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Educating for compassion and mutual accommodation

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ABSTRACT

Macdonald (2020) argues that there are four pillars of civilization- freedom, science and technology, mutual accommodation and compassion. The emphasis in the West since the Renaissance has been on freedom and science. The latter two pillars are needed if civilization is to thrive. In contrast to many countries where nativism, authoritarianism, and populism is manifest, Canada has been able to engage in mutual accommodation so that Quebec did not separate and is “unique among Western nations in the absence of seriously poisoned immigration politics”. The paper outlines ways to educate for mutual accommodation and compassion and describes two schools in Toronto that demonstrate these practices.

1. Educating for compassion and mutual accommodation

There has been a rise in nativism, populism and authoritarianism around the globe. Trump’s presidency has emphasized these trends and has threatened democratic institutions in the United States. Canada has resisted these trends with more open immigration policies and an emphasis on mutual accommodation.

MacDonald (2020) argues that there four main pillars of society: freedom, science and technology, mutual accommodation and compassion. He suggests that freedom and science/technology have dominated in the West since the Renaissance. He writes,

This emphasis has led to two results. It has brought the accumulated post-Renaissance achievements into today’s global moment in history. It has also provoked populism and the current rise of centrifugal forces within and between countries. Mutual accommodation is urgently needed if the outcome is to be bearable and a new Dark Age avoided (p. xv)

Mutual accommodation and compassion are needed now to preserve democracies and allow for the world to become a place where climate change, inequality and injustice can be addressed. MacDonald argues that Canada has been a place where mutual accommodation has worked. Mutual accommodation involves *compromise*, *cooperation* and *inclusion*. (Macdonald, ,2020) writes, “The simplest way of thinking about mutual accommodation is that it helps to get things done by making room for others. It is often about compromise, and always requires an understanding of what each side needs. Inclusion is the key driver” (p.6). Mutual accommodation was crucial in working with Quebec so that it remained in Canada rather than separating. There is great diversity in Canada as seen in Toronto which is one of the most multicultural cities in the world; yet there is little ethnic tension and the crime rate is relatively low for a such a large North American city. The television series, *The Transplant* filmed in a Toronto hospital is about how a doctor from Syria becomes valued member of the emergency team there. MacDonald summarizes Canada’s achievements through mutual accommodation:

Canada has reached a point where its stories mutually reinforce one another. All through its challenging history, Canada has found it necessary to put what works ahead of nationalism, ethnic difference, religion, class and ideology. . . Canada has got one

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of the great governance lessons of history right-the necessity of mutual accommodation for a good and decent life. Accomplishing this goal makes Canada not just a good country but a great country. . . Canada is unique among Western nations in the absence of seriously poisoned immigration politics (p. 34, 279)

In contrast religion, ideology, and nativism dominate American politics. Mutual accommodation has allowed the federal and provincial governments in Canada to work together to address COVID-19 while in the United States wearing mask has become politicized. Unlike the United States where supreme court vacancies end up in bitter ideological struggles, there is rarely a politicization of a new appointment.

Professor [Vipond \(2017\)](#) at the University of Toronto has written the history of the Clinton St. School in Toronto and how it accommodated various ethnic groups in the twentieth century. MacDonald writes, “this story shows how Canada became a mutual accommodation leader at the community level” (p.93). Public education in Canada is one of its strengths and unlike the United States where underfunded public schools have led to parents seeking private schools.

Canada’s shadow involves the treatment of Indigenous peoples which has begun to be addressed through the Trust and Reconciliation Commission. Still there is so much that needs to be done to fulfill the recommendations of the commission.

2. Compassion

Compassion is also needed. Compassion is seeing the suffering of others and doing something to address the suffering. When we see how we are connected to all life, compassion can arise naturally. Parents who care for their children can readily feel compassion for all parents. The emphasis on the individual today’s world makes compassion more difficult. This emphasis has led to what Jean Twenge describes as The Narcissism Epidemic. [Twenge’s \(2010\)](#) research has focused on young people and how over the past twenty years they increasingly respond positively to the statement “I am an important person.” There is no better example of the culture of narcissism than Donald Trump who wants his name to be seen everywhere.

