



Axiology in Ontario (Canada) Secondary School Health and Physical Education

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Abstract

Axiology includes the study of human values and related value judgements. Most opt to study human values in communities and institutions that offer larger sample sizes and reflect society in general. Often it is within school communities and programs that there is both opportunity and mandates to address axiology via curriculum, instruction, discussion (axia) and pedagogy. Examining values via a content analysis within Ontario Secondary School curricula is not infrequent and discussing values with students as part of a secondary school curriculum is an expectation. Indeed, conversation and examination are necessary to instigate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that guide each of us. Values clarification begins in teacher training as values are infused within the teacher training curricula and later while in-service Ontario educators are prompted via curricular scripts to address critical thinking, human development, and sexual health within a value grounded secondary curriculum. Ontario secondary educators are encouraged to teach students about relationships, nutrition, and activity via a values-based orientation.

Keywords: Values; curriculum; values instruction; scripted curriculum

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1. Introduction

Axiology is often described as the study of human values including related value judgements (Jones & Rouw, 2022; Ryan & Robinson, 2013); and to study human values researchers often turn to communities and institutions such as schools. It is within school communities and programs that there is both opportunity and mandates to address axiology directly and indirectly via instruction and discussion (axia). Within Secondary Schools it is not uncommon to encounter educators discussing values with students as part of a secondary school curriculum (Jones & Rouw, 2022). Indeed, discussion and debate are a “conscious attempt to help others acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes,

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and values that contribute to more personally satisfying and socially constructive lives” (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 14).

While school mission statements and staff meetings address school ethos, it is tacit values that are “expressed materially in patterns of choices that are both culture-bound and definitive of different cultures” (Graham, 2007, p. 3). A school culture has enduring beliefs that guide and influence growth as values are expressed in the,

language we use; in the friends we keep; in the clothes we wear; in what we read, write, and watch; in the technologies we use; in the gods we believe in and pray to; in the music we make and listen to -- indeed, in every kind of activity that can be counted as a definitive element of culture. (Graham, 2007, p. 1)

The illumination and examination of values is fundamental in education and in teacher training since "learning to learn, preparation for work, responsible citizenship and instilling values tend to underpin the broad purposes of education in Canada" (Gambhir et al., 2008, p. 4). Initial Ontario teacher education (pre-service training) is part of a continuum of professional development for educators and helps teachers wade through the mandated provincial (Ontario) curricula as they instruct, coach and guide students in practicum, which occurs during teacher training in schools. Ontario educators move through a pre-service training process over a period of two years wherein transformative learning requires “the identification of problematic ideas, beliefs, values, and feelings; critically assessing their underlying assumptions; testing their justification through rational discourse; and striving for decisions through consensus building” (Taylor, 2009, p.3). As an outcome it is believed that fully trained and certified Ontario educators can decode, interpret, and explain a curriculum that is infused with transformative content touching upon human beliefs and associated values that can lead all to realize a healthy life.

2. Method

Content analysis includes the repeated reading of curricula which improves comprehension and one’s awareness of textual nuances. In fact, “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 4), qualifies as content analysis. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis (Elo et al., 2014) includes “a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories (headings) based on explicit rules . . .” (Stemler, 2001, p. 1).

A content analysis process involves decoding texts via recursive close reading (Schreier, 2012), which is the centerpiece of iterative content analysis “. . . in order to understand what they meant to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. xviii). Text is revisited to condense, reinterpret, and restyle interpretations (Ryan, 2021; Schreier, 2012), to develop insight and link these insights to related elements in much the same way as a mind-map (Ryan, 2021; Schreier, 2012; Weber, 1990). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) believe content analysis is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data” (p. 7). Each content analysis is highly descriptive and requires summarizing to expose meaning, orientations, and perspectives (Schreier, 2012), while linking assertions to reviewed content as illustrated herein.

