

WOMEN'S EQUALITY



The women's movement is a movement intended to achieve social justice and equity for all people. Through an exploration of economics and the workplace, education, gender-based violence, health, politics and the law, pop culture and the arts and social movements, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's Women's Equality Project honours the contributions to society made by diverse women and non-binary people.

The full resource consists of 7 modules and a teacher resource. To purchase it, please contact ShopETFO.

This excerpt titled Women's Equality in the Key Concepts section of the Teacher Resource and was written by Stephanie Fearon.

CONTEXT

Women's equality is a fundamental human right and cornerstone of an inclusive society. Countries around the world, including Canada, have made commitments to uphold the rights of women and girls (OHCHR, 2018). Despite such measures, women worldwide continue to face discrimination in all aspects of social, political and economic life (OECD, 2017).

WHAT IS FEMINISM?

Feminism addresses gender inequalities. Feminism champions the rights of women to fully contribute at home, at work and in public life, for the betterment of society at large (OECD, 2017).

To achieve this aim, feminism seeks to:

- dismantle patriarchy; and
- secure equal rights for women and girls.

Feminism understands that individuals hold multiple identities (Bell, 2016). As a result, feminism recognizes that sexism intersects with other forms of discrimination, like racism, classism, transphobia, ableism and more, to oppress women (Crenshaw, 2015; Bell, 2016).

Acknowledging the ways that identities connect, overlap and influence one another has given women, girls and advocates a way to frame their circumstances and to fight for their inclusion and visibility (Bell, 2016; Crenshaw, 2015).

WHAT IS PATRIARCHY?

Feminist theory defines patriarchy as a social system that imposes oppressive gender roles. This unjust system evokes male dominance over women. Feminism reveals and critically analyzes the ways that patriarchy privileges men, as well as limits the aspirations, opportunities and rights of women and girls.

WHAT DOES FEMINISM HAVE TO DO WITH TEACHING AND LEARNING?

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (2002) and its members are committed to social justice and equity. Ontario educators work alongside students and their families to change unfair systems internally, in education, and in society (ETFO, 2002).

Feminist pedagogy transforms educators and students into agents of social change for women's equality (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015). These social change makers are committed to community, leadership and voice in the classroom and beyond.

The goals of feminist pedagogy are to (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015):

- raise students' consciousness about patriarchal oppression;
- empower students to take action; and
- help students develop specific strategies for activism.

DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE

How do I begin to reimagine my classroom as a feminist space?

Feminist pedagogy supports students and educators to become agents of change for gender equality (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015).

In classrooms around the world, students have advocated for women's rights by organizing:

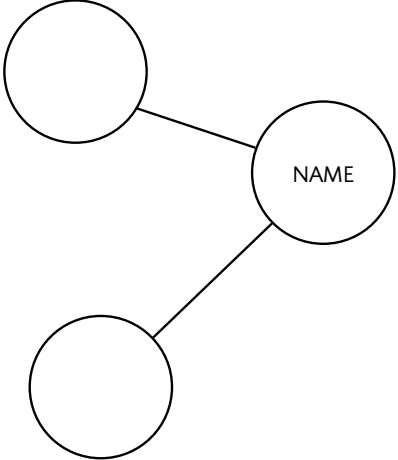
- letter-writing campaigns;
- national women's marches;
- picketing events; and
- social media movements (e.g., #metoo, #bringbackourgirls, #sayhername).

TRY IT OUT!

There are many ways to explore the concept of feminism with students. One way is to investigate the experiences of feminists from around the world.* Take a look at the prompts below and try them out with your students:

Another way to learn about feminism is to investigate the experiences of local and international movements. When developing learning tasks that examine the work of specific feminists and women's movements, reflect on the following questions:

- How does the learning task critically explore the fluid and overlapping identities of individual women?
- How does the learning task highlight that one woman's experiences with privilege and oppression are not identical to another's?
- How does the lesson help students learn about the varying and intersecting forms of discrimination endured by diverse women?
- How does the lesson encourage students to learn more about the varied experiences of women (locally and globally)?
- How does the learning task disrupt stereotypes about gender?
- How does the lesson provoke students to investigate the ways that patriarchy is reproduced and reinforced in their community and beyond?
- How does the learning task challenge students to work for women's rights in their school and local community?
- How does the learning task push students to confront their own identities, biases and experiences of privilege and oppression?
- How does the learning task connect to the curriculum?

TRY ASKING	TRY DOING						
<p>Which identities does your chosen feminist hold? Which identities are privileged in society? Which are not?</p>	<p>Create an identity map:</p> 						
<p>What forms of discrimination does/did your chosen feminist face? How can we learn more about these forms of discrimination?</p>	<p>Make a list of obstacles faced by your chosen feminist. Identify which obstacles are individual, institutional and beliefs/ideas.**</p>						
<p>How does your chosen feminist champion the rights of women and girls?</p>	<p>Brainstorm a list of actions undertaken by your chosen feminist.</p>						
<p>After learning about your chosen feminist, what are you curious about?</p>	<p>Create a K-W-L Chart.***</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1094 1381 1497 1625"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1094 1381 1217 1451">K</th> <th data-bbox="1217 1381 1358 1451">W</th> <th data-bbox="1358 1381 1497 1451">L</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1094 1451 1217 1625"></td> <td data-bbox="1217 1451 1358 1625"></td> <td data-bbox="1358 1451 1497 1625"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	K	W	L			
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*Volumes one and two of *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo contain hundreds of stories about the lives of women from the past and present. The women featured in these books have overcome obstacles and positively impacted the world.

**Individual: Inappropriate jokes (sexist, racist, homophobic, classist, etc.); Institutional: School courses ignoring the histories/contributions of Indigenous women; Beliefs/Ideas: Women make poor leaders.

***K – I know W – I wonder L – I learned