



**THE
POVERTY
CHALLENGE**

Teacher Package

October 21, 2016

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Important Information on Poverty in Ottawa

- Ontario Works (OW: welfare) has a maximum of \$681 a month for both basic needs and shelter. That is just \$8,172 per year.
- ODSP (ODSP: Disability Support) has a maximum of \$1100 a month for both basic needs and shelter. That is just \$13,200 per year.
- In Ottawa, someone making less than \$23,298 per year lives below the low income cut off (LICO: poverty line)
- 1 in 9 Ottawa residents live in poverty.
- 25% of single parents in Ottawa live below the LICO poverty line.
- In 2015, the average 1-bedroom apartment in Ottawa cost \$936. The average 3-bedroom apartment cost \$1,415.
- Some of the shelters in Ottawa include:
 - Shepherds of Good Hope
 - The Mission
 - Bruce House
 - The Salvation Army
 - The Women's Emergency Shelter
 - Harmony House
- Food insecurity is more common in households with children and in households with single mothers
- Women who are poor lose 9.7 years off of their life expectancy, and men who are poor lose 11.4 years off of their life expectancy
- The waitlist for subsidized housing in Ottawa varies but it can often be 5 years or more.

Follow-Up Activities

When teaching about poverty, be sensitive. It is important to keep in mind that there might be students in the class who consider themselves poor or who live in a shelter. They might be embarrassed by the discussion or may feel emotional. Furthermore, students who are not living in poverty may also feel embarrassed, guilty or awkward. It is important to ensure that the classroom discussion is respectful and non-discriminatory.

1. Discuss Poverty in your Classroom (provided by Becky Conroy and Devan Sheahan)

Activity 1:

- a) Write the term 'home' on the board. Ask students to think about words, ideas and emotions they associate with the term. Write responses on the board, forming a word web around the term 'home.' Some answers might include: building, space, security, protection, privacy, warmth.
- b) Next to the word chart ask students to list activities people do at 'home.' Answers might include: sleep, eat, read, play, watch TV, do work, and bathe.
Think about getting ready for school in the morning at your home: brushing your teeth, bathing, getting dressed, eating breakfast, etc. What might it be like to do all of these things in a homeless shelter?
- c) What is it like to get ready for school in the car that your family lives in? What is it like to try to do your homework while caring for siblings or in a parents' car?

Activity 2:

- a) Write a response to the question: Why is there so much poverty in such a rich country as Canada?
- b) Form groups of 3 or 4 to share ideas about the causes of poverty.
- c) Brainstorm ways to reduce poverty in Canada.

2. Have Students Try to “Make the Month” (<http://www.makethemonth.ca/>)

Make the Month is an online game created by the United Way to help people understand the reality of people living in poverty in Canada. Gamers must answer a series of questions to see if they can make it to the end of the month on a fixed income.

3. Consider the Impact of Language

As a class, compare city pamphlets detailing social assistance programs from 30 years ago to today. Consider denotation and connotation of the language used and discuss how tone is developed. (The tone has changed!)

4. Become Advocates for Social Change through Film

As a class, brainstorm a few possible solutions and then create videos detailing your proposals. Connect with local poverty reduction activist groups such as Citizens for Public Justice, The Wrench, or ACORN. Go to <https://goo.gl/ihNkW8> for inspiration.

5. Create a Resource for the Community

Many people living in poverty don't have access to the internet. It can be very difficult to find a comprehensive list of places to get help in Ottawa. Ask students to create a flyer that can be dropped off at food and community centres. They can use the list below as a starting point OR you can have them research one of the following resources:

- Diet Allowance
- Camps: Tim Horton's, Christie Lake
- CAS and the Respite Care Program
- City Resources (311)
- Community Information Centre (211)
- Food Banks and Food Centres in Ottawa
- Financial Education Centre
- Housing Help
- Legal Aid
- Registered Disability Savings Plan
- School Breakfast Program
- School Lunches for Kids
- Snowsuit fund
- Subsidy Program for Recreation (City of Ottawa)
- The Ottawa Mission
- The Salvation Army
- The Well

Additional Resources for Students

Canadian Council on Social Development (<http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/>) links to very informative statistics on economic security, family, education, demographics, health, and the labour market in Canada.