3.0 Values in Teacher Training (Pre-service)

By identifying and clarifying values in the pre-service training of teachers, educators may be able to reflect upon, address, comprehend and match their own values with curricula and positions articulated by Canadian educational associations, institutions, and authorities they are learning about (Ryan, 2021). Gambhir et al. (2008) believe initial teacher education in Canada is a foundational phase in teacher professional development. Ryan et al. (2013) examined pre-service educator values in Ontario and found,

‘Terminal values’ (end state of existence) such as Family security was ranked highest. True friends ranked second and Health third; whereas Self-respect was ranked fourth and Freedom fifth, leaving Equality sixth. For ‘Instrumental values’ (modes of conduct) being Honest was ranked highest by the entire sample (n=319) and Responsible was second. Loving was ranked third and Helpful was ranked fourth highest. Loyal was ranked fifth and Ambitious was ranked sixth. Teaching is not neutral therefore values clarification for teachers is a matter of identity as we need to be aware of what values we possess and employ within our praxes. (p. 394)

Ontario teacher training is expected to introduce critical knowledge bases, skills, and practices that allow prospective teachers to develop and a value fundamental understanding of high-quality student and teacher learning and performance (Ryan, 2021). The Ontario Physical Education teacher in training will encounter a 220-page Ontario Secondary Health and Physical Education curriculum document which addresses grade nine through 12 and uses the term values 27 times within the 220 pages. For instance, Ontario secondary educators are told:

The health and physical education curriculum promote important educational values and goals that support the development of character. These include striving to achieve one's personal best, equity and fair play, respect for diversity, sensitivity and respect for individual requirements and needs, and good health and well-being. These values are reinforced in other curriculum areas, as well as by society itself. Working together, schools and communities can be powerful allies in motivating students to achieve their potential and lead healthy, active lives. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.8)

This official position taken by the Ontario provincial government means that these outcomes need to be valued by pre-service student teachers who will soon assume a role and undertake the task of teaching values within a school. It is however clearly understood by all stakeholders that,

parents are the primary educators of their children with respect to learning about values, appropriate behaviour, and ethnocultural, spiritual, and personal beliefs and traditions, and they act as significant role models for their children. It is therefore important for schools and parents to work together to ensure that home and school provide a mutually supportive framework for young people's education. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 13)

Some of the Canadian teachers in training in Ontario Faculties of Education have children of their own who attend Ontario schools and these parent/teachers have experienced education in Ontario schools as students themselves; therefore, many teachers in training understand that "... schools are already powerful socialisers of traditional values" (Kohn., 2010, p. 186), yet some Ontario teachers in training may "fail to appreciate the extent to which this is true because we have come to take these values for granted" (Kohn, 2010, p.186). Educators may not address axiomatic commitments, yet these same teachers frequently discuss their values and ethics in staff rooms, classrooms, and the community. Ontario secondary educators embrace their position in the classroom as a leader, coach, authority, and their commit to social justice via teaching.

A teacher's "value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 43). Values infuse our daily lives and materialise via "curriculum as teachers teach, students learn, and education unfolds in our nation's classrooms" (Ornstein et al., 2010, p. 23). Globally, it is established that values are taught "explicitly

in classrooms and through the activities and relationships of the school and its community. In schools, core values influence how people communicate, work together, and make decisions. They are reflected in the policies and procedures of schools" (New South Wales: Department of Education & Training, 2004, p. 2). Teachers in training are trained to be self-reflective and experience reflective tasks in training that lead to self-awareness and greater understanding of self. This understanding of self allows teachers,

to increase their comfort level and their skill in teaching health and physical education and to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum, teachers should reflect on their own attitudes, biases, and values with respect to the topics they are teaching and seek out current resources, mentors, and professional development and training opportunities, as necessary. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.15)

3.1 Curricular Orientations

Some topics within the Ontario Secondary Healthy Living curricula need to be approached with additional sensitivity, care, and awareness because of their personal nature and their connection to family values, religious beliefs, and/or other socially linked cultural norms (Ryan, 2021). Sensitive topics can include, but are not limited to,

human development and sexual health, mental health, body image, substance abuse, addictions, violence, harassment, child abuse, gender identity, sexual orientation, illness (including HIV/AIDS), and poverty. It is important that both teachers and learners have a comfort level with these topics so that information can be discussed openly, honestly, and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 39)

Educators are alerted to the physical education curricula in teacher training so that teachers once in-service can be prepared to be sensitive to students' reactions and concerns as they move through the content. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2015b) provides an advance organizer for educators explaining that "sensitivity regarding weight and shape and personal values regarding 'what is healthy' are important when considering in-class instruction. What can always be stressed, however, is that healthy eating and regular physical activity are essential requirements for maintaining good health" (p. 40).

