen Mundy, Charles Pascal, Jim Slotta, and Charles Ungerleider” (para. 5). The project website shows the “knowledge management team” is comprised to two faculty members (Ben Levin and Creso Sá) and a group of graduate assistants from the Education Administration program (http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/rspe/OISE_KM_Team/index.html, accessed April 28, 2010).

123 Aporia Consulting Ltd. is described at the website as “a research and evaluation firm specializing in the education domain. The principals, Dr. Lorna Earl and Dr. Steven Katz, and their associates offer services in the three broad areas of capacity building, program evaluation and applied research, and facilitating organizational change” (http://www.aporia.ca/, accessed April 5, 2009). Edu-quest International Inc. claims to “provide strong supports for educators and organizations through building capacity” (www.avisglaze.ca, accessed April 5, 2009). Another website states: “Michael Fullan is an international leader on educational change. He has developed a number of partnerships designed to bring about major school improvements and is engaged in training, consulting, and evaluation of change projects around the world ... [and has] worked extensively with Microsoft’s Partners in Learning (PiL) initiative” (http://www.michaelfullan.ca/index.htm, accessed February 26, 2010). Visiting these websites reveals how extraordinarily prolific the education reformers are with respect to publications, speaking engagements, workshop sessions, and consulting contracts all over the world, and how similar are their terms of reference.
Our focus in this article is on the lessons learned about effective change from international experience with large-scale reform over the last 20 years—and indeed, starting well before 1988. … Between us we have been actively involved in education policy or worked closely with leaders in about twenty countries, including all the main English-speaking countries. We have also been involved with international policy through organizations such as the OECD and the Open Society Institute. (p. 291)

In contrast to national and international networking activities at the upper levels of governance, actual experience in classrooms seems conspicuously lacking among the ‘experts,’ which could explicate the communication gap between practicing teachers and system reformers. There appear to be similar career trajectories: from university or administrative positions, to senior ministry appointments, to private consulting firms. These consulting activities are quite in line with medical academia and research, where vested interests arouse concerns about an erosion of credibility in research findings. This raises critical questions about the social relations of education for further research: Who benefits from the education reform agenda? How are hiring, promotion and appointment practices governed by adherence to the education reform agenda? How are teacher pre- and in-service training programs being shaped by the education reform agenda? How does the reform agenda operate to displace people with alternative ‘visions’ of education and to quash dissent?
Chapter 10
E-governance and Data-driven Accountability:
OnSIS in Ontario Schools

Everyone knows that the challenges facing education haven’t changed substantially in the past 100 years; educators are still in the business of turning blank slates into valuable resources. (President and CEO of SRB Education Solutions Inc.)

As a teacher I can say that nothing could be further from my experience! This chapter unpacks an initiative of the Ministry of Education, the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), designed by the private IT company, SRB Education Solutions Inc.

During my preceding textual analyses, OnSIS was mentioned in some texts but not explicated. These references indicate that since at least 2004, OnSIS has been in the process of being phased in by the Ministry through the Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA) Project. However, OnSIS is not yet visible to my teacher-participants; most have not heard of it, while others have heard of it, but do not know what the acronym stands for, or what it accomplishes. Taking the lack of transparency surrounding the OnSIS/MISA project as a marker of ruling relations, my intertextual analysis of it reveals how ruling relations coordinate the activities of people across local sites through technology and surveillance; it brings to light the ideological code of education reform in Ontario, as epitomized in the above opening quote.

The evaluation report of the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), discussed in Chapter 8, describes OnSIS as providing the “infrastructure” for the Student Success Strategy, and

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124 This quote is taken from an interview with Steve Thompson, CEO of the IT company, SRB Education Solutions Inc.. First published in the *EdTech Show Daily*, June 27, 2007, the interview is reprinted at [http://cache.zoominfo.com/CachedPage/?archive_id=0&page_id=1833537396&page_url=%2f%2fwww.srbeducationsolutions.com%2ffr%2fnews%2fpr2007_0627.htm&page_last_updated=6%2f25%2f2008+5%3a19%3a38+PM&firstName=Steve&lastName=Thompson](http://cache.zoominfo.com/CachedPage/?archive_id=0&page_id=1833537396&page_url=%2f%2fwww.srbeducationsolutions.com%2ffr%2fnews%2fpr2007_0627.htm&page_last_updated=6%2f25%2f2008+5%3a19%3a38+PM&firstName=Steve&lastName=Thompson) (accessed October 17, 2009). As a former TDSB IT manager, his career trajectory reiterates the pattern identified in the previous chapter (section 9.4) of public servants moving into private enterprise, with the benefit of ‘insider’ information and connections.

as “a web-based application, which integrates and collects board, school, student, educator as well as course and class data” (p. 37, note 6). Though the explanation of OnSIS is relegated to a footnote, the evaluation report finds the excitement about OnSIS among Ministry ‘informants’ not surprising, given the investment of work, time and money in the initiative. A common theme reiterated across this and other reports is the call for ‘evidence-based’ research, and a turn to ‘evidence-informed’ practice. The OnSIS data base constitutes a centralized province-wide source of data evidence for education policy and management decisions. The concern is about how ‘evidence informed’ practice may come to regulate teachers’ work in a so-called data-rich world oriented to the Ministry’s the three core priorities (high levels of student achievement, reduced gaps in student achievement, and increased public confidence in publicly funded education). Reiterated across Ministry documents and reports, the dominant measure of student achievement is EQAO standardized test results. However, teachers do not activate EQAO results, but rely on direct experience and that of their colleagues to guide their practice; they keep their own data about students in software programs such as MarkBook, or customize their own spreadsheets.

Drawing on Jacobsson’s (2006) regulative, inquisitive, and meditative activities (explained in Chapter 9), my intertextual analysis of OnSIS shows all three of these forms of governance work operating at multiple levels that are oriented to the re-regulation of teaching practice towards data-driven instruction and data-driven accountability. Yet frontline teachers engage in face-to-face contact and decision-making in the context of moment-to-moment interactions with students in classrooms. In their everyday work, teachers are responsible and accountable for ‘delivering’ curricula as well as reporting on students’ marks, attendance, and behaviour. They interface with and contribute to the collection of electronic data through entering student attendance daily, and filling in computerized student report cards at regular intervals during the school year. Chloe’s dilemma (in Chapter 5) that revolves around reconciling care for the student with course reporting requirements shows how teachers working with students ‘at risk’ adapt, negotiate, and deliberate around standardized reporting requirements that seem out of step with the complexities and uncertainties of their everyday practice. Additional forms
pertain to students ‘at risk’ on both academic and non-academic grounds; for example, Jerry says he draws on a “cheat sheet” to fill in IEP forms for special education students, and Caroline recounts how student Safety Plans are hooked up to behaviour logs (in Chapter 7). These reports are not only entered into an individual student’s Ontario Student Record (OSR), but are also tied to school funding arrangements; as such, they become part of the official records of institution and get taken up as data in OnSIS.

In compliance with administrative-managerial priorities, through activating and filling in forms according to prescribed checkboxes, categories, and/or data sets, teachers constitute ‘informants’ about what is happening in the so-called black box (Black and Wiliam, 1998) of classrooms across the Province. Whereas teachers talk to and consult with one another informally about students in their everyday work, teacher/participants find that reporting requirements have become increasingly formalized and standardized in fixed formats that prescribe how students are profiled in the official records and how teachers report their work. Moreover, repetitive use of these fixed formats may reframe the language used by teachers with each other, bringing them into institutional capture with ruling relations and influencing teachers’ work with students (especially new teachers).

How teachers interface with computerized record keeping technology varies across schools and boards. Whereas individual student records are currently held in the student’s OSR in hardcopy documentary form at the last school attended, the move from paper to electronic digital records that is underway through the OnSIS/MISA project reorganizes textual record keeping practices from paper to electronic form. The OSR has a physical presence and location, and is accessible to teachers and administrators, as well as to parents upon written request. However, electronic records raise concerns about privacy, access, and control over people’s lives. Web-based technologies like OnSIS depend on security systems to maintain data integrity and prevent data-mining.126 Teachers with the

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126 News reports in January 2010 announced a privacy breach and potential identity theft of teacher data. In this instance, according to reports, unencrypted personal information compiled by the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) about teachers on the hard drive of stolen laptop computers included names, addresses, birth dates, and social insurance numbers. The OTPP is jointly administered by the Ontario Teachers’ Federation and the Ontario government. Only a few weeks earlier, the issue of compromised
TDSB do not have access to electronic records, except in the uni-directional sense of data entry for each student that they teach at report card time. For example, at one school in Toronto, teachers book computer time on a limited number of computers to input data for their courses into the computer program, Trillium™ Student Information System (produced by SRB Education Solutions Inc.).

In schools, it is guidance counsellors and school administrators who interface with Trillium in their everyday work. For guidance counsellors, Trillium facilitates certain routine aspects of their work. As a guidance counsellor teacher/participant, Alan, put it, Trillium is useful for timetabling, maintaining student transcripts, tracking attendance, and providing contact information about students. The ‘credit summary’ aspect of Trillium provides more information than the student transcript does; it records courses failed in grades 9 and 10 which do not appear on the student’s transcript, since ‘full disclosure’ of failed courses applies only to grades 11 and 12. Thus, from this grey zone that is undeclared in paper records, guidance counsellors can identify courses that students failed in making timetable decisions. The feature of the ‘Notepad’ function documents meetings, with dates, persons present, and decisions made. Even though Alan finds Trillium to be a useful time-saving timetabling device, it also imposes limitations in extraordinary situations. As Alan, explains:

I have to go to the principal to override the program to increase the size of a class to accommodate a student when a class is closed, and there is no space and no other timetable option available; or to permit a student to take courses in a different order, if that is advantageous to a student who, say, may not have the pre-requisites or co-requisites.

Thus class sizes and course prerequisites or co-requisites written into the program language of Trillium impose electronically-mediated constraints that restrict guidance counsellors’ discretion in timetable decision-making, and enforce the ritual of obtaining permission from a principal-administrator. Prior to Trillium, in such circumstances, decisions would be worked out face-to-face with the teacher of the class in question.

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personal data arose over lost patient health records stored on a USB memory stick. In that case, the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner issued an order that all personal health information stored on mobile devices be strongly encrypted. Privacy legislation lacks anticipatory safeguards with new information and communication technologies.
ascertain the appropriateness of adding a student to the class. Moreover, graduated access to Trillium enables higher levels of authority to activate a broader range of data, to override default program code, and to monitor lower levels in the educational hierarchy.

Alan, had heard of OnSIS, but was not aware of what it accomplishes or how it is hooked up to Trillium. During the interview, he noticed a new OnSIS icon as a menu item at the top of the Trillium screen. Surprised that he could activate it, he expressed consternation that it contained information about him, including his own timetable. These accounts of teachers and guidance counsellors reveal how their work has been reorganized with the advent of computerized record keeping technologies oriented to managing professionals and displacing their discretion. However, none of my participants were aware that OnSIS also contains information about teachers.

10.1 School Board Informants
Whereas OnSIS is not yet visible to teachers, and school reporting work is coordinated by the school administration, data management work is organized by people working in various IT departments at the Ministry and at school boards. A school board representative describes the work intensification at reporting time: “We have been short staffed and there is a lot going on--especially as we come up to reporting time.” He explains OnSIS and MISA and related data reporting activities as follows:

[OnSIS] is a web-enabled system that is being used for the collection and management of education-related information at the elemental and aggregate levels. It will provide information to facilitate policy development and board funding as well as tracking, monitoring and accountability at the Ministry, board and school levels. OnSIS is part of the MISA project. Day schools will send their data to OnSIS three times a year for the submission dates of October 31, March 31, and June 30. These files will be validated and cross-referenced against other Ministry information, such as validating OEN information, and verifying data across schools and boards. … Data areas are: Educator, class and student.127

The ‘elemental’ level pertains to identifiable personal information, and the ‘aggregate’ level pertains to depersonalized statistics. OnSIS records student data by Ontario Education Number (OEN), and teacher data by Ministry Educator Number (MEN). This marks a change from former data collection systems of aggregated data only, to OnSIS

127 Communiqué from a school board representative, received November 20, 2009.
which includes personal data about individual students, and also about individual teachers. Moreover, this statement reveals that the OnSIS data base is activated by policy making and management levels of the educational hierarchy that are hooked up to funding and accountability mechanisms.

The process of data collection begins at the school level and is transmitted electronically to the Ministry’s OnSIS website at regular intervals. What I would call a ‘data cleansing’ process, as described by a school board representative at one school board, is shown in Figure 10.1: Data Cleansing Loop. This process works as follows: Trillium OnSIS is the application tool “to capture, format and validate the student data that is required.” At reporting time, each school office runs a Trillium OnSIS snapshot for the school, to validate Ministry “business rules” against Trillium data, including educator, class and student data areas. The snapshot detects “errors” or warnings to be corrected. Errors are referred to the appropriate person for correction. The process continues until there are zero errors. The School Information Systems Department (SIS) at the board uses the Trillium OnSIS application to create a Transmission file in xml format, logs onto the Ministry OnSIS website, and uploads the xml file. The Ministry batch process checks and validates the data against its “business rules.” If there are errors, SIS works with the school to correct them in Trillium, and the process starts again from the beginning with a new snapshot, and is repeated until there are no errors. When there are no errors, the School Signoff is complete, and SIS confirms the School Signoff. The last stage in the process is the Board Signoff. If there are errors when the data is checked against “more business rules,” then SIS works with the school to correct them. The process begins again with a new snapshot, and continues until there are zero errors. The process is complete when the Board Signoff has no errors, and is confirmed by the Planning Department.