Mathieu [Ricard \(2015\)](#), the Buddhist monk, has written about compassion.: “Altruism and compassion have the aim of spreading themselves as widely as possible. We must simply understand that our own wellbeing and the world’s cannot rest on indifference to the happiness of the other or on a refusal to care about the sufferings around us” (p. 24). Impartiality is essential to lovingkindness and compassion. Ricard writes that it is similar to the physician who treats anyone who is ill that comes and does not discriminate or favor one person over another. The rays of the sun have been used as a metaphor here as they reach all beings equally.

[Ricard \(2015\)](#) does distinguish between *instinctive* altruism and compassion and *extended* compassion. The former arises naturally; for the example, the mother’s love for her child. Extended compassion, however, is impartial and needs to be cultivated. Here we see others, who may come from different cultures, have the same needs as those close to us. Both instinctive and extended compassion require both an emotional and cognitive component. The cognitive element involves seeing the causes of suffering. Only by seeing deeply into the situation will one begin to see the conditions that give rise to suffering and it is these conditions that must be addressed.

Ricard also makes the case that our happiness and the happiness of others are connected. When we are caring of others, it can engender a sense of well-being or “feeling of harmony with ourselves” (82). He cites Plato who said, “The happiest man is he who has no trace of malice in his soul” (82). Ricard goes on to argue that “love, affection, and concern for others are, in the long run, essential to our survival” (82).

Another way of framing the four elements presented by MacDonald is through the Chinese concepts of *yin* and *yang*. [Lin \(2016\)](#) describes these two qualities, “*yang* is the energy that creates and motivates and *yin* is the energy that nourishes, nurtures, sustains and harmonizes. . . the balance of *yang* and *yin* preconditions the harmonious existence of nature and human beings” (p. 80). *This flow of energy between the two is essential to the health of the cosmos, the earth, society, and the human being*. [Wong \(2015\)](#) in translating the ideas of Chuang-Tzu writes how *yin* contains the seed of *yang* and *yang* contains the seed of *yin*:

Ultimate yin is cold and stern; ultimate yang is warm and bright. The sternness and coldness of ultimate yin comes from the heart of heaven’s yang. The warmth and brightness of ultimate yang comes from the heart of earth’s yin. These essences of yin and yang are embedded in their opposites so each already exists within the other. Ying and yang interact, copulate, comeingle, and harmonize with each other bringing forth all life. (p. 162)

Freedom and science/technology are *yang* in nature. As MacDonald notes these have dominated since the Renaissance. For the planet and cultures to heal the *yin* dimensions of mutual accommodation and compassion need to manifest more fully.

3. Educating for mutual accommodation and compassion

Holistic Education is one approach that can develop the skills and capacities associated with mutual accommodation and compassion. The core of the holistic education is the educating the whole person: body, mind and spirit. Today, at every level, education focuses on skills and a narrow view of the intellect. The body receives little attention while the spiritual life of the student is ignored. The image of the student is a brain on a stick. In contrast, the holistic curriculum attempts to reach the head, hands, and heart of the student.

The other main principle of holistic education is connectedness. Connectedness and interdependence are part of the fundamental realities of nature. In contrast, the curriculum at every level, except perhaps for kindergarten, is fragmented as knowledge is broken down into courses, units, lessons and bits of information. Rarely are there attempts to show how knowledge is interconnected. As a result, students are conditioned to see phenomena as unconnected. An education that reinforces fragmentation and separation inevitably causes suffering because the individual is divorced from how things are. In contrast, holistic education seeks to be in

harmony with how things actually are by focusing on connections.