Education Foundation (<http://www.educationfoundationottawa.ca/>) of Ottawa helps to ensure that every child's critical needs, as identified by a school principal, can be met. The Foundation is a registered charity and works to support the students of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

Parkdale Food Centre (<http://parkdalefoodcentre.ca/>) strives to provide healthy food, nutritional education and a welcoming environment to community members in needs. The Centre serves people living in Hintonburg, Mechanicsville, Civic Hospital and Welling West neighbourhoods.

Poverty Reduction Ontario: (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/realizing-our-potential-ontarios-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019>) provides information on poverty reduction policies and programs in Ontario.

National Anti-Poverty Organization (<http://www.napo-onap.ca>) provides good fact sheets on poverty and access to an on-line newsletter and a link to key issues on poverty.

The Wrench (<http://ottawawrench.ca/>) is Ottawa's only street newspaper. Its mission is to shed light on local issues pertaining to those experiencing, and at risk of, homelessness in the city.

The Poverty Challenge: Resources for Teachers

Created by Matt Devon and Jesse Keyes-Renaud, 2011

Introduction

Poverty is a world-wide issue that continues to plague society. It is an issue that affects individuals from every age group and virtually every country in the world. This is no different in Canada, where, according to the Canadian Council on Social Development, more than 11% of the population, 3.5 million people, were living in poverty in 2004 (CCSD, Poverty Factsheet, 2010). In all, 684,000 families were living below the poverty line in the same year, with the highest percentage of these families being led by female lone-parents, which constituted 35.6% of families living in poverty (ibid.). The impact this has on families and children is staggering, with one in every eight children under the age of 18 living in poverty (ibid.). Clearly, there is still a great deal that needs to be done in Canada in order to reduce these astounding levels of poverty.

The impact poverty has on students and in the classroom is a severely understudied area in education and in other fields. Considering the unacceptably high numbers of students that live in poverty, this is a travesty. According to a recent report by Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, and Walters, students affected by poverty tend to experience a delay in reading/writing development, increased aggression/violence, social withdrawal, substance abuse, irregular attendance, depression, and/or poor test results (2010). The goal of this report is to educate the public as to the serious consequences that poverty has on students and families, and to provide awareness raising activities and resources that will benefit any interested individuals. Poverty is a serious issue that can be remedied through the collective efforts of a concerned and caring population. Schools, educators, and parents are in a unique position to address these issues and to form vibrant, healthy, and proactive communities.

Impact on Classroom

Studies have shown that a student's social class can seriously affect his or her academic success. Educators, policy makers, and community activists have found that academic success is dramatically lower in urban schools with high levels of poverty (Anisef et al., 2010). Students from low-income households are also more likely to suffer from poor mental and physical health (ibid.). Poverty influences where a family lives, a family's dynamics, whether a student can participate in extra-curricular activities, and even whether a student's basic needs are being met. The Canadian Council on Social Development identified 27 factors that significantly influence child development, including their family situation, neighbourhood, aggression, health, academic scores, and extracurricular involvement (ibid.). A staggering 80% of these elements were related to family income, meaning that the risk of negative developments in children from low-income families is significantly higher than in high-income families (ibid.). Clearly, poverty is a serious issue that limits the opportunities for growth in affected students.

Recent studies have also linked the high school drop-out rate to socioeconomic status. In Ontario, the drop-out rate varied by family income and in 2003 those students from the lowest income levels suffered an 8.3% drop-out rate by age 19 (Anisef et al., 2010). This stands in

marked contrast to those students from the highest family income levels whose postsecondary participation was 40% higher (ibid). Additionally, a recent study conducted by the Toronto District School Board found that ‘neighbourhood effects’ significantly influenced the drop-out rate of students. The study found that “13 percent of the variation in the odds of dropping out can be attributed to neighbourhood level factors” (ibid.). If this statistic is correct then it should be alarming that the “poor” immigrant family population within poverty-stricken areas of Toronto has risen 484 percent since 1981 (ibid.). As many as 65 percent of immigrants are expected to suffer from a low-income period within their first ten years, implying that immigrant youth will face many more obstacles academically, socially, and economically than most other students (ibid.). The high drop-out rates among immigrant students in the TDSB suggests that socioeconomic status is a highly significant factor in determining students’ continued academic success.

Students from the working class face the reality of being less likely to receive academic and financial help from their parents. Access to even basic school resources is dependent largely on an individual’s socioeconomic status (Van Galen, 2000). According to Jane A. Van Galen, students from the working class are less likely to be instructed by teachers who hold a degree in their subject area, and these teachers are much less likely to be satisfied with their working conditions (ibid.). Evidently, issues of class and poverty significantly impact the lives of many students, at home and at school. Answers need to be sought to deal with these problems, as they may very well limit the opportunities of students from a working class background.

