

Considering Education and Social Class: A Case Study of the Toronto District School Board and the Availability of Democratically Enriching Electives.

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Preface

This project was conducted without human participants and is therefore exempt from a formal Ethics Review.

Abstract

This Master's Thesis explores the relationship between course availability in the Toronto District School Board and democratic education relative to socio-economic status of the student. This project combines Instrumentalist and Cultural privilege theories to better understand how course selection can impact citizen construction. In addition, prior scholarly work on democratic citizenship was utilized to determine indicators of "Fundamental Democratic Values" within curriculum documents. Utilizing [ATLAS.TI](#) to evaluate courses for these "Fundamental Democratic Values", this project was able to examine the course offerings of 5 cases, and consider the potential correlation between income based wealth and higher access to courses which promote the values necessary for effective democratic engagement. Due to this correlation, it is reasonable to suspect the potential for differences in access based on class to be impacting democratic engagement. The results of this first line of analysis into these topics indicate that access to courses which promote "Fundamental Democratic Values" could be connected to socio-economic status, emphasizing the necessity of further research into this topic.

Résumé

Cette thèse de maîtrise est ciblée sur le connecteur entre l'évaluabilité du cours en le Toronto District School Board et l'éducation Démocratique relative à la classe socio-économique des élèves. Ce projet combine la théorie Instrumentaliste et le théorie du Cultural Privilège pour plus bien comprendre comment la course availability peut impacter construction citoyenne. En plus, littérature de démocratie citoyenne utilisé pour déterminer indicateurs de « Fundamental Democratic Values » dans les documents curriculum. En utilisant atlas.ti pour évaluer les cours pour ce « Fundamental Democratic Values » ce projet a examiné les offres de cours de cinq écoles, et examiner la corrélation potentielle entre richesse basée sur le revenu et plus accès de cours avec plus de valeurs démocratiques. parce qu'il existe une corrélation entre ces questions, c'est juste demander si il y a un différence en accès basée en classe impactant en l'engagement démocratique. Les résultats de ce projet indiquent la nécessité de poursuivre les recherches dans ce domaine.

Introduction

Education has taken the forefront as a highly publicized and debated issue in the province of Ontario. The province is currently facing an epidemic of student absenteeism following the COVID-19 pandemic (Callan & D'Mello, Global News, 2026), coupled with continuous declines in academic performance¹ over the last ten years (CMEC 2022, 6) as well as controversial action being taken by the provincial government, introducing sweeping changes to the funding and administration of Ontario's education system. As of 2026, Ontario's education budget faces widespread criticism for failing to address concerns of underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, and reduced opportunities for students (OSSTF, 2026). According to a People for Education report, the Ontario Government neglected to put forth a plan to address continued issues of inequality in Ontario's classrooms (2023,12). Inequality in schools, particularly that associated with economic inequality, not only results in real inconsistencies of outcome for students, but fundamentally undermines democratic principles including equity, inclusion and diversity (Chmielewski & Maharaj, 2022, 5). In comparison to international measures of socio-economic segregation, Ontario ranks "low-to-medium", and medium relative to other provinces within Canada (Ibid, 17). Despite this, Ontario maintains that it is committed to providing a fair and equitable education to all students (Ontario, 2024). The tension between this claim and the aforementioned concerns illustrates the necessity of scholarly work interrogating socio-economic equality in Ontario's education.

While the expectation of equally accessible education extends to all forms of schooling in Ontario, high school (secondary school) education better represents this "universal" ideal in Canada due to higher accessibility and compulsory attendance requirements (differentiating it from postsecondary education), and will be the focus of this project. There are many valid ways to evaluate education, however, curriculum in Ontario carries the unique benefit of uniformity. The province provides clearly defined expectations about what information needs to be communicated within curriculum documents

¹ In the fields of reading, math and science

provided to schools. These documents make clear what information the government of Ontario prioritizes when educating future citizens, making the Ontario curriculum ideal for considering how education is intended to be executed by the province.

Education in Ontario serves a “democratic” purpose in addition to standard understandings of schooling to transmit necessary knowledge and skill. Education as an institution is expected to impress upon all students equally the importance of their democratic responsibilities, a process often referred to as “citizen construction” as will be elaborated below (Hess and Torney 1967, 101). This sentiment is additionally echoed in Ontario’s education act (Education Act, 1990, c.25 s.1). These commitments, coupled with the concerns of inequality outlined prior, underline the democratic importance of interrogating Ontario’s position in regards to accessibility in opposition to all forms of inequality, though this project focuses on socio-economic inequality. This paper will consider socio-economic inequality in Ontario by evaluating the role secondary school plays in democratic education through the evaluation of curriculum documents.

Key Definitions and Theories

In line with related authors in the subject area, this project is viewed through the lens of a socially constructed world deploying critical education and class theory. Theories of socially constructed reality exist in opposition to the positivist tradition of pursuing objective truth within academia, largely hailing from the fields of critical thought (Jones, 2023, 80, Freire, 2005, 16).

At its core, a theory of socially constructed reality hinges on the rejection of traditional assumptions in academia that “knowledge” is a reflection of objective truths evident in the “realities” of the world we live in. In other words, the traditional belief is that objective truths are translated into language, which can be transferred between individuals to spread “knowledge”. As described by Gergen in *Social Construction and the Educational Process*, the resulting traditional knowledge hierarchies are formulated based on those who can “reflect the world most accurately” (2012, 26). Theories of social

construction, on the other hand, interpret “reality” as translated through the mind in a fundamentally transformative way, conditioned by social structures of class, race, gender, etc. Due to this, the resulting language translations cannot be separated from said social structures, and “legitimate” or authoritative claims are found to be such not due to their “accuracy” to objective truth, but rather how they gel with the experiences (“knowledge”) of colleagues within the academic sphere (Ibid, 24). If a state itself carries biases- which Canada certainly does, those biases will be reflected in all institutions of the state (including the education system). In the context of the actual education system, Gergen posits that the “language” through which “knowledge” is translated in this institution is primarily written, including texts, journals, and for this project’s purposes, curriculum documents (2012, 23).

This project will also utilize theories of Instrumentalism and Cultural Privilege. Instrumentalism dictates that education can (and should) be utilized as an arm of the state to influence citizenry. Students are understood as capable of absorbing information in education outside of that provided in direct instruction from curriculum, meaning that while students are learning course material, they are acquiring additional information which will play a role in constructing their values and behaviours. This shapes the norms and values they carry into adulthood as well as their perception of self to world, including norms about socio-economic hierarchies (as in our case). Cultural Privilege theory expands upon this concept, dictating that a classist education system filters students based on perceptions of “culture” evident largely in extra-curricular activities, but also interests. Since “interests” as a behaviour are shaped by the information translated by the school, the types and content of the courses available to students fundamentally shapes how they come to understand themselves not only personally, but economically and politically. Essentially, we posit that the availability of elective “interest” courses with democratically enriching content informs students about the relevance of said content to their lives. Instrumentalism dictates that education is a state institution responsible and capable of transmitting democratic values, social construction acknowledges how state institutions are conditioned by social biases (including

classism), and Cultural Privilege stresses that unequal knowledge transfer of democratic values along class lines has potential to create democratically unengaged citizens.

The potential for external factors such as socio-economic status (SES) to impact the educational process of citizen construction has broad implications for Canadian democracy, because the education system is the primary institution through which the state is allowed to shape its future citizens, politically. All students of the Canadian education system go through a certain amount of required civics training at the secondary school level. Education in Canada is a provincial responsibility, meaning the majority of funding comes from provincial taxes, and the provincial government maintains primary control over educational agenda setting including constructing curriculum (Wallner, 2014, 122). Notably, there has been a concerted effort post the second World War to “expand educational opportunities and to remove the persistent barriers separating the classes” across Canada as a whole (Ibid, 230). Overall, provincial education in Canada operates with an outcome-based curriculum focussed on transmitting the necessary skills required for adult citizens, including engaging democratically (Ibid, 124).

Ontario’s Education Act defines the purpose of education in Ontario to be providing “students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society.” (Education Act, 1990, c.25 s.1). If schools only fulfill this purpose for some students and not others, they fail to uphold the democratic expectation of equality of opportunity and access. One of the core tenets of modern liberal democratic societies is equal opportunity for all, this sentiment is reflected by Ontario’s requirement that all educators consider and prevent potential inequalities in the education system, stating: “Ontario’s education system, at all levels, must...work towards identifying and eliminating barriers to equal treatment in education that limit the abilities of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society.” (Considerations for Program Planning, Ontario, 2024).

There are several key definitions integral to understanding the nuances of this project. To begin, we reiterate that this project utilizes a lens which understands the world as being socially constructed, and all “knowledge” to be the result of translations of reality into language which is then socially evaluated and refined. We also approach this project with a critical understanding of “Class”, based on the Marxist principle that the social stratifications of individuals in a capitalist society are dependent on one’s role in the economic means of production, as described by Jones (2023. 42). This descriptive concept is further refined by Bourdieu in relation to culture, positing that class extends beyond material wealth to “Cultural Capital”, described as a “subordinate” form of capital to wealth, but indicative of a “temporally dominant position in the field of cultural production” which serves to reinforce the aforementioned social stratifications via the internalization of individuals (1988, 36). “Cultural Privilege” refers to the level of authority in which an individual draws from their cultural capital. This term is closely related to class inequality, which refers to the advantages and disadvantages innately present as a result of one’s social class. We tie these concepts to education via Instrumentalism, which refers to the integral role education plays in transmitting the societal order (morals, values, and norms) defined by the state to individuals within the state. The most obvious means of the state transmitting political information and values via education is Civic Education, which refers to the education students receive on the knowledge and duties of citizenship. This is not to be confused with Democratic Education, which is a concept of *ideal* education in order to produce a democratically engaged citizen. The tenets of democratic education are outlined by Martha Nussbaum, including but not limited to empathy, critical thought, respect for diversity, etc (2012, 25) and will be elaborated on further in this paper. Courses which effectively teach these skills are referred to as “democratically enriching”. A student who internalizes these concepts is adequately prepared for “Political Engagement”, which refers to interaction between the individual and the state, this includes but is not limited to “political participation”, which typically refers to descriptive means of political action such as voting, contributing to polls, or joining a political party.

Research Question and Roadmap

Ontario's civic participation falls within the bottom 39% of Canadian voters by region, ranking 9th out of the 13 provinces and territories (OECD, 2026). Low income Canadians face more hardship as a result of cuts to institutions (including education, healthcare, etc.) due to their struggle to seek private alternatives, therefore a reasonable expectation that individuals would politically engage to address these issues could be expected. Despite this, when discussing dynamics of democratic participation scholars repeatedly return to the following issue: the lower classes are not motivated to vote, and when they are, they are often perceived to vote against their own self interest (Cramer 2016, 4). According to an article published by Statistics Canada, wealth, or "economic well-being" indicators such as home ownership and lower working hours (below 60 hours a week) are positively correlated with voter participation (Uppal and LaRoche-Côté, 2012, 8). University education was also a major positive contributor to voter turnout (ibid, 5-6), which is notable as university is not a financially accessible option for the lower classes without accruing large amounts of student debt.

If the civic education mechanism in Canada is failing to prepare only some groups to participate in their democracy, it indicates not only an illiberal inconsistency in Canadian education, but an injustice in Canadian Democracy. This is why the work explored in this paper is vital to democratic study, and leads to our general research question: Does Socio-economic status appear as a conditioning factor influencing access to citizen constructing courses in Ontario's secondary education system? This project will consider the democratic implications of the types and availability of non-compulsory "elective" or "interest" courses within the Toronto District Schoolboard (TDSB) on the civic construction of students from varying socio-economic backgrounds.

The following paper will begin with a review of key literature groups relevant to this project, including the ties between class and educational systems, describing how education functions as an arm of the state and thus carries the class biases inherent to the state within it. We will then expand upon the role

of education in civic development, specifically how education can serve to bolster or demotivate the citizenry to politically engage. Utilizing this understanding, we will then explore the scholarly work that has been done on how to effectively educate towards an engaged citizenry. The final section will outline the intention of this paper to address tensions between the more material realities of wealth and education and the conceptual concepts of class and knowledge transfer. This intention will then be further refined in the theoretical framework section, will elaborate on the aforementioned major theories of this project; Instrumentalism and Cultural Privilege. This section concludes with the patchwork theory of this paper; that elective or interest courses serve as a potential pathway to culture, and that inequalities in access along class lines to courses which could be considered instrumentally vital to democratic education may be a potential factor in a politically demotivated lower class.

The methodology of this project utilizes purposeful or “judgemental” sampling in order to select cases ideal for our considerations while accounting for our limited scope, selecting five schools of relevant demographics within the TDSB due to its unique economic qualities. From these case studies we created a list of elective courses, which were then individually evaluated for fundamental democratic values (FDVs) derived from relevant literature on the topic. This includes values such as the ability to critically engage with information (“Critical Perspective”), fostering a respect and desire for equality (“Equality”) or promoting a view of the World system as interconnected and downplaying individualist or nationalistic tendencies (“World Citizenship). Using this data, we could effectively evaluate the proportions of democratically enriching electives at each school, utilizing a control or “average” school as well as data from the overall course pool to create proportional thresholds that we could reasonably expect all cases to meet. In our discussion section, we elaborate on further findings including what subjects were offered, how our project compares to other school evaluations in Canada, and differentiations between courses the schools *claimed* to offer but in reality had not run in the most recent school year.

The central findings of this project are as follows; the proportion of “highly” democratically enriching courses declines in line with our wealth indicators, meaning that in low income areas students have less access to courses most proficient at transmitting the necessary values to foster engaged democratic citizenry. To this effect, we found that the “richest” school of our cases actually *exceeded* the proportional threshold for high FDV courses by 2 percentage points, while the “poorest” school failed to meet this threshold by 1 percentage point. The results of this project are alarming, and indicate a clear necessity for further research into class inequality in relation to democratic value transmission in Canada. While there is recent and relevant literature regarding class inequality and education as a whole, these works are primarily centered around the United States and the United Kingdom, and typically do not focus on the transmission of democratic values specifically. Works which are concerned with democratic values tend to primarily focus on teaching methodology and reform rather than critical class theory, and once again are not housed in Canada. This is the first study of its kind to focus on the transmission of democratic values along class lines in a Canadian context.

Literature Review

The scholarship most influential to this project has been categorized based on topic into three categories. The first category outlines the ties between education and class, centering the works of Foucault, Bourdieu, Freire and Porter to illustrate how state institutions such as schools can serve to transmit class values and reinforce class barriers in a capitalist system. The second category pivots to consider how education can effectively construct a democratic citizen, with particular focus on education scholars whose work interrogates traditionalist methods of education as merely “knowledge transmission” including Dewey, Ranciere, and Nussbaum. Finally, we consider how civic education can be tied to meaningful political engagement, exploring the significant literature on what methods of educating students are best to motivate future political activity. The final section will illustrate how all these topics are utilized into the central ethos of this project; combining the material and theoretical to develop a nuanced understanding of democratic education and class inequality.

Class and Education

As described in the introduction, this project is deeply rooted in the work of scholars concerned with class and domination. For this reason, it is important to begin our literature review with previous scholarship which has drawn connections between class and educational institutions. There is a considerable body of work regarding the domination of lower classes, but the role education plays in this system is typically underplayed in reports pertaining to Ontario's education system (as will be described below). In this section we will make clear how education is deeply tied to issues of class inequality.

An example to this effect is the work of Michel Foucault. The Foucauldian concept of *self-reinforcement* as surmised in *Discipline and Punish* is easily connected to education. This describes the phenomena where domination is not only (or even mostly) imposed on the object by the powerful, but also "transmitted by them and through them" as societal norms "localized in the relations between the state and its citizens." (Foucault 1995, 21). Essentially, Foucault highlights that class domination is a process which extends beyond the overt coercion of an individual by an authority, it is also an internal process by which a person constructs their own identity in adherence with their perceived "role" in societal hierarchies. The information they take in around them, informs how they understand the self.

To Foucault, "power-knowledge relations" are fundamentally an issue of *what can be known*, - this is the information the individual utilizes to construct the self, and what can be known is dictated by those in power (Ibid.). Thus, the education system as an arm of knowledge *transmission* seems particularly relevant as it functions to literally teach social norms. This said, the work of *Discipline and Punish* prioritizes the prison system over educational institutions. When it does focus on education, this work is primarily interested in the ways schools mirror military and correctional institutions, either through surveillance or disciplinary judgement (Ibid, 391, 406). This relationship is further explored in depth in the collection of essays by Foucault scholars in *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge and Power in Education* (Baker, 1998, 137, Fendler, 1998, 58, Simola et.al., 1998, 77, Hultqvist, 1998, 100).

Other class scholars have been more overt regarding the connection between education and class domination. Pablo Freire's radical work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* directly highlights the "banking method" of education not only as dehumanizing the student's potential, but creating a relationship of dependence between the student and teacher which mirrors class relations between poor and elite individuals in a capitalist system (2005, 73). This banking method refers to a style of teaching centered wholly on the transfer of practical knowledge from the teacher to the student; the teacher "deposits" said knowledge into the student, who is conceptualized as an empty vessel or a "bank". For Freire, education is an integral point of indoctrination into capitalist norms, especially regarding one's ability to view themselves as capable of meaningfully engaging politically.

Bourdieu and Passeron also consider the relationship between education and class, though from a differing perspective more focussed on how education creates and sorts individuals dependent on class-based norms of behaviour, interests, necessity, etc (1979). Like Freire, Bourdieu and Passeron observe that the process of education for the student is largely a passive one, though they also highlight the self-destructive nature of the role. The student seeks to fill the self with knowledge until the time that they can be "elevated" out of the role of student hood and enter scholarship or academia instead (1979, 56). The self (student) must be destroyed in order to be complete (scholar). However, for some students this "rise" cannot be completed, notably the lower classes as they are stunted by the necessity of employment in order to survive (ibid, 62). While Bourdieu and Passeron attribute this as a failure of the system, they note that for the student, it is a failure they attribute to their own person. Students who fail to complete the process of self-destruction for enlightenment, who are forced to instead turn to occupation, come to internalize this "failure" as a facet of their "personal identity" (ibid, 70).

