

idea Fisher points out that "One of the challenges of teaching children to think is to help them to discover that the process of evaluating, approving, and disapproving of one's own ideas is natural and healthy; the confidence to be self-critical can strengthen the sense of self" (p. 54). These processes develop in healthy social, economic, and political environments. In addition, ideas are the lifeblood of good writing and speaking.

What is refreshingly different about this book, however, is the way in which Fisher begins his discussion and dialogues in order to specifically illustrate the mechanisms important for teaching children to think. The only distinct criticism I offer to this text is that the discussion might have been well served by the inclusion of an international perspective to address the varying needs of children from different parts of the world. This would expand Fisher's arguments on how to teach all children to think.

This book provides useful information that will enable parents, families, educators, and communities to better understand each other and become advocates of children in teaching children to think. Courses in creative problem solving can be especially helpful since they not only develop the ability to think creatively but they also instill the desire to act creatively.

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McCaskell, T. (2005). *Race to Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

Tim McCaskell's book is a detailed journey of his work with the Toronto School Boards between 1983 and 2001. The book provides the reader with a comprehensive explanation of the fight for educational equity in Toronto's schools combined with vivid details with respect to the political movement in Ontario during this time period.

Quite early on in his career, while working for the Riverdale Intercultural Council, McCaskell learned that one of the best ways to bring together equity groups that felt that they were being marginalized, was to invite representatives from the various

communities together to discuss their own personal experiences of injustice. Although this type of work began with community members, McCaskell soon realized that the experts on the lived experiences of racism and other inequities were students, and he began to work directly with them. McCaskell's work in schools, paired with the efforts of Tony Souza, eventually led to the creation of Camp Kandalore aimed at taking groups of students on a five-day retreat to discuss issues surrounding racism. These camps grew and changed over time, running from 1981 until 1997 with much success. The camps focused on racism as a starting point in order to inform young people about unjust practices of power in our nation, and the intent was that, once students could grasp the concepts of how power may lead to inequity, then the group could move on from racism to other types of oppression.

One of the strengths of this book is that it provides concrete examples of activities that may be done with students of many ages to teach about social equity, and not simply racism, but also sexism, homophobia, classism, and ableism. The camps were a major starting point for this type of training, but the book also illustrates a multitude of wonderful student success stories in the fight against inequity. A number of shifts occurred in McCaskell's work with students as a result of his return to university in 1985 to work on his Master's of Education. During this time frame he began to look for similarities in the literature of various anti-racist educators. He studied concepts such as Garnet McDiarmid's axis on the roles of teachers of anti-racist educators that compared content-focused versus student-focused education, teacher versus student directed education, and curriculum as instrumental versus developmental. After studying these debates and other literature reviews, McCaskell came to the conclusion that, "To be effective in changing how students thought and acted, anti-racist education had to touch both hearts and minds. Anti-racist education, then, was fundamentally but not exclusively *student-focused*" (p. 113).

This realization also caused the author to recognize one of the significant barriers to incorporating anti-racist education in the school system, namely, that this type of student-focused work went against the traditional culture of the education system where teachers are authoritarians, schools are ingrained in power, and the organization remains traditional.

An additional strength of this book is that it outlines the typical obstacles that the teacher as anti-racist educator or social activist may come up against in the average school. McCaskell outlines the common objections to incorporating such curriculum, including how teachers feel there is not time to interrupt mandatory curriculum, that there is little professional development time, that board pressures are already overwhelming, and that they are not afforded the time to work together on these types of projects. Additionally, he points out that parent support is often limited, as many parents from minority groups do not participate due to barriers in language and, therefore, parent council meetings become dominated yet again by the power group (i.e., white, middle-class parents).

Due to some of these issues McCaskell continued direct work with students. Some fantastic activities he worked with included "Star Power" that simulated the experience and dynamics of living in an inequitable society, WHORM (World History of Racism in Minutes), and he worked hand in hand with curriculum staff to create more multicultural reading lists within schools. Two of the most successful groups to emerge from McCaskell's work were STAR (Students of Toronto Against Racism), which developed out of an anti-racist conference in 1992, and the ARA (Anti-Racist Action) group who refused to allow white supremacy groups to form in schools. The STAR group reached new ground when they fought for all schools in the Toronto School Board to provide copies of course outlines (which were already deemed to be public knowledge) in order to investigate and grade courses for their level of social justice content, including material from authors of color, material from gays and lesbians, and other social justice issues. After a long fight to receive outlines, and much work "grading" the schools, the STAR group produced report cards and noted strengths and weaknesses in schools and the system in general. They offered six solutions to improve required content, and although all of their issues were not fully addressed, they certainly quickened the process of curriculum re-evaluation. Despite the fact that not all staff members working in the area of equity agreed with the strategies used by the STAR group, this was an example of how students could come together to enact social change.

*Race to Equity* also provides a detailed description of some of the forces that McCaskell and his colleagues were forced to fight in their work towards an equitable educational system. There were definitive issues with homophobia from an onslaught of groups – the Heritage

Front that combined neo-Nazis and skinheads was a dangerous coalition which was strong between 1992-1994, and often, work in the area of equity involved arguments from oppressed groups over who deserved the most attention. In an effort to address some of these issues, McCaskell included a chapter entitled, "Beyond Political Correctness: Toward the Inclusive University," where he outlined six key principles that he felt essential in anti-racist education including:

- 1) anti-racist education dealing with the concept of racism being a social construction;
- 2) anti-racist education in the struggle for justice of oppressed groups, and institutional change resulting from political pressure;
- 3) anti-racist education could not be an add-on and changes were required across the curriculum;
- 4) anti-racist education needed to be system-wide;
- 5) anti-racist education had its own pedagogy that would require teachers and students to work together to understand and challenge unjust power relations; and,
- 6) anti-racist education must be willing to engage other forms of oppression including sexism, homophobia, and class prejudice that are all part of the education system.

McCaskell's hope was that students would be empowered to become partners in the fight for social change, and he hoped to provide a common social vision for students (K-12 and post-secondary), teachers, administrators, parents, and community.

The reader cannot ignore the fact that this book is also a depiction of the political movement in Ontario from 1970 to the present. McCaskell describes the ups and downs of politics in the province and how this both supported and undermined the "race for equity" at different times. During the idealistic period of the 1970s, the fight for equitable education was able to get off the ground and continued to flourish with the social movements of the 1980s. Much of the work done by McCaskell and others was diminished in the 1990s by politics that created limited identities and by the amalgamation of the Toronto and area School Boards, yet despite this, McCaskell and others who remained passionate about equity were still able to win the fight for the inclusive equity policy that was passed in December of 1999 and remains intact today. Should readers put the detailed politics aside, they will find that McCaskell's message is clear – that

is, the need to recognize all marginalized groups equally and to ensure that each group's voice is heard.

Some may finish this book and ask themselves, what is the point if, after approximately 30 years of fighting for equity, all is lost when the boards amalgamated and many key players left, including McCaskell? However, McCaskell's story is an example of the substantive changes that are possible in the areas of anti-racist education and social justice when the right people – a combination of educators, students, parents, community groups, and politicians – come together with a common dream to enact change. The work in this area is by no means simple, and this book shows the tendency for success and failure to be cyclic; however, at the same time it offers hope that, in the future, change for equitable education for all is possible.

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