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GLOBAL VOICES

UNIVERSITIES REMOVE IVORY TOWERS TO BUILD BRIDGES TO THE COMMUNITY

ELEMENTARY RESOURCES



Students and community members alike volunteer and learn gardening skills on eight on-campus gardens. (Photo: Bernard Weil, Getty Images)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- There are 98 universities ([Universities Canada](#)) and more than 127 colleges and technical institutes in Canada. ([Colleges and Institutions Canada](#))
- In Canada, universities are post-secondary institutions that may grant formal degrees to graduates—bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees. Colleges are post-secondary institutions that focus more strongly on career-related training. Most college programs result in a diploma or professional certificate. However, a few college programs in Canada give graduates a bachelor's degree or master's degree. ([settlement.org](#))
- Canadian universities contribute approximately \$35 billion a year to the economy in spending and employ approximately 250,000 people. ([Universities Canada](#))
- Canadian universities spent \$13 billion on research in 2013, including \$1 billion to support businesses and \$1.2 billion to support non-profit organizations and causes. ([Universities Canada](#))

- In 2015, there were 1.7 million people enrolled in colleges and universities in Canada. ([Universities Canada](#))
- In 2013, 498,759 students graduated from some level of post-secondary education in Canada. ([Statistics Canada](#))
- As of 2011, almost 12 million Canadians aged 25–64—64.1 percent—had some level of post-secondary education. 23.2 percent of Canadians had only completed high school. ([Canada.com](#))
- In 2011, 25.9 percent of Canadians had a university degree, and 21.4 percent had a college diploma. ([Canada.com](#))
- In 2009, Canada had the highest proportion of its adult population with a post-secondary education of any country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). ([Statistics Canada](#))

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:



These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at [www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/](#).

KEY TERMS

Post-secondary education—Any formal education program taken after graduating high school—most commonly college or university.

Relevant—To have a bearing on the matter at hand. In the context of an organization or institution like universities, it means their programs and work are very connected with and able to address and current issues and challenges in our world.

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Education, Values and Ethics, Socially Conscious Living, Local Issues
- **Course Connections:** Language, Social Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Create links between a current issue and personal experiences
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information
- Participate in active group work and class discussions
- Communicate effectively in writing, orally and visually
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically

DISCUSS

1. What is the purpose of universities offering free programming to community members? Consider the examples and reasons provided in the article as well as any additional considerations that may be relevant.
2. The *Global Voices* article asks if there still a need for "brick-and-morter institutions" in a time when there are so many opportunities to learn online. What do you think? Explain your response.
3. Review the opportunities provided at universities to non-university students that are listed in the article. If these opportunities were offered in your community would you take advantage of any of them now or in the future? Explain your response.

DIVE DEEPER

Reiterate to students that the *Global Voices* article examines ways education is becoming more accessible and relevant to the communities they are a part of. In doing so, students of the schools are finding more connections to the neighbouring communities and finding more purpose in what they are studying.

In small groups have students consider what they are learning and studying in their classes. This can be done by assigning each group a class subject and asking them to summarize what they are learning in that class. Next, instruct students to brainstorm a list of ways to share what they are leaning in this class with the school community, their parents or the neighbouring community outside of the school.

After groups have a few ideas, ask them to select one of the best or strongest ideas and develop it a bit more. Students may consider what lesson they would share, how they would share it and with whom they would share it with. For example, students may decide to select a musician or song that they are learning in music class and plan a concert to share it with the student body with a presentation on why music is important to the class. Or they may plan to visit a senior centre nearby to perform a selection of songs to share the gift of music. Have students create a brief explanation to promote their idea to the rest of the class.

Once students are ready, have a representative from each group share their group's idea with the class. Hold a class vote to pick one idea to implement. Ideas may also be combined. For example a Science and Technology lesson on bridge construction may be combined with a Social Studies lesson on local history by creating a pamphlet on the construction and historical importance of a local bridge project. The pamphlet may be distributed door-to-door to homes surrounding the bridge.

As a class, develop the selected idea into an action plan assigning tasks and outlining learning goals. Take action on the plan and create bridges from the classroom to the school, home or community.

To complete the lesson, have students reflect in conversation or in writing on the connections they made from the classroom and what they are learning to a community outside of the classroom using the following questions:

- How were you able to connect what you were learning in class with people in another community (student body, parents or school neighbours)?
- What did you learn from the experience of sharing your learning with others?
- Would you like to share what you are learning with others more in the future? Explain why or why not. Share any ideas you have.
- Why might it be important to connect your learning with people outside of your classroom?