The synthesis of the above works is that domination is a process enforced internally by the recipient's own self-construction, transmitted through institutions which interpret individuals as empty without their intervention, priming them to accept disadvantages brought about by said institutions as tied to their own personal identity. Bourdieu further expanded upon the student's personal identity in relation

to class in his seminal work *Homo Academicus*, where he defined certain behaviours as a form of cultural “habitus”, a set of identifiable qualities utilized by the academic elite to assess an individual's cultural capital and reproduce academic hierarchies ranging from the individual level to entire faculties (Bourdieu, 1988). This work was particularly focussed on the mechanism of self-reinforcement embodied by individuals who are devalued by the academic system, noting that since they evaluate their worth on what they have been given by said system, they often defend its hierarchies the most fiercely (Ibid, 123-125, 116-117).

Beyond internalized conceptualisations of the self, there are studies into the material differences faced by low income students, and how these realities impact their understanding of the political. The work of Katherine J. Cramer in *The Politics of Resentment* is particularly useful for the way it connects issues of class and domination to political engagement. Cramer tracks the political attitudes of low-income rural individuals in Wisconsin through a series of interview groups over the course of 5 years (Cramer 2016, 5). What she finds are salient feelings of resentment, apathy, and unfairness among these groups as predecessors of populist mobilization by those who will perpetuate unfair systems, coupled with community demobilization undermining the people's ability to prevent it. The widespread perspective is that politics are not *for* these individuals, as they have “fundamentally different” needs than their urban counterparts, and they feel disconnected and neglected from both public services and their government (Ibid. 77). These perspectives were reflected in the ways these groups spoke of the education system as well. They pointedly expressed discontentment with the lack of preparation, resources, and support for low-income rural secondary and postsecondary students (Ibid, 115-116, 203). Fundamentally, these individuals *feel* disadvantaged, but this does not then translate into political motivation to “fix” institutions. Instead, it leads individuals to wholly disconnect from these systems which they feel do not “represent” them - mirroring Bourdieu and Passeron's assertion that one's exile from the political system is internalized as a personal identity.

In a Canadian context, education was a major feature of John Porter's analysis of class relations, noting the lower attendance of university among working class populations, as well as higher rates of school-leaving before the completion of secondary education (Porter, 2015, 186, 181). His work is also complimentary to internal conceptualizations of class, as he notes how elite paths to leadership positions are often centered on certain behavioural characteristics rather than practical competencies. He highlights the prioritization of certain unquantifiable qualities such as "initiative", "ambition", and "energy" when selecting leaders, noting how many of these traits could be accounted for based on a "generalized aura" of self confidence and grace which often comes from being socialized as an elite at a young age (ibid, 282). The children of elites take naturally to leadership positions as they have a head-start on acclimatization to the "appropriate modes of behaviour" characteristic of the higher levels of corporate class (ibid, 284). Note the similarity here to Bourdieu's conception of habitus, with these unquantifiable qualities equate to what Bourdieu described as "cheek" recognizable by a fellow elite (Bourdieu, 1988, 127).

While Porter and Cramer do not focus on the educational institution specifically, other scholars have centered work about economic disadvantage in connection to education. Jessie Abrahams' *Schooling Inequality* effectively describes the way the United Kingdom's education system perpetuates disadvantage in a material way. Notably, through the attitudes of Guidance Counsellors in low income areas reflecting bias towards the "fixed (lower) ability" of low income students (2024, 112), variations in the types and quality of advisement services for students including alumni networks (ibid, 104-105), and the focus of this project; inequalities in access to elective courses related to certain topics (ibid, 72-75). Sharon Jones's *State Schooling and the Reproduction of Social Inequalities* completes the life cycle of a low income student, interviewing adults from socio-economically disadvantaged demographics about their own perceptions of the education system. She used these interviews to exemplify how school worked as an arm of class reproduction ensuring the participants inability to elevate their class status as they transitioned into adulthood, particularly through the reinforcement that economic struggle is the result of "personal failings" of both the individuals and their parents, and the internalization of poverty not only as

an economic state but a core feature of the self (2023, 102 and 97, 107). Through the works of Abrahams and Jones we are able to track the ways low income children are actively, practically undermined, in addition to the process of internalized class hierarchization. It is evident from this section that the personal development - and thus political development, of the individual is impacted by their social class and exacerbated by education.

Educational Theory and Civic Development

The critique of education as a means to render the individual passive to class hierarchies, demonstrated by the scholars in the previous section, is equally if not more relevant in the literature on educational theory. In educational theory, there is a concept called the “banking” or “receptacle” method of teaching, (as prior mentioned by Freire) typically described in some variation of the traditional relationship between teacher and student being one in which the teacher *has* knowledge which the student *lacks*, and therefore knowledge is something which must be *given* to the student, akin to a deposit at a bank or receptacle. It prioritizes obedience and submission of the student to the will of the teacher, as in order to “learn”, they must empty the self in order to best absorb the knowledge of another. An exemplary critique of this teaching method was written by John Dewey in *The Child and the Curriculum*: “To possess all the world of knowledge, and lose one’s own self is as awful a fate in education as in religion. Moreover, subject-matter never can be got into the child from without. Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within.” (Dewey, 1902, 7).

This vision of schooling situated on the master-pupil model has been critiqued since before the establishment of the public education system. One of the earliest critics of this method was Joseph Jacotot, who lived from 1770-1840, as described in the 1991 book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* by Jacques Rancière. Rancière described the process of emptying the self as “stultification” in which the student learns dependency and loses the self confidence to ever trust their own, innate knowledge (Rancière, 1991, 8). Instead, he posits that education is most effective and meaningful when it positions the student

and teacher as having their own capacity to teach and learn from each other, recognizing the status of the student as a human of equal value to the teacher - Rancière calls this “universal teaching” (Rancière 1991, 16). Another early critic of passive or stultifying teaching was the aforementioned John Dewey. Dewey was particularly concerned with tying the methods and nuances of education to civic responsibilities. He valued education as a tool in citizen construction, describing constructing citizens prepared for the maintenance of society in his 1909 book as one of the primary focuses of education (16-17). This underlines the necessity for the student to become an independent thinker, capable of relating academic concepts - especially democratic in nature- to their lived reality. Dewey opposed the educational method in which “facts are torn away from their original place in experience and rearranged with reference to some general principle.” (Dewey 1902, 5). What Dewey described would further be outlined in educational scholarship as “active teaching”, reflective of Jacotot’s values of universal potential already present in the student prior to education. Essentially, Dewey drew attention to the necessity of *active* teaching to create *active* citizens, who are capable of dissenting to what he describes as “an evil condition in adult society” where “masters” rule over the masses (Dewey 1909, 8). However, unlike Rancière, Dewey also qualified that in order to construct active citizens, one cannot eschew the teaching of facts entirely, and instead calls for a combination of “discipline” and “interest”. He noted that despite his aforementioned critiques of an education solely based on the accumulation of facts in the perceived “empty” mind of a child, to only cater to the interests of the child results in “indulgence and spoiling” (Dewey, 1902,12,). Dewey did not mean spoiling in the traditional sense, rather, he refers to the spoilage of the potential for learning. The endless pursuit of interest alone does not result in a child who meaningfully understands concepts, rather it results in the "continuous starting of activities that do not arrive” and “It is as if the child were forever tasting and never eating.” (Ibid). Evidently, the passive form of learning described in the previous section as related to class disadvantage is also critiqued by education scholars as an ineffective means of learning, especially in regards to civic education.

A key student of Dewey, Martha Nussbaum published her pivotal manifesto in defense of arts in education *Not For Profit* in 2012. Nussbaum promotes *Socratic pedagogy*, a style of teaching she claims aids in the Democratic Education of the student, whereas traditional teaching methods (like the banking method) promote passivity, subservience, and demobilization. In line with Dewey, she describes these traditional teaching methods as “fatal” for democracy which requires “alert and active citizens” (Nussbaum, 2012, 65). Socratic Pedagogy is primarily based around teaching styles which incorporate active learning, such as small class sizes and a focus on discussion and feedback (Ibid, 55-56). Outside of teaching methods, however, there are also content markers which Nussbaum indicates reflect a Democratic Education, including content which promotes empathy, critical thinking, conceptualizing world interests over specific ones, analysis skills, etc. (Ibid, 25-26). These markers are not limited to any specific course type, but they are generally characteristic of arts and humanities classes, which is why Nussbaum considers access to arts courses as vital for democracy (Ibid, 7). Notably, the aforementioned markers are all concerned with the internal development of the engaged citizen, potentially an internal defense system to the “stultification” described by Ranciere and class scholars. Nussbaum also critiques inaccessibility to arts programs as well as the growing pressure placed on arts courses to be more “useful” towards the end of employment (Ibid, 128, 131). Another notable scholar, Noam Chomsky, also highlighted the potential threat redirecting the purpose of education towards employment alone poses towards the development of the democratically engaged citizen. In line with the other scholars influenced by Dewey in this section, Chomsky highlights that a child possesses an innate nature and capacity towards creativity (echoing the prior sentiments about universal potential), and that the responsibility of education is to *foster* this intrinsic nature so that it may develop (Chomsky 2003,164). Learning is a core part of the spiritual fulfillment of an individual, and Chomsky critiques universities for losing sight of this purpose, instead effectively becoming manufacturers of “the academic commodity”, seeking only to serve the necessary economic needs of existing institutions, and thus inherently reinforcing the status quo (Chomsky, 2003, 178, 183, 181). Chomsky problematizes the focus on obedience in the American

education system as destructive to the creative spirit, which is undervalued when “training” towards production lines like factory work is prioritized (Ibid, 171).

Both educational scholars and class scholars seem to be in agreement that education is a process which not only includes the transfer of knowledge, but embodies an important influence on the construction of the self, and thus the way one views the world. In essence, education is vital to the development of *values*. Literature on values in education largely hails from the realm of Environmental Education, underscoring the importance of educating the citizenry about the biophysical environment, and producing individuals capable of observing their environment, thinking critically, and feeling a sense of responsibility leading to engagement/participation (Disinger 2001, 5 and 10, Simsek 2011, 2253). Teaching values is rooted in the belief, in line with the prior literature, that there must be more to education than the transmission of facts, it should also provide a student with “criteria for social experience” in order to provide guidelines for determining the moral indications of an event (Benzer 2013, 1331-1332). In the realm of political studies, there is also literature focussed on the teaching of political, specifically democratic values. The democratic values of these works align with the aforementioned “markers” of Martha Nussbaum when conceptualizing the ideal engaged democratic citizen, including tolerance for diversity, ability to think critically, responsibility and desire to engage, etc (Carr and Thésée 2017, 5-6, Hoek [et.al.](#)2025, 287).

It should be noted that the purpose of this study is not to challenge education as a means of knowledge transfer, rather it is to reiterate the importance of education by examining course offerings from the lens that subject availability is integral to value transfer as well. It is obviously necessary that students receive correct and relevant information in their classes so that they can be educated in the practical realities of our world. As Dewey said, education is the delicate balance of discipline (facts) and interest (feelings). However, given the current structure of education institutions in the West, where students are inundated with standardized tests ensuring proficiency, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the aspect of discipline in education is perhaps already suitably addressed. Interest, values, and the

construction of the self on the other hand, may potentially be under-prioritized. This is a concern for a democratic society, as without an education that actively endeavors to inculcate a sense of democratic citizenship in individuals, there is potential for the development of a politically demotivated citizenry, as Dewey describes, children who cannot govern themselves “...may be a foundation for that evil condition in adult society where the citizens are arbitrarily ruled by political bosses.” (Dewey, 1909, 5).

Overall, educational theory is clear, in order to offset the potential evils described in the prior section, students must have their internal development; their values, nurtured with the same importance we apply to their practical education and skill development. Without internal development, the student is at risk of becoming an automaton, technically trained in the necessary actions to fulfill an occupational role in the job market, but stunted and robbed of the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. A process which necessitates their participation in order to function properly. According to education scholars, this can be addressed through efficient teaching of values and fostering of the student’s internal world, according to class scholars, this underdevelopment is by design. While these two fields of literature may never come to an agreement in this aspect, both share an understanding that education is key to the construction of the citizen internally. Both highlight education as an arm of government with the capability to inform a student’s sense of political self and thus influence how they interact with the political world. What education does with that power is the topic of the next section.

Political Engagement and Civic Education

This final section will be concerned with the practical education of the political, considering what practices are utilized to address the aforementioned “balance” between discipline and interest. This is primarily through the lens of “civic education”, which is centered on preparing the student to engage in democratic society. When conceptualizing said democratic engagement, it is common for one to consider political participation in a descriptive sense, the obvious example being voting. Political participation is one of the most famous puzzles in political science, but this is not a concept without controversy. Initially,

political participation was defined explicitly as direct participation within the confines of the political institution, underlining the significance of voting but also excluding any passive forms of political action and civically disobedient forms of direct political action (Conge, 1988, 242.). This definition was modified repeatedly to be more inclusive, but as outlined by Conge, expansion reaches a point in which the term ceases to be concrete enough to be meaningfully studied (Ibid, 248). Conge then explicates that political participation cannot include passive forms of political action including attitudes or sentiments, and political awareness, because “what attitudes or sentiments really concern are political culture and socialization, *not* participation. A focus upon these phenomena may explain *why* individuals do or do not participate, but they do not account for *what* is meant by the term political participation.” (Ibid. 246). Teaching values, as described prior, encapsulates both the descriptive knowledge (what) and said political socialization (why) (Disinger, 2001, 9), therefore it is not enough for this study to focus entirely on educational ties to political participation.

An alternative approach to understanding political engagement is that of political sophistication, which is indicative of a citizen’s understanding and engagement of politics *beyond* the material measure of voting. Alternatively referred to as political “awareness” or political “expertise”, it is concerned with creating a measure of political *knowledge* rather than accounting for descriptive action. This said, high political sophistication is often tied to more meaningful engagement with the democratic system (Claes et.al. 2009, 620, Highton, 2009, 1564 and Hooghe and Dassonneville 2011, 321). What qualifies as political sophistication can vary, but the term is often conflated with the descriptive “knowledge” an individual possesses about “political facts”, as is the case in Benjamin Highton’s 2009 article on the topic (Highton, 2009, 1568). This method of evaluating civic education is often subject, as Highton notes, to be reflective of societal impacts which are known to affect academic performance, such as gender, class and race. Thus, political sophistication is closely tied to the concept of political socialization, or the process by which children come to understand themselves as political. Aspects like race, class and gender are important arenas in which the child is socialized to their role in the political world, affecting their future

behaviours. Political socialization itself is more closely tied to aforementioned notions of internal development, but the fundamental connection between these two concepts is that the level of political *sophistication* a citizen develops can be dependent on their political *socialization* in youth. Political sophistication is an acceptable approach to what in prior sections we have described as “discipline” or the practical training to engage in political society, thus an ideal citizen would be prepared with both political socialization *and* sophistication.

Now that we have defined our understanding of efficient citizen construction, we will consider the literature on the efficiency of civic education as the primary means of constructing citizens. Everything from what qualifies as civic education to its impact on academic achievement is heavily debated within the field. There is no accepted interpretation of the correlation between civic education and citizen construction, as citizen construction (as explored above) does not necessarily derive from in school learning. Many factors impact how students associate the self to politics, and education is just one means of political development which has had its efficiency routinely critiqued in the literature on the topic. This said, Mendelberg and Willeck have helpfully identified three general models of scholarly thinking regarding the efficiency of civic education. The models are as follows: the standard model, the socialization model, and the proxy model (Willeck and Mendelberg 2022, 90).

The oldest model is the standard, which espouses the direct effects of civic education on political engagement (Ibid.). This model is often utilized in works debating political or legal theory behind education, such as Amy Gutman’s article analysing differing perspectives of liberalism on education (1995). The effectiveness of education must be taken as a given in order to fine-tune its delivery. Speaking generally, these studies do not focus on other factors like race and wealth, or downplay their impact. It is characteristic of this model that education is an effective means of constructing citizens, with the majority of studies drawing conclusions about the most effective teaching *styles* for ideal civic education (ex: Hooghe and Dassonneville 2011, Genell and Lewis 2008 and Witschge et.al.). As an example, Hooghe and Dassonneville’s 2011 study into political knowledge focuses primarily on

classroom based variables affecting political knowledge levels, including “classes about politics”, “classroom climate”, “group projects” etc (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2011, 15). They then include “control” variables which may be stretched to consider SES implications such as education levels of parents and “books at home”, but their results showed “no significant impact” of these variables on political knowledge (Ibid, 13).

The socialization model views education as one in a complex web of factors which contribute to political engagement. According to these scholars, education is only one aspect of political socialization (Willeck and Mendelberg 2022, 90). The works of Robert D. Hess and Judith V. Torney (1967) as well as other notable scholars of political education like John Dewey (1909, 1902) and Martha Nussbaum (2012) are central to this model, but perhaps the most famous scholar of this type is Noam Chomsky. In comparing the impact of socialization factors and education, Chomsky underlines the importance of “home influences” such as “social policy and dominant culture” and “information systems” when considering the impacts of education (Chomsky, 2003, 36). This dual consideration is at the center of the socialization model, which seeks to observe the way a myriad of differing social factors influence behavioural outcomes for students. Studies of this model tend to be centred around the impact of education relative to other socializing factors, such as race, class, gender or wealth. Studies of this type include Warren and Wicks (2011), Claes et.al. (2009), and Galston (2004) with varying results regarding the scale of effects of civic education. Some scholars deem it more important (Galston, Dewey, Nussbaum, Hess and Torney) and others come to the conclusion that civic education has limited effects on political interest and participation, notably favouring cultural factors which they deem more important (Warren and Wicks 2011, 164 and Claes et.al. 2009, 629).