Identifying Poverty

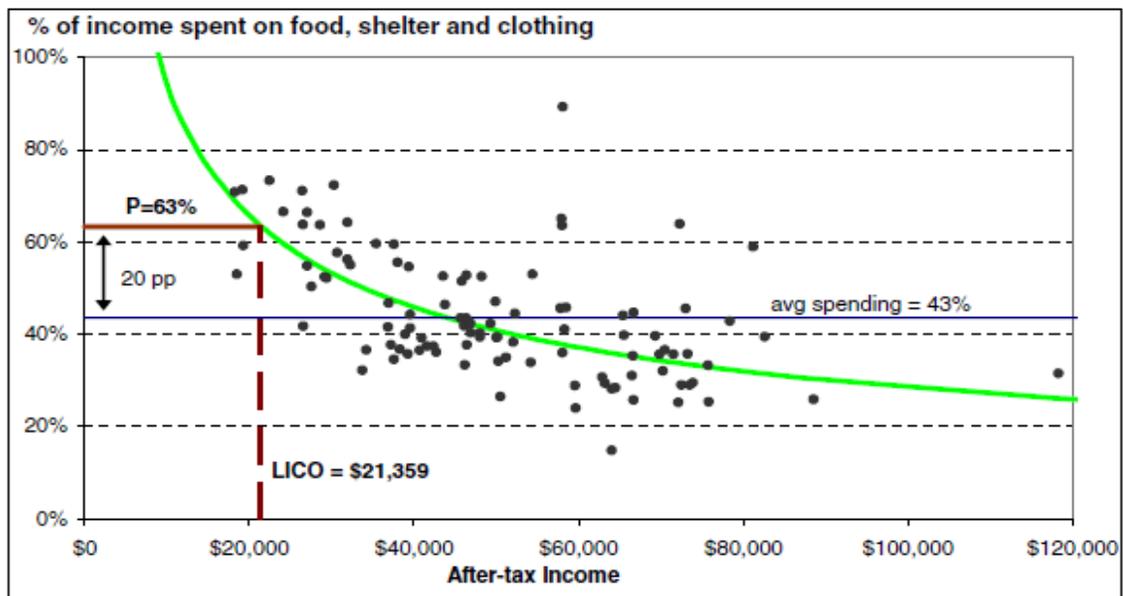
Van Galen utilizes an already existing framework for defining the term “class”. She writes, “the class location of most individuals fall[s] along the dimensions of authority within the workplace and the possession of scarce skills and/or expertise” (Van Galen, 2000). Therefore, an individual with little authority in the workplace and who lacks sought after skills will be relegated to the lower classes in society. Galen discusses the difficulty teachers and administrators face in trying to identify students from working-class families. It is because of the “invisibility” of class that it is difficult to record the educational experiences of children from low-income families (ibid.). If a teacher cannot identify a student’s class, how can s/he attempt to ameliorate any disadvantages that student might face?

It is difficult to gather accurate data regarding poverty because Statistics Canada does not explicitly make reference to ‘poverty lines’, perhaps because of the negative connotation associated with the term. What is used by many analysts to determine who is living below the poverty line is Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICOs). A LICO is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing (Statistics Canada, 2010). Essentially, the approach is to estimate an income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing (ibid.).

According to the most recent base for LICOs, the *1992 Family Expenditures Survey*, the average family spent 43% of its after-tax income on food, shelter and clothing (ibid.). LICOs are updated

using the *Consumer Price Index* – an indicator of changes in consumer prices experienced by Canadians – which is obtained by comparing, through time, the cost of a fixed basket of commodities purchased by consumers (ibid.).

The figure below shows the calculation of a LICO using the example of a family of four living in an urban community with a population between 30,000 and 99,999. The 63% line represents the average proportion of after-tax income that all families (regardless of size) spent on food, shelter and clothing in 1992 (i.e. 43%) plus the 20 percentage point margin. The dots on the chart show the actual observed proportion of income spent by four-person families in medium-sized cities on necessities, according to the 1992 Family Expenditure Survey. A regression line is fitted to this distribution and the intersection of that curve and the 63% line gives the LICO—in this case, \$21,359 (ibid.).