128 The file designation ‘xml’ stands for Extensible Markup Language, which is a set of textual data format rules.
129 Error levels and the GOTO command can be used to set up batch files to do different things depending on whether the commands in them succeed or fail. Thus, batch files are only as reliable as the programming script.
Figure 10.1: Data Cleansing Loop

School

Student data

Trillium

(Snapshot)

Error No error

Board / SIS

(Transmission/ xml file to Ministry OnSIS website)

Error No error

School Signoff

Board / Planning

Error No error

Board Signoff
The entire data cleansing process seems to hinge on detecting errors in so-called business rules. The OEN is a crucial field in data cleansing work. An example of a school error is ‘OEN is mandatory,’ that is, a student without an OEN is not accepted in the system. At the Ministry level, an OEN discrepancy may show up if the OEN does not match the OEN website. As explained by the school board representative, “It’s hard to give business rules–there are so many of them.” An example at the board level is a “Main School Flag error --- this error occurs when more than one school is trying to count the student.” Whereas these examples of errors might seem relatively benign and rectifiable, they gloss over some everyday problematics and the larger implications. First, while people are involved in entering data and rectifying errors in Trillium, the warnings and errors are electronically generated, and depend on decisions made extra-locally that are written into the computer program. The MISA project has apparently been delayed because of a number of system glitches, such as bottlenecks and hard- and software failures; for example, Ministry Memo 32 cites “extraordinary issues associated with OnSIS implementation” (http://cal2.edu.gov.on.ca/oct2007/MISAMemo32.pdf, accessed December 21, 2009). Second, the process is much more centralized at the Ministry than pre-OnSIS data reporting practices, and highly prescriptive with respect to data sets, and compliance with reporting and deadlines.

Once fully implemented, data exchange directly from schools to the Ministry OnSIS website could suffice, thereby eradicating the need for school boards. Thus, electronic reporting could portend the elimination of school boards, and a major shift in educational governance, displacing school boards and democratically elected trustees; this is not inconceivable in light of new legislation (Bill 177, discussed below). Coupling the centralization of power with devolution of responsibility to the local level is a hallmark of neoliberal reforms. Third, once entrenched, the data categories and fields come to determine discursive practices and policy frameworks that coordinate how the system operates, that in turn impacts on frontline teachers’ work. What is visible to those who have access and refer to OnSIS (that is, primarily policy- and decision-makers) is confined to prescribed data sets; what is not included in data sets disappears from

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130 According to a conference presentation on OnSIS, there are more than 5000 business rules (http://www.verney.ca/ea2007/presentations/359.pdf, accessed November 2, 2009).
consideration. Thus an ideological circle exists whereby the assumptions inherent in the data sets frame decision-making; in other words, the kinds of decisions that can be made are predicated upon the data fields available. Fourth, although it may seem reasonable that policy and funding decisions ought to be based on ‘correct’ information, the main impetus appears to be ensuring data files are ‘structurally’ correct according to computer protocols (such as the xml standard), or business rules and numbers (OEN and MEN), versus substantively correct in terms of actual data content. Finally, questions arise as to the kind of information collected, how it might be used/abused, and to what ancillary purposes it can be put. Scarce educational resources are directed to inquisitive and meditative activities, to develop software and infrastructure, to input and correct data, to maintain and service the technologies, as well as for consultants, training, meetings and so on. The original OnSIS/MISA budget range of $12 to 15 million over three years escalated to $90 to 100 million over that time, with no visibility or feedback to teachers in classrooms.131

OnSIS replaces the former Ministry Reports on school enrolment, and the entire cleansing process is repeated three times a year for each school (October 31, March 31, June 30). It is not clear whether or not similar cleansing processes also take place for report cards, but a school board representative cautions that “as data is constantly changing in Trillium, a snapshot that had no errors today may have errors tomorrow.” Since computer detected errors must be corrected in Trillium at the school level, the data cleansing process places a considerable burden of work on schools (and boards) to support the Ministry’s data collection enterprise. Whereas data collection and reporting practices differ from board to board, the OnSIS/MISA project intends to streamline and homogenize them across the Province into a single centralized system, the full extent and implications of which are as yet unclear. Based on informants’ accounts, it seems that

131 The amounts spent on OnSIS are derived from two sources: reports on OnSIS/MISA to the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, and to the Niagara Catholic District School Board. See respectively, http://www.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/Documents/Board_Meetings/Meetings/2008/March_2008/Chairs_Mar26_2008_6_DRIVE_to_Success.pdf; and http://www.niagararc.com/niagaraRC/board/meetings/committee_whole/2008/Oct14/C4.pdf. Similarly, escalations of spending arose over computer contracts at the City of Toronto, and e-health Ontario; both of these cases involved allegations of questionable practices regarding contract tenders, mismanagement of public funds, and lack of accountability among high ranking officials.
only certain limited aspects of OnSIS are accessible and visible to guidance counsellors and principals, and to some board staff when activated for specific assigned tasks.

Formal reporting procedures not only regulate how students are written up in the official records of the institution, but also constitute measures of school and system performance. As such, OnSIS is tantamount to a centralized data resource that can conceivably be activated to enforce accountability to Ministry mandates; schools and boards that do not measure up in producing results face punitive sanctions. This raises critical questions about the Student Success Strategy and the infrastructure of OnSIS: Is it actually about raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap? Is it about student success, or school success, or overall system success?

10.2 Intertextual Analysis of OnSIS
Since OnSIS is invisible to teachers and guidance counsellors in their everyday work, and negligible public communication or published material is available, I undertook an intertextual analysis to unpack what is going on. This included connecting the dots between Ministry memos and reports, minutes of school board meetings and committees, legislation, websites, and other internet sources to find out what OnSIS is, what it actually accomplishes, what the implications are for frontline teachers, and how it fits into educational governance. Memos from the Ministry to Directors of school boards reveal that work on OnSIS dates back prior to 2005 at the level of the Ministry and school boards. The MISA project strategically coordinates the phasing in of OnSIS through directives from the highest level of educational governance, based on the meditative activities at seven MISA Professional Network Centres (PNCs) established across the Province by the Ministry. School boards use different data bases, data fields, and reporting practices; for example, the TDSB uses the SRB computer program, Trillium, to keep track of students.132 Under OnSIS, all data will be merged into a single resource and rendered comparable.

132 Introduced by the TDSB in 2002, Trillium is a school-based electronic student information system. However, not all school boards use the Trillium program which is the ‘core’ of OnSIS, although the majority do, according to the SRB website. Other student information management systems may not be compatible with OnSIS, thus creating ongoing problems with system glitches.
The OnSIS/MISA project not only marks a move to computerized record keeping and data collection practices, but brings school boards into compliance with centralized Ministry mandates. The ‘objects’ in these data bases are not only students but also teachers, thus enabling accountability and surveillance over teachers’ work. From my intertextual analysis, it becomes clear that OnSIS extends computerized records beyond student academic records of attendance and marks, to importing and merging data bases across various extra-local sites. Figure 10.2: OnSIS Data Sources, indicates some of the sources that have been identified from the intertextual analysis as linked to OnSIS. Teachers provide information to the school (with respect to students in their classes), to school boards (with respect to their periodic criminal background checks), and to the Ontario College of Teachers (with respect to professional courses). However, OnSIS also shares information with various other agencies: Statistics Canada, the EQAO, the Elementary and Secondary Data Warehouse, and post-secondary institutions, through the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre (OUAC) and Ontario College Application Services (OCAS). A new national postsecondary database, called the Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) designed by Statistics Canada is in the works as well, that will track students across the country throughout and beyond their postsecondary education years. Apart from OnSIS, there is a separate data base of elementary schools called the Ontario Statistical Neighbours (OSN), a recent initiative of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat branch of the Ministry which seems to be a kind of pilot for the more extensive and ambitious OnSIS/MISA project. Thus, electronic data reporting technologies are hooked up across educational sectors, from elementary and secondary to post-secondary education.

In order to make visible how OnSIS is articulated to educational governance, the analysis below focuses on Ontario Statistical Neighbours (OSN); the School Information Finder; Notice of Indirect Collection of Personal Information; SRB Education Solutions Inc./StarDyne Technologies Inc.; the Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act (Bill 177); and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
Figure 10.2: OnSIS Data Sources

(See List of Acronyms in Appendix A)
10.3 Ontario Statistical Neighbours (OSN)

OSN is outlined in a Ministry document entitled *Ontario Statistical Neighbours: Informing Our Strategy to Improve Student Achievement*.¹³³ No equivalent document exists about OnSIS. However, the OSN data base provides a window into what OnSIS accomplishes, and it seems likely that OSN may be integrated into OnSIS in future to circumvent duplication. As depicted by the Ministry (see Appendix E: Ontario Statistical Neighbours), rather than being oriented to individual students’ achievement, the OSN data base is oriented to administrative-managerial functions: capacity building, program development, data to inform school- and board-based decision making; research and evaluation; and strategic planning. The Ministry maintains that OSN enables answering a myriad of questions, and it provides an example of one “school-focused question” which states:

> Are there schools with demographic challenges like my school that are improving on the Grade 3 EQAO reading assessments and have a high proportion of students whose first language at home is different than the language of instruction? (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/osneng.pdf, p. 4, accessed October 27, 2009).

What possible relevance could such a factoid have for frontline teachers’ actual work with students? Instead, it seems to be part of the preparation for interventions across schools.

Taking the school as the unit of analysis, the Ministry declares that the “OSN was used to help identify the schools selected to participate in the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) and the Schools on the Move: Lighthouse Program” (p. 3). Based on the statistics of EQAO assessments and school demographics, OSN thus serves as a surveillance tool to monitor school performance, and may be the precursor of how OnSIS is to be deployed. Schools tagged as “low-performing” or “static schools” are labelled as OFIP 1, OFIP 2 or OFIP 3 schools contingent on their performance on EQAO tests.¹³⁴ In


¹³⁴ The Ministry explains the designation in terms of EQAO test results as follows:

“OFIP 1 – schools where less than 34% of students are achieving at Level 3 (the provincial standard) or Level 4 in reading, in two of the past three years.
2006-2007, almost 1,100 schools came under review. Once tagged, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat dispatches Student Achievement Officers (SAOs) as ‘critical friends’ to dispense discrentional funds to ‘help’ OFIP schools ‘improve’ and avoid being slated for closure. Similar surveillance of school performance tied to funding applies to Title 1 schools under *No Child Left Behind* legislation in the US, and to inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in Britain that ‘name and shame’ failing schools. In Ontario, ‘low-performing’ schools, and ‘under-performing’ students, are targeted for early intervention; the two are often confused and/or conflated by the Ministry in ways that convey contradictory messages. Amidst the constant repetition of slogans about student success, student achievement and student-centred learning, the Ministry’s MISA project of capacity building through OnSIS statistics, like OSN, seems tied to inquisitive or punitive interventions that target schools in poor neighbourhoods.

A second implication of OnSIS arising from the precedent of OSN is pressure on teachers towards so-called evidence-informed practice, or data-driven instruction. Recognizing teachers’ lack of “comfort” with data, it seems the main thrust of the Ministry is to orient teachers to ‘data literacy,’ and to re-train teachers to become results-oriented technocrats. The ‘data wall’ tool of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat constitutes an example of how the Ministry envisages using data ‘evidence’ to guide instruction, and epitomizes outcomes-based education. According to a podcast of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, a data wall tracks students’ progress (especially targeting students ‘at risk’) in visual form, mounted in a prominent place on a school wall, with colour coded stickers indicating where each student is at in terms of Ministry standards and objectives, and in relation to peers. The assumption is that student learning is a simple linear process of progress towards a predefined goal. Tracking students like horses in a race towards the finish line, the data wall denotes a particularly crude graphic representation to display publicly; imagine how a student losing the race might feel?

OFIP 2 – schools where 34%-50% of students are achieving at Level 3 or 4 in reading and results have been static or declining based on trends over the past three years.
OFIP 3 – identifies schools where 51%-74% of students are achieving at Level 3 or 4 in reading but results have been static or declining based on three-year trends”
Across Ontario, EQAO scores constitute the barometer of student, school and board ‘success,’ and education becomes geared to closing the achievement gap on EQAO scores. The implications of OnSIS and e-governance for the front line are pressure to re-orient teachers’ practice to teaching to the test, that is, data-driven instruction. Whereas teachers do not activate EQAO results in their everyday work, the primary activators of EQAO scores are school and board administrators, and Ministry officials tracking the public education system. Parents (and the public) have access to schools’ EQAO scores through school board and ministry websites, which is promoted as providing the information parents need to exercise school ‘choice.’

10.4 The School Information Finder

The Ministry’s School Information Finder website, launched in March 2009, provides another window into some of the data fields of OnSIS. This interactive site posts school ‘profiles’ of elementary and secondary public schools across the Province. Purporting to increase ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability,’ the website states:

The School Information Finder increases the transparency and accountability of Ontario’s publicly funded school system. It provides information to encourage a more informed dialogue about schools and school communities. This information enables all members of the school community to be informed participants in the school improvement process (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift/faq.html, accessed October 20, 2009).

The School Information Finder website compares the school with the provincial average on EQAO results. Appendix G: A Secondary School Profile, shows how one secondary school is publicly re/presented on the School Information Finder site. The data deemed meaningful and relevant about secondary schools appears in three tables: Grade 9 Student Achievement (Math); Grade 10 Student Achievement (Literacy); and Student Population.\textsuperscript{135} Student achievement data appears in the first two tables, based exclusively on standardized EQAO tests, thus conveying a very narrow and simplistic notion of ‘achievement’ that is devoid of people and school life. Posting changes in achievement over three years for each test foregrounds school improvement (or lack thereof) in

\textsuperscript{135} This analysis focuses on secondary school profiles. Elementary school profiles contain similar data: Grade 3 Student Achievement and Grade 6 Student Achievement (on EQAO tests); Student Population (with the same data sets as for secondary). However, elementary school profiles also provide Class Size data, but only for JK to Grade 3.
rudimentary terms; that is, by recording the increase (or decrease) in percentage points of students achieving the provincial standard, accentuated by plus and minus signs. No context is provided for interpreting these numbers beyond a superficial reading. The third table of Student Population tabulates demographic data from Statistics Canada’s 2006 Census. Demographic data about the student population at the school is also compared with the provincial average. The Student Population data sets are the percentage of students who live in lower-income households; whose parents have some university education; who receive special education services; identified as gifted; whose first language is not English; who are new to Canada from a non-English speaking country; whose first language is not French; who are new to Canada from a non-French speaking country.

Highly contentious at the outset was an interactive feature called the ‘School Bag’ that allowed users to select three to five schools and to activate the ‘Compare the Schools I Selected’ button in order to rate the selected schools against each other, based on EQAO test scores and demographics. This feature was swiftly removed following a surge of objections that are indicative of a rupture between the Ministry and the public. Nevertheless, broad-based opposition to the premise of the School Information Finder continues, as indicated in a subsequent letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister Kathleen Wynne, dated June 1, 2009, from the Education Partnership Table of 21 signatory groups, including teacher unions, trustees, directors, principals, deans of education, parents, and others.136 Indeed, such unanimous consensus among educational ‘stakeholders’ is rare.