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), a legal body that registers and oversees teaching in the province of Ontario (Canada) explains how "members of the Ontario

College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public" (Ontario College of Teachers, 2012). Indeed, teachers model desired behaviours as students "learn more about self, others, and identity; peer, family, and romantic relationships; personal safety; and decision making. Acquiring information and skills and developing attitudes, beliefs, and values related to identity and relationships are lifelong processes" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 42).

The importance of being an example of a good person, citizen and adult figure in the classroom, school and community creates expectations that the public look for. "Teachers can also have a positive influence on students by modelling the behaviours, values, and skills that are needed to develop and sustain healthy relationships, and by taking advantage of 'teachable moments' to address immediate relationship issues that may arise among students" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.71). Appropriate identification of research participants is critical to the science and practice of psychology, particularly for generalizing the findings, making comparisons across replications, and using the evidence in research syntheses and secondary data analyses. If humans participated in the study, report the eligibility and exclusion criteria, including any restrictions based on demographic characteristics.

3.2 Scripted Curriculum

Bringing values discussions to life in classroom communications can be critical to the development of people in educational environments and preplanned scripts help educators negotiate sensitive and serious topics (Balci & Yanik, 2020). A scripted curriculum is prearranged and controlled to meet certain societal (government) expectations. Teachers are encouraged to follow scripts to advance critical thinking and healthy development. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2015b) directs teachers within the Healthy Living curricula to "describe the importance of understanding their personal strengths and values and using this understanding to guide them in making thoughtful decisions about their health" (p. 90). Ontario Secondary educators are to follow the script or prompt by suggesting to students,

as their bodies continue to grow and change and their understanding of themselves and their bodies continues to develop, some teenagers are thinking about becoming sexually active. What should you keep in mind when making decisions about sexual activity?" Students: "There are a lot of different things to think about. You can start with considering how having sex fits in with the values that you and your family respect." "As a Métis woman, I was taught by my aunties about my ability to create life

and how important it is to respect that gift. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.105)

This script/prompt guides the educator through sensitive materials and the secondary educator can plan on using this passage at an appropriate time. In another example a secondary educator is prompted:

Teacher: “One of the best ways to take care of your sexual health is to do some thinking in advance about your health and safety and also about your needs, your values, and your limits when it comes to sexual activity. It is important to think about what you are comfortable with and what you are not comfortable with at this point in your life. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 106)

The Ontario Ministry of Education script also prepares the educator for responses from students by providing a plausible student reply to scripted teacher prompts for instance,

Student: Thinking in advance about your sexual health and about being sexually active means reflecting on your own values, your priorities, and your situation. If you’ve done this thinking, you’ve considered your health and safety and focused on understanding yourself and what’s best for you. It’s helpful to think things through for yourself in advance before you must make a decision ‘in the moment’. (p.106)

It seems improbably that a student might provide this response however, the student scripted response provides a high-level exemplar, a goal for responses possibly. As the curricula wades into delicate and highly mature content at the secondary level teachers will want this quality of guidance especially when the topics involve personal health within physical education, for example,

Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 216)

The curricular content is clearly controversial at any age and a script helps teachers at any point in their career navigate, for instance this script,

Teacher: “How are a healthy eating plan, a physical activity or fitness plan, and thinking ahead about your sexual health connected?” Student: “They’re all related to how I care for my body physically, but also how I care for myself. They reflect how I feel about myself as well as the personal values I have developed and my cultural values. Healthy eating, physical activity, and a good understanding of sexual health all contribute to good physical and mental health and to my sense of well-being.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.106)