Most schooling today is done within the context of helping the country compete in the global economy. It focuses on skills that will help a person get a job and contribute to the economy. Holistic education has a broader set of aims. These include wisdom, compassion, wholeness/wellbeing and sense of purpose. Wisdom is seeing deeply into the nature of things and acting on that awareness. This awareness involves recognizing the interconnectedness of things which can lead to a natural compassion for all beings. Certainly, wisdom and compassion are central to any possibility of life on the planet moving forward to a place where there is less poverty and violence and where all life flourishes. Wellbeing- physical, mental, and spiritual is also an important goal. Bhutan's goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is one vision of how wellbeing and happiness can be societal aims. GNH has inspired other countries to move beyond just economic growth as the central aim. Finally, holistic education assists students discover their purpose for being here. Maria Montessori and other holistic educators believe that we part of something greater than ourselves which can be called the cosmic symphony. Montessori education includes what she called cosmic education where students study the universe story (Swimme & Berry, 1992) and our place in that story. More specifically each person has his or her own purpose as part the larger story and holistic education attempts to help the student in discovering that purpose.

Community in schools and classrooms is central to holistic education. A teaching/learning strategy that is helpful is *cooperative learning*. Cooperative employs small groups where students learn to trust each other and work with together. Cooperative learning can take many forms. Johnson and Johnson (1994) suggest cooperative learning encourages students to feel responsible for others' learning as well as their own. For example, in a spelling lesson students would work in small groups to help each other learn the words. Cooperative learning has also facilitated higher level reasoning, more frequent generation of new ideas, and greater transfer of learning from one situation to another.

Circles of Learning. Another vehicle for creating community is having the students form an entire circle. The circle has its roots in Indigenous cultures; for example, some first nations people form a circle and pass the talking stick around to give each person a chance to share their thoughts and feelings. Black Elk said this about circles:

Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle.

The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. . . The life of a (person) is a circle from childhood to childhood, and it is in everything where power moves. (Cited in Baldwin, p. 80)

This can be used in the classroom as well giving each student a chance to speak. The circle can focus on a specific topic or have an open agenda.

A circle that focuses on problem-solving (Glasser, 1986) can follow a specific step-by-step process. Glasser suggests six steps: (1) creating a climate of involvement; (2) exposing the problem; (3) making a personal value judgment; (4) identifying alternative courses of action; (5) making a commitment; (6) behavioral follow-up. These steps involve mutual accommodation as the group needs to cooperate and make compromises.

Baldwin (1994) believes that the circle can be an agent of societal transformation. Baldwin describes a process for adults to participate in what she calls the PeerSpirit Circle. She makes reference to the work of Gibbs (1987) who has developed the concept of tribes for use in classrooms. The tribe is a small classroom group of five or six children who work together throughout the school year. Gibbs also uses the large classroom circle to allow students to share events in their lives. Baldwin summarizes the work of Gibbs when she says: "Students in tribes have their contributions and feelings acknowledged throughout the process: they feel safe, they feel loyal, they feel loved and loving. In thousands of classrooms, the tribal community is preparing children to become adult citizens of the circle" (p.159).

Restorative Justice. Circles are also central to restorative justice. Restorative justice is a community-based approach to deal with issues that can arise in classrooms and schools. According to the Center for Restorative Justice at Suffolk University it "engages those who are harmed, wrongdoers and their affected communities in search of solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships" (cited in Gardner, 2016, p. 2). A sense of community is fundamental to implementing restorative justice in a school. It will not work where students and teachers do not feel part of a community. This form of justice has its roots in Indigenous practices (McClasin, 2005, p. 7). Gardner (2016) writes that community is first principle necessary for restorative justice. This involves a shared sense of purpose and values in a school where people have sense of responsibility to other people's wellbeing.