Redolent of ‘school choice’ and the ghettoization of particular schools, rating schools against the provincial average shows disregard for the effect on school and community morale. Even though school profiles may now only be viewed individually, this kind of

136 This letter is posted at multiple websites of the signatory groups, including People for Education at http://www.etfo.ca/IssuesinEducation/SchoolInformationFinder/Documents/Joint%20Letter%20to%20the%20Premier%20on%20the%20School%20Information%20Finder.pdf (accessed February 11, 2010). The letter acknowledges removal of the ‘school bag’ and of schools with under 50 students, but expresses this change as insufficient, since the site is “inappropriate,” and should be removed “pending meaningful and inclusive consultations” (p. 2). It is possible that this misjudgement of the public may have been a factor in the provincial Liberal government cabinet shuffle on January 18, 2010, in which Kathleen Wynne was replaced as Minister of Education by the former Minister of Agriculture, Leona Dombrowsky.
public exposure carries consequences for school enrolment and hence school funding, since Ontario’s school funding formula is calculated according to school enrolment; most negatively affected are schools in low SES communities. The Student Population data sets indicate a dominant focus on percentages of students at the school who are most likely to be labelled ‘at risk.’ The text-reader conversation of interpreting the data requires some knowledge about statistics. For example, the use of outdated Statistics Canada Census data from 2006, based on estimates by postal code for SES status and parental education, misleads the public into believing it is a scientifically accurate representation of actual students currently enrolled at the school. This classist bias is exacerbated by an ethnocentric bias that singles out immigrants and ESL students for demographic exposure, as in the example in Appendix G. The special education and gifted sets highlight a cognitive ableist bias. Taken together, these data expose ‘others,’ and seem oriented to reinforcing white middle-class aspirations. For example, parents searching for a school with a compatible ethnic population to their own are not provided with sufficient information. However, court challenges under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 1982, are notoriously lengthy and difficult to win, due to complex legal arguments balancing different laws, and to the onus of proving discrimination in relation to some ‘comparator’ group.\(^{137}\)

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that the biases identified above may be inherent in OnSIS, which is not accessible but presumably hooked up to the School Information Finder, since both are coordinated by the Ministry and articulated to data. The School Information Finder arguably constitutes the public inter/face of OnSIS.

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\(^{137}\) The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* of 1982, pertains mainly to language rights of the two official languages of English and French, that is, to linguistic minorities in provincial contexts. Section 7 of the Charter, under Legal rights to ‘Life liberty and security of person,’ states: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice” ([http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html#anchorbo-ga:1_1-gb:s_3](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/1.html#anchorbo-ga:1_1-gb:s_3), accessed February 12, 2010). Section 29 of the Charter, under ‘Rights respecting certain schools preserved,’ states: “Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools.” This section of the Charter refers to section 93 of the *Constitution Act*, 1897 (otherwise known as the *British North America Act, BNA*) that relates to public education in Canada, and focuses on Protestant and Roman Catholic religious minorities. Although education falls under provincial jurisdiction, the *BNA Act* prohibits provincial education laws that infringe upon these two religious groups.
10.5 Notice of Indirect Collection of Personal Information

Nested within the Ministry website under Frequently Asked Questions, is a crucial
document: *Notice of Indirect Collection of Personal Information* (at
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/faqs.html, accessed October 30, 2009). It is not stated when
the Notice was originally posted but that it was “Last Modified: 1/4/08 11:12 AM.” It is a
legal requirement in Ontario to notify individuals about indirect collection of personal
data (as opposed to that provided directly by individuals), yet the Notice is not readily
visible. What if the persons affected have no computer, or have no reason to continually
check the website? Resembling responsibilization, the assumption is that it is sufficient to
post information and leave people responsible for finding it. According to the posted
Notice, the Information Management Branch of the Ministry indirectly collects personal
information about identifiable individuals from multiple sources: schools, boards, school
authorities, EQAO, OCAS, OUAC, Statistics Canada, and unspecified “other
organizations.” OnSIS is thus hooked up with an extensive web of translocal ruling
relations. The categories of personal information about students and teachers listed
include name, OEN or MEN, gender, and date of birth; as well as educator employment
history and student educational history.

The legislative authority for collection of private data is broadly stated as “the *Education
Act*, the regulations, and the policies and guidelines made under the *Education Act,*
*Ontario Regulation 440/01,*” and the “*Freedom of Information and Protection of
Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31.*” The only particular legislative clause cited is the
*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, s. 2(1);* a follow-up shows that
this clause provides no more than the legal definition of ‘personal information.’ The
justification the Ministry gives for collecting indirect personal data is as ‘evidence’ to
improve student achievement outcomes, to inform policies, programs and practices, and
to provide educational services, administration and planning at the local level. What is
not declared in the Notice is that educator data collected by OnSIS includes the status of
individual teachers with regard to performance appraisals conducted under the auspices
of the New Teacher Induction Program, and every five years thereafter under the Teacher
Performance Appraisal process. The Teacher Performance Appraisal rates teacher competency on a two-point scale of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.”

As a teacher, I had no idea that personal data was collected about me towards these administrative-managerial purposes. This raises concerns about rights to privacy for students and teachers, and about security, data mining, identity theft, and other possible misuses of personal information; even if the technology for transmission of information is purported to be “secure and password-protected,” and “depersonalized” for “most” purposes, issues remain about who has access to and can activate personal information, whether authorized legitimately or through the back door. Similar to the documents contained in the OSR (discussed in Chapter 7), access to OnSIS data would be particularly disadvantageous for students labelled ‘at risk.’ On the website it is stated that data access is controlled by the Information Management Branch of the Ministry that “acts as the gatekeeper for requests from other ministry staff and external researchers.”

With respect to “other organizations” that could be sources for the indirect collection of personal information about teachers, two separate sources cite the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) as hooked up to OnSIS, whereas the OCT denies that it sends information to the Ministry or to OnSIS about individual teachers on a “systematic basis.” A representative from Client Services at the OCT states:

The College does not provide individual member data or information to the Ministry of Education and/or the OnSIS data base for our entire membership. Although member statistics and aggregate operational information are provided to the Minister on the College’s activities pursuant to section 11 of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, there are not specific member data fields associated with this report. ... You should also note that district school boards, individual schools, the Ministry of Education, or any member of the public can obtain information about individual College members, their statuses and their teaching qualifications on the College Register. (communiqué received on January 11, 2010)

As this statement intimates, through writing program code into OnSIS, it is possible to link OnSIS to the OCT’s Public Register (at [http://www.oct.ca/PublicRegister/Default.aspx?lang](http://www.oct.ca/PublicRegister/Default.aspx?lang)). This public data base, searchable by teacher name or OCT registration number, contains

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information about individual teachers across the Province according to the following data fields: name history, registration number and date of issue, degrees, program of teacher education, basic qualifications, additional qualifications, status history, and disciplinary history (if applicable). Public access to such data not only lays teachers open to data mining, but it can be used to develop teacher profiles.

As public sector employees, teachers have considerably less privacy protection than private sector workers. Increasingly in public sector work, transparency is tied to documenting and reporting activities, and accountability is tied to institutional rule-following. Inherent in the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act* is a tension between the public’s right to know, and the privacy rights of public employees and clients--in this case, teachers and students. Moreover, *Ontario Regulation 440/01* (which amended the *Education Act* to allow student personal identification numbers) may contravene the spirit of protecting confidentiality and individual privacy as outlined in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. With the shift from paper- to web-based communications systems and digital technologies, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* seems outdated and insufficient to protect people’s rights to privacy. The ease of electronic storage in massive data warehouses enables digital data to remain forever archived. Whereas paper records require perusal time, can be purged, and even fade with time, digital records enable the extraction of de-contextualized information that is retrievable instantaneously by key punch and available indefinitely. In the absence of protection regarding the disposal of personal information, the new digital technologies produce an unforgiving society that never forgets (Mayer-Schönberger, 2009). Once ‘at risk,’ always ‘at risk.’

### 10.6 SRB Education Solutions Inc./StarDyne Technologies Inc.

OnSIS is produced by the private sector IT company, SRB Education Solutions Inc., that does the work of writing software codes, issuing updates, and providing ongoing technical support, under contract to the Ministry. Thus SRB is integral to OnSIS ruling relations. The opening quote and comment of this chapter, by the President and CEO of SRB Education Solutions Inc., indicates the ideological gap between data management software developers and frontline teachers. The corporate-managerial mindset built into
the data systems becomes visible through tracking SRB’s achievements from its early work oriented to administrative tools for payroll, HR, financial accounting, and planning. One example of potential abuses of OnSIS data appears under features of the student data archive system; the OnSIS suite can, the SRB website states, “maintain accurate past student records for future requirements such as reunions or fundraising” (http://www.srbeducationsolutions.com/Default.aspx?PageContentMode=1&tabid=448, accessed October 30, 2009). Fundraising puts OnSIS data to a purpose outside the legal authority for its collection; this extends beyond student achievement and education policy, and enables data mining for commercial purposes. This misuse of personal data is in violation of clauses in the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act that restrict unauthorized use of personal information for fundraising without proper notice.

From its beginnings in Markham Ontario, and Trillium sales contracts to individual school boards, SRB’s market niche expanded to the OnSIS contract with the Ministry. In its promotional literature (see Appendix F: SRB’s OnSIS and Related Products), SRB refers to OnSIS as the Ontario Student Information System, and Trillium as the “core” of OnSIS. The two words--assessment and achievement--appear across Appendix F, as if the one ensures the other, and defying an old adage that every farmer knows: weighing a pig never made it fatter. It is apparent that SRB’s educational data systems that are linked to Trillium continue to proliferate: automated library systems (L4U); archived data management (Student Data Archive System); decision support (Data Mart); and other so-called partner solutions for stakeholder communication. This expansion of Trillium’s capabilities coincides with the business practice of mergers and acquisitions: SRB was acquired by StarDyne Technologies Inc., an IT company that specializes in business software tailored to the lucrative market of local government public management. According to the website, StarDyne’s ‘philosophy’ of accountability is that “you can only improve what you can measure” (http://www.stardynetech.com/group_companies.html, accessed October 27, 2009). With headquarters in Kelowna, B.C., the company’s reach extends far and wide, with offices in British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta, the US, and India. 139 The

139 According to its website, StarDyne has offices in Surrey, BC; Kelowna, BC; Mission, BC; Vancouver, BC; Edmonton, AB; Orillia, ON; Markham, ON; Grimsby, ON; Paris, ON; Fargo, ND; Flint, MI; and Pune, India. SRB acquisitions include: L4U - Kelowna Software Ltd. (August 2008); StudentsAchieve Software
India office is located in Pune, a city renowned for its educational institutes, English fluency, and multiple IT and software development companies. It appears that StarDyne is engaged in the corporate global practice of outsourcing work to cheap unregulated labour markets offshore, where the computer programming work is likely done.

At a location far removed from the everyday world of teachers and students in classrooms, OnSIS draws together data from multiple sources and corporate software programs into a centralized Ministry tool to surveil and manage system performance, as well as to construct ‘evidence-based’ policy and devise ‘evidence-informed’ practice. Aside from electronic data management through OnSIS, the Ministry also promotes online learning through its E-Learning Ontario initiative, with the contract for the web-based learning management system awarded to Desire2Learn Inc. with its headquarters in Kitchener, Ontario. The computer-assisted learning program, PLATO® that is geared specifically to the Ontario curriculum, has been available for purchase by schools and boards for several years from Plato Learning Inc. with its headquarters in the US. The online career guidance and planning system, Career Cruising, a registered trade-mark of Anaca Technologies Ltd. located in Toronto, matches a student’s profile with occupational profiles and gears students to their employment destination; it too has been available for purchase since 1997. Within a technocratic ‘vision’ of education that would turn blank slates into human resources, envisage the ultimate scenario of computer-mediated education: the student is diagnosed/read off from computer data, fed computer-assisted learning materials and career guidance from a central hub, with ‘results’ transmitted directly in a closed loop, thus providing immediate feedback, eradicating face-to-face contact, and relying on artificial intelligence to remove ‘human error’ altogether.

Inc. (May 2008); TSC Software Services Inc. (January 2007). The StarDyne group claims to have 255 employees, revenues of $31 million and 3000 customers. See www.elearningontario.ca, and http://www.desire2learn.com/.

142 See http://www.careercruising.com/
10.7 *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act*

The *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act*, 2009, passed through the Ontario provincial legislature as Bill 177, and received Royal Assent on December 15, 2009.\(^{143}\) This Act amends the *Education Act* with respect to school board governance. It specifies new duties of school board officials and trustees and new process for alleged breaches of the code of conduct; it also changes the powers and duties of the Minister, and adds a so-called purpose provision. This provision centres student achievement as the purpose of education and the public education system.

This *Act* enshrines the Ministry’s three priorities in law. Clause 1(3) states: “All partners in the education sector, including the Minister, the Ministry, and the boards, have a role to play enhancing student achievement and well-being, closing gaps in student achievement and maintaining confidence in the province’s publicly funded education systems” (http://www.ontla.on.ca/bills/bills-files/39_Parliament/Session1/b177ra.pdf, accessed January 10, 2010). Clause 169.1 (1) (f) states: “[Every board shall] develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the goals referred to in clauses (a) to (c);” clauses (a) and (c) refer, respectively, to promoting student achievement and well-being, and delivering effective and appropriate education programs.

Similar to corporate evaluation practices and stock market reports, Bill 177 essentially legislates school boards to formulate ‘multi-year plans’ in line with the Ministry’s purpose provision. Although ‘student achievement’ is not defined, this legislation effectively subordinates local school board autonomy to Ministry priorities, makes school boards accountable for student achievement board-wide, and expands Ministry authority to intervene and place boards under supervision. Under previous legislation, the Ministry was authorized to take over school boards only if they failed in their fiscal responsibility to balance the budget. The coercive hard regulation written into law marks enhanced centralization of control at the Ministry, although on the surface, it may appear to be mere housekeeping in terms of re-defining roles and responsibilities at the upper levels of educational governance.