Human development and sexual health are within the Health and Physical Education curricula because these human aspects are factors that influence,

sexual decision making (e.g., personal values, having limits and being able to communicate them, being aware of and respecting the limits set by others, peer and family expectations, having physical and emotional desires, media messages, myths and norms related to sexual activity or safer sex practices, participation in activities such as substance use that impair judgement), and demonstrate an understanding of how to use decision-making and communication skills effectively to support choices related to responsible and healthy sexuality. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.124)

This content at any level of education brings controversy and in Ontario the Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has stepped up and into the discussion suggesting, “children must receive timely access to information to protect their health and well-being, break down stigma and have inclusive learning environments “(p. 1). In addition, the OHRC is also,

concerned that the government is requiring school boards to allow parents to exempt their child from the Human Development and Sexual Health curriculum for any reason. The curriculum is meant to provide all children in Ontario with the information they need to be healthy and safe. Allowing parents to exempt children for reasons that go beyond religious accommodation undermines this goal.

Educators, Administrators, and the larger school community are currently engaged in a discussion and in some cases an argument (Ontario protests) for change within the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum. The Ontario government has provided parents and students with an exemption pathway however, this is problematic as it divides the educational experience and excludes some students perhaps, when they

may want to be in the class learning about this sensitive material, but parents do not. School Boards in Ontario now put forward guidelines for these exemptions for instance the Rainbow Board of Education (2019) in central Ontario (Canada) has stated:

Exemption will be granted only for instruction related to all the Human Development and Sexual Health expectations in a student's grade, not for instruction related to selected expectations or groups of expectations. There will be no academic penalty for an exemption. Teachers will provide the dates for instruction of strand D – Human Development and Sexual Health expectations 20 days before instruction begins. A meeting with the Principal will be scheduled with parents/guardians to discuss options selected no later than five days before the start of the period of instruction. (p.1)

While this exemption may be a means to relieve some pressure it also brings more attention and scrutiny to the curriculum from stakeholders. However, the school board also states: “Students will not be exempted from instruction related to any other expectations in this curriculum or related to expectations in other curriculum subjects” (Rainbow Board of Education, 2019, p.1). Describe the procedures for selecting participants, including (a) the sampling method, if a systematic sampling plan was used; (b) the percentage of the sample approached that participated; and (c) the number of participants who selected themselves into the sample. Describe the settings and locations in which the data were collected as well as any agreements and payments made to participants, agreements with the institutional review board, ethical standards met, and safety monitoring procedures.

4. Critical Thinking

Curriculum “frameworks around the world have formalized the rationale for critical thinking, problem solving and creativity in PE as elements both in curriculum design and in student achievement standards” (Ridwan et al., 2022, p.280). Critical thinking skills include questioning, predicting, analysing, synthesizing, examining opinions, identifying values and issues, detecting bias, and distinguishing between alternatives (Ryan, 2020). Students who are taught these skills “become critical thinkers who can move beyond superficial conclusions to a deeper understanding of the issues they are examining. They can engage in an inquiry process in which they explore complex and multifaceted issues, and questions . . .” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 77). Generally critical thinking skills “consist of those skills that are required to evaluate and make judgments about materials of any kind” (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 45). “Critical thinking in physical education is very important to study. Overall, from year to year, learning the

concept of critical thinking physical education tends to increase” (Ridwan et al., 2022, p.283).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2015b) believes that to think critically,

students need to ask themselves effective questions in order to: . . . determine why a source might express a particular bias; examine the opinions, perspectives, and values of various groups and individuals; look for implied meaning; and use the information gathered to form a personal opinion or stance, or a personal plan of action with regard to making a difference. (p.77)

Globally it is believed that “effective analytical thinking incorporates critical thinking (i.e., the evaluation of the materials under analysis), while effective critical thinking incorporates analytical thinking (i.e., drawing distinctions and making connections). Therefore, analytical, and critical thinking skills” (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 46), are entangled and help teachers deal with some of the most prevalent values such as “respect, solidarity, healthy lifestyle, nutrition, and sports, culture, and national culture and unity, respectively (Balci & Yanik, 2020, p. 903).