A second principle is that restorative justice seeks to transform behavior and not just address individual incidents. Gardner writes, "students who make bad or harmful choices should be held accountable to their actions through a process of reflection, communication, and action that makes right the harm they have done, not through punishment" (p.7). A third and related principles is harm to the individual is harm to the community. A harmful action is seen beyond just the individual but as something that can damage the entire community.

The fourth principle is participation in the process of restorative justice is a choice. Students should not feel forced into the process or it will not work. This may mean in some cases the student may be sanctioned in more traditional ways if they do not want to participate. However, if there is a strong sense of community and trust in the process students usually choose to participate.

Shifting the power dynamic in the school is the fifth principle. Discipline is no longer a top down process but includes the student's voice. Students get to tell their side of the story and can be even be involved in determining consequences of their actions.

Restorative justice seeks to find the root causes of problems. This sixth principle can involve seeking underlying causes of behavior that may include "academic frustration to students dealing with trauma due to the death of a loved on" (p. 9).

Restorative justice seeks equitable outcomes which may involve responding differently to student behavior. It seeks "to understand

the complexities of students and why they make the choices and take the actions they do and respond accordingly” (p.10).

The eighth and final principle is that all students want and deserve the chance to learn. Ultimately, restorative justice is an opportunity to learn more about one’s behavior and how one can act responsibly in a community.

Restorative justice is a challenging form of mutual accommodation since it deals with difficult situations. It needs to be employed more widely in schools.

There is a school in Toronto -Equinox Holistic Alternative School-that uses restorative justice and learning circles. Circles are used in a variety of ways. Every morning the classes meet outside in circles where they do meditation, yoga, Qi Gong and other activities together. Circles have also been used to deal with behavioral issues. One teacher said: “I meet with students in a circle when there is a problem. We also do this as teachers. People actually practice what they preach here. It is wonderful.” The school also use restorative justice to deal with behavioral issues. Here is the statement on restorative justice in the staff handbook:

3.1. Restorative practices

When facing interpersonal challenges in relationships, we rely on the wisdom and methods of Restorative Justice to develop a healthy school environment. In striving to operate as a community, with students taking ownership and responsibility for learning and relating, and teachers taking a power-with students approach, the major rewards include skill building, creative fulfillment and personal growth. Through this process, we all learn to be accountable for our actions in meaningful, direct ways. (2018, p. 12)

Equinox is discussed in more detail in next section - how schools can foster compassion.

3.2. Compassion

Nature Based Learning. Educating for compassion starts with showing how all life is interconnected which can start with seeing ourselves as part of nature. Young children need to have experiences in nature. When I was in Japan in 1994, I had the opportunity to visit a school that demonstrated such experiences. This school called Ojiya school and is described in detail by Tezuka (1994) in a book entitled, *School with Forest and Meadow*.

This school is fortunate to be situated on large grounds. The school itself is rectangular and encircles an open area that is called the Friendship Pasture. Living in this pasture are a variety of animals including goats, chickens, rabbits and turtles. The pasture is a 440 square meter pen surrounded by a net which was made with the help of parents and teachers. When the weather is good, the animals are let out to feed on the grounds. The children love to go into the pasture to "touch, hold, speak to, and take care of the animal."(p.3). Tezuka, who visited the school on several occasions, writes "One can observe the children growing in love and gentleness through taking care of their animal friends"(p.4). When I walked into the pasture during my visit, my first impression was of three boys on a bench each holding and petting a rabbit, confirming Tezuka’s remarks.

Tezuka reports that, at the first, many children were afraid of the animals. Many students did not like the chickens which they felt were dirty and smelled bad. But gradually they began to change in their attitude on closer acquaintance. "Now the children run to the pens and buildings at cleaning time in the morning. They look forward to taking care of the rabbits. They even like to clean the hen house" (p.5). The students have come "to sympathize with these creatures and *sense their own kinship with them* (my italics)" (p.6) .