Finally, the proxy model views education as merely an institution which reflects the political norms of the system it exists in (Willeck and Mendelberg 2022, 90). The socialization model does not truly exist in opposition to the proxy model, as unlike the standard model, socialization and proxy models both acknowledge that the way education is interpreted and internalized is deeply connected to a web of

other complex social factors. The key distinction between these types is whether education is viewed as a tool that can be effectively utilized to combat systemic issues. For those classified as proxy scholars, the education system fundamentally is reflective of the biases of the system, and in order for education to change, the system must first. As described by Benjamin Highton, "...attributing causal force to education remains problematic. Many factors that influence political sophistication are also related to who gets how much education." (Highton, 2015, 1565). Notable scholars in this field include John Porter (2015), Pablo Freire (2005), Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1988) and Jean-Claude Passeron (1979), all of which analyze education as an arm of capitalism. This model also includes scholars who primarily focus on issues of race or class, *not* education, but acknowledge the role education plays in these systems, such as Aaron Schutz (2006) and Katherine Cramer (2016).

Discipline and Interest = Action and Theory

While the standard model of evaluating citizen construction perhaps falls short in accounting for class dynamics, proxy theories, even those which account for education, are often limited in their applicability towards creating an education system more effective in its citizen construction. It should be noted that this is often by design, as many scholars in this field are either not focussed on education (Foucault (1995), Cramer (2016)) or actively oppose reform on principle. Notably, Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that reform is only a means of satiating critics of the education system, and does not meaningfully address the underlying issues fundamental to a capitalist system, or as he puts it: "*Let us carry out reforms before the people carry out revolution.*" (2005, 162). The socialization model appears to take influence from both of these approaches, though admittedly this model encompasses the most scholars of differing ethos, and in that sense may lack a central cause; which makes us hesitant to place this project in that camp.

What is evident between all three models is that the impact of civic education on the process of citizen construction is heavily debated. This section perhaps best exemplifies the tension between these

two understandings, notably, the way proxy scholars approach education with futility, compared with the standard model's approach of complete educational supremacy when it comes to the child's "training" in the political. The general onus of the standard model on "efficient" teaching methods is perhaps indicative of traditional understandings of knowledge transfer, while the other two models are more concerned with the internal process of personal political development - even if that development leads one to the conclusion of their own helplessness. However, much like Dewey confirms the necessity of both discipline and interest in order to construct a well rounded citizen, this project underlines the importance of both concerns on efficient teaching and internal development of democratic values.

This project seeks to address a similar tension between practical approaches and conceptual understandings of class, through the combination described in our introduction of "cultural" and "descriptive" class theory. We utilize practical means of analysis; such as the study of curriculum and categorization based on material wealth, in order to evaluate nebulous concept democratic values, in order to consider if different opportunity structures for democratic education are present in Canadian public schools, centering class as a conditioning factor.

Theoretical Framework

Instrumentalism, "Interest" Courses, and Political Agency

The foundational theory relevant to this work is John Dewey's concept of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism has one key tenet: that the education system is integral to citizen construction. Education serves as an *instrument* of democracy to develop a civic conscience and create a citizen prepared, motivated, and dedicated to participation in democratic society. Dewey states in his introduction to *Moral Principles in Education* that "To an extent characteristic of no other institution, save that of the state itself, the school has power to modify the social order." (1909, 3). Dewey's instrumentalism is particularly concerned with aspects of motivation and dedication. A political education, for Dewey, cannot simply be *about* the democracy one lives in, it must be a motivating force to create an *active* citizen. This is

motivated by Dewey's belief that society is inseparable from education: "the school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain specific work,...maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society." (Ibid, 10). It is this societal reality which gives children the tools to understand moral concepts: "special school habits" ie; punctuality, must therefore be tied to "moral habit" which manifests in the daily life of an individual in society in order to be meaningfully internalized by the student (Ibid, 16). As an example, the mandatory 3.0 credits (equivalent to half a semester) of civic education in Ontario teaches about government branches, political parties, and other factual knowledge necessary to engage in Canadian politics, but instrumentalism expands that through this course, students can (and must for the well-being of a society) interpret other "moral truths" about their society.

As noted in the previous section, Martha Nussbaum's 2012 work *Not For Profit* elaborates on this point further, underlining the importance of certain *types* of courses as necessary preparation for a citizen with political values – and the types span far beyond standard "civics" courses. Nussbaum illustrates that humanities courses as a whole are a key instrument for democracy as they foster empathy, critical thinking, a sense of "world citizenship", etc, all necessary preparation for engagement in democratic society (Nussbaum, 2012, 108, 72, 84). What is key here is that instrumentalism allows for the idea that a *variety* of courses can have a direct impact on citizen construction, not just the obviously political "civics" courses. In Ontario, public schools allow students to select from a variety of available "elective" courses during their high school attendance. Dewey posits that without autonomy, the student learns only to interact in a world where "master's rule them," and limits the development of a "force of character" necessary for democratic participation (Dewey, 1909, 8 and 56). These "Interest" courses are one area of the Ontario education system that allows students to guide their own education based on their internal curiosities and values. Thus, by extension, choice in interest courses which can span from introductions to international business to beginner sign language is one way that students are allowed to construct an internal understanding of *themselves* politically. However, school boards and individual schools in Ontario work in conjunction to determine which interest courses they will provide to students at which

schools (Ontario: Responsibility for Publicly Funded Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022).

Schools “must offer a range of courses” but “are not expected to offer all courses in all course types”, instead course availability is determined by student interests and necessity (Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2024). There is untapped potential for political socialization here, as student’s political agency can thus be limited by the availability of interest courses at their school. These “interest” courses are rarely studied, likely due to their lack of universal availability, but this feature is what makes them particularly useful for this project.

While the instrumentalist approach is only one interpretation of the purpose of education, it is one in line with the aforementioned “purpose” of education in Ontario’s Education Act. This said, the tendency of instrumentalism to uphold capitalist ideology leads to inconsistencies between this “purpose” and the tangible realities of education in Ontario. For example, in the individual curriculum documents in Ontario for various fields, a different “purpose” is applied. Curriculum documents all define the “goal” of Ontario’s secondary schools instead to be “support high-quality learning while giving individual students the opportunity to choose programs that suit their skills and interests.” (Ontario Curriculum; Canadian and World Studies 2015:5, Ontario Curriculum; Business Studies 2006:3, Ontario Curriculum; Classical Studies and International Studies 2016:3, Ontario Curriculum; Social Sciences and Humanities 2013:4). Notably, the changes to this goal reorient Ontario’s education towards a more pragmatic, employment based ethos rather than a democratic one (“skills” prioritized over citizen construction). The *sentiment* of instrumentalism for civic education is evident in Ontario’s education act, but practically the educational curriculum is limited by the realities of a liberal capitalist society. This is why this project is specifically interested in the *manifestation* of citizen construction through *curriculum*, as the practical application of teaching political values to children often varies, and may perhaps even violate, the theoretical purposes of education as an institution.

This demonstrates the limitations to utilizing instrumentalist theory alone for our endeavor. Most notably, by definition, instrumentalism is concerned with the stability and maintenance of the current

governing structures and regimes in the developed world. For example, Martha Nussbaum claims that Socratic education creating students with critical thinking skills and empathy will off-set conformist cultures and inequality within the economy and business settings (Nussbaum, 2012, 53). She prioritizes a “strong economy and flourishing business culture” as a necessity for democracy (Ibid, 10) all the while simultaneously acknowledging that it is that very business culture which undermines the arts in the first place (Ibid, 23). This “education for economic growth” as she calls it, can not convincingly be saved by arts education if one of its central goals has been to defund and delegitimize arts education.

Instrumentalist theory fundamentally carries ties to liberal capitalist society, the ethos of education from an instrumentalist lens as being an institution to serve the state inherently upholds whatever government model the state manifests as. Thus, in a liberal capitalist society, instrumentalist education will seek to uphold liberal capitalism. This is made evident in the prior section by Nussbaum’s vehement allegiance to continued economic growth. Dewey also acknowledges, albeit less so, that the student is “not only a voter and a subject of the law” but a “worker, engaged in some occupation which will be of use to society.” (1909, 10). It is apparent that this allegiance with capitalism causes instrumentalists to often lack a critical edge when examining economic structures, leading to instrumentalism as a theory being one willing to forgive the more unsavoury aspects of capitalist systems. If the system of capitalism itself is the authority, and it allows or encourages inequality to exist while dehumanizing millions of people into statistics, it seems far-fetched that simply re-prioritizing values of critical thinking and empathy into an education system inherently tied to this authority would be enough to overcome these fundamental issues.

Cultural Privilege and Course Availability

The above limitations are what motivate this project to hybridize instrumentalism with what Willeck and Mendelberg describe as “Proxy Theories.” If these theories were condensed into a single Proxy Theory, it could be described as such: education as an institution is born out of pre-existing systems

of inequality (socio-economic, racial, gendered, etc.), thus, the effect education has on democratic engagement is limited by pre-existing structures of inequality (Willeck and Mendelberg, 2021, 90).

Within this admittedly broad swath of critical education literature, of particular relevance for this project is the Bourdieu and Passeron's theory of Cultural Privilege. Cultural Privilege is a concept based in the way structures evaluate an individual's *prospects* based on a perceived level of "culture" indicative of class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 17). The status of "cultured" is a code for wealth, as most "cultured" activities (think the opera, fine art, politics, etc.) are only affordable for the elite classes. Education is advertised as a "path to culture" (wealth), when in reality, it is a means of determining who has culture and who does not, and by extension, who is worthy of culture and who is not (Ibid, 21).

This role of culture in education is expanded in Bourdieu's aforementioned *Homo Academicus* to account for differences in value of different faculties/fields in academia. The phenomenon of a "lower class faculty" is one that fundamentally emerges from a structure (the university) which is mirroring the hierarchies of the capitalist system it exists within, internally (Bourdieu, 1984, 21). These hierarchies are repeatedly reinforced at every level, from differing schools of thought within a field all the way down to the student-professor relationship (Ibid, 22). Every element of student life is applied a cultural "value" in this system, which Bourdieu attributes to the role the university fulfils as an institution oriented towards the "reproduction of cultural order" (Ibid, 74). Essentially, certain behaviours are utilized as indicators of high cultural value and thus elite status, these indicators are used to source individuals for leadership positions, and the individuals are assumed to be deserving due to the mythologized merit these titles imply (Ibid, 88). The inverse is thus also theoretically true, with Bourdieu noting the tendency to evaluate those excluded from the system as "uninvited" rather than conscientious objectors, especially in the context of those who also openly critique the system (Ibid, 19-20 and 28). Essentially, if someone does not have access to certain academic powers, it is assumed it is because they are not fit to access them, not because their access has been unfairly limited, this serves to legitimize the system while simultaneously devaluing those who fail to succeed within it. There is an internal effect to this process as well, as

Bourdieu describes that the “understanding” of merit is so pervasive within the university system, that those who manage to succeed *in spite* of their class position (as there will always be exceptions to the rule) carry the view that they “owe everything to the system” and in turn become “the most unconditional defenders of the system and its hierarchies.” (Ibid, 68).

From the perspective of cultural privilege, education is a tool to control the outcomes of students based on their class, attributing individuals with coded language like “gifted” (in possession of culture) or “hardworking” (lacking in culture and suited to labor) evaluated primarily from class indicators such as extra-curricular activities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, 24). Cultural Privilege is the reward to the person who has indicators of culture, leading to better prospects in life, reinforcing pre-existing class hierarchies. From the works of Bourdieu and Passeron, we can derive that access to paths to culture, for example, the availability of courses which promote democratic values and empower an individual to engage politically, thus may be considered a means to gatekeep cultured status. What makes this theory particularly well-suited to this project is the focus on “Extra-curricular culture”. Class indicators are derived from the activities of an individual *outside* of required courses for a base education, this project will focus outside of traditional leisure activities like clubs, but instead on the aforementioned elective (“interest”) courses made available to students at the secondary school level. Since they are centered on the agency of the student exploring their own “interests”, what courses are available fundamentally indicate what interests are appropriate for those they are offered to. Rather than lack of access to certain cultural indicators such as an opera isolating an individual from their peers, lack of access to certain educational topics may exclude an individual from certain adult “behaviours” such as political engagement. Thus, their outcomes have been policed by the education system through gatekeeping what topics are relevant to them through access, which has potential to be influenced by socio-economic status.

Theoretical Framework

Between Instrumentalist theory and Cultural Privilege theory exists a tension, there is an extensive critique of education reform and Socratic teaching methods in Bourdieu and Passeron's work, and it is evident that to some extent they seek to undermine the very system Dewey and Nussbaum are concerned with maintaining (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979, 37). As described above, instrumentalists often fail to meaningfully critique structures of capitalism. Cultural Privilege theory can account for this due to its focus on the role capitalist hierarchy plays in the education system. This being said, the aforementioned critique of the reformists as well as the concluding remarks from *The Inheritors* which instead prioritize "collective action" to address these issues make clear the limited interest these works take in seeking tangible improvement in the current system (Ibid, 97). This tendency, coupled with the interpretation of education as a reinforcing mechanism which does not equip the student to meaningfully address capitalist inequality in any way, causes cultural privilege as a concept to exist to some extent at odds with instrumentalist theory which prioritizes education reform to this end.

As outlined prior, this project seeks to utilize constructivist ontology in order to deploy instrumentalist and cultural privilege theories simultaneously, in order to address the shortcomings of each respectively. We posit that perhaps to meaningfully address issues of inequality in education, which is itself such a complex system of individuals and structures, it is necessary to approach the issue from a theoretical perspective that is both critical of capitalism but maintains the potential for education to shape citizens in its own right.

From instrumentalist theories, this project acknowledges the important role education plays in citizen construction, with the constructivist lens that students derive more from education than the data accumulated through their required course content. The school is as Dewey describes it, a micro-practice community, with authority figures and complex social relations which shape the student's understanding of self, others, and state (Dewey, 1909, 52). The types of courses available to students fundamentally

shapes what values they deem important and relevant, because if the classroom is a community, the courses available signify what topics are relevant to the community. Beyond the material of the course, there is an implication that the information is *worth* learning for “me”, “me” as indicative of “my type of person” (rich/poor, white/black, etc). This ties into theories of cultural privilege, as, if we interpret supplementary courses as a means to promote or encourage the interests and education of individual students (contrasted with the core courses which exist to educate students to a base standard), a directive arises about what the correct “interests” are for certain people. This fundamentally changes what types of knowledge are accessible to people in those groups. If courses fail to promote democratic values in a certain region or demographic there is an implication that students from said area need not concern themselves with the political. This is a fundamentally undemocratic insinuation as one of the universal tenets of democracy is the representation of the masses regardless of arbitrary barriers such as socio-economic status.

If certain interests are not for certain people, there is a logical extension that whatever values are communicated in said material are also irrelevant to their lives. In the case of interest courses which promote democratic values (critical thought, empathy, diversity etc), which we’ve outlined prior as vital for *all* citizens in order to maintain a democracy, this is a particularly concerning line of thinking. If we were to find that certain demographics (ie; low income areas) have less access to interest (elective) courses which embed democratic values in students, it could indicate that these groups have less opportunity to internalize democratic values. This could then be a potential factor in these groups’ prior described lack of political engagement. Using political values as an indicator for efficient citizen construction (as defined in our literature review), this project will assess the relative presence of democratic values embedded into the curriculum of official electives, then consider the availability of those courses across varying SES demographics as a first line of analysis into potential inequalities present in Ontario’s education system.

It is important at this time to reiterate that Ontario and the TDSB respectively purport to be aware of and actively taking measures to account for potential class inequalities. This project is a critical interrogation of this claim, considering whether or not there will be less availability of elective courses geared towards the construction of citizens with political/democratic values in low-income areas. An extension of this supposition is that instead electives will favour trades and “useful” skill development targeted towards employment in the labor market, though this will be considered in a limited capacity due to the scope of this project.

Methodology

This study seeks to provide a first line analysis considering the relationship between socio-economic status and citizen construction in education in Ontario. We will seek to answer the prior defined research question utilizing content analysis in order to determine criteria for politically rich elective courses and assess their availability over five cases studies from the Toronto District School board (TDSB).

Selecting cases based on Toronto census data on SES, this study will evaluate a combination of median pre and after tax household income and median family income, as reported for the City of Toronto by Statistics Canada based off the 2016 census reports, in order to determine which cases are most relevant to the purposes of this study. This is necessary due to the limited scope of this study, and more robust statistical methods including random sampling would be prudent for future research. The cases will be chosen in order to observe two cases from each economic extreme (“poorest”/“richest”), and one median or control school.

As the previous section clarified, citizen construction will be evaluated based on the promotion of political/democratic values in the curriculum of available elective courses hosted at the cases in this study. Schools will be selected based on income, courses will be selected based on what each school offers, and

courses will be evaluated based on curriculum for values. We will then use these evaluations to determine if there is any variation in availability of democratically enriching courses correlated to class. The following sections will examine each section of this process in further detail.

Case Determination: A Justification for the TDSB and School Selection

Toronto District School-board (TDSB) was selected for this project for three reasons. As the largest district school board, TDSB offers the most secondary schools within a single school-board, meaning the largest samples of high schools where provincial education standards should in theory be consistently applied. Toronto is more financially diverse than provincial averages, with 12.8% of the population making over \$300 000 a year in 2021, compared to Ontario's overall population at 2.06%, conversely, 14.4% of the population made \$30 000 or less, less than but close to half of Ontario's 29.3% (City of Toronto 2022 and StatsCan 2024). Thus, the variety of SES demographics are more represented in Toronto than Canada as a whole, including almost equal percentages of super rich *and* super poor demographics. This makes the TDSB region ideal for locating inequalities along socio-economic lines, as it cannot be argued that the region as a whole falls into any income block. Consistent with Ontario-wide claims, the TDSB also expresses commitment to overcoming barriers to equality among their students, ensuring "equitable access to programs, resources and opportunities" (Toronto District School Board: Learning, Equity and Wellbeing, 2025). Thus, there is reason to expect that SES inequalities should be meaningfully mitigated within TDSB, if they are not, there is reason to question these claims within the TDSB, which could potentially raise concern about the provincial education system's declaration of this ethos as a whole. This study will focus on the English Language division of the TDSB and thus all curriculum evaluated will also be English Language.