4.1. Human Development and Sexual Health

Much of the Ontario Secondary Health and Physical Education curriculum is controversial for example the Ontario curricula script proposes student responses such as,

Student: I need to make sure it’s my choice. Being sexually active is not something that you should feel pressured into doing. I would think about the benefits and consequences of a sexual relationship. I need to consider my values and beliefs to be sure my actions are consistent with them. I want to make sure that my relationship with my partner is affectionate and respectful and that we feel comfortable discussing what we find pleasurable and what our sexual limits are. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p.124)

Grade 12 - Student: It can be hard to talk about sexuality, but it’s important for each partner to know what the other thinks and values so they can both agree on what is pleasurable and on how they will avoid unintended pregnancy or STIs. This kind of

discussion requires open communication, mutual respect, and trust. If you're not comfortable talking about sex with your partner, you shouldn't be having sex. (p. 156)

While it is known that any discussion of human development and sexual health can include various sensitive materials it is useful and pragmatic to have possible student responses available to guide teacher planning and instruction. Admittedly, all curriculum development “involves a systematic process of designing, reviewing, and revising educational programs to ensure they are effective, relevant, and aligned with educational goals. . . It requires collaboration among educators, . . . and other stakeholders to create a comprehensive and coherent learning experience” (ChatGPT June 9th, 2023).

4.2. Relationships

Teachers are authorities by default (law) in Ontario schools and there are laws that empower educators and laws that lay out expectations for students while at school. For example,

From the Education Act: A pupil shall: be diligent in attempting to master such studies as are part of the program in which the pupil is enrolled; exercise self-discipline; accept such discipline as would be exercised by a kind, firm, and judicious parent; and show respect for school property. Every pupil is responsible for his or her conduct to the principal of the school that the pupil attends: on the school premises; on out-of-school activities that are part of the school program; and while travelling on a school bus that is owned by a Board or on a bus that is under contract to a Board. (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, 2023, p.1).

Educators guide and coach students in the classroom via nonverbal and verbal means. Often a word need not be spoken to guide student behaviour and a simple verbal prompt or cue may be all that is required to help students meet legal obligations. Teachers model social skills and nurture friendships “with peers, students, and parents. This modelling can teach students how they can make and maintain true friends as they engage and progress educationally and socially in schools. Having friends and forming relationships with friends can impact Health” (Ryan et al., 2013, p.14)

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2015b) prompts educators to communicate and define healthy relationships, for instance:

Teacher prompt: In a relationship, it is important to try to balance time for each other with time for school, jobs, family, friends, other interests, and doing things independently. Differences in opinions, values, and priorities need to be acknowledged and reconciled. Conflicts can occur. What type of skills and strategies might be needed to deal with such matters as the relationship matures? (p. 156)

Ontario educators are part of a college registry that is overseen by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) who communicate policy, expectations, and guidelines. For example, the OCT suggests “members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2012). Trust build upon honesty is a belief that endures, and it is earned and lost in schools daily through experiences that are reflected upon and critically revisited by all who have relationships in schools. Educators in Health and Physical Education must address relationships and examine certain qualities to help all manage their relationships; for instance, a senior student will cover curricular content that delves into the dark side of relationships:

Harassment and Abuse in relationships - In school we can respond by starting programs to prevent bullying, building awareness among staff, students, and parents, providing counselling and support, and helping students develop skills and values that discourage harassment and create a more positive atmosphere. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 159)

The notion that students and teachers can develop skills and values to improve relationships is an ambitious goal, yet possible via dialogue and assigned tasks in classes such as Health and Physical Education. Be sure that baseline demographic and/or clinical characteristics of each group are provided.