Whereas Bill 177 purports to hold school boards accountable for student achievement, it is actually frontline teachers who engage with students and influence achievement. The effect of this legislation is downloading accountability onto teachers for student achievement, as defined by the Ministry. It forces directors of school boards to report directly to the Ministry, and to control and regulate teachers work under threat of being placed under Ministry supervision. Section 47 of Bill 177 amends the Education Act by adding a section on ‘Additional duties of director of education;’ Section 283.1 (1) includes clauses about developing, implementing, reviewing, monitoring, and reporting on multi-year plans aligned with the purpose provision, or Ministry priorities. Clause 283.1 (1) (g) states: “[the director shall] if a board does not respond in a satisfactory manner to an act or omission brought to its attention under clause (f), advise the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of the act or omission.” This establishes a chain of command that is made actionable by law.

Section 42.(1) of Bill 177 pertains to governance of teachers; it repeals Subsection 277.38 (12) of the Education Act and substitutes the following:

Pending the board’s decision whether to terminate the teacher’s employment, the director of education for the board, or the supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education, shall, (a) suspend the teacher with pay; or (b) reassign the teacher to duties that are appropriate in the circumstances in the view of the director of education or supervisory officer. (http://www.ontla.on.ca/bills/bills-files/39_parliament/session1/b177ra.pdf, accessed January 10, 2010; italics added)

The italics indicate the change in wording from previous legislation; comparing the Act with Bill 177, the word change has larger implications: “director of education for the board” (only) is changed to “director of education for the board, or supervisory officer acting as the board’s director of education.” Subsection 277. 38 (13) (which read:” In the case of a school authority that does not have a director of education, the duties under subsection (12) shall be performed by the appropriate supervisory officer”) is repealed, effectively having been folded into 277.38 (12). Subsection 277.38 (14) (which read: “No

144 For the previous version of Section 277.38, see http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/statutes/english/2001/elaws_src_s01024_e.htm, accessed February 17, 2010). Section 277.38 of the Education Act (as previously amended) pertains to teacher performance and governance.
hearing is required before making a decision under subsection (12) or (13)”) remains the same, except that “or (13)” is struck out. The wording raises that question of what is a ‘supervisory officer’? Whereas it may refer to a teacher qualified as a supervisory officer to perform the duties of a director of education for school authorities, the term may also apply to supervisory officers appointed by the Ministry to oversee errant boards. In either case, supervisory officers are treated as synonymous with directors of education for school boards, and their decisions require no hearing.

The meditative activities of the Governance Review Committee leading up to Bill 177 are revealing. It is apparent that the Ministry mandated the Committee to recommend so-called ‘provincial interest regulations’ (the new purpose provision in law). The Minister of Education appointed this Committee (on November 4, 2008) to review the governance structure in education. Comparing two documents pertaining to the Committee -- the Consultation Paper (December, 2008) and the Report (April 20, 2009)145 --- it is apparent that the Committee came up with its recommendations remarkably quickly, and they look remarkably similar to the key considerations laid out in the Consultation Paper brief. In its Report, the Committee defines governance and what constitutes good governance as follows: “Governance is about the allocation of responsibilities within an organization. Good governance provides a framework and a process for the allocation of decision-making powers” (p.12; http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/grc/grcReview.pdf, accessed September 21, 2009).

In the Consultation Paper, the Committee regards the existing legislation regulating school boards as “outdated,” and requiring a shift from local priorities to provincially mandated priorities, with an emphasis on “educational outcomes as the core business of school boards” (p. 3). The four discussion guides of the Consultation Paper are: modernizing the Education Act; identifying effective governance practices; supporting school board leaders; and strengthening school board accountability. Each guide contains

“key considerations” in point form, followed by leading questions that orient discussion and feedback to those predetermined considerations. Hence, it is not surprising that the recommendations in the Report would align with the key consideration in the Consultation Paper. This suggests an ideological circle where the Committee’s recommendations seem to have been established in advance, according to Ministry priorities. How educational outcomes, or student achievement, are to be gauged is left in vague terms, and there is no direct mention of OnSIS in either document. However, under recommendation 25 that deals with provincial interest regulations, the Report specifies the “indicators” for Ministry intervention in a school board as triggered by “results of provincial assessments and other indicators that reflect the increased sophistication in gathering and analyzing data relevant to understanding progress in improving student achievement” (p. 49), that is, presumably by EQAO scores and OnSIS data.

10.8 Transnational e-governance

Similar emphases on surveillance and accountability practices are evident in other countries, including the US and Britain. In England — a country well-advanced in surveillance technologies — data is also linked across the public services. Hoyle (2008) states that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for different services in contact with children ‘at risk’ and framed as ‘safeguarding children’ promotes “a structured process for collecting information about the development, circumstances and/or behaviours of a child/young person; and, a form for recording this information – which became standard across all public services in every local area throughout England” (www.infed.org/socialwork/every_child_matters_a_critique.htm; accessed March 5, 2009). As the English precedent indicates, data collection and the re-organization of public services seem to go hand in hand, integrating the work activities of frontline workers across the fields of education, social work, healthcare and criminal justice, and orienting the discursive practices of public service work around notions of risk and safety.

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146 David Hoyle’s reading of the Every Child Matters strategy in England as a practitioner exposes the gap between ‘thin rhetoric and sound-bite politics’ and the complex realities practitioners face. He contends that ‘safeguarding’ children ‘at risk’ is actually about “whole system change;” the “centralisation of credit” and “diffusion of blame;” ‘integrated services’ impose surveillance on practitioners and violate children’s rights to privacy.
My intertextual analysis makes visible a complex web of translocal ruling relations that extends across national boundaries. The previous chapter identified the activities of CERI and the Directorate of Education with regard to OECD boss texts and large-scale tests. Although it lacks legislative authority, the OECD operates as an international data clearing house and policy think tank. Another department -- the Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development -- presides over public administration in general. This directorate advocates the new public management (NPM) model as the solution to ‘harmonize’ public sector work across member states. The seminal text on NPM entitled *Governance in Transition: Public Management Reforms in OECD Countries* (OECD, 1995) calls for ‘reinventing’ public sector governance to conform to market-driven priorities. In 2001, this directorate launched the e-Government Project to formulate “how governments can best exploit information and communication technologies (ICTs) to embed good governance principles and achieve public policy goals” (http://www.oecd.org/department/0,3355,en_2649_34129_1_1_1_1_1,00.html, accessed October 19, 2009). At the outset, the policy brief entitled *The Hidden Threat to E-Government: Avoiding Large Government IT Failures* (OECD, 2001) identifies problems of ballooning budgets, deadline over-runs, IT shortcomings, abandoned projects, and the ‘political risks’ taken by governments as a result, but nevertheless promotes e-governance as the “e-dream of enhanced effectiveness and efficiency.” The flagship report on e-government entitled *The E-Government Imperative* (OECD, 2003) specifically links e-governance to accountability as a guiding principle; enhancing management powers and opening the way for public-private partnerships in public administration, it states:

> E-government can open up government and policy processes and enhance accountability. Accountability arrangements should ensure that it is clear who is responsible for shared projects and initiatives. Similarly, the use of private sector partnerships must not reduce accountability. (p. 19)

In its recent publication entitled *Rethinking e-Government Services: User-centred Approaches* (October, 2009), the Directorate heralds e-governance as “a paradigm shift towards citizen centricity,” yet conversely reveals low adoption and low use of e-
government services. This raises questions about what ‘citizen centricity’ actually means, and whether the push for e-governance is more about cost savings benefits in line with corporate governance. It seems that lack of evidence to support the ‘take-up’ of the ‘paradigm shift’ may be accounted for by the invisibility of people in electronically-mediated ruling relations orchestrated at a distance that have negligible value for people or in everyday practice. Thus, the work of the two new OECD directorates (the Directorate for Education, and the Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development) co-ordinate and homogenize public sector education work across the member states. Peer pressure draws senior government officials (such as the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat at the federal level) into institutional capture with OECD norms, and nation-states into compliance with international standards. As previously stated, Canada has no federal ministry of education; however, the inquisitive and meditative activities of the CMEC (discussed in Chapter 9) co-ordinate education policy across the country.

Congruent with norms established by the OECD and CMEC, the goal of the OnSIS/MISA project in Ontario seems to be to render statistics comparable and to re-regulate education, by standardizing school board policies and practices across local sites. The OnSIS/MISA project conforms to OECD norms of using key performance indicators and standardized testing to make comparisons and formulate policy. Moreover, OnSIS is compatible with OECD’s drive for literacy / numeracy, with its singular emphasis on EQAO test results. While there are local differences, identifying similarities and patterns across jurisdictions helps to make visible the social relations that are restructuring public

147 The OECD uses the internet to disseminate its ideas and statistics to subscribers via their online library, SourceOECD or its successor, OECD iLibrary. For an abstract and chapter titles for this publication, see http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,3343,en_2649_34129_43864647_1_1_1_1,00.html (accessed October 19, 2009). At the time of writing, this document is not yet available through SourceOECD at University of Toronto. Related texts on e-governance include Simplification and e-Government (2009) and e-Government for Better Government (2005).

sector work, and how international discursive practices and electronically-mediated relations are hooked up translocally.

This “re-regulation” across “embedded states” (Djelic & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006) is organized and coordinated at multiple levels, and can be traced to “boss texts” (Dorothy Smith) emanating from the OECD, as discussed in Chapter 9. These boss texts orient education to producing human resources to serve the global economy, and they also orient public sector administration work towards corporate-managerial practices, under the auspices of the new public management and e-governance. Although it lacks regulative authority, the inquisitive and meditative activities of the OECD exert influence through institutional capture of senior government officials, as well as through its various publications and conferences. OECD publications and conference proceedings rely heavily on statistics to read the social world, in line with economics and human capital theory. Statistics are rendered comparable across nation-states to rate and rank countries and regions. Convergences in the new public management, e-governance, and education policy internationally are arguably coordinated in and through these OECD activities. As this intertextual analysis shows, the OnSIS/MISA project is part of the nexus of inquisitive and meditative activities that orchestrate consensus about education across the Province; in addition, however, the Ministry of Education has regulative legislative power in Ontario to enforce compliance with its edicts.

10.9 OnSIS and Accountability

Starting from the disjuncture that classroom teachers and guidance counsellors experience with the reporting requirements that shape their work, and given the lack of transparency about the OnSIS/MISA project, the foregoing intertextual analysis makes visible the extra-local work of ‘capacity building’ going on at school board and Ministry levels of governance in Ontario, organized around notions of safety and risk management. Taking into account developments in IT web-based communication systems, as well as new forms of transnational governance, helps to unpack the changing ruling relations of contemporary forms of governance that control and regulate public sector work extra-locally according to a corporate governance paradigm. Official calls for accountability rely on garnering public support for transparency of information; in the
case of education, this appears under the auspices of “increasing public confidence in publicly funded education.” However, publishing statistical data in predigested form (without raw data) not only determines what counts as ‘evidence’ and ‘fact,’ but also attributes causality to mere correlations, and creates the impression of managerial authority and certainty. Increasing student achievement and closing the gap are read off from, and reduced to, standardized EQAO ‘results.’ From the perspective of teacher-participants, these statistical data are inconsistent with, and convey an oversimplified partial picture of, their experience on the frontline. Using IE as a method of inquiry makes visible the relations of ruling governing frontline teachers’ work; the OnSIS/MISA project shows how transparency and accountability actually operate as governance technologies to accomplish compliance.

Whereas teachers contribute to data collection about students in the form of attendance and course marks, my intertextual analysis reveals that the data management capabilities of OnSIS extend well beyond producing report cards and transcripts for students. Both students and teachers are ‘objects’ contained in and tracked by OnSIS -- students recorded by OEN, and teachers by MEN. School boards appear to be at different stages in implementing the OnSIS/MISA project, with some being used as test sites. For example, the existence of an “OnSIS/IEP Data Collection Form” at the Thames Valley District School Board indicates that exceptionality data about students is also being compiled by OnSIS, phased in by that board around January 2009. Although it is an internal document, the small print at the bottom of this one-page form, states “Notice of Collection” and cites the authority of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989, and the Education Act, RSO, 1990 as the legal authority to do so; it is not clear how students or parents are made aware of this notice. Moreover, other data about students in OnSIS include behavioural aspects of non-attendance, incidents and infractions, as well as suspensions and expulsions.

149 See the OnSIS/IEP Data Collection Form at https://apps.tvdsb.on.ca/employees/dptspeced/Forms/OnSIS%20IEP%20Forms/EXAMPLES/Example%204%20-%20Additiona%20of%20Exceptionality.pdf (accessed November 16, 2009).
Not only does this raise concerns about violations of privacy, but portends new forms of data-driven instruction and data-driven accountability for teachers. OnSIS streamlines data from school boards across the Province to render it comparable and actionable. The Ministry’s shift to ‘evidence-informed’ practice or data-driven instruction suggests that OnSIS will come to govern teachers’ day-to-day work, standardizing teaching practice according to centralized mandates and priorities, and displacing teacher discretion. Although the Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act of 2009 appears to hold directors of school boards accountable for student ‘achievement’ under threat of being placed under Ministry supervision, this legislated accountability must inevitably be downloaded onto teachers, since they are the ones who actually interact with students ‘at risk.’ Given that the OECD coordinates systems of data collection and standardized testing (PISA) across member states through inquisitive and meditative activities, it seems that the OnSIS/MISA project is oriented to the optics of system success in international rankings, rather than to student ‘success.’ At a US venue of education ‘leaders,’ the Special Advisor to the Premier and Minister of Education in Ontario gives teachers pause for concern when he states:

Another big feature of our work is to play down accountability in favour of capacity building, and then re-enter accountability later. If you lead with accountability, which most states do, then people are immediately on the defensive and it doesn’t work so well (http://www.houstonaplus.org/testimony/focus-michael-fullan, accessed October 27, 2009).

The capacity building of the OnSIS/MISA project, coordinated by the Ministry, enables one-way surveillance and accountability of which teachers are as yet unaware. The inquisitive and meditative activities of the OnSIS/MISA project’s building capacity seem to be setting up the infrastructure for data-driven accountability. Whereas few would argue against the usefulness of computers as tools, the OnSIS/MISA project portends changed relations of ruling, mediated by web-based technologies controlled from the centre.

OnSIS enables school boards and the Ministry to have a panopticon view into classrooms across the Province -- at least as far as statistics allow. Since OnSIS contains educator, student, and class data, it is possible to tie a teacher’s MEN to student OENs so as to read
off individual teacher’s performance in terms of the Ministry’s notion of student achievement; whether defined in terms of course marks or EQAO scores, this could portend managing professionals through reward and punishment; that is, merit pay for producing ‘results,’ and suspension or reassignment for non-compliance. At the same time, aggregate disembodied data operate as electronic forms of governance to monitor system performance in a nameless faceless world. With interpersonal relations mediated by computerized e-governance technologies, actual people — teachers and students -- are displaced and rendered invisible. Devoid of context, certain measurable aspects of teachers’ work and students’ achievement are fore-grounded over immeasurable aspects; and quantitative data eclipses qualitative data. Reconstituted in prescriptive data sets as objectified reified statistics, the complexities, uncertainties and particularities of frontline work disappear from view.