This study will evaluate five schools chosen based on multiple SES factors drawn from Toronto's most recent (2015) Social Atlas reports on income. The Social Atlas reports comprise of three reports illustrated through maps; Median After-tax Household Income, Median Pre-Tax Household Income, and

Median Economic Family Income derived from census data. For each report, regions of Toronto are divided into 5 ascending categories of wealth. By combining these reports with maps of the TDSB, we were able to determine the regional wealth category of every school in the TDSB. This was done by providing a numerical score to each school for each income report (3 in total), the sum of these scores illustrates the overall “income score” of the school. To illustrate further, the lowest possible score a school could achieve was 3; as this signals this area fell into the poorest wealth category for each report, and was only scored a “1” for each (which combined to 3 overall). Conversely for rich areas, the highest possible score would be 15, as this would indicate that in each income report it fell into the highest wealth category and was awarded a “5”. From the individual income score of each school, we were able to determine average Ward income scores, which were used to indicate if a ward is comprised of “mostly wealthy” or “mostly poor” areas.

Utilizing the individual school’s income scores as well as the average Ward income score, we were able to draw our 5 case studies. We selected schools from 3 wards, the Ward with the richest average (Ward 2), the poorest average (Ward 13) and the Ward with the average closest to the average of all the Wards in the TDSB, which rounded out to 6 (Ward 10). From the richest and poorest Wards we selected the schools with the highest and lowest income scores respectively, to represent the richest and poorest schools in that ward. For the “average” Ward, we selected the school with the income score closest to the average of all the income scores (which also rounded to 6), which would ideally represent the “average” or “standard” school in the TDSB. The cases selected for this study are as follows;

Ward 2 (Richest Ward, Ward Average 9.5/15)

Richview Collegiate Institute (Richest School in Ward, Income Score 13/15)

Kipling Collegiate Institute (Poorest School in Ward, Income Score 8/15)

Ward 13 (Poorest Ward, Ward Average 4/15)

AY Jackson Secondary School (Richest School in Ward, Income Score 6/15)

Georges Vanier Secondary School (Poorest School in Ward, Income Score 3/15)

Ward 10 (Standard Ward, Ward Average 6.3)

Bloor Collegiate Institute (Standard School, Income Score 6/15)

The Overall Course Pool: What courses were considered

The government of Ontario provides all possible supplemental courses and their corresponding curricula to high schools in the province. However, it is up to the discretion of individual schools and school boards which interest courses they will provide at which school. Any secondary education institute in Ontario may offer any variety of courses ranging from second languages to business to health and physical education. There is no set number of elective courses in Ontario, likely because there is no set standard for what makes a course an “elective”. All official secondary school courses in Ontario are listed on the province’s website, divided by field. In some fields, such as English, courses are labelled as “compulsory” or “optional”, making the distinction obvious. This being said, in other fields, such as Mathematics, no distinctions are made despite some courses (such as the destreamed grade 9 math course) being required to graduate. Additionally, any local board is capable of developing an elective course for their specific student populations, and though it must be approved to run, it would not be listed as an official Ontario elective. Thus, the exact number of “electives” running in Ontario varies depending on where one is and what one considers an elective to be, necessitating a limited definition for the purposes of this study.

We categorized a course as elective based on the concept of “interest” courses as described prior; meaning an elective course is one not required to graduate, which a student is free to choose based on their own interests or future plans. This includes courses where a credit in the *field* is required for graduation but students are free to choose the topic (ie; a student needs to complete one credit in The Arts,

but are free to choose between drama, music, visual art, dance, etc.). However, in cases where students are all required to take a credit at a certain grade level but are divided based on streaming (such as grade 10 math), we excluded the courses as a student is required to take at least one of them, and would not be permitted to take the alternative stream as an elective. We also exclude courses which are not required for all students, but are taken as a requirement by some, ie: English as a Second Language courses or Guidance courses on literacy which are required for students who fail the Grade 10 Literacy Test. Another notable exclusion made for this study was French as a Second Language and French Immersion courses, this is because these courses were not reliably recorded by the TDSB “course search”, making it impossible to determine which schools actually offered and ran them in prior years. With these specifications, we were able to compile a list of 229 “elective” courses available in Ontario.

Evaluating all 229 of these courses would be beyond the scope of this project, therefore we further limited courses for consideration to those offered by the five schools considered for this project. This was determined in two ways; first, by checking the websites of each school to see if any courses were “advertised”, second, by checking TDSB “course search” records to determine which courses were reported to have run in the most recent school year (2024-2025)². This allowed us to get an accurate and well-rounded understanding of what courses were offered for each case, including the courses most recently ran, but not excluding courses which are perhaps routinely run in the past (and thus were advertised), but were not for that specific school year. Inconsistencies between courses advertised by a school (via their website) and those which actually ran were not expected to be significant, and in most cases were not. The exception to this circumstance is further discussed in the results section.

Utilizing these methods, we were able to extract 153 total electives offered between the 5 schools. It should be noted that this total excludes both AP classes and Locally Developed Courses³. This is because we utilized the curriculum provided by the province of Ontario to determine the presence of

² 2024-2025 was chosen over 2025-2026 as at the time of this study the 2025-2026 TDSB records were incomplete.

³ This was particularly relevant, as all of our cases offered a locally developed course (CHG381 - Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity)

political values; and neither AP courses nor Locally developed courses are covered under this curriculum. These 153 courses are collectively referred to as the “Overall Course Pool” in the results of this project.

Emergent Framework and Fundamental Democratic Values: How courses are evaluated

The next action of this study will be to determine the level of political/democratic value for each of the 153 selected courses using the specific expectations within its curriculum. Specific Expectations were chosen as this was a feature that was consistent across all elective curricula considered. This process will be modeled off work of those studying Environmental Ethics Education, a fitting choice as our concept of democratic values was also derived from Environmental Education work. Most notably, studies by Canan Lacin Simsek and Elif Benzer evaluated curriculum for environmental ethics values using document analysis seeking specific themes (Simsek, 2011, 2253, Benzer, 2013, 1333). We intend to take a similar approach while considering democratic values, designating relevant themes (values) derived from prior literature on the topic and allowing the criteria for each theme to develop organically throughout the study via an emergent framework.

Our themes are based on democratic education literature focussed on what values are necessary for a student to become an informed and engaged member of democratic society. This requires a more nuanced approach to understanding democratic education than transferral of necessary knowledge for political participation (ie: Voting), as mentioned prior. This is described by Carr and Thésée as a “thicker approach” to the conceptualization of democratic education, which calls for not only a descriptive understanding of democratic systems, but the developmental equipment (values) to cope with the “experiential realities” of living in a democratic society as well (2017, pg 4 and 3).

A key scholar to this effect is the aforementioned Martha Nussbaum, who designated said values in *Not For Profit* as: (i) Engagement: the ability to “examine, reflect, argue, and debate” on political matters, (ii) Diversity: the ability to recognize others as human, even if they are of different race, religion, gender, sexuality, etc., (iii) Empathy: the ability to feel concern for others experiences and harms, even if

they do not experience them, (iv) Connection: an understanding of political issues with a focus on the real lives of those they impact, “not just by aggregate data”, (v) Critical Perspective: the ability to critique institutions of authority, (vi) National Community: a point of view which looks out not only for the self but the nation as a whole, and (vii) World Civilization Mindset: an understanding of one’s nation as a piece of a complex world system which requires co-operation and respect for other nations (Nussbaum, 2012, 25-26). Similar principles are evident in Carr and Thésée’s “spectrum of critical engagement for education for democracy” as well. Though the spectrum is more expansive, including specific instructions for teachers such as “study of voting and elections” and “study of political parties”, good education for democracy is described as having principles of engagement: “a focus on how to function in society, how to contribute to building a better society...young people are not simple consumers but also...are contributors to reproducing or transforming social relations”, diversity: “efforts made to have students engage with diverse groups, problems, realities, etc., outside of the mainstream media lens of society;”, empathy “dynamic usage of lived experiences of those impacted is highlighted”, and critical perspective “seeking to eliminate the notion that we must blindly follow the rules presented by elected officials” (2017, pg 5-6). Hoek [et.al](#) also find similar themes towards these, “fundamental democratic values” in their own synthesis of literature on the topic; citing “understanding of others” (empathy), freedom of speech (critical perspective), tolerance and the rejection of discrimination (Diversity) and a sense of personal responsibility (engagement) as key (2025, pg 287). Utilizing the common themes of these works; this study has developed six “fundamental democratic values” (FDV) for determining the quality of democratic education;

Fundamental Democratic Value (FDV)	Summary
<u>Engagement</u>	Course seeks to develop the confidence of students to examine, reflect and engage in political processes. Promotes the belief that individuals <i>do</i> have an impact on the world around them, and can make meaningful change.

<u>Diversity</u>	Course promotes respect for the humanity of individuals <i>outside</i> of the in-group/ perspective of the student. Encourages students to understand the necessity of differing perspectives in politics.
<u>Empathy</u>	Course fosters concern for the livelihood and wellbeing of other people, even if they are different. Beyond understanding their perspectives (see: Diversity), promotes a genuine sense of care for their issues.
<u>Critical Perspective</u>	Course encourages students to examine and analyse information they are provided, especially from sources of authority (ie: Parents, News, Church, etc.). Fosters the ability to critically engage with information.
<u>Global Citizenship</u>	Course promotes an interest in what is good for the global and national community beyond the student's immediate social circles (ie: Family, Church, Friends). Encourages students to consider how domestic political factors impact global systems.
<u>Equality</u>	Course promotes the value that all human beings on earth deserve fundamental human rights, and are equal under laws and institutions. They are deserving of autonomy and no specific group should be subject to rules others are not.

The curriculum for each of the prior established 153 courses were then evaluated on their promotion of these fundamental democratic values. Initially we attempted to focus only on the course descriptions in line with Simsek and Benzer, but found that there was significant variance between fields of study and the content within said descriptions. For this reason, we pivoted to focus instead on specific expectations, which while more tedious, allowed us to have a more thorough understanding of the exact FDV relevant statements for each course. Since this project utilized an emergent framework, the criteria for our evaluation of democratic values developed organically throughout the project by utilizing code groups in [ATLAS.TI](#) to track similar statements pertaining to each value in the curricula. [ATLAS.TI](#) is a software ideally suited to highlighting and categorizing lines of text in a series of documents, then

comparing occurrences within documents to identify patterns in the text or between shared groups. In our case, we utilized this software to categorize highlighted quotes from curriculum documents into groups based on whatever FDV they aligned with.

Due to the expansion into specific expectations, and given the nature of some course material being directly connected to FDV (in some cases, even mentioning the values by name), it became evident that there should be some distinction between “overt” and “implied” instances of each FDV. Relative to other codes of the same value, statements in curriculum were divided based on whether they were direct in their FDV presence or more suggestive, with the specifications for each value developing over time. The final criteria is as follows:

FDV	Implied Criteria	Overt Criteria
Empathy *centers the differing perspectives/ internal work on different issues	- Encourages student to view an issue from multiple perspectives - Encourages students to understand the response of different perspectives to issues - Encourages students to consider how a person’s identity is constructed - Encourages students to consider the daily lives of other people, their health, wellbeing, prosperity, etc. - Encourages students to consider what their own values are	- Instructs students to consider how a “good” thing could have adverse effects for other people. Especially when the student is narratively implied to be in the camp who benefitted from the struggle of others. - Instructs students to consider an issue prioritizing its impact on other people. - Instructs students to analyze other people’s perspectives on an issue from an emotional/internal standpoint. - Underlines the importance of empathy for positions of authority
Engagement	- Encourages students to consider how group or individual efforts have changed history - centering activism groups or individual activists. - Encourages students to consider what issues/topics are important to them, and what they would be	- Centers the students' individual ability to create change in their society from a confidence boosting frame. Instructs them to consider how change is brought about effectively. - Evokes a sense of

	willing to do to embody those causes. - Encourages students to consider what strategies have been utilized by non-governmental actors (ie: individuals, grassroots orgs) to evoke political change. - Encourages students to consider what drives individuals to act, including assessing grassroots reform movements and government initiatives.	responsibility from the student towards shaping their society and acting on what they believe in, underlining the impact of daily activities. - Drives students to consider why political engagement is important/ what makes an engaged citizen and create plans to engage for social change. - Instructs students to analyze issues of engagement, including potential inhibitors to engagement social change.
Equality	- Acknowledges the existence of inalienable rights which humans are equally entitled to, but does not explicitly address said rights from the frame of equality. - Encourages students to consider examples of inequality, the sources of inequality and what issues they create in various fields - Encourages students to consider issues/ consequences of inequality without overtly stating it ie: uneven resource distribution, accessibility issues, discrimination etc. - Encourages students to consider historical developments towards equality	- Directly addresses issues of inequality (by name) and the consequences of inequality in our society. - Centers equality as an important ethical position which individuals and governments should strive to embody in their daily lives - Frames barriers towards equal rights as a negative and encourages students to consider why it is important for various actors to defend rights - Centers the responsibility of authorities to defend equality of persons via human rights law or international legislation and instructs students to assess government action towards such.
Critical Perspective *centers holding truth to power / holding authority accountable/ interrogating current power	- Encourages students to consider the influence of current systems on individual thought- specifically addressing systems of authority (media, government, economy, judicial systems, etc.) - Encourages students to interrogate their own values and	- Directly instructs students to interrogate biases or failures of current institutions of authority (government, research, legislation, media, judicial systems, economy, etc.) - Instructs students to hold

systems	criteria for judgement of our systems (benefits + costs?, effective leadership? Comparison?) - Encourages students to confront “truths” in their reality and interrogate them, specifically addressing ways of thinking which reflect biases in institutions (racism, homophobia, sexism, etc) - Encourages students to consider hierarchies.	authorities (including corps.) accountable by critically considering if authorities are sufficiently performing their duties and meeting their reputations/promises. - Instructs students to consider the lasting impacts of colonialism, nationalism, facism, capitalism, liberalism, etc. on our current systems - Instructs students to interrogate the nature of power/ superiority.
Global Citizenship	- Evokes a sense of personal responsibility in the student for what occurs in our world. - example: through the lens of a tourist making culturally respectful decisions about how they interact with native citizens of a country - Encourages students to view some issues as globally important, distinct from issues that are important at the individual or community level. - Frames students as influencers and influencees of global culture. Notes the effects of globalization or IGOs. - Underlines the ways global interconnectivity has led to benefits for all of humanity.	- Directly centers global citizenship, global commons, or otherwise instructs the student to view themselves as a member of the world community and consider what that means. - Centers the necessity of cooperation between individuals, communities, and governments in order to protect our shared environment/world. Some issues are so large they require this cooperation ie: climate change. - Encourages students to consider that the domestic policies of some countries may have global consequences (ie: war, environmental damage, economic protectionism, etc.)
Diversity *differs from Empathy in framing - diversity is about how different groups have different experiences, empathy is about	- Encourages students to consider that there are culturally significant acts for diverse communities - Encourages students to consider that diverse perspectives in their world are derived from the lived experiences of others, specifically tied to their cultural	- Instructs students to consider or directly states the necessity of diverse viewpoints in the modern multicultural world, especially regarding political issues which affect everyone. - Underlines the importance

how those experiences impact decisions.	experience. - Encourages students to consider that the diverse perspectives of different communities are fundamental to the historical development of our world - positive OR negative. - Acknowledge the potential harms that may befall a person for their diverse identity	of maintaining cultural identity and acknowledges the rights and existence of distinct societies within a nation. - Evokes an understanding of Canadian / Global society as one that is constructed from many diverse perspectives, which vitally contribute to the larger cultural identity.
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These criteria become more evident with the addition of examples for overt/implied statements, which can be viewed in the following table:

Fundamental Democratic Value (FDV)	Overt Example	Implied Example
<u>Engagement</u>	<i>“Analyse ways in which personal actions....can empower individuals and reduce the impact of inequality or social injustice in local, national, and international contexts” D1.3/ HSE4M- Equity and Social Justice</i>	<i>“Describe the issues that motivated various social reform movements in the United States during this period, and assess the contribution of some of these movements...” D2.3/ CHA3U - American History</i>
<u>Diversity</u>	<i>“Explain how diversity (e.g., cultural, economic, gender, intellectual) among members in a group may affect group dynamics in a positive way” GWL3O - Designing Your Future</i>	<i>“How do special holiday foods help to establish ethnocultural or religious identities?” B1.2/ HFC3M - Food and Culture</i>
<u>Empathy</u>	<i>“Assess ways in which norms, values, and expectations (e.g., cultural or social norms and expectations, gender expectations, familial values and expectations) influence individual decision throughout the lifespan...” C1.1/ HHS4U - Families in Canada</i>	<i>“Explain various ways in which works by selected writers from Canada and around the world are influenced by the writer’s personal experiences...” 1.5/ EWC4U- The Writer’s Craft</i>

<u><i>Critical Perspective</i></u>	<i>“Analyze how power is distributed in Canada and in various countries around the world (e.g., with reference to social, economic, political, judicial, military power) E1.1/ CPW4U: Canadian and World Politics</i>	<i>”Interpret statistics presented in the media...and explain how the media, the advertising industry, and others...use and misuse statistics...to promote a certain point of view” D3.1/ MDM4U: Mathematics of Data Management</i>
<u><i>Global Citizenship</i></u>	<i>”Describe the characteristics of global citizenship, and explain how individuals, acting as global citizens, can help to lessen economic, social, and environmental impacts associated with globalization...” D1.1/ CGW4C: World Issues - A Geographic Analysis</i>	<i>”Analyze the impact of globalization on the fashion industry...” C3.3/ HNB4M - The World of Fashion</i>
<u><i>Equality</i></u>	<i>“Explain programs and policies of governments in various countries designed to narrow income inequality...and assess their effectiveness.” C3.2/ CIA4U - Analyzing Current Economic Issues</i>	<i>“Analyse the extent to which the social, political, and/or economic roles and status of women have changed in various countries or regions during this period...” E3.3/ CHY4U - History Since the 15th Century</i>

For each value, this project sought only to test for presence rather than occurrences. While it is the case that some courses contained multiple occurrences of the same value, at both overt and implied levels, to record and compare every occurrence (totalling over 1000 individual codes) would be beyond the scope of this project. Since the focus is on the content of curriculum, courses were evaluated only on whether a democratic value was overtly present (awarded a score of 2), had implied presence (awarded a score of 1) or no presence (awarded a score of 0). The sum of each value was then collected to determine each course’s “FDV score”. The highest possible FDV score a course could receive was 12, as in this case all FDVs were overtly present at least once. FDV presence was then further simplified as either “high”, “mid” or “low” dependent on where the FDV fell in the relevant scores (figure 1);

	FDV Score
	12
	11
	10
	9
(High)	8
	7
	6
	5
(Mid)	4
	3
	2
	1
(Low)	0

A score of 7 necessitated that at least 1 FDV be overtly present, therefore it was determined that anything above a 7 be designated a “high” FDV course, and thus highly democratically enriching. From this, the rest of the table was divided into equal quadrants (Mid: 4-7, Low 0-3), excluding the score of 12 as the highest score achieved by any course in this study was 11. Notably, if a course scored 0, meaning no FDV was present, it was still coded as “low”. This is for multiple reasons; firstly, the proportion of courses which scored 0 was relatively small, at 7%. In addition, this study acknowledges the subjectivity of its evaluation on courses, to deem a course as “democratically value-less” goes against our theoretical understanding of democratic education, which acknowledges the ways political values are transmitted beyond material means (ie: curriculum). This study

is focussed on curriculum, so the evaluation of such is necessary, but in acknowledgement of the fact that our designated democratic values are not exhaustive, we will honour the potential of a course to have democratic value beyond our own specific FDVs. Therefore, if a course had none of our FDVs present, it was “low” in democratic enrichment, not devoid of it. It should also be noted that the prior literature has emphasized the impact of individual teachers and their personal deployment of curricula on the internalization of information by students (Disinger, 2001, 10, Lewis and Genell, 2008, 17). It is important to reiterate that this project is concerned with curricula specifically as the manifestation of state-endorsed knowledge in the classroom. The impact of teachers is acknowledgably vast, but their role as agents of the state is beyond the scope of this project.