The table below shows the after tax Low Income Cut-Offs, based on community and family size, for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Table 1 Low income cut-offs (1992 base) after tax (continued)

Size of family unit	Community size				
	Rural areas	Urban areas			
		Less than 30,000 ¹	30,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 499,999	500,000 and over
Current dollars					
2007					
1 person	11,745	13,441	14,994	15,184	17,954
2 persons	14,295	16,360	18,250	18,480	21,851
3 persons	17,800	20,370	22,725	23,011	27,210
4 persons	22,206	25,414	28,352	28,709	33,946
5 persons	25,287	28,940	32,285	32,691	38,655
6 persons	28,044	32,095	35,805	36,255	42,869
7 or more persons	30,801	35,250	39,324	39,819	47,084
2008					
1 person	12,019	13,754	15,344	15,538	18,373
2 persons	14,628	16,741	18,676	18,911	22,361
3 persons	18,215	20,845	23,255	23,548	27,844
4 persons	22,724	26,007	29,013	29,378	34,738
5 persons	25,876	29,614	33,037	33,453	39,556
6 persons	28,698	32,843	36,640	37,100	43,869
7 or more persons	31,519	36,072	40,241	40,747	48,181
2009					
1 person	12,050	13,791	15,384	15,579	18,421
2 persons	14,666	16,785	18,725	18,960	22,420
3 persons	18,263	20,900	23,316	23,610	27,918
4 persons	22,783	26,075	29,089	29,455	34,829
5 persons	25,944	29,692	33,124	33,541	39,660
6 persons	28,773	32,929	36,736	37,198	43,984
7 or more persons	31,602	36,167	40,346	40,854	48,308

Identifying Poverty in the Classroom

In the classroom, although teachers see their students on a daily basis, they may not be aware of those who are living in reduced circumstances. Unfortunately, students experiencing poverty will not always explicitly disclose their problems to their teachers or to their peers, but rather, may implicitly suggest them through irregular behaviour. Such behaviour may be difficult to identify as caused by poverty because it may occur in many students. A more troubling situation surrounds those students experiencing poverty who maintain a reserved personality. It is easy for these students to fly under the radar and thus struggle, on their own, with the emotional burdens associated with poverty. Fortunately, teachers have the legal responsibility to act in *loco parentis* – in the place of a reasonable, prudent, caring, and judicious parent – and thus must understand their legal duty to provide a high standard of care and appropriate protection for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the students for whom they are responsible (Kutsyuruba, 2011). Teachers must recognize this legal responsibility by being aware of the issues affecting their students' lives. Trustworthy relationships must be developed between students and teachers in order to create a comfortable atmosphere that fosters communication.

Teachers cannot idly educate their students. They must be aware of the issues and burdens that their students bring to the classroom every day and be able to recognize irregular behaviour that might suggest a student is struggling with poverty. Active communication with both the student and guardian will help further the teacher's ability to identify poverty in the classroom.

What You Can Do

Poverty has an enormous impact on families and children. With one in every eight children under the age of 18 suffering from poverty (CCSD, Poverty Factsheet, 2010), it is a problem that has to be addressed. The following is a list of actions and ideas that can alleviate the impact of poverty in the classroom and community.

- Establish Breakfast Clubs at school or volunteer in existing clubs.
- Create or volunteer at after-school programs (provide homework help, an after-school snack, and activities for students.)
- Establish a positive classroom environment in which every student feels included and safe.
- Raise poverty awareness in your community (through existing organizations or your own efforts).
- Seek financial support for school trips (some museums and other institutions offer grants to schools in low-income communities).
- Organize fundraisers for groups that fight poverty (ie. UNICEF, World Vision, etc.).
- Volunteer at a local shelter or relief agency.
- Involve parents of students in the school and school community.
- Establish links between the school, local community, and businesses (to support vulnerable students).

- Participate in the Poverty Challenge
- Develop vulnerable families' **social capital** (See paragraph below).

The concept of **social capital** is important to consider in understanding the relationship between education and poverty. There are three different kinds of social capital that are considered important in making people successful. Bonding capital refers to our close family and friends who usually belong to the same socio-economic background (Anisef et al, 2010). The next, bridging capital, connects individuals from a variety of backgrounds (ibid.). Bridging capital is what links individuals to mainstream society, information, and services that might be otherwise unavailable to the individual. (ibid.). Terrier discusses a third type of social capital called linking, which links individuals to other sympathetic people in positions of power and provides access to resources, ideas, and information from institutions beyond the community (Terrier, 2006). Developing the social capital of vulnerable families will create support networks for them that ease stress and feelings of isolations (ibid.). With this in mind, Terrier suggests that parents of vulnerable children become involved in the academic lives of their children. The idea behind this is that parents are in a unique position to shape their children's attitudes towards learning, and also have the opportunity to be positive role models. Also, through parent involvement in the school, these adults will become more comfortable working alongside educators (ibid.)