150Impending legislation in Florida suggests that this is not improbable. According to a special report posted on the Education Tech News Weekly Newsletter, “Republican state lawmakers are pushing legislation that would end professional service contracts -- AKA ‘tenure’— for public school teachers. And Florida could become the first state in the country that evaluates teachers’ performance based on students’ test scores. ... Half of teachers’ pay would depend on students’ test scores improving from the previous year” (http://educationtechnews.com/florida-giving-tenure-the-heave-ho/, accessed April 10, 2010).
Chapter 11
Conclusion

Although people may seem to disappear in textual analysis as a research method, it is people who actually produce texts and people who activate them through reading, interpreting, and acting upon them. The direction of my intertextual analysis arose directly from disjunctures and questions from teacher/participants who work with students ‘at risk;’ that is, it addresses their relevancies. Taking the cue from teacher/participants, my thesis journey has led in directions that I did not expect at the outset. Teacher/participants questioned the premise of student ‘success,’ the source of these policies, and the evidence of official statistics that claim rising graduation rates which are not borne out in their experiences in practice. Taking teacher/participants seriously made it incumbent on me to wade through (often tedious and acronym-laden) policy documents, reports, and statistics that practicing teachers seldom activate, in order to unpack how text-mediated ruling relations operate translocally, beyond the realm of teachers’ experience. This meant analyzing texts and statistical data framed by extraneous discourses of corporate-managerialism and human resource development. The discovery process was fraught with frustration, anger and tears: from exasperation at the cynicism of ‘experts,’ to difficulties accessing reports and data that required using Freedom of Information, to despair over the extent of strategizing going on behind teachers’ backs in policy circles. At times, the ruling apparatus seemed impenetrable, pervasive, and invincible. How can I possibly capture the complexity of teachers’ work in a nutshell so as to have an effect on policy circles? How can I counteract official facile slogans and lists without resorting to similar oversimplification? At other times I questioned myself: Who am I, as a relatively privileged white woman, to be undertaking this research on students ‘at risk’? Who am I to be challenging the ‘experts’? What are the personal consequences? During the write-up, I deliberated over how to approach it to avert misinterpretation that could be used to justify cuts to programs and constituencies that have struggled for special consideration and funding. Through moments of self-doubt and uncertainty, what gave me the courage to keep going was recalling my former students,
and knowing that despite institutional constraints, teachers of students ‘at risk’ work around institutional requirements, insisting on high expectations, resisting standardization, and adapting curricula to suit the students they teach. The efforts of activist teachers who are committed to a genuinely student-centred ethic of care (even at peril to themselves) and who teach against the grain (Simon, 1992; hooks, 1994) provide hope and encouragement for students on the margins. As Simon (1992) states:

Hope is the acknowledgement of more openness in a situation than the situation easily reveals; openness above all to possibilities for human attachments, expressions and assertions. The hopeful person does not merely envisage this possibility as a wish; the hopeful person acts upon it now by loosening and refusing the hold that taken-for-granted realities and routines have over imagination. ... [H]ope is constituted in the need to imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the present as if this alternative had already begun to emerge. (p. 3-4)

In order to loosen “taken-for-granted realities and routines” requires paying attention to the use of empty shells as proxies for something else. Reiterated across official texts, ‘risk,’ ‘success,’ and ‘achievement’ are relational terms that depend on what and to whom they refer for meaning. Exemplifying Lakoff’s (2006) strict father/nurturing parent trope, the notion of student ‘at risk’ personifies students both as posing a threat/danger (a risk to others) and as vulnerable (at risk themselves). Under the auspices of paternalistic protection, related policies in effect target particular populations for prevention and intervention strategies in ways that individualize and responsibilize students ‘at risk,’ while providing safety/security for those not at risk.

My intertextual analysis not only makes visible the communication gap between policy-makers and frontline teacher practitioners, but also a profound knowledge gap in terms of embodied experiences and values held about the meaning and purpose of education. Oriented to knowledge mobilization and large-scale education reform, the results-based logic of evidence-based research that prevails in educational governance adheres to an epistemological fundamentalism in which EQAO standardized tests constitute the most common measure of student achievement/success. Similar to Title 1 of NCLB, the SS Strategy and its ‘infrastructure’ of OnSIS are geared primarily to school funding and accountability mechanisms that target schools in poor neighbourhoods for enhanced
scrutiny and conditional crisis funding. Instead of reviewing the funding formula instituted under the former Harris/Eves regime, the SS Strategy is about the optics of overall school/system success and not individual student ‘success.’ Moreover, a funding gap remains; according to a recent report, Ontario ranks 54th in per-student spending out of 64 jurisdictions in North America, and 9th of 13 in Canada. In Ontario, scarce resources seem to be diverted away from classrooms to bureaucratic managerial priorities and activities; these include the expansion of government agencies (such as the EQAO and LNS), the proliferation of research and text production (such as the CLLRNet and CCL reports and various Ministry documents), and investments in IT surveillance systems (such as the OnSIS/MISA project). Putting the pieces of the puzzle together, a common thread emerges under the proxy of ‘capacity building’ and ‘tri-level’ reform as orchestrating a ‘culture shift;’ namely, the institution of an audit culture in school governance.

This raises concerns about an incipient ‘culture’ of compliance and silence that threatens democratic-progressive education and marginalizes alternative critical discourses and practices. The culture of silence has several aspects: the first relates to what goes unsaid due to neoliberal colour-blindness. Albeit from an administrative/leadership perspective, Shields (2004) recognizes the problem of “silence about colour and culture” (p. 119) and “about such aspects as ethnicity and social class” (p. 110). As I have argued, the standardization of policy and discursive practices masks colour-blindness and glosses over systemic barriers embedded in official curricula, as well as the hidden curriculum, and reporting regimes in schools. Students disengage (or actively rebel) when they do not see themselves reflected in textbooks, course content, among teachers, or otherwise acknowledged in school life. To address these silences not only requires restoring teacher discretion to respond to the particularities of students they teach, but also deeper systemic change. The second aspect is the silencing of teachers through fear of punitive

151 See the report by Hugh Mackenzie for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, entitled No Time for Complacency: Education Funding Reality Check (November 2009) at http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/reports/docs/Education%20Funding%20Formula%20Review_0.pdf (accessed February 2, 2010). According the CCPA report, per-student spending in Ontario is $9,079 as compared to New York at $18,733 (2nd) and New Jersey at $19,477 (1st) (pp. 46-47). Figures are based on the 2006-07 school year, with US dollar amounts converted to Canadian dollars using the OECD’s purchasing power parity measure rather than the exchange rate which fluctuates.
consequences, as identified by Zanada Akande (2008). Teacher/participants mention restrictions to professional autonomy through being reprimanded, allocated difficult assignments, or otherwise subjected to administrative control. Two teacher/participants explicitly stated that they would quit teaching rather than go along with what they see as the shrinking space for alternative teaching practice; one guidance counsellor/participant had already taken early retirement. Another teacher volunteered to participate but declined when promoted to the position of vice-principal; it seems promotion to positions of responsibility entails tacitly agreeing to silence and towing the line. In this climate, it is especially important to protect the anonymity of participants in my study.

The third aspect is the silencing of teachers’ unions under education reform. In Ontario, much ministerial effort has been geared to creating the impression of labour peace and avoiding any reference to labour unrest; for example, in How to Change 5000 Schools, Levin (2008b) claims that labour disruption has vanished. However, my analysis of the composition of the SSC suggests the cooptation of certain senior union officials, through the so-called consultative activities of the commission that may actually have operated as a strategy to bring about institutional capture to the Ministry’s SS policies. Could this serve to control the membership and secure compliance? One former union negotiator was employed by the Ministry and headed up the first year of the SSC; another former Executive Assistant at the OTF was involved in the CCL report and is listed as one of the experts on the ‘Facts in Education.’ While these instances of blurring the lines could be interpreted as management-labour harmony, there seem to be rewards and opportunities for individual career advancement by crossing the divide. On the other hand, some teachers/participants do not see their unions as standing up strongly enough for the interests of teachers, students, or public education. As I indicated previously (in Kerr, 2006), the teachers’ federation would be reduced to a traditional trade union concerned primarily with collective bargaining, through the establishment of the OCT that took over professional functions during the Harris/Eves regime, despite teacher resistance. In this study, one teacher/participant questioned the union stance of supporting Learning to 18 (perhaps “to ‘grow’ the membership”) despite teachers’ opposition to it; another stated that his objections to SS policies fall on the deaf ears of his district executive. In the
context of creeping managerialism and anti-unionism, the teaching profession seems to lack collective agency. How might the federation concept of organization be reinvigorated to interrupt the ascendancy of managerialism and support broader conceptions of education?

Since its inception, the new curriculum that is tied to the credit requirements of the new Ontario Secondary School Diploma ([OSSD]; Ministry, 1999)\textsuperscript{152} aroused concerns about declining graduation rates under the new regime. Teachers raised questions about the difficulty of the new curriculum in terms of content compacting and fast pacing, especially in applied level courses (Kerr, 2006); that is, for non-university-bound students generically labelled ‘at risk.’ Taking the standpoint of teacher/participants, my analysis of texts internal to the institution in the first part of this study (chapters 4 to 7) indicates that credit recovery/credit rescue and the expansion of cooperative education are key planks of the SS Strategy to increase credit accumulation and graduation rates. Confusion about and resistance towards policies bundled together under the SS Strategy marks a disconnect between upper/middle management and frontline teachers. Superficial changes to awarding credits do not address underlying problems written into the new curriculum or systemic biases that fly in the face of equity. The classing and racializing processes built into ‘pathways to success’ amount to streaming for work in ways that limit post-secondary education too early in high school. Based on predications of ‘risk’ that may not be accurate in the individual case, record keeping processes that pathologize and even criminalize students labelled at risk, may contribute to further marginalization. Whereas few would argue that adverse circumstances in individual students’ lives affect their educational experiences and are relevant in individual remediation, the indirect collection of personal data about students for OnSIS may not only violate students’ privacy rights, but may also exacerbate socio-economic and related inequities through racial and other forms of profiling.

\textsuperscript{152} The requirements of the OSSD have been revised at least seven times through Ministry Policy/Program Memoranda (aside from credit recovery). In sheer number of PPMs, writing on the SS Strategy is matched only by changes to school discipline or ‘safety,’ which was the purview of the Falconer Report.
As teacher/participants have pointed out, and as my own experience teaching at a youth detention centre attests, students ‘at risk’ can accomplish academic work when care is taken to adjust the program requirements to their relevancies, rather than the other way around. When students can work at their own pace, experience ‘success’ in their own terms, and gain confidence, it is astounding what they can achieve. For teacher/participants, this meant maintaining high expectations that are consistent with where students are at, and providing graduated learning experiences that do not delimit post-secondary options prematurely in high school.

The second part of my textual analysis (chapters 8 to 10) delves into translocal ruling texts of which teachers may not be aware, that explicate the knowledge gap between official abstract reified accounts and the embodied experiences of teacher/participants. From Ontario’s ‘success’ story (Levin Glaze and Fullan, 2008), it is apparent that official claims to Ontario’s ‘success’ are based on two reports, one of which (CLLRNet, 2007) is suppressed and not available for public scrutiny, and the other of which (CCL, Stage 1, 2007) is picked up selectively. Both reports were produced by policy think tanks. Also suppressed and not available to the public is the Student Success Commission Report cited by the Ontario Ministry of Education as the authority for credit recovery -- a key plank and contentious component of the SS/L18 Strategy from the perspective of teacher/participants. What other reports have been suppressed? Serious questions arise about the lack of transparency, and how knowledge in education is socially organized to manufacture consent for government policies, especially in light of the Ministry’s third “core” priority to increase “confidence in publicly funded education,” and the so-called Facts in Education initiative to control media reporting (as discussed in Chapter 9). Who are the ‘public’ and what is the public interest in education? Given that freedom of the press is a basic tenet of democracy, what does this mean for Canadian education and society?

Governing frameworks are replicated in “ideological circles,” as Dorothy Smith (1990a) explains:

Ideological circles transpose actual events, located in specific places and performed by real individuals, into the generalized forms in which they can be known,
knowable and actionable within an abstracted conceptual mode of ruling and organization. (p.172)

As my research shows, the ideological circle in Ontario operates as a steering group of ‘experts’ who draw selectively on in-house and out-sourced research to support their policy goals; research that does not fit the policy objectives is suppressed. And the “real individuals” engaged in policy circles are a relatively small group of ideologically aligned ‘experts’ dedicated to large-scale education reform, as promulgated in OECD “boss texts” and standardized testing regimes. In line with human capital theory, the ideological code underpinning education reform in Ontario is revealed: to turn blank slates into human resources. This is not only written into the IT systems code of OnSIS that prescribes the data collected, extracted, and interpreted, but also circulates in texts and discursive practices of the institution that come to organize people’s thinking and actions.

Unpacking the claims of the education reformers in Ontario shows that local practices are being re-regulated by abstract frameworks and statistics from distant sites, with little knowledge about, or experience in, the so-called black box of the classroom—hence, the disjuncture for teacher/participants. Whereas teacher/participants experience a haphazard “change of tune” in Ministry policies, my intertextual analysis reveals considerable strategizing and phasing going on through inquisitive and meditative activities at the macro-system level that are not visible to teacher/participants. Although education officially falls under provincial jurisdiction in Canada, it is apparent that the CMEC (in collaboration with federal government agencies, such as HRSDC, Industry Canada, and Statistics Canada) remotely orchestrates the “generalized forms” of education policy according to their notion of the Canadian brand. The CMEC operates as an intermediary between the provinces and the OECD, which homogenizes education policy and public management across member states in ways that explicate international similarities. These national and supranational ruling relations are not visible to teachers. The activities of these ruling relations are oriented to gathering ‘evidence-based research’ and intended to steer teachers towards ‘evidence-informed practice’ or ‘data-driven instruction.’ However, rather than evidence-based policy-making, policy research operates in reverse,
as policy-based evidence-making. In the circular logic of the ideological circle, conclusions are built into the assumptions beforehand, and inconvenient findings get displaced or even suppressed. Not only is this way of doing policy research unscientific, but it is unconscionable to base public policy on the short-term goals of political election cycles, relying on biased or partial evidence that may induce harm in actual people’s lives with long-term consequences.