The resulting FDV scores of all 153 considered courses were then utilized to determine what proportion of the courses available for each case study were “high”, “mid”, and “low” in fundamental democratic values. Since the cases were selected on the basis of class stratifications, if there are any predominant patterns of access to democratically enriching courses, this would confirm the necessity of future studies into democratic education from this angle. This would address our research question

considering if socio-economic status is influencing the messaging course availability sends to students of differing class backgrounds in the selected TDSB regions, potentially creating or exacerbating a class barrier to democratic life. What courses were available to students impacts their understanding of political life and what roles they see themselves as fulfilling, thus stratifications in democratic education which favour wealthy areas systematically perpetuate a state of democratic underdevelopment to the poor.

Results

Methodological Summary

To reiterate the purpose of this project; we are considering if there is any notable correlation between class stratifications and availability of democratically enriching courses. We are seeking the presence of variances in courses containing Fundamental Democratic Values alongside class differences in school wards. In the previous section, we outlined which cases(schools) were chosen in order to account for the wealth extremes (richest/poorest) of the TDSB as well as a control school which fell closest to the median income. In this section we will compare the presence of democratically enriching courses in each case.

As outlined prior, for the purpose of this project “democratically enriching” is observed through the presence of certain Fundamental Democratic Values (FDVs). This nebulous concept has been narrowed to six key values based on prior literature on the topic for the scale of this project: Equality, Empathy, Critical Perspective, Diversity, Global Citizenship and Engagement. For each case in the curricula where we encountered a value, we then categorized it as either “overtly present” or “implied”. This distinction was made through the creation of an emergent framework based on over 1000 occurrences in the considered curricula. (Note: more explicit description of framework, as well as Value definitions in Methodology Section). For the purposes of evaluation, the “overt” occurrence of a value was awarded a score of 2, an “implied” occurrence of a value was awarded a score of 1. Each course was

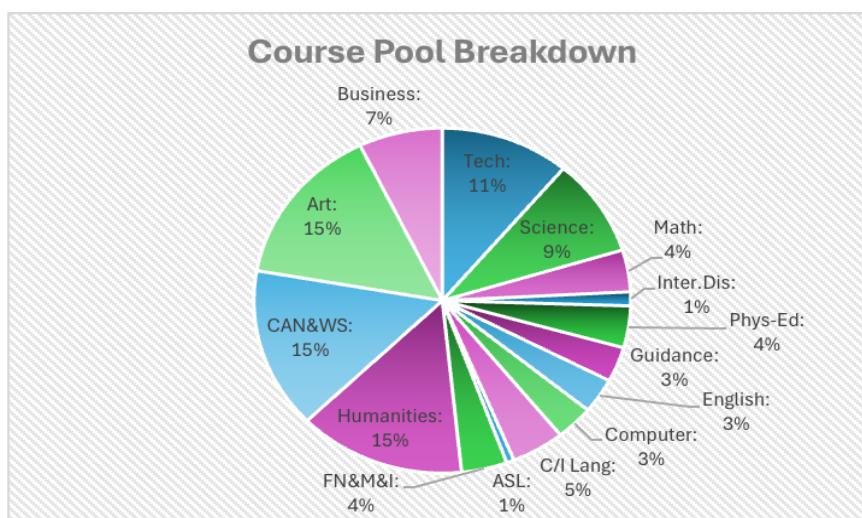
then calculated an “FDV Score” based on these occurrences, with the highest possible score being 12 (all six values overtly present).⁴ The FDV scores were then categorized relatively as “High”, “Mid”, or “Low” (figure 1). For each case, the proportion of high, mid and low FDV courses was then calculated in order for us to compare the presence of democratically enriching courses in schools from various economic situations in the TDSB.

The Overall Course Pool

The pool of courses considered for this project was drawn from the courses advertised and run in the most recent school year recorded for each case. The pool totaled 153 courses out of all the possible elective courses available in Ontario (excluding locally developed courses), or roughly 56% of the possible elective choices available to students. Of those 153 courses, the highest proportion were Arts, Social Science and Humanities, and Canadian and World Studies electives, each making up 15% of the total pool (or 45% overall). The next highest proportion was Technological Education or Trades at 11%, followed by Science (9%), Business (7%) and Classical and International Languages (5%). Math, Physical Education and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies each made up 4%. Computer Studies, Guidance Studies and English each made up 3%, and the remaining 2% was made up by Interdisciplinary Studies and American Sign Language courses (Figure 2).

⁴ This project considers presence of FDV only, not number of occurrences, while a course may contain multiple occurrences of an overt value, the highest possible score it can receive for that value is 2 (overtly present). The frequency of occurrences is something to be considered for later projects.

Figure 2: Subject proportions of all the 153 courses offered between our 5 case studies



Running vs. Advertised

The pool of 153 courses contains all courses advertised by the cases in this study as of the 2025-2026 school year, but not all of these courses actually ran according to TDSB records. A course was considered “advertised” by a school if it was listed as a potential elective on the school’s website, which was then cross referenced with the TDSB records for the most recently recorded school year (2024-2025) to determine which courses actually ran. TDSB records on the 2025-2026 school year were incomplete at the time of this study. It should be acknowledged that not all the schools took part in “advertising” courses. Notably, the schools from the wealthiest ward in this study, Kipling Collegiate Institute and Richview Collegiate Institute, did not advertise any specific courses on their websites. To account for this, the pool (and cases where applicable) were evaluated on Advertised (A) courses, and Running (R) courses.

FDV Statistics

The Overall Course Pool

The breakdown of democratically enriching courses for the overall course pool proved to be revealing about the general state of democratic education in Ontario regardless of the specific

considerations of this study. Of the 153 advertised courses considered, only 14% received a high FDV score. Courses with a mid FDV score made up the highest proportion at 46%, and low FDV scoring courses made up the remaining 40% (figure 3). This already indicates that the state of democratic education in Ontario may be cause for concern, but this concern is exacerbated by the data derived from the overall running courses. Of the total 153, 138 of the advertised courses were shown to have run in the most recently recorded (2024-2025) school year. Courses with high FDV scores made up only 12% of those 138. Mid and Low scoring courses were split evenly at 44% each (figure 4).

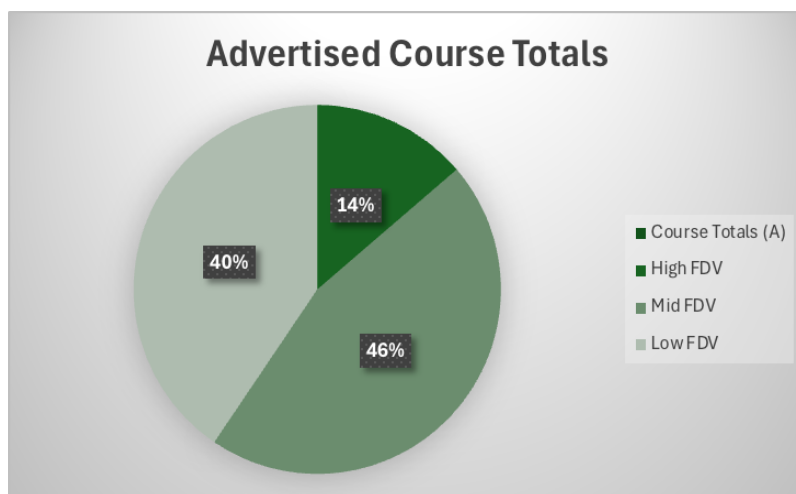


Figure 3: Breakdown of all advertised courses in the Overall Course Pool

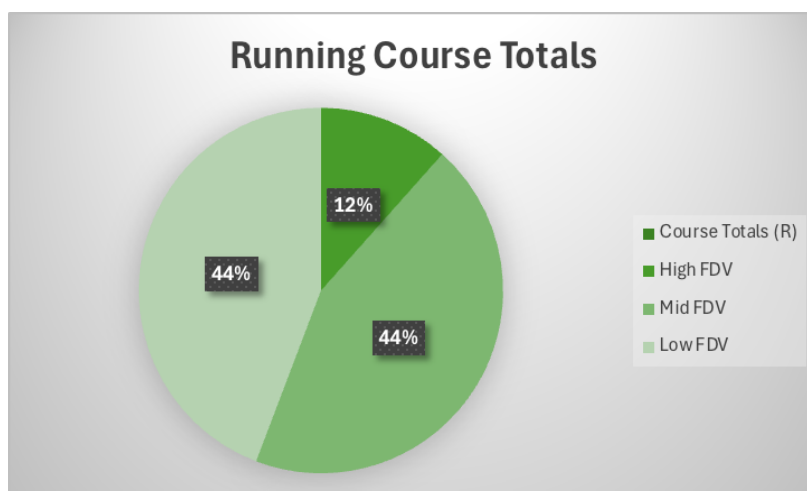


Figure 4: Breakdown of all running courses in the Overall Course Pool

While the high scoring and mid scoring courses both dropped by an equal two percentage points, given the already low proportion that highly democratically enriching courses made up, this drop is more impactful for the already underrepresented high FDV courses.

In all, 21 of the 153 advertised courses scored “high” in FDV. Of these 21, 12 of the courses came from the field of “Canadian and World Studies”.⁵ It is to be expected that the highest proportion would come from this field, as it is one of the largest in this study at 23 courses total, and the subject matter lends itself well to democratic values (containing Politics, History, and Economics courses). This said, we do not see this high proportion reflected in the other highly represented fields. Arts and Social Sciences also had a considerable amount of courses considered, 23 and 22 respectively, but Arts contained 0 courses which scored high for FDV presence, and Social Sciences contributed only 3 high FDV courses. Furthermore, the field of Social Sciences contains subjects which (one would expect) lend well to FDVs, such as Philosophy, Sociology, World Religions and Cultures. Prior literature on the subject has also stressed the potential for arts courses to foster democratic values, most notably Nussbaum’s aforementioned *Not For Profit* (2012), which was fundamental for this project’s conceptualization of democratic values as a whole. Due to this, it is fair to consider that the field Canadian and World Studies courses may contain an exceptionally high proportion of democratically enriching courses in Ontario. It is thus also interesting, but perhaps expected, that all 5 of the advertised high FDV courses which were not actually run at any school in this study were from the field of Canadian and World Studies.

There is also interesting information to consider from the proportions of which FDVs were present in the considered courses. Overall, the most common FDV to occur was Critical Perspective, at 24% of all occurrences. Diversity and Engagement came second, each making up 19% of overall occurrences, followed by Empathy at 18%. The least common FDVs were Equality (12%) and Global Citizenship (8%) (figure 5). In regards to overt versus implied occurrences, Critical Perspective made up an vast 37% of occurrences, meaning it is not only the most common FDV to find in curricula overall, but the mostly likely to be overtly expected by a significant proportion. Interestingly, while Empathy made up

⁵ FDV scores for all 153 courses categorized by field are available in the Appendix.

less occurrences overall, it was more likely, at 19%, than Diversity (14%) or Engagement (15%) to be overt (figure 6), than implied. For implied occurrences, Critical Perspective drops to 12% overall, overshadowed by Empathy (17%), Engagement (23%), Diversity (23%), and (most notably) Equality at 14% (figure 6). For both implied and overt occurrences, Global Citizenship expectedly made up the smallest proportion, at 6% overt and 11% implied (figure 5)(figure 6).

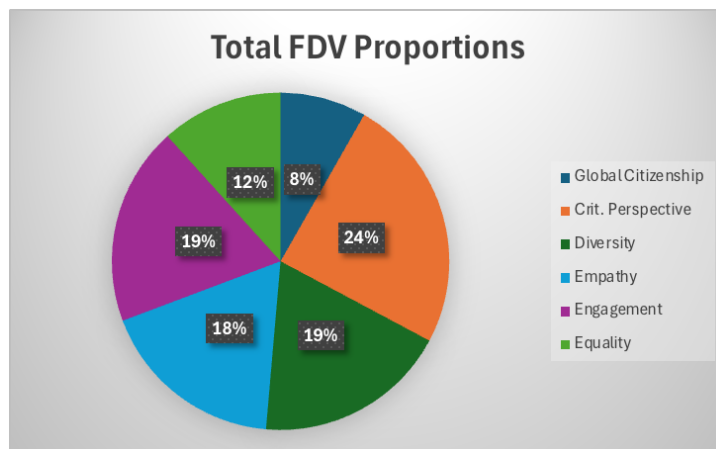
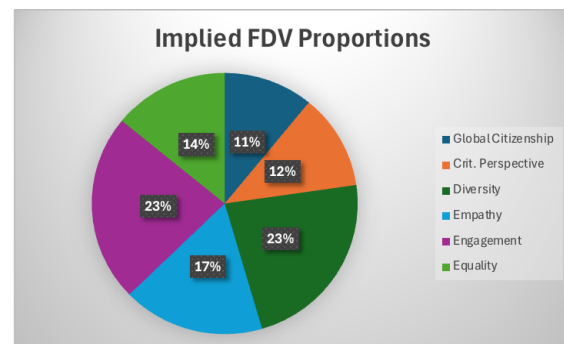
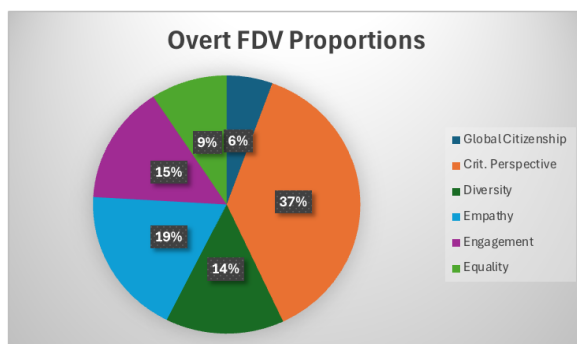


Figure 5: Overall Course Pool Proportions by field

Figure 6: Overall Course Pool Proportions by field, overt (left) and implied (right)



This Overall Course Pool serves as a control for this project. If democratically enriching courses are distributed fairly across income demographics, the advertised and running courses for each case study should closely resemble these FDV statistics, as these proportions were drawn directly from the courses

drawn from these cases. We can expect to see that while high FDV scoring courses will make up low proportions overall, they should at least meet a threshold of 12-14% of courses offered. Low and Mid scoring courses should make up a close to equal share of the remaining courses, with some potential favour for Mid scoring courses (44-46%) over low FDV courses (40-44%) overall.

Case 1: Bloor Collegiate Institute

Bloor Collegiate Institute (BCI) was selected for this study as it landed directly in the middle as far as economic prosperity. It falls very near to the median and mean income both individually and by ward out of all TDSB reported schools at 6 and 6.3 respectively. Due to this, we dub BCI a “standard” school for the purposes of this project. At BCI, 75 of the 77 courses it advertised actually ran (excluding AP variants) in the 2024-2025 school year. Of all the schools considered, Bloor Collegiate Institute ran the least total electives. In spite of this, the FDV statistics of the electives offered by BCI were in line with the expected proportions of the overall course pool. Of the advertised 77 courses, 12% scored high in FDV, with Mid scoring courses at 45% and low scoring at 43% (figure 7). For the actually running courses, BCI exactly matched the overall course pool with 12% high, 44% mid and 44% low (figure 8).

