

Who Are the People in My Neighbourhood?

By Barbara A. Bierman

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All around me Canadian diversity is alive and well. I live in a typical Canadian neighbourhood with middle-class families most of whom lead busy lives carting their children around to activities and school and who head off to work in any one of the large metropolitan centers within an hour's drive. These people come from a variety of ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. These people are parents who work hard to provide a life for their children that far surpasses the one they remember themselves.

Just like all parents, one of the most important decisions the parents in my neighbourhood make is the one about where our kids will go to school. There are a lot of choices depending on what kind of education one seeks and how much disposable cash one has to spend on this decision. Despite the fact that we live in one of the last Canadian provinces whose government does not financially support school choice...choice it would seem is what we all want in this neighbourhood.

Let me explain.

I send my children to a local inter-denominational Christian school. Looking through my living room window, I see the family who lives next door to me who sends their children to the local Catholic English speaking school. The family next to them sends their children to a Montessori school in a city close by after finding that the local Montessori school was not exactly the fit they needed. As I look out my front window across the street there is a family who send their children to a local Baptist church school. Next to them are 2 families who send their children to the local public school. The last family in my little neighbourhood community sends their children to a local Catholic French immersion school.

We talk a lot about why we have chosen the schools we have and how our families are experiencing educational opportunities in the province of Ontario. We discuss everything from curriculum to dress codes to tuition prices. We share our ideas for helping our children to succeed in an increasingly competitive and confusing world.

Guess where we have all these great conversations! In the afternoons after school, all of our children play together in our street allowing us parents to get to know each other and talk together. It's diversity at its finest! Hardly any of these children go to school together and yet they play

together forming a warm, safe community where people are appreciated for their great variety proving 2 things I knew all along.

The first thing is that parents really do want choices when it comes to the education of their children. The second thing is that children do not all need to go to the same schools to form a healthy, tolerant neighbourhood.

I'm betting that my neighbourhood is pretty average as far as Canadian neighbourhoods go. It's time that our provincial government recognized that school choice strengthens neighbourhoods like mine and by extension, our society. If government supported school choice, we would truly all be equal.