Predicated primarily on reading the social world of schooling through standardized test scores and graduation rates, the OnSIS/MISA project of the Ministry of Education reveals how results-oriented accountability and surveillance is being reorganized through devising and using electronic data bases as ‘evidence’ in research and evaluation in order to bring about large-scale reform across elementary and secondary schools. OnSIS not only profiles schools, but also has built-in capacity to profile students and teachers. Although couched in language claiming to improve student ‘achievement’ in terms of outcomes, or as student ‘success,’ my research shows generalized managerial forms of system success that operate in an ideological circle whereby findings and conclusions released to the public are confined to those in congruence with the assumptions and policy goals of the “politico-administrative regime” (see George W. Smith, in Frampton et al., 2006). Invariably conducted by white-listed researchers, commissioned policy research eclipses dissenting views and displaces the perspectives of frontline teachers.

The Ministry’s so-called nine strategy placemat for research and evaluation reveals the ultimate goal in its ninth strategy as to “establish Ontario’s presence on the national and international scene.” This is a far cry from students in classrooms.

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153 These strategies and phases are made explicit in the suppressed CLLRNet Report (2007) that I finally acquired through my application under Freedom of Information. The ‘plan’ is explained as follows: “After the LNS was established in 2004, Avis Glaze, Ben Levin and Michael Fullan played a key role in developing the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the Secretariat’s nine strategy placemat” (p. 29). The nine strategies are: work with school boards to set achievement targets; assemble and support teams at all levels to drive continuous improvement in literacy and numeracy; reduce class size in the primary grades to a maximum of 20 students per class by 2007-08; build capacity to support student learning and achievement; allocate resources to support target setting and improvement plans; mobilize the system to provide equity in student outcome; embark on a process of community outreach and engagement to build support for the Literacy and Numeracy initiative; demonstrate a commitment to research and evidence-based inquiry and decision making; establish Ontario’s presence on the national and international scene. The three phases are: building consensus (Phase 1 November 2004-April 2005); building capacity (Phase 2 May 2005-March 2006); sharpening our focus, (Phase 3 April 2006 – August 2007). Sharpening our focus refers to targeting students at risk.
A brief summary of the SS Strategy is provided in Figure 11.1: Mapping the Student Success Strategy. The identified problem of low graduation rates leads to the desired solution of increasing graduation rates, as mediated textually through various Ministry policies and programs, and related school board polices and procedures. However, teacher/participants identify the primary aspects of the SS Strategy as cooperative education and credit recovery/rescue. This reduces education to workplace training for students ‘at risk,’ and institutes “mickey-mouse” courses and a double-standard. As shown in the bottom row of Figure 11.1, teacher/participants describe the implications for practice as spending more time on reporting and paperwork and less time with students. Policies that may seem simple on paper have repercussions for practice; for secondary school classroom teachers with up to 180 students, there is a multiplier effect in which managerial-administrative priorities take precious time away from students.

A summary of my intertextual analysis of policy research is shown in Figure 11.2: The Factory Model of Education. It shows the translocal ruling structures that came to light as having vested interests in students ‘at risk’ of dropping out of high school before graduation. It portrays an extensive web of provincial agencies (such as the EQAO and LNS), federal level think tanks (such as the CLLRNet and CCL), private foundations and governments in other jurisdictions (such as the MSIP, and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Britain), and international think tanks (such as the OECD and World Bank). Although represented as separate spheres or sites of work activity, all of these agencies are interconnected and share a particular take on ‘dropouts’ or students ‘at risk’ that is oriented to forcing them back to school and churning them out as future workers. In Ontario, taking the lead from the Toyota factory model (e.g. Fullan, 2008), education becomes a production line comprised of four post-secondary ‘pathways’ that are quite distinct and determinative of future life ‘destinations:’ university, college, apprenticeship, and work. For students ‘at risk,’ the major focus is on promoting the school-to-work ‘pathway.’

Far from the factory production line ‘vision’ of education, the so-called black box of the classroom is an elusive space that is invisible to decision makers and policy-based researchers; yet, this is where actual teaching practice and face-to-face interaction
Figure 11.1: Mapping the Student Success Strategy

**Problem**

- Low graduation rate
- Increase graduation rate

**Policy/Programs (Ministry)**

- Alternate certificates: OSSC; Certificate of Accomplishment; etc.
- Expanded Cooperative Education: change diploma requirements; new course codes
- Credit recovery/rescue: change course requirements; hrs of instruction; evaluation

**Policy/Procedures (School Boards)**

- Trillium changes (Guidance) OnSIS tracking
- More Coop teachers/courses
- Appoint SS Leaders/Teachers new GLS course

**Practices (Teachers)**

- Guidance more computer work & teachers more reporting – less time for students
- Workplace training v. education
- Accept assignments anytime; determine make up work; follow-up midterm report cards
Figure 11.2: The Factory Model of Education
Figure 11.3: Panopticon View in Multilayered Governance Work
between teachers and students ‘at risk’ takes place. Figure 11.3: Panopticon View in Multilayered Governance Work shows the nested layers of translocal governance activities going on that rely on statistics and large-scale standardized tests to read -- and change -- what is going on inside the ‘black box.’ From the school administration to school boards to the Ministry of Education to the CMEC to the OECD, each layer is successively more remote from the inner workings of the classroom. Each layer performs certain kinds of governance work that is oriented to re-regulating the ‘black box’ to produce ‘results.’ Each layer has a view of the preceding layer that is filtered through and limited to quantitative measures; that is, primarily results on PISA, PCAP, or EQAO tests, all of which are paid for with public funds. Higher levels of educational governance orient education policy to competition for economic advantage, using standardized test results to rate or rank countries, provinces and schools. This belief in the value of standardized tests marks a fundamental ideological gap between policy makers and teacher/participants in my study.

Rather than depicting teachers as data ‘illiterate,’ policy researchers might do well to take a step back from computer-generated statistical models to reflect on why policy research is not readily taken up by practicing teachers. To bridge the policy-practice gap, imagine a scenario of walking in a classroom teacher’s shoes for a while, not observing or judging, but actually doing the work. Imagine a grade 10 classroom full of 32 students, six of whom have IEPs for learning disabilities or behaviour problems, and several are in ESL. Some with earphones on are bobbing to the beat, while others talk on cell phones, against the school rules of course. There’s Jane at the back slumped over her desk with her head down on her arms. In the corner are Diego and Billy in a scuffle over a bag. Ashley has been absent for several days and brings a note to your desk. There are peels of laughter and high-fives as a group arrives hyped up from physical education. The class phone rings; it’s the office asking you to send Johnny down. It’s 2010, and you are the teacher, not one of the students. This class period is 50 minutes, after which you (and the students) will disperse to other classes. Imagine you have a curriculum to cover; you have your aims and objectives mapped out and a well-planned lesson with a balance of whole-class instruction and a small group activity. You have attendance to take, a marked
assignment to return, and the EQAO test is immanent. You are inside the ‘black box.’
What is foremost on your mind? What happens next?

This scenario is not atypical of life in an inner-city school. The complexity of classroom relations and the competing obligations of teachers intersect with what is going on elsewhere in the school and in students’ lives. What data could possibly inform practice in this scenario? Recognizing teaching practice as lived, embodied, relational, and contingent defies making prescriptive recommendations that are susceptible to piecemeal cherry-picking in ways that would substitute one form of orthodoxy for another.

With regard to the prevailing orthodoxy, a close reading of evaluations of large-scale education reform projects reveals ‘unintended’ consequences, but effectively sidelines these undesirable ‘outcomes’ as collateral damage (in militaristic terms) or mere side effects (in medical terms) of the policies. Analogous to iatrogenic disease induced by the medical system itself, my research indicates that the labelling of students as at risk may be *edu-genic* in the sense that education policies marginalize particular groups of students to the periphery of society through classing and racializing processes (Ng, Staton and Scane, 1995). The individualization of risk according to a deficit model that is tied to corporate-managerial notions of risk and safety dominates neoliberal education reform, and continues to privilege some groups over ‘others.’

I call for an ontological shift away from the myopia of policy research that dismisses inconvenient ‘outcomes’ as mere anomalies. There is a need for self-reflexivity and integrity in policy research, to take ‘unintended consequences’ seriously. Whether intended or not, this means treating all consequences as actual outcomes of the policies under evaluation, and acknowledging them as having real effects on peoples’ lives. Rather than the usual pursuit of individual ‘success’ stories and ‘best practices’ as evidence to support Ministry strategies, we might do well to remember Michael Sadler’s famous quote from 1900, in which he states:

> In studying foreign systems of Education, we should not forget that things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside. We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower
from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant. A national system of Education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties, and of ‘battles long ago.’ (p. 49)\textsuperscript{154}

I argue that the so-called Student Success Strategy in Ontario misidentifies the problem; it blames individual students ‘at risk’ for their lack of ‘success,’ and individual teachers for their faulty teaching and evaluation practices. Disregarding how these policies and ensuing practices reinforce systemic barriers to marginalized groups and exacerbate socio-economic inequity, the SS Strategy actually buttresses an unjust system with temporary band-aid solutions, targeted supports, and add-on programs. From my analysis, it becomes apparent that the Liberal government in Ontario is actually building on education reforms begun by the Harris/Eves regime, rather than bringing about any substantive change to the original plan that exacerbated the problem of students dropping out of high school before graduation. Thus, the Liberal government’s SS Strategy continues to reproduce socio-economic inequity through strengthening neoliberal education reforms and displacing critical democratic approaches to education. Instead of the racializing and classing processes that gear education to corporatist priorities of workplace training, my study calls for the reorientation of education towards genuine equity and social justice, transparency in educational research and governance, and respect for the professional expertise of frontline teachers who actually work face-to-face with students ‘at risk,’ as well as restoring professional discretion in their everyday work.

Rather than what economic forecasters foresee as necessary for the reserve army of future workers, from the standpoint of teacher/participants, what is needed on the ground is a holistic, well-rounded, inclusive, and challenging curriculum that keeps students’ options open and offers a multiplicity of diverse courses and programs. Within the fiercely competitive climate of advanced capitalism in which there is a widening gap between rich and poor, the real challenge for educators is how to keep young people engaged and hopeful about the future, especially those relegated to the lower levels in the socio-economic hierarchy. Teacher/participants cite large class sizes as a problem for them and

for students that is repeatedly ignored by policy makers. A recent report on class size produced for the Canadian Education Association congratulates the government for meeting its targets of reduced class size in the primary grades (that is, JK to grade 3 only) since the initiative was announced in 2004 (that is, six years ago). The report states: “The evidence suggests that students learn more, are more engaged, and are less disruptive. Parents of children in smaller classes perceive improvements in their children’s school experiences” (p. 19).”\(^{155}\) Despite this evidence, the report deduces that class size alone is not a “magic bullet.” This equivocal stance will undoubtedly serve to brush aside, yet again, the most urgent and pressing issue of class size for the vast majority of practicing school teachers.

My study contributes to qualitative research methodology; first, the use of two-person interviews that happened by fortuitous accident, proved to offer advantages over both individual interviews and focus groups, while counteracting some of the disadvantages of each. Two-person interviews enable participants to engage in active dialogue with each other, rather than being led by the interviewer, such that participants’ relevancies emerge in direct exchange. A more extended exchange can unfold than in focus groups where multiple voices taking turns can curtail detail and depth of discussion. The moment-to-moment dialogue of two-person interviews proved to be particularly useful in bringing to light disjunctures for and between participants that yielded markers for my follow-up textual analyses. To facilitate open dialogue, it is important that interviewees are compatible (for example, by teaching position or setting, age/gender); that the interview context is relaxed and informal; and that questions are open-ended to approximate natural conversation and leave room for participants’ relevancies to emerge. The second contribution to methodology is extending textual analysis in IE further, into web-based electronic searches to access original texts circulating in cyberspace. The lateral,

\(^{155}\) Canadian Education Association (2010), *Reducing class size: What do we know?* (http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/CEA_ClassSize_NationalReport.pdf, accessed June 10, 2010). The lead researcher was Nina Bascia. As mentioned in Chapter 9, the CEA was the precursor of the CMEC. The CEA continues as an education reform hub. The list of 25 “research advisory committee members” includes Lorna Earl, Ben Levin and Carol Campbell (http://cea-ace.ca/res.cfm?subsection=com&page=mem); Levin, Earl and Fullan have each received the CEA-Whitworth Award for Educational Research; and the latest recycled version of Fullan’s ‘big ideas’ on system reform is featured at this site (http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/Big_Ideas_EdCan_Sum2010.pdf).
rhizome-like quality of the internet can capture the big and small picture; that is, from official websites of organizations to unofficial blogs organized around topics of interest. Using search engines to sift through digital archives facilitates access to unpublished texts, as well as those otherwise only available at distant locations, or subsequently withdrawn. Once posted, digital data invariably remains somewhere in cyberspace and can be retrieved; for example, the Wayback Machine is an internet archive of 150 billion web pages cached since 1996.¹⁵⁶ In the local context of Ontario, the digital repository of OZone, available through Ontario Scholars Portal, enabled the retrieval of specific government documents.¹⁵⁷ Discovering the Ministry cache of memos to school boards, sorted by date, proved particularly useful to retrieve actual memos issued and trace ministerial decisions.¹⁵⁸ Not only can historical texts be retrieved, but also current up-to-date texts without the delays of print publishing; for example, articles, theses, books, conference papers and proceedings, as well as news reports and Ministry newswires. Beyond prescribed keywords and specific data bases, internet search engines use web crawlers to browse the internet virtually instantaneously, traversing a myriad of sites and entire documents so as to capture pertinent texts and enable connecting the dots between them. Aside from general search engines (such as Google), there are niche search engines, and meta-search engines that combine results from a variety of sources; for example Clusty deploys multiple search engines and also clusters content thematically according to textual similarity.¹⁵⁹ Electronic textual analysis entails navigating the websites of ruling structures, and ascertaining relations between them so as to reveal how ruling relations operate remotely to coordinate activities across local sites, using and exploring those same virtual networks. Invariably posted at websites are funding sources, board members, mission statements, histories, publications, newsletters and so on, as well as links to affiliated sites. A caveat is that, given free access and the openness of the internet, it is important to ascertain the reliability of sources and authenticity of retrieved texts that may not have been filtered through traditional processes of legitimization.

