



# *Why “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” Matters*



## *Chapter 1 The Change We Need*



Image by Giulia Forsythe <http://gforsythe.ca>

## WHY SOCIAL JUSTICE MATTERS



*A story shared by Shelley Wright at Northern Edge Algonquin on August 8, 2011*

## WHY FAMILIES MATTER



by *[Lorna Costantini](#)*

Have you heard families say, "They really don't want us involved"? Maybe it is a response to something teachers think but don't say: "Just what I need more parent involvement".

Ideas like this are one of the barriers that impact how families and schools work together. When they don't get along student learning can take a back seat.

Contrary to the way schools function, the research is clear. Students whose families are supportive of their child's learning do better in school, have fewer drug and alcohol problems and finish secondary school.

Researchers have discovered something else. The support that families give to their children at home has a greater impact on their child's achievement than their attendance at school events.

Think of all the wasted hours worrying about "Why only a few parents show up at the school", "Why it is always the same parents" and "Why few parents answer a survey".

Schools have all the resources, skills and abilities to put into place supports for families so they can support children at home. The change we need is easy. It only takes your imagination to make families matter.

# WHY YOU MATTER



by [\*Darren Kuropatwa\*](#)

You matter because you can change the face of teaching and learning in your school. All you have to do is change the world - a little bit at a time.

No teacher before you has ever taught children quite the way you do. No one ever will again.

The world needs to know what you're doing. How you go about sharing your passion, your excitement, your enthusiasm for learning with the students in your classroom every day.

You make a difference in the world in the way you do this.

What you want for your students is for them to excel beyond your own expertise in all they learn from you.

It's the dream of every teacher: to have your students become more knowledgeable, more capable, more competent than you.

It's a measure of success.

Essentially you share your spark with them.

What we most want is to pass on that spark, this other centred attitude, an attitude towards the world that says: You Matter!

Adopting the attitude: "You Matter", making people other than ourselves important and finding ways to make them more awesome, in the end, makes each of us a little more awesome. It creates the change we need in the world.

Let's pass that on to our students so they know they matter and understand their job is to make everyone they meet a little more awesome. When they've internalized what they've learned from us and brought it to another level: that's success.

No one will ever see the world through the eyes of our students again. No one ever has, throughout the entire history of humanity. They have a unique contribution to make. We help them understand this is also true for everyone they meet.

Imagine a Canada, a world, where every politician, every trades-person, every professional, every store clerk tackled the world in this way? They're all sitting in your classroom. Learning from you. Teach us too. Share what you know. Share how you know. Share what you learn. We need you too. You matter.

## WHY SELF-DIRECTION MATTERS



by *[Andrew Forgrave](#)*

What kind of learners does Canada, and our world, need?

Sir Ken Robinson laments our continued factory-approach to educating children. He advocates for supporting individuals as they “find their passion.”

Allowing employees time to “play” and inquire one day out of five is how Google quantifies their belief in the value of individual interests. They seek to validate the shared benefits of having their employees self-direct.

As educators (and as a society in general) we need to re-focus: We need to empower learners such that they acquire the skills to be self-directed in their approach to learning. Sooner. Rather than teaching students, we need to shift to educating learners. It’s more than semantics.

Currently, structures like routines and consistency in schooling run counter to supporting a learner’s autonomy in the process. The change we need, in our communities, our country, and indeed, our world, is to nurture individuals who have the motivation to inquire, the willingness to collaborate, the knowledge to inform, and the confidence to act.

In the words of Robert Frost, “Education is hanging around until you’ve caught on.” We need more learners who have “caught on.” Caught on at an earlier age, such that they can surely find their positive effect, and share it with others.

# WHY SOCIAL JUSTICE MATTERS



by *Shelley Wright*

“Where you live should no longer determine whether you live.” Bono

Human oppression, animal exploitation, and ecological degradation occur today at rates likely unprecedented in human history. And it’s destroying our world.

More people are enslaved today than during the entire trans-Atlantic slave trade.

One billion people are malnourished or starving, living on less than a dollar a day.

Two billion live on less than two dollars a day. That’s almost half the world’s population.

Rainforests destroyed and species lost forever, all for short-term profit.

But this is not the final story.

We know things need to change. So do our students. It’s time our classrooms are structured to help our students impact the world —now. That what they learn and do in school actually matters; it helps create the change we need.

Technology allows individual voices to come together and speak with one voice. It’s time to use that voice.

Social Justice explores, and then lives out in tangible ways, how to live with compassion and respect for others. It invites students to envision creative solutions for the problems our world is facing, and then begin implementing those changes, while challenging others to do the same.

History will judge us by what we do, or do not do, right now. We cannot say we didn’t know. We cannot say we didn’t have the resources or ability. We may need to admit we didn’t care.

It’s not about charity. It’s about justice -- the clock is ticking.

## WHY THE VILLAGE MATTERS



*by [Jaclyn Calder](#)*

When you think back to your favourite class in school, was it the content or the teacher who made it memorable? I went into science because of my high school science teachers. They told me that I was smart and capable. They cared about what happened in my life; in and outside of school.

Teachers often feel powerless, yet we have the ability to help struggling students take charge of their own learning by developing relationships based on respect and support. Dr. Russell Bishop's research found that teachers felt socio-economic status had the biggest impact on student success.

Students however, felt their relationships with their teachers had the biggest impact. This can be intimidating; it can also be empowering for teachers. It provides the opportunity to help struggling students be successful by creating supportive relationships. This does not mean we must have mentor-like relationships with every student we teach, but we must ensure every student has a mentor they trust and respect. "It takes a village to raise a child". Our schools need to be just that - communities of learning.

Teachers are faced with amazing pressures to both improve achievement and teach in new and exciting ways. The change we need is tough. To change the way we teach, we need partners. We need people who will support us, push us and collaborate with us. We are in the same shoes as our students. Learning along side our students, teachers need positive, supportive relationships.

We need the village. Schools need to function with communities, to ensure no learner is without support. Allow each learner to find the people they need to succeed. Everyone needs to feel supported, challenged and allowed to take risks in the process of learning.

## WHY DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP MATTERS



by [\*Chris Harbeck\*](#)

Digital Citizenship can mean many things. Students need to learn to take control of their Digital Footprint and be ethically responsible. But there is more to citizenship. Students need to use technology to improve their lives and the lives of others. Believe it or not, a teen's world view at the turn of the last Millennium was not very different from today. One thousand years ago a teen's entire world was as far as they could walk and return in a day. Today's teens have a similarly small world view even though the technology allows them to be around the globe in seconds. Teens today are glued to their technology but don't have a good sense of what is happening outside of their immediate social circle or group of friends.

As teachers we are working hard to teach students to be good citizens at home in their local communities. But home has now become the globe. What a student can accomplish in a day is very different now. We need to use the technologies available to fully embrace and access the global aspects of our planet to allow students to participate fully in creating change. If we start the seed of digital citizenship growing when they are young and malleable it will continue to grow into later life.

How do we teach Digital Citizenship? Should students wade into social media without a guide? Odds are their teachers will be that guide and need to be well versed in the use of social media. Our classrooms are communities of learners, global communities. The walls of the traditional classroom have been expanded. We must use social media to connect students with one another online. Students must learn to share with each other and with other students around the globe in ethical and responsible ways. The change we need is for students to get global.

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