Conclusion

Poverty affects a considerable portion of the population and has significant consequences for families and students. The effects of poverty on schooling cannot be denied. Youth growing up in poverty are also at much higher risks of social withdrawal, substance abuse, depression, and increased aggression and violence (Anisef et al, 2010). The prevalence of breakfast programs in most Ontario schools is proof that there are many students whose basic needs are not being met. Despite this and many other programs aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty, there is a great deal more to be done. This includes creating inclusive classrooms and eliminating the stigmas associated with poverty.

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Ontario Secondary Curriculum Expectations Relevant to The Poverty Challenge

Course: Food and Nutrition, Grade 9 or 10, Open (HFN 10/ HFN 20). Revised 1999.

Strand: Diversity, Interdependence, and Global Connections

Overall Expectations

- identify food supply and production industries in Canada

Specific Expectations: Global Food Issues

- identify the causes of hunger in Canada and the world and list some possible strategies for alleviating hunger

Course: Individual and Family Living, Grade 9 or 10, Open (HIF 10/HIF 20). Revised 1999.

Strand: Social Challenges

Overall Expectations

- analyse how a changing society affects individuals and families
- describe strategies by which individuals and family members manage resources in a changing environment

Specific Expectations: Family and Society

- explain how government, non-profit, and business organizations assist families in performing their functions (e.g., how secondary schools, the YMCA, and a local organization assist families)
- demonstrate an understanding of the natural tension that exists between family and government as a result of government policy
- describe the role of employment and income in enabling families to perform their functions

Course: Canadian History Since World War I, Grade 10, Academic (CHC 2D). Revised: 2005.

Strand: Citizenship and Heritage

Overall Expectations

- analyse the contributions of various social and political movements in Canada since 1914

Specific Expectations: Social and Political Movements

- explain how pacifist groups, human rights organizations, and the civil rights movement have influenced Canadian society (e.g., Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, Amnesty International)

Strand: Social, Economic, and Political Structures

Overall Expectations

- analyse how changing economic and social conditions have affected Canadians since 1914

Specific Expectations: Changing Role of Government

- explain how and why social welfare programs (e.g., old age pensions, unemployment/ employment insurance, family allowance, medicare) were designed, and assess their effectiveness in meeting the needs of various segments of society

Course: Civics, Grade 10, Open (CHV 20) Revised: 2005.

Strand: Active Citizenship

Overall Expectations

- apply appropriate inquiry skills to the research of questions and issues of civic importance
- demonstrate an understanding of the various ways in which decisions are made and conflicts resolved in matters of civic importance, and the various ways in which individual citizens participate in these processes.

Specific Expectations: Inquiry Skills

- communicate the results of inquiries into important civic issues, using a variety of forms (e.g., discussions and debates, posters, letters to elected officials, Web pages, visual organizers, dramatizations)

Specific Expectations: The Resolution of Public Issues and Citizenship Participation

- demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which individual citizens can obtain information and explanations or voice opinions about important civic matters (e.g., by communicating with the appropriate elected officials or bureaucratic departments; by writing letters or e-mails to the media; by organizing petitions; by voting)
- demonstrate an understanding of their responsibilities as local, national, and global citizens by applying their knowledge of civics, and skills related to purposeful and active citizenship, to a project of personal interest and civic importance (e.g., participating in food and clothing drives; visiting seniors; participating in community festivals, celebrations, and events)

Course: The Individual and the Economy, Grade 11, University/College Preparation (CIE 3M). Revised: 2005.

Strand: Economic Decision Making

Overall Expectations:

- explain how the scarcity of economic resources requires individuals and societies to make economic choices

Specific Expectation: Scarcity and Choice

- explain, using specific examples, the economic problem of scarcity and the choices and trade-offs that individuals and societies must make

Specific Expectations: Employment Trends

- analyse the causes of specific types of unemployment (e.g., frictional, seasonal, structural, cyclical) and their impact on career choices

Strand: Economic Stakeholders

Overall Expectations

- analyse the factors that influence consumer demand and satisfaction in the marketplace
- explain a variety of ways in which individuals (“producers”) contribute to the economy
- analyse the factors that affect the socio-economic position of people in Canada
- describe the economic rights and responsibilities of citizens

Specific Expectations: Socio-economic Groups

- assess how government policies (e.g., with respect to user fees, taxation, rent controls, resource development) affect various socio-economic groups
- analyse how various socio-economic groups are affected by changes in prices, in incomes, and in their own needs at different life stages

Course: Canadian Politics and Citizenship, Grade 11, Open (CPC 3O). Revised: 2005.