¹⁵⁶ See http://www.archive.org/web/web.php
¹⁵⁷ See https://ozone.scholarsportal.info/
¹⁵⁸ See http://cal2.edu.gov.on.ca/index.html
¹⁵⁹ See http://clusty.com/
Another caveat is to curtail distractions by staying close to the standpoint and problematic, while remaining open to the discovery process of IE research.

In terms of contributions to theory, my study brings practicing teachers’ perspectives to the fore, foregrounding a constituency that is singularly missing in policy research. Critical questions arise about the organization of social relations in education for further research. For example, how are teacher pre- and in-service training programs and qualifying courses for principals at universities being shaped by education reform priorities? How are institutional processes (such as the New Teacher Induction Program and Teacher Performance Appraisals) oriented to bringing teachers into institutional capture by the politico-administrative regime? How are hiring, promotion and appointment practices governed by adherence to the education reform agenda? Second, my study extends an emerging body of literature on the risk society to include education policy. Ulrich Beck’s (1992) risk society thesis proposed that social struggles and conflict in post-industrial societies revolve around risk, where risks are produced by political decisions, and the poor bear a disproportionate burden of risk. Extending Beck’s risk society thesis to education throws into question the use of risk and safety as central organizing constructs in education policy. The change in terminology from students ‘at risk’ to student ‘success’ that accompanied the change of political regime does not allay the consequences of policy decisions that create safety for some and risk for ‘others.’

From a critical perspective, there is ample evidence that contemporary policies and practices for students ‘at risk’ discriminate along the lines of difference. Critical pedagogy challenges deficit thinking that construes difference as deficit, where ‘others’ are seen as lagging behind by ‘our’ standards on ‘our’ tests, while leaving ‘our’ curriculum untouched. Given an uneven playing field within a pluralistic society such as Canada, an equity perspective on risk is crucial to transform the education system to be more just and equitable.

Finally, my study exposes the Ministry’s notion of ‘equity’ as promoting the four destination pathways equally. Instead, robust and substantive forms of equity would take into consideration the people (students) who are affected, to make visible how streaming for work exacerbates socio-economic inequity by class, race, ethnicity, gender, ability
and other axes of difference. Ironically, on April 6 2009, the Ministry released its *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, at the same time as the launch of the School Information Finder website that aroused unanimous opposition by all major ‘stakeholders’ in education because of detrimental effects on schools in low SES neighbourhoods (as discussed in Chapter 10). Linking these two initiatives raises critical questions about what ‘equity’ means when it coincides with profiling and comparing schools by demographic data and EQAO scores. Conflating two conflicting discourses under the proxy of closing the ‘achievement gap,’ equity is framed through orchestrating “a culture of continuous improvement” oriented to getting test scores up. Talk about respecting diversity rings hollow and resembles assimilation when it remains tied to achievement on norm-referenced tests, with no change to dominant structures, curricula, or ways of knowing. Following a pattern that is by now familiar from the SS Strategy, the equity strategy downloads responsibility onto schools boards to come up with an equity policy within the constraints of existing resources. In reiterative circular loops with a penchant for itemized lists recycled in various combinations, this document recounts 12 initiatives as exemplifying the equity and inclusive education strategy, among which is the SS/L18 Strategy:

> Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy – Equity and inclusiveness are at the core of this strategy, which benefits all students in Grades 7 to 12 by providing more choices for innovative, engaging, high-quality learning opportunities within a respectful and responsive school environment. (p. 26)\(^{160}\)

However, the preceding chapters expose the empty rhetoric of this claim.

To democratize education, my call for transparency and integrity in educational research and governance means opening up critical dialogue that is grounded in critical pedagogy so as to embrace broader notions of the meaning and purpose of education. This necessitates actively challenging neoliberal economics/human capital theory as oriented to producing human resources, reducing education to basic skills training, and emphasizing workplace literacy, numeracy, and lifelong learning. Critical discourse and

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pedagogy counteract the dominant neoliberal vision of education and corporate managerial forms of governance. Restoring teacher discretion means acknowledging teachers as ‘experts’ within their domain of expertise, based on direct experience in classrooms. It entails alternative forms of accountability that are rooted in the context of everyday practice and embodied relations in schools, rather than to producing ‘results’ in reified statistical form, with abstract targets and goals, where outcomes trump processes. It defies the ideological code at the upper levels of educational governance that orients accountability to rating and ranking schools, provinces, and countries in pursuit of competitive economic advantage. As I have emphasized, this belief in the primacy of standardized tests marks a major ideological gap between policy makers and teacher/participants in my study.

The intention of my research was to make visible how text-mediated ruling relations operate translocally in order to transform them. Exposing the policy errors of neoliberal education reform opens up the prospect of reinvigorating critical democratic approaches to education. Whereas policy circles may be slow to learn from their mistakes, there is good news from the UK, where Hatcher (2007) says:

There are now clear indications of a significant change in the dominant discourse which is widening the opportunities for progressive practice. The cause is the recognition by government and by the educationists who exercise most influence over government policy (Michael Fullan, David Hargreaves, David Hopkins etc.) that the initial phase of Labour education policy, based on a prescriptive ‘standards agenda,’ has run out of steam. (http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=98, accessed January 24, 2010)

It is my hope that this study will contribute to teachers’ and educators’ knowledge about the shifts and turns of large-scale neoliberal education reform policy – across nation-states and political parties -- so as to foster agency towards an equitable public education system in which open constructive dialogue and creative reflexive practice can prevail in schools across Ontario and elsewhere.
Bibliography


Frampton, Caelie, Gary Kinsman, AK Thompson and Kate Tilleczek (eds.)(2006). *Sociology for changing the world: Social movements/social research*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood.


Kerr, Lindsay (2006). *Between caring and counting: Teachers take on education reform.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


Zur, Ofer and Nola Nordmarken (2007). *DSM Diagnosing for money and power: Summary of the critique of the DSM.*


Appendix A: Acronyms

BCTF British Columbia Teachers’ Federation
CCL Canadian Council on Learning
CEA Canadian Education Association
CERI Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CESC Canadian Education Statistics Council
CLLRNet Canadian Language and Literacy Network
CMEC Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
CSC Curriculum Services Canada
EFA Education for All
ERA Education Reform Act (UK)
E-SAP Student Action Plan (for expelled students)
ESL English as a Second Language
EQAO Education Quality and Accountability Office
ESAC Employability Skills Achievement Certificate
ESDW Elementary Secondary Data Warehouse
ETFO Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario
ETS Educational Testing Service
FSA Foundation Skills Assessment (British Columbia)
HR Human Resources
HRSDC Human Resources and Skill Development Canada
(previously HRDC Human Resources Development Canada)
IALS International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (OECD)
icec International Centre for Educational Change (OISE)
IE Institutional Ethnography
IEA International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IEP Individual Education Plan
ICT Information and Communication Technologies
IPRC Identification, Placement, and Review Committee
ISO International Organization for Standardization
IT Information Technology
KPI Key Performance Indicator
L18 Learning to 18
LNS Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat
MEN Ministry Educator Number
MISA Managing Information for Student Achievement
MSIP Manitoba School Improvement Project
NCLB No Child Left Behind (US)
NDP New Democratic Party
NLS National Literacy Strategy (UK)
NNS National Numeracy Strategy (UK)
NPM New Public Management
OCAS Ontario College Application Services
OCT Ontario College of Teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECTA</td>
<td>Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEN</td>
<td>Ontario Education Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFIP</td>
<td>Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE</td>
<td>Ontario Institute for Studies in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OnSIS</td>
<td>Ontario School Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCA</td>
<td>Ontario School Counsellors’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSIS</td>
<td><em>Ontario Schools, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, Grades 7–12/OACs (1989)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSN</td>
<td>Ontario Statistical Neighbours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSR</td>
<td>Ontario Student Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSS</td>
<td><em>Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12 (1999)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSSC</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary School Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSSD</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary School Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSSLC</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSSLT</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSSTF</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary Teachers’ Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OST</td>
<td>Ontario Student Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUAC</td>
<td>Ontario Universities' Application Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OYAP</td>
<td>Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Public-Private Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Progressive-Conservative Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCAP</td>
<td>Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (CMEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEIP</td>
<td>Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (IEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAR</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNC</td>
<td>Professional Network Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPM</td>
<td>Policy/Program Memorandum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAIP</td>
<td>School Achievement Indicators Program (CMEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAO</td>
<td>Student Achievement Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Student Action Plan (for suspended students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Scholastic Assessment Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCSAP</td>
<td>School Community Safety Advisory Panel (Toronto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHSM</td>
<td>Specialist High Skills Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>School Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Student Success (Strategy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Student Success Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSL</td>
<td>Student Success Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST</td>
<td>Student Success Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats Can</td>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAP</td>
<td>Teacher Advisor Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCDSB</td>
<td>Toronto Catholic District School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDSB</td>
<td>Toronto District School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| TIMSS   | Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (IEA)  
(previously Third International Mathematics and Science Study) |
| TQM     | Total Quality Management |
| TYP     | Transition Year Program |
| UNESCO  | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| YCJA    | Youth Criminal Justice Act (2003) |
| YOA     | Young Offenders Act (1985) |
## Appendix B: Ontario Student Transcript

### Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Credit</th>
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<td>2006-02</td>
<td>BTTI01</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology in Business</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>2006-02</td>
<td>GLE2F1</td>
<td>Learning Strategies 1: Skills for Success in Secondary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-02</td>
<td>PPJ1D</td>
<td>Healthy Active Living Education</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>2006-03</td>
<td>CCG1P1</td>
<td>Geography of Canada</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-03</td>
<td>ENC1P1</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>ENG1D</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>MFM1D</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-02</td>
<td>BB2Q1</td>
<td>Introduction to Business</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-04</td>
<td>CHV1D</td>
<td>Civics (0.5 credit)</td>
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<td>2007-05</td>
<td>HCD2P</td>
<td>Canadian History in the 20th century</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>2007-05</td>
<td>MFM2P</td>
<td>Foundations of Mathematics</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>2007-07</td>
<td>ENG2D</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-07</td>
<td>GLO1D</td>
<td>Career Studies</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
<td>ENG3U</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<td>2008-01</td>
<td>GLE3D</td>
<td>Learning Strategies 1: Skills for Success in Secondary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-01</td>
<td>GLO3D</td>
<td>Philosophy: The Big Question</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</table>

### Summary of Credits

- **Total Credits:** 13.00
- **Total Des Crédits:** 12.00

---

26-2967 (rev 0903)
Appendix C: EQAO Individual Student Report

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, 2004–2005

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name: SAMPLE, SAMPLE
Student Number: 060 00000 00 00000 00 00 00
Ontario Education Number (OEN): 123-456-789
School Name: SAMPLE SS (00000)
School Board: SAMPLE District School Board (00000)

Program Information:
Academic
First semester

ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONTARIO CURRICULUM ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insuficient achievement of curriculum expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

Answered questions: 47 of 88

For participating students, the ■ symbol represents the student's achievement level on this assessment.

"Answered questions" refers to the number of questions the student answered in relation to the total number of questions on the assessment. Unanswered questions are treated as incorrect in the calculation of the student's results.

LEVEL 4: The student has demonstrated a very high to outstanding level of achievement. Achievement surpasses the provincial standard.

LEVEL 3: The student has demonstrated a high level of achievement. Achievement is at the provincial standard.

LEVEL 2: The student has demonstrated a moderate level of achievement. Achievement is below but approaching the provincial standard.

LEVEL 1: The student has demonstrated a passable level of achievement. Achievement is much below the provincial standard.

BELOW 1L: The student has not demonstrated sufficient achievement of curriculum expectations.

NO DATA: EQAO did not receive completed assessment booklets for this student.

EXMPT: The student was exempted from the assessment.

The result reported here is a snapshot of this student's achievement on the day of the assessment and is only one indication of how this student is learning the mathematics curriculum.

This report contains personal information that is protected under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Printed October 2005
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

This individual Student Report contains results from the province-wide Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, 2004–2005.

Students in first-semester mathematics courses wrote the assessment in January; students in second-semester or full-year mathematics courses wrote the assessment in May/June. Students in applied and academic programs wrote different versions of the assessment.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

EQAO assessments objectively measure how well students are meeting the provincial curriculum standards. The assessments complement the information teachers collect throughout the year from classroom assessments, daily observations and conversations with parents.

HOW TO READ THE REPORT

Achievement Levels

The Ontario Curriculum identifies four levels of achievement that indicate how well students are meeting the provincial expectations in mathematics up to the end of Grade 9. The four achievement levels used in this report are aligned with these levels.

Provincial Standard

The Ontario Curriculum establishes Level 3 as the provincial standard.