4.3. Nutrition: Values

Balci and Yanik (2020) found that the “values related to physical education and sport lessons are important variables in predicting the self-reported personal and social responsibility behaviours of secondary school students” (p. 903). The impact of personal values on daily behaviour is present and often observable in student behaviour as implied in this Ontario secondary curricular expectation for secondary students:

Demonstrate the ability to make healthy eating decisions that take into account their personal requirements and resources (e.g., nutritional needs, personal likes, ethical and environmental values, budget, time available to shop and cook, access to different kinds of foods) in a variety of situations that they may encounter now and, in the future, (e.g., camping, living on their own, sharing accommodations). (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 156)

The understanding that what we eat is associated with our values is obvious herein and something that can be influenced when addressing nutrition and behaviour in physical education classes. One Ontario secondary teacher script/prompt goes further suggesting,

issues related to food are often in the news. Let's think about two of them. One involves the influence of the media and advertising on our values and behaviour, the other concerns the genetic modification of food crops. How might these issues be related to food choices? Do people's choices influence these issues? How might these issues affect someone's choices? (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015b, p. 142)

Being able to critically think about such complex issues related to values stirs up questions that instigate change as humans grow and evolve.

4.4 Nutrition: Values

Being active and maintaining your health are certainly goals within the Ontario Secondary Physical Education program yet the value of Health was only ranked third in a study of educators in 2013 (Ryan et al., 2013). Indeed Ryan et al. (2013) found that, "health was ranked third highest by our sample, with year three ranking it number one. Only year four ranked it similarly at position two" (p. 4). Ryan (2013) was referring to the year of pre-service training of Ontario teachers; however, international research by Veisson (2009) found, . . . that Estonians considered the most important values to be health" (p. 4). "Veisson (2009) concluded that students' health is relatively highly valued by teachers and school directors following a survey" (p. 67). Health is important since the lack of healthy impairs our quality of life and may alter our values (Beck, 1993).

Health and activity level are related and linked to many human constructs such as motivation and a good quality of life (Taylor et al., 2015). However, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2015) remind us that “motivational factors . . . and potential challenges (. . . transportation difficulties; restrictions related to family values, social, or cultural norms; . . .) affect lifelong participation in active recreation and healthy leisure . . . (p.194). This realization is not new, and part of the picture can be traced back in Canadian history.

Historical records indicate that many modern team sports were derived from traditional indigenous games. In addition to celebrating this legacy, the games also promote the development of personal and social values. What qualities can be developed through sport and physical activity that are valuable throughout life? (p.176)

Taylor et al. (2015) suggests “many of the links between sport and different social impacts are common, including greater physical competencies, better cognitive skills, better social skills, trust and reciprocity, and identification with social values” (p.4). Being active improves social and health outcomes hence valuing health supports an active lifestyle.

5. Summary

Values education impacts people and “is a way of conceptualizing education that places the search for meaning and purpose at the heart of the educational process” (Jones & Rouw, 2022). Clarification of values and communication in classroom “is central to creating a values-based learning community that fosters positive relationships and quality education (Jones & Rouw, 2022), moreover, Jones and Rouw (2022) believe that by “incorporating a values framework . . . PE, learners can participate peacefully in physical activities, respecting and celebrating diversity within their classroom” (p. 236). Examining content of any resource used in teaching practise seems wise and necessary since values are interwoven within texts. Ontario teachers learn and train to be inclusive and value all students while educating in Ontario. The Ontario Physical Health Education Association (2016) suggests,

it’s important to be proactive . . . to have optimal understanding of themselves and their students before examining any of the topics in a learning environment. Once this is achieved, it’s the responsibility of the teacher to promote open discussion with students by providing a safe,

positive, and confidential (if necessary) environment for students to discuss matters of their own experience. (p.3)

Ontario educators are well trained and strive to be ethical (Ryan, 2021), within a safe and secure teaching environment. Teachers do model ethics and values via behaviour each day and this surfaces via acts honesty, responsibility, trust, and humor while guiding students (Freire, 1996). “As we learn from one-another it is possible to establish an ethic of care in school. This goal can only be achieved in a warm mentoring environment that provides support to all” (Ryan, 2021). Teachers care and model cooperation while offering support to all and “seek-out professional development opportunities to continue to learn and improve the educational conditions” (Ryan, 2021). “In this way, through largely unconscious means, people ‘pick-up’ values from their socio-cultural environment. This happens to all of us and to a large extent makes us what we are” (Beck, 1993, p. 238).

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