Strand: Citizenship, Democracy, and Participation

Overall Expectations

- evaluate the influence of various forms of citizen action on public policy

Specific Expectations: Active Citizenship

- identify opportunities for citizens to participate in governmental and non-governmental political decision making at the community, municipal, provincial, federal, and international levels (e.g., elections, lobbying, demonstrations, petitions, public consultation on proposed changes in laws)

Specific Expectations: Identity and Participation

- describe the barriers to participation (e.g., language, homelessness, ethnicity, disability) and representation in the political process faced by various social groups, and identify strategies to overcome these barriers through the legislative process

Course: Living Spaces and Shelter, Grade 11, Open (HLS 3O). Revised: 2000.

Strand: Shelter for Everyone

Overall Expectations

- demonstrate an understanding of social realities related to living spaces and shelter in Canada and abroad
- identify the ways in which political, social, economic, and technological trends, as well as psychological factors, affect available types of shelter

Specific Expectations: Shelter for Special Markets

- demonstrate an understanding of sociological, psychological, political, and economic factors connected with dwellings for specialized markets (e.g., criteria for tenant eligibility; geared-to-income and subsidized housing, Habitat For Humanity homes, trailer parks, homes in northern First Nations communities) and of societal attitudes towards those living in such dwellings

Course: Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology, Grade 11, University/College Preparation (HSP 3M). Revised: 2000.

Strand: Social Structures and Institutions

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate an understanding of recent structural changes in work and education and of the impact these changes have on Canadian society

Specific Expectations: Social Structure: The World of Work

- identify current trends in Canadian employment and unemployment patterns, using information from Statistics Canada, and analyse the influence these trends have on individuals, groups, and communities

Course: Analysing Current Economic Issues, Grade 12, University Preparation (CIA 4U). Revised: 2005

Strand: Economic Decision Making

Overall Expectations

- analyse the causes and consequences of economic instability and the effectiveness of stabilization policies designed to help Canadians achieve an appropriate level of economic security

Specific Expectation: Scarcity and Choice

- identify specific examples of economic choices – both individual (e.g., for whom to work) and collective (e.g., what level of government spending is needed or appropriate) that Canadians must make because economic resources are scarce;

Specific Expectations: Economic Stability

- evaluate the effectiveness of government legislation (e.g., related to employment standards/health and safety legislation) and programs (e.g., education, health care, employment insurance, pensions, welfare) designed to enhance the economic security of Canadians

Course: Canada: History, Identity, and Culture, Grade 12, University Preparation (CHI 4U). Revised: 2005

Strand: Social, Economic, and Political Structures

Overall Expectations

- analyse changes in Canadian social programs and policies over time
- evaluate the impact of Canada's national and international economic policies on Canadian identity and sovereignty

Specific Expectations: Social Programs and Policies

- describe the history, development, and extent of Canada's social programs (e.g. unemployment/employment insurance, family allowance, medicare, pension plans, welfare/social assistance, subsidized daycare)

Course: Challenge and Change in Society, Grade 12, University/ College Preparation (HSB 4M).

Revised: 2000

Strand: Social Change

Overall Expectations

- describe key features of major theories from anthropology, psychology, and sociology that focus on change
- analyse patterns of technological change from the perspectives of anthropology, psychology, and sociology

Specific Expectations: Forces That Influence Social Change

- demonstrate an understanding of how social change is influenced by poverty and affluence (e.g., consequences of unequal access to personal computers or higher education)

Strand: Social Challenges

Overall Expectations

- appraise the differences and similarities in the approaches taken by anthropology, psychology, and sociology to the study of social challenges pertaining to health, social injustice, and global concerns
- demonstrate an understanding of the social forces that shape such challenges

Specific Expectations: Challenges Facing Canadians in a Global Context

- analyse, from a Canadian perspective, the social structures that support, and those that weaken, global inequalities (e.g., literacy, poverty, new technologies)
- evaluate, from a psychological perspective, the role of perception in Canadians' understanding of themselves, their families, and their local and global communities