Figure 7: FDV score proportions of advertised courses at Bloor Collegiate Institute

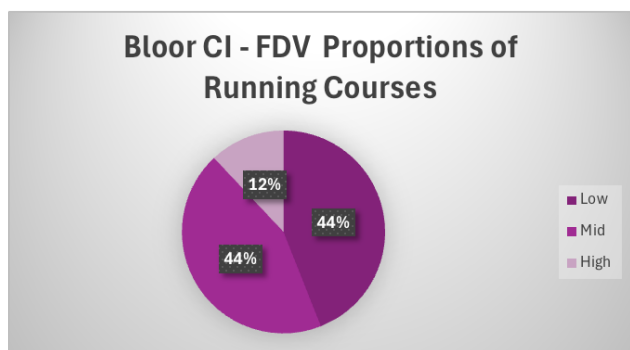
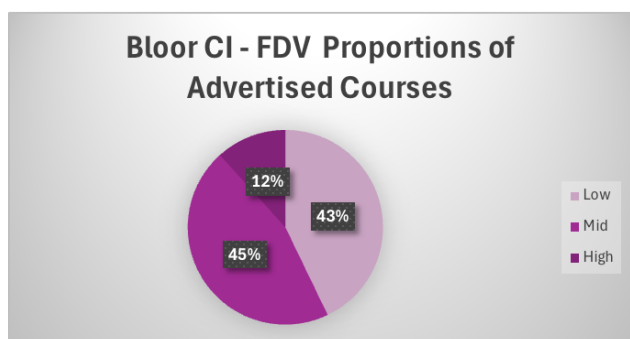


Figure 8: FDV score proportions of running courses at Bloor Collegiate Institute



In both cases, BCI meets the expected thresholds described above. The advertised courses which did not run are Nutrition courses under the field of Social Science and Humanities, which both received Mid FDV scores. Given the adherence to the FDV threshold and the low overall number of courses advertised but not ran, it is reasonable to suspect that these two courses simply did not run in the 2024-2025 school year due to low interest, and that the courses were advertised with fair expectation by BCI that they would run. The field from which BCI ran the most electives was the Arts (15 courses total), which is also in line with what we would expect based on the high proportion Arts made up in the overall course pool. In summary, BCI as a median school provides a good basis for what we should expect the FDV statistics to look like for all the following cases, presuming there is equal access to democratic education regardless of economic circumstance. This is further solidified by BCI being the school offering the least electives of any case in this study, as if we were going to expect a school to make cuts to potentially democratically enriching courses, it would make sense to be the school which offers the least courses overall.

Case 2: Richview Collegiate Institute

Richview Collegiate Institute is the wealthiest school drawn from the wealthiest ward (Ward 2) in this study. It is the school located in the highest income area in the entirety of the TDSB, scoring a 13 (over twice the average income of all schools considered) in a ward scoring 9.5 overall, one of 3 wards (out of 22) to score a 9 or above in the whole TDSB. As mentioned prior in this section, Richview did not advertise any specific elective courses on their website. This means we will only be considering the elective courses recorded as having run in 2024-2025 by the TDSB. In total, Richview ran 76 elective courses in most recent recordings. This is the second-least courses run out of all the cases, with only BCI running less at 75. Despite running such a similar amount of courses to BCI, the FDV proportions of Richview's courses varies significantly from BCI's. At Richview, 14% of elective courses ran scored high for FDVs (figure 9). This is still within our expected threshold of 12-14%, but notably it lands on the higher extreme of this threshold which was only achievable for the overall course pool when courses advertised but not ran were included. What is perhaps more telling is that Richview deviated from the

threshold in regards to Mid and low scoring courses; with Mid scoring courses making up 49% of the elective offered, and low scoring courses making up only 37% of the courses offered (figure 9). While the high scoring courses fell within the threshold, mid scoring courses exceeded the threshold by 3%, and low scoring courses fell short of the threshold by 3%.

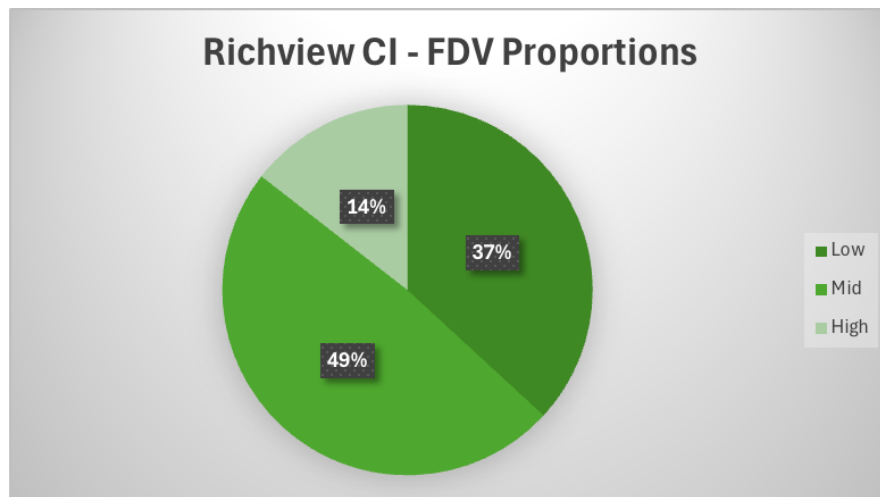


Figure 9: FDV proportions of courses at Richview Collegiate Institute

Overall, it is evident that Richview's course offerings are more democratically enriching than expected relative to the overall course pool, which is notable given Richview's status as the highest income school considered for this study. In addition, the most common field from which this school drew electives was the Arts, with 15 Arts electives offered matching exactly the proportion Arts made up at BCI. Given this, and their similarity in number of electives offered overall, we would have even more reason to expect that Richview would have similar FDV statistics to the standard school, BCI, but it does not. Clearly, the remaining 61 electives at Richview contain more high scoring FDV courses than the remaining 60 at BCI.

Case 3: Kipling Collegiate Institute

Kipling Collegiate Institute (KCI) is the lowest income eligible school from the wealthiest ward in this study. Like Richview, it is located in Ward 2 which averaged a 9.5 on income, but KCI itself only scores an 8 on income. It should be noted that this is still above the average income for schools in the

TDSB generally, but in such a high income ward it still qualifies KCI as the “poorest” eligible school. Like Richview, KCI did not advertise specific courses on their website, so the courses considered are only those confirmed to have run in the 2024-2025 school year according to the TDSB. KCI offers slightly more courses than the prior two cases, with 80 electives total. The FDV statistics at KCI are closer to the expected thresholds than Richview, but still vary from BCI. At KCI, 12% of electives scored high for FDV, the same as BCI and within the 12-14% expected threshold drawn from the overall course pool (figure 10). Low FDV scoring courses were also within the expected threshold, making up 41% of electives offered at KCI (figure 10) though notably lower than BCI’s 43-44% (depending on advertised v. running courses). This said, KCI still exceeded the expected threshold in regards to mid-scoring electives, which made up 47% of its courses offered (figure10). Though this variance is only by 1% from the threshold, it is 2-3% higher than the standard school BCI. This is in line with the trend we observed at Richview, where the favour towards high or mid scoring courses appears to be more prominent in the wealthier Ward 2 than the standard school.

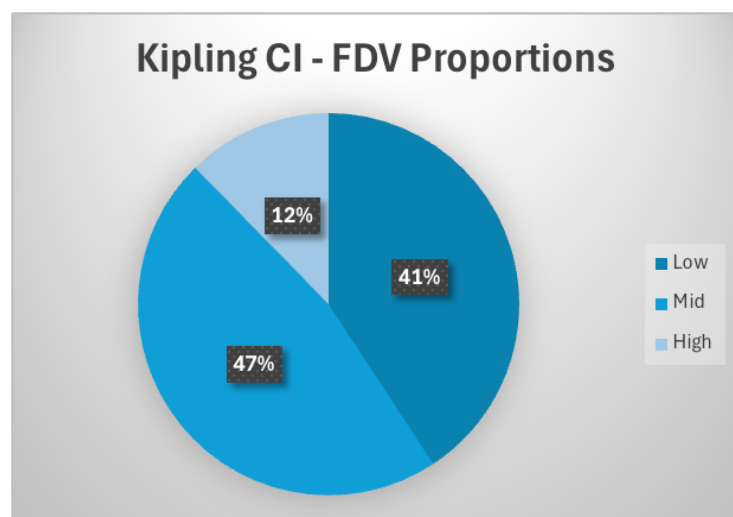


Figure 10: FDV proportions of courses at Kipling Collegiate Institute

Like the two prior cases, the most prevalent field for KCI’s elective courses is Arts, with 13 electives offered total. Notably, at KCI Arts is most common by a lower amount (+2 courses) than BCI (+3 courses) and Richview (+6 courses). In addition, KCI offers more electives overall than both prior

cases, so the fact that arts makes up less of a proportion, but KCI still offers significantly less high FDV courses than Richview, and significantly more mid FDV courses than BCI, may be notable. Overall, it is worth considering that KCI's status as a "poor" school in a "rich" ward may offer it advantages over the standard school in the TDSB (less low FDV courses), but disadvantages relative to other schools in the ward (less high FDV courses), regarding democratically enriching electives.

Case 4: AY Jackson Secondary School

AY Jackson Secondary School is the wealthiest school in the poorest ward in the TDSB. Located in Ward 13, which had an average income score of 4, AY Jackson's individual income score met the average income in the TDSB as a whole at 6. Notably, AY Jackson and BCI share the exact same income score, only differing in their ward score. This would give us even more reason to expect that AY Jackson would reflect similar FDV statistics to the standard school, aligning with thresholds established by the overall course pool. AY Jackson advertises 106 electives total, in 2024/2025, 103 of those electives ran. This is a significantly higher amount of total courses offered relative to the cases considered so far, KCI, the previous case with the closest amount (80 courses), still falls 23 electives short of AY Jackson's offerings. Due to this, and due to the aforementioned shared income score, it would be reasonable to expect that AY Jackson would easily meet the expected FDV thresholds established from the overall course pool.

Of the 106 advertised courses at AY Jackson, 11% scored high in FDV, 43% scored mid, and 46% scored low (figure 11). This is the first school to completely divert from the thresholds set by the overall course pool and the standard school, most notably, with the increase of low scoring FDV courses to 2% higher than the extremes of the threshold (44%). This is the first case where low FDV cases exceeded the expected proportion in the case statistics, and mid and high scoring courses failed to meet the expected thresholds. This being said, the proportions of the 103 running courses did reflect a 12% proportion of high FDV courses, with 42% mid and 46% low (figure 12).

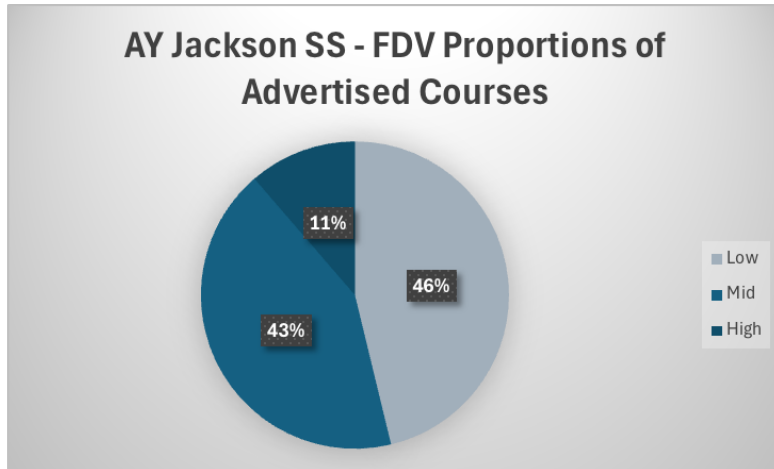


Figure 11: FDV proportions of advertised courses at AY Jackson Secondary Sch

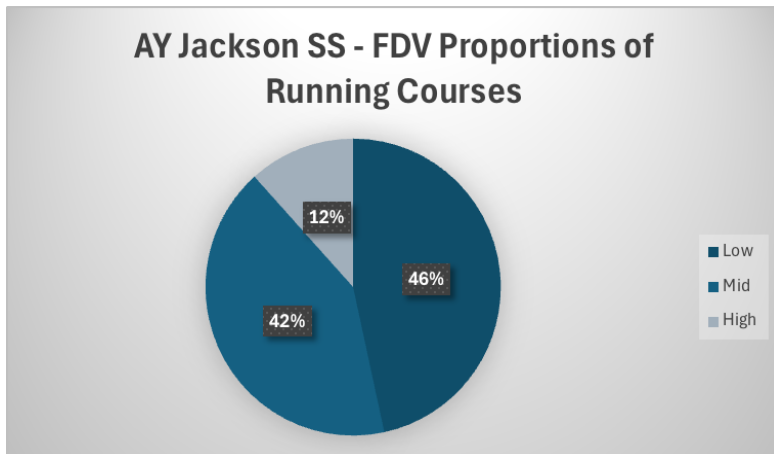


Figure 12: FDV proportions of running courses at AY Jackson Secondary School

This can be attributed to the three courses which were not ran being made up of 2 mid FDV courses and 1 low FDV course. Essentially, the number of high FDV courses ran was not more than those advertised, rather, the proportion of courses made up from mid and low FDV courses both dropped, leading to an increase in the proportion high FDV made up. Furthermore, while this 12% proportion does meet the expected threshold, the proportion of mid level courses still falls 2% below expected, and low FDV courses still make up 2% more than expected. AY Jackson reflects the opposite of the slight bias towards mid-level courses in the statistics, in both advertised and running courses. As alluded to prior, this is especially notable considering that AY Jackson i) shares an income score with BCI, only differing in Ward score, ii) offers the most electives out of the all of the cases thus far, and iii) is the *wealthiest*

school in Ward 13. It should also be noted that like the other cases, Arts is the most common field of electives at AY Jackson at 20 courses.

Overall it is clear that AY Jackson does not benefit from being the wealthiest school in the Ward to the same proportion that Richview does, nor does it meet the expectations set by a standard school like BCI (beyond 12% high FDV courses on a technicality) or even the “poorest” school in Ward 2, KCI, in regards to access to democratically enriching courses.

Case 5: Georges Vanier Secondary School

Georges Vanier Secondary School (GVSS) achieved an income score of 3, this is the lowest possible income score obtainable in this study, and can only occur when all three of the income metrics considered also achieved the lowest income score possible of 1, meaning that by every metric, this area generated a below average income in Toronto according to census data. In line with the gradual increase we’ve observed in the amount of courses offered, GVSS advertised 115 courses on their website. 9 more than AY Jackson’s 106 advertised, and 38 more than the case advertising the lowest amount in this study (BCI). However, according to TDSB records, only 83 of those 115 courses actually ran in 2024-2025, 32 less than advertised. This being said, 83 courses is still the second highest quantity of electives ran per school in this study, therefore as in the prior case, one would expect there to be more room for democratically enhancing courses at GVSS.

When we examine the 115 advertised courses at GVSS, this appears to be the case. Only 36% of courses score low for FDV, 47% receive and mid score, and an exceptional 17% score high (figure 13). GVSS appears to exceed the overall course threshold for highly democratically enriching courses by 3%, as well as exceeding the threshold for Mid FDV courses by 1%. Consequently, the proportion of low FDV courses falls short of the expected threshold by 3%. Statistically, this would mean GVSS out performs even Richview in regards to its democratically rich course offerings, with 3% more high FDV courses and 1% less low FDV courses. However, this is evidently not the case when we consider the FDV statistics of courses actually ran at GVSS in most recent records. In reality, high FDV courses only made up 11% of

the courses ran at GVSS, Mid FDV courses made up 41%, and low scoring courses made up the majority at 48% (figure 14).

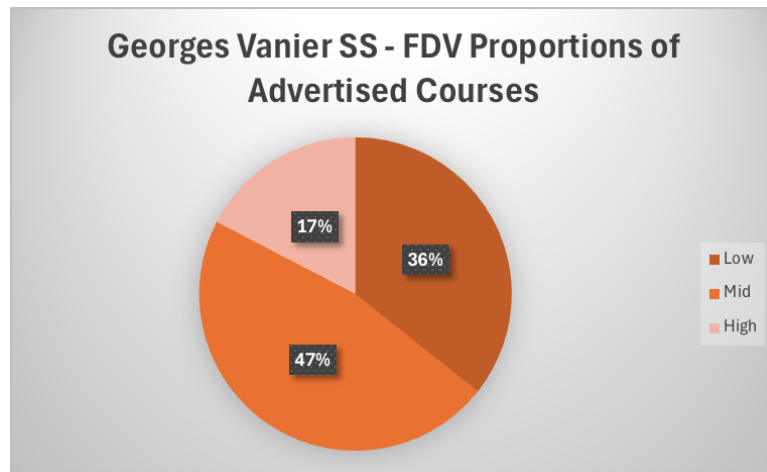


Figure 13: FDV proportions of advertised courses at Georges Vanier Secondary School

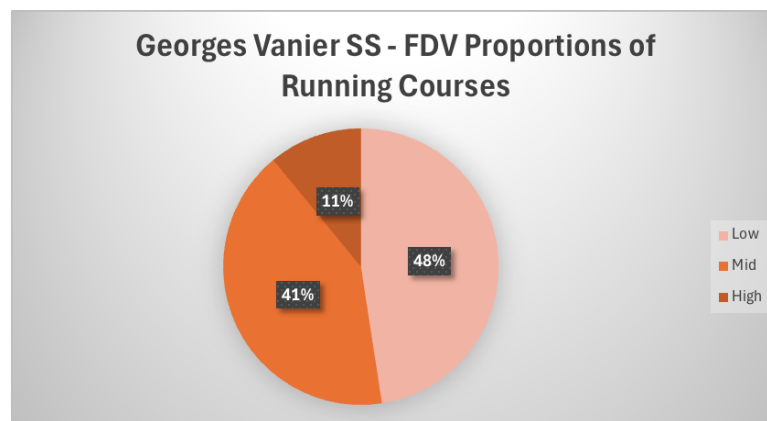


Figure 14: FDV proportions of running courses at Georges Vanier Secondary School

This is the only case where neither the advertised nor running courses met any expected thresholds, though notably for opposite reasons. While GVSS's advertised courses caused it to appear GVSS exceeded thresholds in democratically enriching courses, GVSS's running courses fail to reach those thresholds at all. This is the only case where a school did not run enough high FDV courses to meet the 12% expected proportion, it is also the case by which low FDV courses exceed expectations by the highest percentage (4%). Essentially, despite the advertised courses giving the appearance that GVSS is

the best performing school in regards to democratically enriching courses, it is actually the school that offers the lowest proportion of high or even mid scoring courses in regards to democratic education.