The school also has a small forest called "Yasho Homeland Forest" with about 300 trees. Before the students and teachers planted the trees, they surveyed the surrounding area and identified all the different kinds of native trees. They found 96 different kinds of trees and shrubs within 10 kilometers of the school. In planting the trees, attention was given to the size and colors of the flowers and buds, incorporating consideration of aesthetic principles into the learning of natural science. Tezuka describes how the forest changes colors through the seasons. In spring there are red blossoms which grow against the green background. In summer the variety of colors increases with whites, more reds and purples appearing. In fall, of course, the leaves on the trees turn orange and yellow.

The students are very concerned about the trees. If there is a typhoon, the first thing they do is look at the trees to see if they are alright when they come the next day. The students write about their feelings for the trees in poems,

Trees in The Home Forest

by Yukari Kazama

I saw trees in the ground.

They are moving as if they were dancing with snow.

Don’t they feel heavy

When they have snow on their branches!

Trees

By Takumi Yokota

I saw trees.

They look as if they were weeping in the snow.

Don’t they feel pain when they are bound with ropes?

I’d like to remove the ropes to make them feel better. (Tezuka, pp.10-11)

The poems are evidence that children at Ojiya school are learning a deep reverence for the natural world. They are also gaining in their knowledge of the principles of conservation as they progress with their care of the trees. For example, when fall came, they used to put the fallen leaves in a bag for disposal and now they put the leaves under the trees to help enrich the soil there.

The person responsible for the approach at Ojiya school is Giichiro Yamanouchi, a former principal. He felt that a forest could provide many learning opportunities for children and also foster their ability to take care of the natural environment around them. He believed that it would be useful for learning science and writing compositions as well as other learning activities. He thinks that the forest is also good for the children's souls. He found that the children liked to go to the forest to be alone, sit quietly and listen to the forest. He calls these forests "natural meditation rooms" where the child's soul can be nourished.

Educators from Korea visited schools where Yamanouchi was principal in 1999. This led to the School Forest Movement in that country and there are now 762 school forests there. Professor Kim (2019) writes about the movement in Korea: "The school forest movement emphasizes maximizing the potential of the space for environmental education by planting the trees on the playground and embracing a holistic perspective. . . The school forest is the outdoor classroom where the teacher and students get together and study. It is the place where environmental and holistic education allow for a teacher moment" (p.189).

In a recent biography of the civil rights icon, John Lewis, Meacham (2020) writes about how caring for chickens when he was young contributed to his sense of compassion. Lewis said, "The kinship I felt with these other living creatures, the closeness, the compassion, is a feeling I carried with me out into the world from that point on. It might have been a feeling I was born with. I don't know but the first time I recall being aware of it was with those chickens" (p. 28)

In North America there is the movement to have a garden on or near the school grounds. For example, there is the Green Thumbs program that offers a variety of approaches including a Urban Roots Youth program which teaches youth the techniques of growing food in small spaces (greenthumbsto.org).

Being outdoors helps student relate to each other in a more authentic way. Students at Equinox spend a great deal of time outdoors. In my study of the school there is one example of how it helps students with different backgrounds care for one another. One parent commented how being outside allowed for positive interactions between students.

I saw one boy who was known as a bully in his previous school working with a girl. She was an artistic, creative person who had been bullied in her previous school. She was teaching him about knot tying and I saw all those barriers and labels falling away. How would they have interacted in typical classroom setting? It is outside and they feel less exposed. I also saw kids working cooperatively on projects together. It seemed to happen so organically. It was amazing (Miller, 2016, p. 296).

