

# CCEAM/CASEA 2014 Conference

## University of New Brunswick

### Conversation Session

Documenting the Challenges and Successes of Meeting a Child's Right to an Education

Sunday, June 8, 2014

15:15 – 16:30

Tilley Hall 205

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### Context

In response to the conference theme *(Re) Situating Commonwealth: Educational Leadership at a Time of Demographic Change* in which proposals are sought that illuminate the diversities with which contemporary school systems and educational leaders are grappling with increasingly complex environments, this Conversation Session invites individuals to share their experiences of how children's rights to an education are being challenged and how those challenges are being addressed in the Commonwealth. This conversation session is particularly relevant in light of the fact that, in some instances and some nations, there is still ignorance, and even resistance and hostility to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention)* (Freeman, 1996).

Using the backdrop of a three part mini-documentary about the Barefoot Teacher Training initiative operated out of the Loreto School (Sealdah) located in Kolkata, India, participants will be asked to join a conversation at CASEA/CCEAM 2014 about the local and global initiatives designed to empower local communities to insure a child's right to education is met. UNESCO's *Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities* challenges us to commit to the realization of human rights for all people in tangible ways.

Even though education is a fundamental human right and arguably essential for the exercise of all other human rights, debates have continued for decades about what constitutes "children's rights" and, in some instances, the concept of a child's rights touches raw nerves when adult decisions and actions are put to the test (Stainton Rogers, 2004). However, while ideological debates continue, millions of children remain deprived of equal educational opportunities (Reardon, 1995). Rights are entitlements, valuable commodities which individuals ought not to have "to grovel or beg to get", according to Freeman (1996, p. 70). Thus, while theoretical conceptualizations can help frame discussion of education as a right and, as such, are warranted, what are often missing in academic gatherings are vivid representations of what is required, in concrete terms, to meet the obligation to educate children in some of the world's poorest communities, and what obligation is due by those involved in educational leadership preparation.

Guiding questions for the session include:

1. How have the challenges to a child's right to an education been documented?
2. How have the initiatives designed to address these challenges been documented?
3. What are the responsibilities of academics and colleges and/or departments of educational administration, management or leadership to insure that there is a commitment to raise awareness to the challenges that exist to a child's right to an education?

### Select references

- Freeman, M. (1996). The importance of a children's rights perspective in litigation. *Butterworths Family Law Journal*, 2(4), 84-90.
- Reardon, B. (1995). *Educating for human dignity: Learning about rights and responsibilities*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Stainton Rogers, W. (2004). Promoting better childhoods: Constructions of child concern. In M.J. Kehily (Ed.), *An introduction to childhood studies* (pp. 125-144), Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.