GVSS is also the only school to have a variation between the most common field in advertised and running courses. When we consider advertised courses, Canadian and World Studies is the most common field at 23 courses. Given the high proportion of democratically enriching courses which hail from this field, as established prior, this likely contributed to the notable 17% proportion of high FDV electives in figure 12. This being said, when considering courses which actually ran at GVSS, Arts is the most common field as it was for all prior cases. Notably, GVSS offers 15 Arts courses total, just as BCI and Richview did. This further draws scrutiny to the low level of democratically enriching courses available at GVSS relatively, as compared to Richview and BCI it has more courses offered overall, and the same proportion dedicated to the largest field (Arts), but the remainder of its courses still fall short when it comes to democratic education.

Discussion

Returning to the first paragraph of this section, the purpose of this study is to create a first level analysis on a potential correlation between class and access to democratically enriching elective courses at the secondary level in the TDSB. While these results do indicate some clear trends which we expected, they also have introduced new avenues worth considering. Though a thorough analysis of these aspects would warrant another project, it is worth exploring these stratifications in our discussion, alongside our main focus (as we believe they are closely connected).

Research Question

This project was an investigation into the possibility that in low income areas, courses with a focus on citizen construction (democratically enriching) would be less present than in high income areas in the TDSB. What we have found through this project is that as the income scores of a school descend, so do the proportion of electives scoring “high” and “mid” in Fundamental Democratic Values. Conversely, as the income score descends the proportion of “low” FDV courses ascends (figure 15). AY Jackson is the “richest” school in Ward 13, but this school’s course proportions (12%-42%-46%

High-Mid-Low) are relatively worse than KCI, which is the “poorest” school in Ward 2 (12%-47%-41%). This indicates that even students attending the “richest” schools in a poor ward will be at a disadvantage in regards to democratic education. No less notable is the advantage AY Jackson carries over the corresponding “poorest” school in Ward 13, GVSS (11%-41%-48%). Theoretically, GVSS should at least reflect similar proportions to KCI, as the two “poorest” schools in their respective wards, but GVSS fares worse in every category, with 1% less high FDV courses, 6% less Mid FDV courses, and 7% more low FDV courses. It also should be reiterated that even though KCI’s proportions are so impressive relative to the cases of Ward 13, they are *still* demonstrably worse than Richview, the corresponding “richest” school in Ward 2 (14%-49%-37%).

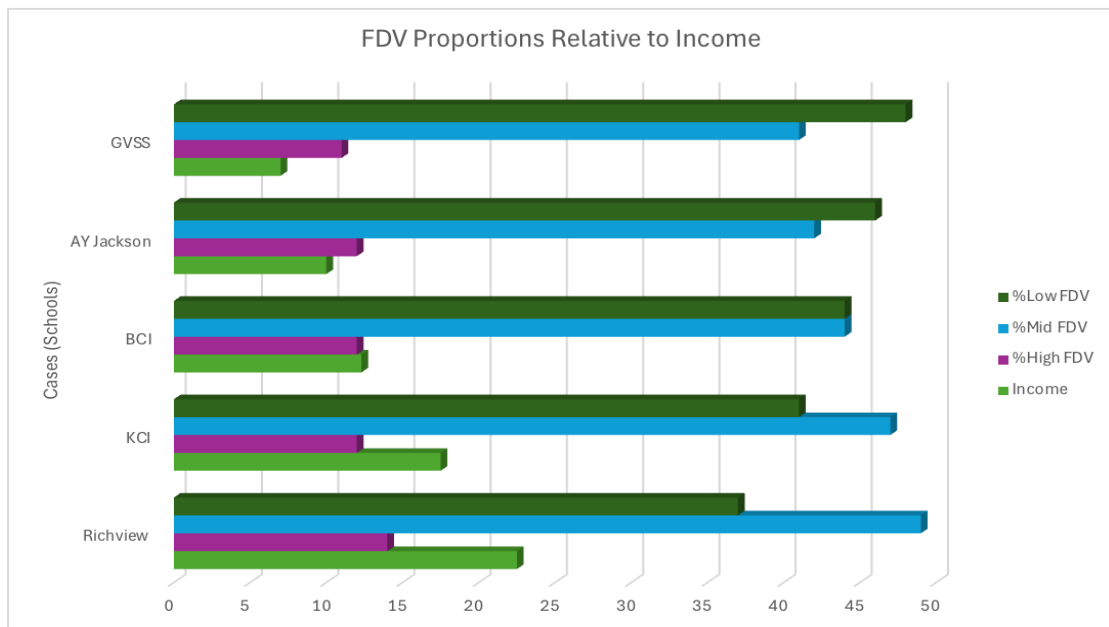


Figure 15

These results underscore the importance of our reconsideration of the role SES plays in the democratic education of students in Ontario, signalling that there is merit to further study into the relation between class and access to democratically enriching material. This project was centered around the supposition that interest (elective) courses impact the way a student is constructed into a citizen through tacit messaging about what topics are relevant to themselves and others in their community. Based on the results of this project, and the relative lack of democratically enriching courses available at the poorer schools in this study, there is reason to believe that this may be the case.

“Academic Performance” vs Democratic Performance

For our first discussion section we would like to consider how our findings compare with other academic evaluators utilized by Ontario to assess secondary education, starting with the Fraser Institute. The Fraser Institute creates the only reference tools for school rankings based on academic performance (drawn from report card data and standardized testing). The rankings put forth by this institution are highly cited and carry considerable authority in regards to the reputation of schools. Since this study was concerned with comparing schools in the TDSB it seemed appropriate to acknowledge how other measures evaluate them. Notably, there are inconsistencies between the findings of this project and the Fraser Institutes ranking, but we argue that this is actually indicative of the way our project differs from traditionalist prioritizations of academic performance. Academic performance is fundamentally rooted in educational outcomes centered on traditional, quantifiable educational evaluations (often associated with the workforce), rather than transmission of necessary values for meaningful engagement in civic life.

The Fraser Institute ranks our case studies as follows;

Overall School Ratings (Ontario Average = 6)

1. Bloor Collegiate Institute (9.2/10)
2. A Y Jackson Secondary School (8.9/10)
3. Richview Collegiate Institute (8.7/10)
4. Georges Vanier Secondary School (6.7/10)
5. Kipling Collegiate Institute (3/10)

Clearly, the Fraser Institute’s academic performance indicators do not align with our data on access to democratically enriching courses, with our best performing school (Richview CI) taking only 3rd place in the rankings, and our “standard school” (Bloor) instead being the school to excel (Cowley [et.al.](#), 2025, 10). This said, this ranking *does* align with potential disparities *within* wards, as our two “richest schools” (Richview and A Y Jackson) do outrank our two “poorest” schools (GVSS and KCI).

Additionally, there are some interesting variations within the academic performance indicators which shed light on where these variances may come from. Fraser lists 6 indicators of academic performance; Applied and Academic Gr.9 Math performance, percentage of students to pass the Literacy Test (OSSLT) on first and subsequent attempts, percentage of tests below standard, and percentage of Gr.9 tests not written (Ibid, 5-6). The onus on math scores is a point of contention to begin with, as our study found math to be a relatively low FDV contributor overall. According to Bourdieu, Mathematics is the “theoretically pure” manifestation of the faculty of sciences (the equivalent of philosophy in the humanities), coupled with its utility in practical application, math sits high on the traditional hierarchy of the faculties (Bourdieu, 1988, 121). This hierarchical importance explains the priority which has been historically placed on the teaching of math, which continues to be embodied by the utilization of math scores in current indicators of academic merit like those of the Fraser Institute. Our study explicitly counters this traditional evaluation of math as a “gold standard” in education by highlighting its relatively limited use in democratic education, though a more in depth discussion on this “conflict of the faculties” as Bourdieu describes it, is beyond the scope of this text. The special emphasis the Fraser Institute puts on mathematics innately emphasizes how evaluations of “academic performance” differ from our evaluation of the subconscious transmission of values through education.

What is more relevant to our study are the Fraser indicators which could potentially be tied to student support systems and class indicators. While the percentage of tests below standard reflects the overall school rankings provided by the Fraser institute, there is an interesting deviation in Gr.9 tests not written at all (assumedly tied to absenteeism). For this indicator, Richview performs the best, with only 1.1% of tests being left unwritten, and GVSS once again performs the worst, with 30.2% (over a quarter) of their Gr.9 students failing to write their standardized tests (Ibid.). High percentages of absenteeism are an indicator of potential school-leaving (commonly referred to as “dropping out”), which has been tied to low socio-economic status in prior studies (Porter, 2015, 181). In addition, while first-attempt passes on the OSSLT reflect the overall ranking, multiple attempt passes once again show Richview at the forefront with 81.8% of students passing after a failed attempt, and GVSS once again fares the worst with only

51.2% of repeat attempt students passing (Fraser Institute, 2024). This indicates that while Richview students do not academically “perform” the best overall, they may have greater access to support when they do fall short. In addition, while GVSS students do not “perform” the worst, a higher percentage of them do not perform *at all*, and they are less likely to recover from failures than students from the other case studies. Notably, when describing this indicator, the Fraser Institute does not explain how absenteeism is incorporated into the overall school “score”, and additionally suggests that in cases of high absenteeism principals “...should be able to provide good reasons for the student’s failure to do so (attend).” (Cowley et.al., 2025, 8).

Subject Matters (the second most common subject)

A branching point of our research question is that while democratically enhancing courses would be less available in low income areas, the alternative electives which would be favoured would in turn be those less centred on the personal/social development aspect of civic education, and instead would favour the transfer of practical skills/knowledge ideal for the job market. While this is not the focus of this study, there is some evidence to be considered from the data towards this end; namely in the analysis of educational fields. The full extent to which subject area contributes to democratic enrichment in relation to class in the TDSB is beyond the scope of this study. However, the higher presence of democratically focussed subjects (ie: Canada and World Studies) in wealthier schools is another potentially rich angle this project puts forth. While we have established that there is correlation between democratically enriching courses generally and the wealth of an area, it is worth also considering what those democratically enriching courses are. As stated prior, the most common courses ran for all cases were Arts, this is unsurprising given the high presence of arts courses in the overall course pool (23 courses total). Additionally, Art courses also generally did not score high for FDV in the curriculum evaluation. Due to these factors it is evident that the most popular subject was not a major contributor to the variations of high FDV courses across cases. However, there were potentially meaningful variances in the *second and third* most frequent subject areas.

At Richview, where the proportion of high FDV courses were 14% respectively, Canadian and World Studies was the second most common subject field for electives to be drawn from at 9 courses. Canadian and World Studies, like arts, made up a very large proportion of the overall course pool (23 courses). However, Canadian and World Studies, unlike arts, *did* make up a large proportion of the courses scoring high in FDVs, contributing 57% of advertised high FDV courses and 43% of ran high FDV courses (the highest proportion in both cases). Interestingly, Richview, which had the highest proportion of highly democratically enriching courses overall, is the only school where Canadian and World Studies was the 2nd most common subject. KCI, BCI and AY Jackson all had high FDV courses take up a 12% proportion, still within the expected threshold, but still notably lower than Richview's 14%. At KCI the second most common field was Social Studies and Humanities, and at both BCI and AY Jackson the second most common field was Science. This said, at all three schools Canadian and World Studies was among the third most common subject fields. GVSS, the only school to not meet the expected threshold of high FDV at 11%, is also the only school in which Canadian and World Studies was not within the top 3 fields from which electives were drawn. This is especially notable given that Canadian and World Studies was the most common field for the elective courses *advertised* at GVSS - in reality they only ran 7 Canadian and World Studies courses. Instead, the second most common field at GVSS was Technological Studies, or in other words, Trades education (which contributed a total of 0 high FDV courses to the overall course pool).

Democratically enriching material is not limited to closely tied subject matter, as evidenced by the course with the *highest* FDV score in this project (11/12) technically hailing from the field of "Guidance and Career Studies"⁶ - the field most directly tied to the practical goal of employment. Equally interesting, this course was available in every case we considered, despite the clear stratifications in democratically enriching courses overall. What this makes evident is that the variances in FDV we are observing between fields are unnecessary, every course has potential to be democratically enriching, even though as they stand now, they are not. In extension, the thesis of this project is derived from the principle

⁶ GLC20 - Career Studies (Grade 10)

that all schools in the TDSB have the capability to be equally democratically enriching, but they are not. Recall that the number of course offerings was actually higher for the schools which offered the least democratically enriching courses, GVSS *should* be capable of offering more high FDV courses than it currently does. The fact that it does not, is a problem, and one that the school seemingly is aware of, given the disparities between its advertised high FDV courses (17%) and those it actually ran (11%).

False Advertising (running vs advertised)

The discrepancies witnessed at both BCI and AY Jackson between advertised and running courses were statistically very small and did not make any meaningful difference to the larger picture of FDV in their cases for the purposes of this study. At BCI, both advertised and running statistics on FDV fell within the expected thresholds, and in the case of AY Jackson the slight discrepancy between advertised courses actually *improved* its overall standing in democratic enrichment (Advertised high FDV was at 11%, running FDV reached the threshold at 12%). This being said, the discrepancies at GVSS between what was advertised vs what actually ran was so egregious that it has necessitated further discussion as to why this may have been the case.

The two poorest schools in this study, AY Jackson and GVSS also had the most elective course options for students, as has been discussed prior. While this did not translate into more democratically enriching courses, it does give us some information to the unique practical realities these schools may be facing. A high number of elective options may indicate a large student body, thus more elective courses are required in order to serve them. This is likely the case at AY Jackson, who did have the largest student population out of all the cases in the study (around 1400 students). This said, the school with the least electives, BCI, did not have the least students in attendance with a population of 820 (KCI did at 565). In addition, the second largest student body was actually at Richview with 1000-1125 students, in spite of Richview offering the second least amount of electives. There is another possible answer here; advertising.

Schools which cater largely to low income areas which have limited other opportunities to entice parents to enroll their children may offer (or claim to offer) a larger array of courses to increase the appeal

of their institution. Richview's website has multiple points of interest for parents, extended and immersion French programs, student success plans illustrated with clear slideshows, a broad athletics program, school trips, and a "pantheon of prominent alumni" (TDSB 2026). Alternatively, GVSS focuses their website on government initiatives like STEM+ or the Specialist High Skills Major - a provincial program which "lets students focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma" (TDSB 2026). Generally, GVSS center their advertisement on practical skills and academic enrichment for the purpose of appealing to the job market - whereas Richview focuses on improving "student experience". In their about section, GVSS underline their "full range of courses in all areas of the Ontario Curriculum" (Ibid.), however, in previous sections we have established that GVSS actually runs less democratically enriching courses than should be the case, and relatively less courses of certain subjects (ie: Canada and World Studies) than the other cases. On the GVSS website under the "Social Studies and Humanities" department tab, GVSS has displayed the pre-requisite charts for "Canadian and World Studies (History)" (sic), "Social Science", and "Law and Economics" (TDSB 2026). Of the courses listed on these charts, 27 did not run according to our data. This page gives the false impression that a student attending GVSS would have the opportunity to follow any of these pathways, which materially is just not the truth. Given the underrepresentation of these courses - many of which were found to be democratically enriching, it is reasonable for one to wonder why this school chose these specific "pre-requisite" charts to display on their website, and if these misrepresentations are potentially influenced by the desire to give parents the impression that the school provides their children with more options than it actually does.

Course Offerings and Habitus

Inconsistencies in course offerings naturally lead one to consider how it is decided which courses will run for a particular school. According to the TDSB, courses are offered based on a variety of factors including facility capabilities, staff availability and "student requests" (TDSB, 2026). In the case of high FDV courses, the majority could be categorized as "class-centric" courses, meaning that the majority of their necessary work can be completed in a standard classroom, unlike courses which would ideally

incorporate hands-on learning in appropriate facilities, ie; a woodworking course. Thus, it is reasonable to theorize that lack of facilities is not the cause for low FDV course offerings. Teacher availability could likely be a factor, as in order for certain courses to run there must be teachers employed with the necessary skill set (and time in their schedule) to instruct said course. While it is beyond the scope of this study to theorize on the teaching situation of our specific case studies, it is worth noting that 2026 provincial budget cuts are expected to lead to mass teacher-layoffs (Previl, Global News, 2026). According to David Lawson, a career educational planning specialist who works with high school students, budget cuts and teacher layoffs lead to the loss of elective courses, especially highly specialized courses like environmental studies, physical education, law, etc. (Collaco, CBC, 2019). Note that many high FDV scoring courses (ex;; PPL40 (FDV 10/12), CLU3M (8/12), CGR4E (8/12)) came from these (and other) highly specialized subject areas.

With the aforementioned constraints, the importance of student agency in directing which courses are offered at their schools is emphasized. As teachers and budgets are stretched thin, courses deemed “unnecessary” will continue to disappear, including those with high democratic value. A strong student demand for these courses is one way to potentially prevent this, as the TDSB acknowledges the potential power of “student request” in determining course offerings at their schools. These “requests” are typically made through option or interest sheets, or a direct petition to a school’s guidance team. This means they require not only interest on the student’s behalf, but a strong conviction and sense of empowerment to take control of their own education. Ideally, this process is another means for students to enact Dewey’s aforementioned concepts of student agency and “force of character”, subconsciously preparing them to be engaged citizens. This being said, it is also a process by which students can be taught the opposite, that their interests - especially in certain subject areas - are unnecessary and do not matter, politically dis-empowering them.