Service Learning. Lourdes Arguelles taught at Claremont Graduate School in California and her work there is good example of service-learning. Her students ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-fifties. As part of the curriculum she had them go into "grassroots communities" which were often marginalized, either economically or socially. First, she had her students just be with people in these communities in informal situations such as "sharing meals and casual conversation, and doing manual labor" (p. 294). Second, she encouraged "slow, non-deliberate, non-formal and sporadic ways of knowing" which she calls "slow mind" (Arguelles, 2002, p. 296). One student described the experience of being with recent immigrants from Mexico

We came as a group with our teacher to spend time with recent immigrants from Southern Mexico, and in the process we developed strong relations with each other. We learned some unexpected things including how to be of service to people, sometimes in surprising ways, while waiting for the right time to plunge into more formal academic work. At first it seemed strange to register for a class and then to be told to get out of the university and try to engage mindfully with people that I never dreamt had anything to teach me. I thought I already knew what I would see and hear from them. . . . In the first few weeks I often asked myself when the "real learning" would start. It's been only recently that I've understood there is no such thing as "real learning" (p.295)

Lourdes's course shows how there is another way to relate to immigrants from Mexico than Trump's policies.

Lourdes approach emphasizes simply being with people "in a relaxed, reciprocal manner, without immediately trying to make them objects of our "service" or subjects for our research" (p. 295). This allows for other ways of knowing than "accelerated, focused, and goal-oriented style of cognition". This allows to see the gifts that other bring and the limits of our "expert" knowledge (p. 296).

John Donnelly used nature as a vehicle for what he called engaged service for behaviorally challenged adolescents. The goal of this work was development of compassion in students or the ability to see that another person's suffering is not separate from ourselves. The teachings of Ram Dass had a strong impact on John and he quoted Ram Dass' definition of compassion.

Compassion in action is paradoxical and mysterious. It is absolute, yet continually changing. It accepts that everything is happening exactly as it should, and it works with a full-hearted to commitment to change. It sets goals but knows that the process is all there is. It is joyful in the midst of suffering and hopeful in the face of overwhelming odds. It is simple in a world of complexity and confusion. It is done for others but nurtures the self. (cited in Donnelly, 2002, p. 313)

Engaged service, then, is a process of attempting to heal this suffering in others and ourselves. John liked to use nature and field trips to the outdoors to engage his students. Yet these were not just trips to see and observe nature; they also involved students helping one another. John describe one of activities that his students engaged in:

On one occasion during field trip, ten of my students helped one student who was confined to a wheelchair gain mobility around a mountain camp that had not been adapted for children with specific physical needs. They assisted him off the bus, folded his wheelchair, set out his silverware at the table, and by splitting into three different teams, helped him hike on trails that were inaccessible to children with special needs. They finished a full day of these activities by helping him get ready and go to bed. . . . I doubt if any more love or concern could be shown by a group of students (Donnelly, 2002, p. 310)

Many of the students in this program came from extremely challenging backgrounds. One of his students was shot on the streets of Los Angeles. Yet John with his love and commitment was able to bring hope to many of his students. He remained hopeful that we can offer an education that is truly life affirming. He wrote, "Look to the children and they will show us the way. Ask them what they need, do not explain to them what they want. Ask them how they can help do not tell them what is required. Make the subject of the day a life that can be enhanced" (p.314).

4. Two schools in Toronto that foster compassion

I have been connected to two schools where compassion is central. One is the Equinox Holistic Alternative School which I have already mentioned. In 2007 I was asked to meet with a small group of parents and teachers who wanted to start a holistic school within the Toronto District School Board. The original name of the school was The Whole Child School. They asked me to establish an advisory group to help the school develop its program. I contacted several people from different backgrounds including Waldorf education, Montessori education, and teachers who had set up their own alternative schools. This group met several times during the two years before the school began in the fall of 2009.

After the first year they changed the name of the school since the older students were not comfortable attending a school with "child" in the title. The school-based part of its program on my book, *The Holistic Curriculum* (Miller, 2019) and the six connections which they define as Community, Earth, Inner, Body/Mind, Subject, and Intuition/Inquiry (equinoxschool.ca). Through these connections children at Equinox see how life is interrelated and how they are connected to the earth and each other. There is strong ecological consciousness that is developed there.