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT

The overall achievement level provides a general picture of a student’s achievement relative to the curriculum expectations in mathematics. The overall level is represented by the ■ symbol. The shaded line extending from this symbol shows the approximate range of the student’s overall achievement in mathematics.
Appendix D: Individual Education Plan

Sample 2

Individual Education Plan

IEP

REASON FOR DEVELOPING THE IEP
☐ Student identified as exception by IPRC
☐ Student not formally identified but requires special education program/services, including modified/alternative learning expectations and/or accommodations

STUDENT PROFILE
Name: Student [ ]
Gender: Female
Date of Birth: 02/02/1990

School: Ontario School

Student OEN/MIN: 234567891
Principal: B. Principal

Current Grade/Special Class: 9
School Year: 04-05
Sem 1

Most Recent IPRC Date: 29/05/2004
Date Annual Review Waived by Parent/Guardian:

Exceptionality: Developmental Disability

IPPC Placement Decision (check one)
☐ Regular class with indirect support
☐ Regular class with resource assistance
☒ Regular class with withdrawal assistance
☐ Special education class with partial integration
☐ Special education class full-time

ASSESSMENT DATA
List relevant educational, medical/health (hearing, vision, physical, neurological), psychological, speech/language, occupational, physical therapy, and behavioral assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Summary of Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological report</td>
<td>06/04/1999</td>
<td>Report indicates moderate developmental delays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENT'S STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

Areas of Strength | Areas of Need
---|---
Visual acuity skills | Receptive language (comprehension and decoding)
Kinesthetic learning style | Expressive language (writing)
Gross motor abilities | Cognitive understanding and memory skills
Self-regulatory skills | Social skills
Self-help skills | Fine motor skills

Health Support Services/Personal Support Required: ☐ Yes (list below) ☐ No

Personal care support

1
## Subjects, Courses, or Alternative Programs to Which the IEP Applies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject/Program</th>
<th>MOD</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Numeracy KMM10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Geography CSG1P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Health Living PPL10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Music AMU10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elementary Program Exemptions or Secondary School Compulsory Course Substitutions

- [ ] Yes (provide educational rationale)
- [x] No

Complete for secondary students only:

- Student is currently working towards attainment of the:
  - [ ] Ontario Secondary School Diploma
  - [ ] Ontario Secondary School Certificate
  - [x] Certificate of Accomplishment

## Accommodations

(Accommodations are assumed to be the same for all subjects, unless otherwise indicated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Accommodations</th>
<th>Environmental Accommodations</th>
<th>Assessment Accommodations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colour-coded organizers</td>
<td>Reduced audio/visual stimuli</td>
<td>Alternative supervised setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete materials/manipulatives</td>
<td>Use of headphones</td>
<td>Periodic supervised breaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture cues to reinforce understanding</td>
<td>Alternative supervised setting</td>
<td>Pictures/charts/diagrams for expressing ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High structures</td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbatim recording of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cueing systems for self-monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Extra time for processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatizing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual cues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra time for processing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- [ ] Individualized Equipment  Yes (list below)  [x] No

## Provincial Assessments (accommodations and exemptions)

Provincial assessments applicable to this student in the current school year:  Grade 9 – Mathematics

- [ ] Accommodations:  Yes (list below)  [x] No

- [ ] Exemptions:  Yes (provide explanatory statement from relevant EQAO document)  [x] No

Student not able to provide evidence of learning under the conditions of the assessment.
# Special Education Program

To be completed for each subject/course with modified expectations and/or each alternative program with alternative expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID/Min.</th>
<th>Subject/Course/Alternative Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25457891</td>
<td>NUMERACY AND NUMBERS KMM10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current Level of Achievement:**
- Prerequisite course (if applicable)
- Letter grade/Mark
- Curriculum grade level

**Current Level of Achievement for Alternative Program:**
- Student B adds and subtracts one-digit whole numbers using counters, counts to 50, and names and states the value of a penny and a loonie.

**Annual Program Goal(s):** A goal statement describing what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish by the end of the school year in a particular subject, course, or alternative program.

- Student B will demonstrate the ability to recall addition and subtraction facts to 10, add and subtract two-digit whole numbers without regrouping (using counters), count to 100, demonstrate halves, and name and state the value of a quarter, a dime, and a loonie.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Expectations</th>
<th>Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(List modified/alternative expectations outlining knowledge and/or skills to be acquired, by reporting period. Identify grade level, where appropriate.)</td>
<td>(List only those that are specific to the student and specific to the learning expectations.)</td>
<td>(Identify the assessment methods to be used for each learning expectation.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Term 1**

- Student B will:
  1. Count by 1s to 70; read and print numerals from 10 to 80;
  2. Recall addition and subtraction facts to 5;
  3. Add two-digit numbers without regrouping (using counters);
  4. Demonstrate halves, using concrete materials and drawings;
  5. Name and state the value of a penny, a quarter, and a loonie.

| 1. Oral and written activity |
| 2. Oral and written activity |
| 3. Written demonstration |
| 4. Written demonstration |
| 5. Oral activity |

Appendix B: Samples of Completed IEP Forms
### Special Education Program

To be completed for each subject/course with modified expectations and/or each alternative program with alternative expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student OE/MN:</th>
<th>Subject/Course/Alternative Program:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>234567891</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHY OF CANADA GGC1P (MOD) (NON-CREDIT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Level of Achievement:</th>
<th>Current Level of Achievement for Alternative Program:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite course (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter grade/Mark:</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum grade level:</td>
<td>8 (MOD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Annual Program Goal(s): A goal statement describing what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish by the end of the school year in a particular subject, course, or alternative program.

Student B will demonstrate improvement in their recall and communication of basic concepts relating to community, province, and country, in her ability to use a map, and in her ability to make connections with the world outside the classroom.

### Learning Expectations

(List modified/alternative expectations pertaining knowledge and/or skills to be assessed, by reporting period. Identify grade level, where appropriate.)

### Teaching Strategies

(List only those that are particular to the student and specific to the learning expectation)

### Assessment Methods

(Ideally the assessment method to be used for each learning expectation)

#### Term 1

**Student B will:**
1. Create a visual presentation of familiar buildings/areas in the community and identify orally the purpose for each;
2. Match province names to their locations on a map of Canada;
3. Locate Canada and Ontario on a globe;
4. Choose two countries (e.g., in near-polar and near-equatorial regions) and compare the weather, homes, food, and clothing typical in those countries.

1. Arrange for staff member to accompany Student B on a walking tour, taking along a digital camera.
2. Provide project framework.

1. Visual and oral presentation to selected audience
2. Map activity – written
3. Globe activity – demonstration
4. Written project
## Special Education Program

To be completed for each subject/course with modified expectations and/or each alternative program with alternative expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID: OEN/MIN:</th>
<th>Subject/Course/Alternative Program:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>224657891</td>
<td>HEALTHY ACTIVE LIVING EDUCATION PPL10 (MOD) (NON-CREDIT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Current Level of Achievement:
- Prerequisite course (if applicable)
- Letter grade: 68%
- Curriculum grade level: 8 (MCD)

### Current Level of Achievement for Alternative Program:

### Annual Program Goal(s): A goal statement describing what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish by the end of the school year in a particular subject, course, or alternative program.

- Student B will demonstrate improvement in her movement skills, through regular participation in physical activities, and in her understanding of safety and injury prevention, including substance use and abuse.

### Learning Expectations

List modified/alternative expectations outlining knowledge and/or skills to be assessed, by reporting period. Identify grade level, when appropriate.

### Teaching Strategies

List only those that are particular to the student and specific to the learning expectation(s).

### Assessment Methods

Identify the assessment method to be used for each learning expectation.

### Term 1

Student B will:

1. Demonstrate understanding of rules for participation in a basic group activity;
2. Improve fitness level by increasing power-walking time to 15 minutes;
3. Throw an object overhead or side-arm, to a target or a partner at a distance of 10 m;
4. Identify harmful substances and their negative effects on health;
5. Participate in a skill demonstrating how to use decision-making and assertion skills when confronted with media and peer pressure related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

4. Provide simple visual aids and text on harmful substances.

### 3(c)
### Special Education Program

To be completed for each subject/course with modified expectations and/or each alternative program with alternative expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student OEN/MRN:</th>
<th>234567891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject/Course/Alternative Program:</td>
<td>MUSIC AMU10 (MOD) (NON-CREDIT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Level of Achievement:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite course (if applicable):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter grade/Mark:</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum level:</td>
<td>8 (MOD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Annual Program Goal(s):
A goal statement describing what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish by the end of the school year in a particular subject, course, or alternative program.

Student B will demonstrate improved understanding of the basic elements of music, improved performance skills, and greater ability to listen attentively.

### Learning Expectations
(List modified/alternative expectations outlining knowledge and/or skills to be assessed, by reporting period. Identify grade level, where appropriate.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student B will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. distinguish between a treble clef and a bass clef and label the notes on the treble clef staff;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. perform note values for whole, half, and quarter notes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. keep a steady beat on the snare drum, while following a conductor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. name 4 music genres and select 4 pieces of music, each reflecting one type (e.g., rap, pop, country, classical), for inclusion on an audiotape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching Strategies
(List only those that are particular to the student and specific to the learning expectations.)

| 1. Written activity |
| 2. Performance |
| 3. Performance |
| 4. Provide tape-recording equipment |

### Assessment Methods
(Identify the assessment method to be used for each learning expectation.)

| 4. Oral presentation/audiotape |

---

*The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide*
**Special Education Program**

To be completed for each subject/course with modified expectations and/or each alternative program with alternative expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID/IND</th>
<th>Subject/Course/Alternative Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20456789</td>
<td>PERSONAL CARE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current Level of Achievement:**
Prerequisite course (if applicable) __________

**Current Level of Achievement for Alternative Program:**

With respect to washroom visits, Student B indicates need to visit washroom, undresses, and uses facilities appropriately.

**Letter grade/Mark:** __________

**Curriculum grade level:** __________

**Annual Program Goal(s):** A goal statement describing what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish by the end of the school year in a particular subject, course, or alternative program.

Student B will demonstrate greater independence in performing the sequence of skills required for a washroom visit, including readjusting clothing, hand-washing, and returning quietly to the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Expectations</th>
<th>Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(List modified/alternate expectations outlining knowledge and/or skills to be acquired, by reporting period, identify grade level, when appropriate)</td>
<td>(List only those that are particular to the student and specific to the learning expectations)</td>
<td>(Identify the assessment method to be used for each learning expectation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Term 1**

Student B will:
1. readjust clothing and check appearance in mirror with one verbal prompt;
2. recall hand-washing step without prompt 5 out of a possible 10 times;
3. return to the classroom without vocalization 5 out of a possible 10 times.

1. Checklist and data collection
2. Checklist and data collection
3. Checklist and data collection
HUMAN RESOURCES (teaching/non-teaching)
Include type of service, initiation date, frequency or intensity, and location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation/Teacher Support</th>
<th>Special Education Teacher</th>
<th>07/09/2004</th>
<th>Minimum once per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource Support</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>20/09/2004</td>
<td>Min. 2 X month per modified course, resource room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Support</td>
<td>Teacher’s Assistant</td>
<td>07/09/2004</td>
<td>20 min. per day, as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EVALUATION
Reporting Dates: 06/11/2004 07/02/2005

Reporting Format
☐ Provincial Report Card (required unless student’s program comprises alternative expectations only)
☐ Alternative Report

TRANSITION PLAN
If the student is 14 years of age or older and is not identified solely as gifted, a transition plan is required (see page 6).

IEP Developed by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Member</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Staff Member</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Numeracy Teacher</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>Mr. Music Teacher</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Geography Teacher</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>Mr. Special Teacher</td>
<td>Spec. Ed. Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Health Teacher</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>Ms. T. Assistant</td>
<td>Teacher’s Assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources Consulted in the Development of the IEP
☐ IPAC Plan of Decision (If applicable)
☐ Provincial Report Card
☐ Previous IEP
☐ Parents/Guardians
☐ Student
☐ Other sources (list below)

Date of Placement in Special Education Program (select the appropriate option)
☐ 1) First day of attendance in new special education program
☐ 2) First day of the new school year or semester in which the student is continuing in a placement
☐ 3) First day of the student’s enrolment in a special education program that he/she begins in mid-year or mid-semester as the result of a change of placement

Date of Placement: 07/09/2004
Completion Date of IEP Development Phase:
(within 20 school days following the date of placement): 04/10/2004
### LOG OF PARENT/STUDENT CONSULTATION AND STAFF REVIEW/UPDATING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity (Indicate parent/student consultation or staff review)</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16/04</td>
<td>Phone call to parent</td>
<td>Parent requested phone conversations with the numeracy and geography teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20/04</td>
<td>Phone call to parent by numeracy teacher</td>
<td>Parent requested that concept of halves be included in IEP expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23/04</td>
<td>Phone call to parent by geography teacher</td>
<td>Discussed first-term expectations and ways parent can support learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1/04</td>
<td>IEP sent to parent</td>
<td>Returned with signature Oct. 4/04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principal is legally required to ensure that the IEP is properly implemented and monitored. This IEP has been developed according to the ministry's standards and appropriately addresses the student's strengths and needs. The learning expectations will be reviewed and the student's achievement evaluated at least once every reporting period.

**Mr. Principal**  
October 4, 2004

Principal's Signature  
Date

Involvement of Parent/Guardian and Student (if student is 16 or older)
- [ ] Parent/Guardian  [ ] Student
- [ ] Parent/Guardian  [ ] Student
- [ ] Parent/Guardian  [ ] Student

Parent/Guardian and Student Comments:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature  
Date

Student Signature (if 16 or older)  
Date
### Transition Plan

**Student's name**: Student B  
**OEN/MIN**: 234567891

Specific Goal(s) for Transition to Postsecondary Activities

*Student B is planning for independent living in the community with supported employment.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Required</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible for Actions</th>
<th>Timelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meet with local Community Living Association and register for any wait-listed programs/services</td>
<td>student, parents, Community Living representative (Special ed. teacher to coordinate)</td>
<td>Oct. 2004 and annually in full of each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attend Post-21 Community Options presentation</td>
<td>student, parents</td>
<td>Before June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Visit Community Living supported employment locations</td>
<td>student, parents, Community Living representative</td>
<td>Before June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plan for work placement through cooperative education programs</td>
<td>student, parents to meet with co-op teacher</td>
<td>Every February beginning in 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Investigate summer work placement programs</td>
<td>student, parents, Community Living representative</td>
<td>Every Spring beginning in 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix E: Ontario Statistical Neighbours

Appendix F: SRB’s OnSIS and Related Products

Source: SRB Education Solutions Inc.
Appendix G: A Secondary School Profile

Grade 9 Student Achievement (Math) – 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>English students</th>
<th>French students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Math:** Percentage of students achieving the provincial standard

Change in academic math achievement over three years: +27 points +6 points -2 points

**Applied Math:** Percentage of students achieving the provincial standard

Change in applied math achievement over three years: -7 points +3 points +7 points

**Note:** Data may be marked as not available (NA) for a variety of different reasons. See the glossary for details.

Grade 10 Student Achievement (Literacy) – 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>English students</th>
<th>French students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Literacy:** Percentage of students who passed test on their first attempt

Change in literacy achievement over three years: -15 points +2 points +3 points

**Note:** Data may be marked as not available (NA) for a variety of different reasons. See the glossary for details.

Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Percentage of students who live in lower-income households</th>
<th>Percentage of students whose parents have some university education</th>
<th>Percentage of students who receive special education services</th>
<th>Percentage of students identified as gifted</th>
<th>Percentage of students whose first language is not English</th>
<th>Percentage of students who are new to Canada from non-English speaking country</th>
<th>Percentage of students whose first language is not French</th>
<th>Percentage of students who are new to Canada from non-French speaking country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Data may be marked as not available (NA) for a variety of different reasons. See the glossary for details.


Note: The name and other identifying details of the school have been omitted here.