According to Bourdieu, Habitus is both constructed and constructing, meaning an individual can simultaneously be experiencing the effects of their socio-economic cultural conditioning while reinforcing said standards of behaviour of their own volition. For example, the exercise of power presupposes the

merit of the individual by their ability to exercise said power, they are simultaneously *constructing* habitus through their exercise (exercise of power indicating this is an individual who is worthy of being listened to), while being *constructed* by their exercise (their ability to take action solidifying their internal belief that they are worthy of being listened to) (Bourdieu, 88). Logically the inverse would be true as well, and an individual who is incapable of taking action may interpret that their positionality is the result of their own *unworthiness* to take action. This interpretation of hierarchy then leads the individual not only to internal de-mobilization, but to what Bourdieu describes as near religious condemnation of others in their social strata who attempt to wield power beyond their station (Ibid, 117). In the case of highschool students and FDV, we can interpret that attempt and failure to get an elective course run could further disempower a student as they interpret said failure to be an indication of their own innate helplessness. By extension, we may even posit that a life-time of disempowerment due to poverty may prevent a student from even attempting this step, especially if the course they are seeking out is one whose subject matter relates to systems they already feel alienated from; ie democracy. If all the high FDV courses are cut from their course schedules, it may subconsciously communicate to students, via their lack of ability to prevent this cut, that they are unworthy of learning said subject matter. If these courses were never present at all, having been cut years prior, it may lead the student to internalize into adulthood how these topics are irrelevant to them, and if democratically rich topics are irrelevant to them, how can we then expect them to become democratically engaged citizens?

Conclusion

This project has sought to explore a first line analysis of potential inequalities in the democratic education of low income students in the TDSB. We incorporated literature and theory from class and domination scholars, educational scholarly work and studies into civic education in order to do so. Fundamental to this project was the tension between practical knowledge transfer and the internal development of democratic values; this dichotomy between the material and metaphysical bled into all

aspects of this project, including the methodology which sought to combine pragmatic sources of information with an analysis towards nebulous, subjective concepts through code grouping and emergent framework.

Limitations and Future Research

It should be noted that this study faced a series of limitations in scope, and is intended as a first line of analysis. This is not a causal study, but an exploration to validate the potential of future research into this topic and collect data which would be useful for such. This is a small project examining only 5 public schools in one school board, and only the courses offered at said schools; any attempt to draw a causal conclusion would require a much larger sample size and the necessary statistical arbiters of significance.

Another specific limitation which should be acknowledged is the decision to study curriculum alone in order to “evaluate” education. Education is undeniably more than what is written in curriculum documents, and other similar studies (like the work of Jessie Abrahams and Sharon Jones) notably take a more broad and nuanced approach to education, acknowledging the importance of external social elements to the act of teaching and learning. The impact the role of individual teachers can have on the learning experience of students cannot be overstated, and has been validated by larger, more robust research into the topic. In addition, the roles of guidance counselors, academic advisors, clubs, and even external influences like parents, churches, community programs, etc are also relevant to the perception of the self and the political.

While this project sought to identify potential conditioning factors present in the written content of curriculum, it is important to acknowledge the subliminal communication which relevant scholars also underline as vital to this field of study. Often referred to as “hidden curriculum”, this is unspoken information conditioning students to internalize certain behaviours or events as morally “good” or “bad”. Essentially, the way a subject is taught can communicate the “correct” moral perspective on said subject,

response to certain behaviours (reward, punishment) shape future adult behaviour even without overt value statements. Sharon Jones provides the examples that the way students are taught about capitalism has indicated to students that it is a “just and fair” system despite work on the subject being heavily debated, or that reward for obediently lining up for assemblies imposes the value of conformity to students (2023, 56). The importance of these subliminal lines of communication to student conditioning cannot be overstated, and arguably without these additional measures, the conditioning present in curriculum itself would be far less effective. Ideally future research into this topic would incorporate both hidden and written curriculum to account for how these two aspects of education work in tandem to solidify certain “truths” in students minds.

Overall, while the findings of this project are not without merit, they are only indicative that this avenue is worth exploring further, and serve as the basis for which future research can be built upon. This project introduced many avenues for which the aforementioned future research may develop, first and foremost being the inclusion of teaching methods/student teacher relationships to better understand how the information from the curriculum is *communicated* to students, which is fundamental to how it is then interpreted and understood. In addition, this project did not examine the streaming aspect of Ontario’s education, which through a pre-requisite system limits not only what courses students can take in highschool, but whether they can apply to University or College in the future. It is evident that this aspect could also play a role in the potential political underdevelopment of the lower classes through biased prescription of “lower” academic ability to the already underprivileged. There is also potential for inequality to be observed between boards, especially the French and Catholic school boards in Ontario which serve thousands of students every year. This project focussed solely on public schools, and there is massive potential in considering what differences we may find in private or non-public alternative schools. All this being said, it should be noted that the datasets and codification methods of this project have great potential for future use in projects of similar topics.

Final Word

Overall, the results of this project make evident the necessity of this study and future studies into class inequality and education in Canada, with particular importance on the role course availability plays in these institutional structures. Our supposition that class would correlate with access to courses that were democratically enriching (scoring high in the presence of fundamental democratic values) was validated, and we garnered more and relevant information on the types of educational content which are democratically salient and where they are available. Furthermore, we uncovered some unexpected information regarding the way educational institutions are potentially required to “market” themselves which may indicate that not only are democratically enriching courses underrepresented in poor neighbourhoods, these schools may be aware and attempting to obfuscate this potential inequality.

It is important to reiterate the proclamations at the provincial and school board level that Ontario’s education system is dedicated to addressing potential inequity in education. Liberal systems function on the principle that if there is equality of access, equality of opportunity, it should offset the potential evils of a capitalist market and allow anyone who works hard to flourish economically, but also socially and internally. The education system as an arm of the liberal state should be functioning to this end, and preparing students to enter and engage with their society on an occupational, communal and political level. We noted at the beginning of this paper that according to the OECD, Ontario ranks 9th out of the 13 provinces and territories for civic engagement, scoring a 5.2 out of 10. It is all the more interesting that Ontario actually ranks first out of all the provinces and territories for education level, with 95% of our labour force having completed high school (OECD, 2026). Additionally, Ontario ranks 2nd in the country for math, reading and science scores (Ontario 2023). Students in Ontario are not performing poorly, they are not failing to attend, they are taking in the necessary information to complete their education, but what they are learning is evidently not motivating them to democratically engage.

Based on the results of this study, there is ample reason to continue pursuing this avenue in order to improve our understanding of why Canadian citizens behave the ways they do politically; and most notably, to investigate why some citizens may choose not to engage politically. Were the results of this study replicated on a larger scale; it would provide evidence that individuals from low income areas are not engaging at least in part because the educational material they had access to never imbued them with a sense that they should. The material they had access to transmitted a clear message to them about what their “role” in socio-economic hierarchies should be, their education had a clear purpose, one not rooted in personal development, or exploring interests, or even keeping their future options open. Their academic “training” was to fulfill the necessary skill development, to transfer knowledge, so that they may take their place in the job market to contribute to production. This was how they were intended to engage as citizens, and “higher” orders of calling, like democratic participation, was simply not for people *like them*.

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Appendix

Key:

C&WS - Canadian and World Studies

SS&H - Social Sciences and the Humanities

CIL - Classical and International Languages

FNM&I - First Nations, Métis and Indigenous Studies

Com. Ed - Computer Studies

1 - Implied Presence in the curriculum

2- Overt Presence in the curriculum

Courses	FDV	FDV	FDV	FDV	FDV	FDV	
C&WS	Global Citizenship	Critical Perspective	Diversity	Empathy	Engagement	Equality	Total FDV Score:
CGF3M- Forces of Nature	0	2	0	2	2	0	6
CGW4U- World Issues: A Geographic Analysis	2	2	1	2	2	1	10
CLU3M- Understanding Canadian Law	0	2	2	1	1	2	8
CLN4U- International Law	1	2	0	0	1	2	6
CHW3M- History to the end of the	1	2	0	1	2	0	6

15th century							
CHY4U- History since the 15th century	2	2	2	1	1	1	9
CHI4U-C anada:History, Identity and Culture	0	2	2	2	1	1	8
CGO4M- Spatial Technologies in Action	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
CHY4C- History since the 15th century(college)	2	2	1	0	1	1	7
CGW4C- World Issues: A Geographic Analysis(college)	2	2	0	0	2	2	8
CHA3U- American History	0	2	2	2	1	1	8
CIA4U- Analyzing Current	1	2	0	0	2	2	7

Economic Issues							
CGG3O- Travel and Tourism: A Geographic Perspective	2	2	0	2	0	0	6
CGR4M- The Environment and Resource Management	2	2	0	2	2	0	8
CHT3O- World History since 1900	2	2	0	0	1	2	7
CHM4E- Adventures in World History	0	2	1	1	1	1	6
CIE3M- The Individual and the Economy	0	2	0	2	2	2	8
CPW4U- Canadian and World Politics	2	2	1	2	2	0	9

CLU3E-U nderstan ding Canadian Law(Wor kplace)	0	2	0	0	1	2	5
CPC3O- Politics in Action: Making a Change	0	2	0	2	2	2	8
CGU4M- World Geograp hy	1	2	1	2	2	0	8
CGR4E- Living in a Sustaina ble World	2	2	0	2	2	0	8
CGT3O-I ntroducti on to Spatial Technolo gies	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Art	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
ATC1O- Dance	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
ATC2O- Dance	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
ATC3M- Dance	0	0	1	0	1	0	2

ATC4M-Dance	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
ADA1O-Dramatic Arts	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
ADA2O-Dramatic Arts	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
ADA3M-Dramatic Arts	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
ADA4M-Dramatic Arts	0	1	1	2	1	0	5
AMU1O-Music	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
AMU2O-Music	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
AMU3M-Music	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
AMU4M-Music	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
AVI1O-Visual Art	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
AVI2O-Visual Art	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
AVI3M-Visual Art	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
AVI4M-Visual Art	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
ALC1O-Integrated Arts	1	0	2	1	1	0	5

ASM2O-Media Arts	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
ASM3M-Media Arts	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
ASM4M-Media Arts	0	1	1	2	1	1	6
AEA3O-Exploring and Creating in the Arts	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
ATC3O-Dance (open)	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
ASM3O-Media Arts (open)	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
SS&H	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
HFN2O - Food and Nutrition	0	2	0	1	1	1	5
HPW3C-Working with Infants and Young Children	0	2	2	2	2	2	10

HFC3M- Food and Culture	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
HIF1O/2 O- Introducti on to Family Studies	0	2	1	0	1	0	4
HSE4M- Equity and Social Justice	0	2	0	2	2	2	8
HZT4U- Philosop hy : Question s and Theories	0	2	1	1	0	2	6
HSP3U- Introducti on to Anthropol ogy, Psycholo gy and Sociolog y	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
HSP3C- Intro to Anthropol ogy, Psycholo gy and Sociolog y(college)	0	2	1	1	0	0	4

HFA4U- Nutrition and Health	1	2	0	1	2	1	7
HFA4C- Nutrition and Health (college)	1	2	0	1	2	1	7
HHS4C- Families in Canada (college)	0	2	1	2	0	1	6
HHS4U- Families in Canada	0	2	1	2	0	1	6
HPC3O- Parenting	0	2	1	1	0	1	5
HRT3M- World Religions and Belief Tradition s	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
HSB4U- Challeng e and Change in Society	1	2	2	1	2	2	10
HSC4M- World Cultures	0	2	2	2	1	0	7

HRF3O- World Religions : Belief and Daily Life	0	2	2	2	0	0	6
HNB4M- The World of Fashion	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
HNC3C- Understanding Fashion	0	2	1	0	1	0	4
HZB3M- Philosophy: The Big Questions	0	2	0	0	0	2	4
HHG4M- Issues in Human Growth and Development	0	2	1	1	1	0	5
HLS3O- Living Spaces and Shelter	0	2	0	1	0	1	4
Tech. Ed	Global Citizens-hip	Critical Perspec-tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage-ment	Equality	Total
TEJ3M- Computer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Engineeri ng Technolo gy							
TEJ4M- Compute r Engineeri ng Technolo gy	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
TGJ3M- Communi cations Technolo gy	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
TAS2O- Technolo gy and the Skilled Trades	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
TFJ3C- Hospitalit y and Tourism	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
TGJ4M- Communi cations Technolo gy	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
TFJ4C- Hospitalit y and Tourism	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
TAS1O- Technolo gy and	0	0	2	1	0	0	3

the Skilled Trades							
TDJ3M- Technolo gical Design	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TDJ4M- Technolo gical Design	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TCJ3C- Construct ion Technolo gy	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
TDJ3O- Technolo gical Design and the Environm ent	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TTJ3C- Transport ation Technolo gy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TCJ4C- Construct ion Technolo gy	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
TDJ4O- Technolo gical Design in	0	0	1	0	1	0	2

the 21st Century							
TTJ4C-Transportation Technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TFJ3E-Hospitality and Tourism (Workplace)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Science	Global Citizenship	Critical Perspective	Diversity	Empathy	Engagement	Equality	Total
SBI3U-Biology	0	2	1	0	1	0	4
SBI3C-Biology (college)	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
SCH3U-Chemistry	1	2	0	1	1	0	5
SPH3U-Physics	0	2	0	0	1	1	4
SVN3M - Environment Science	1	2	0	2	1	0	6
SES4U-Earth and Space Science	0	2	0	2	1	0	5

SBI4U-Biology	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
SCH4U-Chemistry	0	2	0	1	2	0	5
SCH4C-Chemistry (college)	0	2	0	0	2	0	4
SPH4U-Physics	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
SNC4M-General Science	0	2	0	0	2	1	5
SPH4C-Physics (college)	0	2	0	0	2	0	4
SVN3E-Environmental Science (workplace)	0	2	0	1	2	0	5
SNC4E-General Science (workplace)	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
Business	Global Citizenship	Critical Perspective	Diversity	Empathy	Engagement	Equality	Total
BOH4M-Business Leadership: Manage	0	2	2	2	0	0	6

ment Fundame ntals							
BDI3C-E ntreprene urship: The Venture	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
BAF3M-F inancial Accounti ng Fundame ntals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BAT4M-F inancial Accounti ng Principle s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BBB4M-I nternatio nal Business Fundame ntals	2	2	2	2	1	0	9
BMI3C-In troductio n to Marketin g	0	2	0	0	2	0	4
BTA3O-I nformatio n and Communi cation Technolo gy	0	2	0	0	0	1	3

BEM1O-Building the Entrepreneurial Mindset	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
BEP2O-Launching and Leading a Business	1	0	2	0	0	1	4
BOG4E-Business Leadership, Becoming a Manager	0	0	0	2	0	2	4
BTX4C-Information Technology in Business	0	2	2	0	0	0	4

CIL	Global Citizenship	Critical Perspective	Diversity	Empathy	Engagement	Equality	Total
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LBABO-LDYBO	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
LBABD-LDYBD	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
LBACU-LDYCU	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
LBADU-LDYDU	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

LVLCU/L VGCU- Latin/Anc ient Greek 2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
LVLDU/L VGDU- Latin/Anc ient Greek 3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
LVLBD/L VGBD- Latin/Anc ient Greek 1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
FNMI	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
NAC1O- Expressi ons of Aborigina l Cultures	0	1	1	2	1	0	5
NBE3E- Understa nding Contemp orary FN,M,& I Voices	0	2	2	2	0	0	6
NBE3C- Understa nding Contemp . FN,M,&I Voices (Civl)	0	2	2	1	1	1	7

NBE3U- Understa nding Contemp . FN,M,&I Voices (Ulv)	0	2	2	1	1	0	6
NAC2O- FN, M, and Inuit People in Canada	0	2	1	2	1	0	6
NDA3M- Contemp orary FN, M,&I Issues and Perspect.	0	2	2	0	2	0	6
English	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
ETC3M- Canadian Literature	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
EPS3O- Presentat ion and Speaking Skills	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
EWC4C- The Writer's Craft (college)	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
EWC4U- The	0	1	1	1	0	0	3

Writer's Craft							
EMS3O-Media Studies	1	2	0	2	0	1	6
Phys.Ed	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
PPL2O-Healthy Active Living Education	1	0	1	2	2	1	7
PPL3O-Healthy Active Living Education	0	1	0	2	2	0	5
PPL4O-Healthy Active Living Education	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
PSK4U-Introductory Kinesiology	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
PLF4M-Recreation and Fitness Leadership	0	0	1	2	0	2	5

PPZ3C-Health for Life	0	2	2	2	2	0	8
Math	Global Citizenship	Critical Perspective	Diversity	Empathy	Engagement	Equality	Total
MHF4U-Advanced Functions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MCV4U-Calculus and Vectors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MDM4U-Mathematics of Data Management	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
MAP4C-Foundations for College Math	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MCT4C-Mathematics for College Tech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MEL4E-Mathematics for Everyday Life	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Com. Ed	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
ICD2O-D igital Technolo gy and Innovatio ns in the Changing World	0	2	2	0	0	1	5
ICS3U- Introducti on to Compute r Science	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
ICS4U- Compute r Science	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
ICS3C- Introducti on to Compute r Science (college)	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
ICS4C- Compute r Science (college)	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Guidance	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
GLD2O- Discoveri ng the Workplac e	0	0	2	0	0	2	4

GLC2O-Career Studies	2	2	2	1	2	2	11
GPP3O-Leadersh ip and Peer Support	0	2	2	2	0	2	8
GLN4O-Navigatin g the Workplac e	0	0	2	0	0	2	4
GWL3O-Designin g Your Future	1	2	2	0	2	1	8
Interdis. Studies	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
IDC3O-Interdisci plinary Studies	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
IDC4U-Interdisci plinary Studies	1	2	0	1	1	0	5
ASL	Global Citizens- hip	Critical Perspec- tive	Diversity	Empathy	Engage- ment	Equality	Total
LASBO	0	2	2	1	2	2	9