Seeing how we are connected can lead to compassion for all life. A holistic approach then can help lessen violence and the harm that we do to each other. Compassion is the central teaching of all religions and needs to be nourished in schools. I did a study of Equinox in 2015 where I interviewed teachers, parents and children. What came through is a strong sense of community where students, teachers and parents care for one another (Miller, 2016) One parent commented on how students showed empathy for one another. "We are beyond grateful and happy that Canada offers alternative education. . . At recess you see children of different ages playing together. It's amazing what you see- the amount of compassion and empathy.

They also do meditation and mindfulness activities. One teacher described his use of these practices:

We start with meditation and do mindful movements outside. We try to do noble silence. Coming in after lunch we do one minute. I also incorporate it into the health curriculum. I notice too when there is stress like before Christmas and Halloween. So we do guided meditations then. We will lie on the ground for about ten minutes. I also use it for being attentive, mindful listening.

One of the students in this teacher's class suffered from OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). He and his parents commented that the mindfulness was helpful to him and lowered his stress level. The father said "It was wonderful. His OCD improved a lot."

Another teacher described a meditation activity that they did before the holiday season.

"At holiday time, we had parents come too and we did a meditation around eating brown rice. We set up an altar with the rice on it. People reflected on the experience and were finding the world in their little rice. The bonding that happened was amazing. A transpersonal experience. We were connected. The kids and I know that we have been together in a special way. For 20-30 minutes there was silence."

Equinox is an example of how holistic education and spirit can flourish in a public school

The School at Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto. At RMHC Toronto children with serious illnesses stay with their families while receiving treatment at surrounding hospitals Katie Doering began teaching on her own at the RMHC Toronto in 2003 which was the beginning of the school there. Katie is one of the most inspiring educators I have ever met. Over the years she got a beautiful classroom built on the first floor and eventually was able to add two teachers and an early childhood educator to the school. The school is the only one of its kind of the 368 houses around the world. It is the result of Katie's vision to compassionately provide a unique, student-centred, learning environment to facilitate academic, emotional and social success. The school incorporates mindfulness practices, learning circles and regularly pairs students from different grades in cooperative learning activities all in an effort to build a strong and supportive community. <https://www.rmhc-toronto.ca/Our-House-Family-Rooms/Our-House/RMHC-Toronto-School/Overview>

The school was featured on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*. She says her work is about "making a difference in children's' day that day". In the article, "Ms. Doering said there were times when she wondered whether she wanted to continue teaching at the school. In one of her first years, she learned of nine deaths in a one-week period" (Alphonso, 2019, p. 15). The significant impact the school makes on children keeps the staff focused and engaged. A student recently commented at the school's 15th anniversary that "this school. This place and the people here made a massive difference in my life, one whose impact is unmatched by anything else I've experienced thus far." OR A parent recently commented "This is a special school that not only meets requirements academically, but goes over and beyond to provide a safe and fun environment for children, special friendships, and peace of mind for parents...at a time when it is needed most and in an environment where there are children from many different backgrounds and whom are impacted greatly by either their own, or their siblings' special needs."

Katie was in my graduate course *The Holistic Curriculum*; she wrote this about the course. "The school's guiding principle and my daily work has been directly influenced by you and your book. Thank you for all you have done for me and the field of holistic

education”.

Katie completed her doctorate in 2019. She did research on picture books featuring child protagonists with cancer. Her family held a celebration for completing the doctorate and there was a large group of friends and family attending. At one point we all stood and applauded Katie in honor of her what she has done for the children at Ronald McDonald House Charities Toronto.

Katie and the teachers at the RMH show how holistic education provides for an education that is deeply compassionate.

Equinox and the school at RMHC Toronto are examples of how it is possible to support and nurture mutual accommodation and compassion in educational settings. It is not a coincidence that they exist in a country where mutual accommodation and compassion are embedded in the culture.

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