

Working Towards Equitable Career Education Through Early Intervention



ELEMENTARY
CAREERS

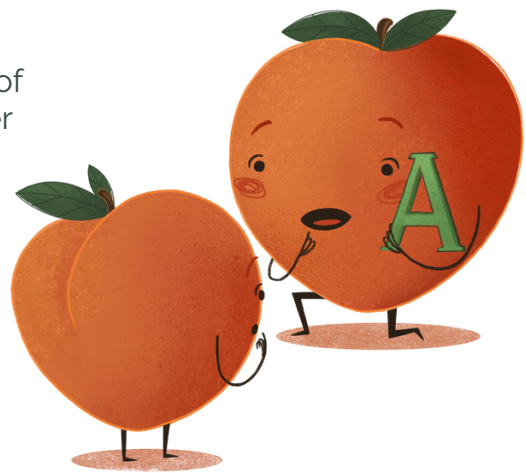
ABOUT US

Elementary Careers is the perfect solution for any school looking to set the highest of standards for their students when it comes to making key decisions about the future.

Our vision is for all children to learn from an early age about the breadth and depth of careers available in the world of work, so that they can reach their full potential without the barriers that harmful gender and racial stereotypes bring.

Our main customers are educators and parents, for whom we provide:

- The stereotype-free flashcard series OPUS
- Quality lesson plans and printable activities
- Consultancy and training for teachers in need of equitable resource management, and a deeper knowledge of career guidance



THE EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPING IN CAREER EDUCATION

Stereotypes based on gender and race can limit children's long-term aspirations by introducing them to behaviours and ideas that lower their self-esteem and general wellbeing.

In 2006, the **Women and Work Commission** identified the gender gap in education, demonstrating that it has significant implications for the career choices that young men and women make and, in the longer term, for their future earnings. Over fifteen years have passed since this report, and the gains for women and other marginalized communities has been negligible.

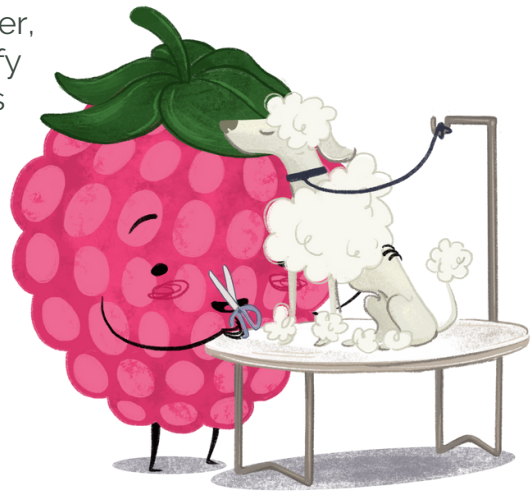
Numerous other organizations have highlighted the need for early intervention to prevent stereotypes from embedding. From **Education and Employers** to **CERIC** to the **Fawcett Society**, the message is clear: we must act now to prevent future generations from suffering the harmful consequences of inequitable education.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

The environments that children are surrounded by inform them how the world works and their place within it. Early education settings need to be bursting with information that tells every single child that they belong, while educators need to understand their role in ensuring students receive an equitable experience.

A key component in this is the teacher diversity gap, which compares the percentage of students of colour to the percentage of teachers of colour. In **Ontario** racial minorities represent 26% of the population yet make up only 9% of the elementary school and kindergarten teachers.

The same kinds of divisions can be seen with gender, as the overwhelming majority of school staff identify as female. It is imperative, therefore, that educators begin to take unconscious bias seriously, and be **proactive** rather than reactive.



LANGUAGE MATTERS

During the early years of education, children are absorbing everything they see and hear around them, which is why equity-centred language is critical at this stage.

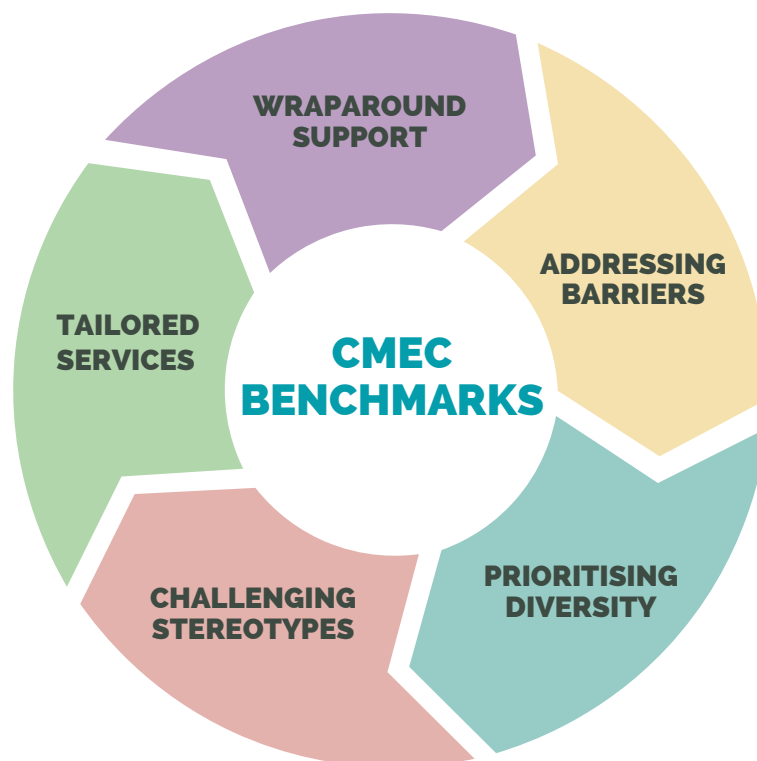
Too often we hear people in caring professions described as 'she' and people in manual or technical jobs described as 'he', even when talking in hypotheticals. To ensure that children of all gender expressions are included in career education, teachers must use 'they/them' at all times. This not only creates equitable learning environments, but also prevents gendered stereotypes from embedding.

The language and content that children are exposed to in books and games also has a huge impact on how they see themselves. Classrooms around the country are filled with materials centred around white, non-disabled boys, which excludes over half of the pupils in each class. This lack of diversity leads to traditionally under-represented communities believing that they are not capable of certain achievements because of their identity. These effects last well into adulthood and are a direct cause of narrow career ideas.

USING THE CMEC REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDENT TRANSITIONS

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) states that student success is highly dependent on their capacity to navigate key transitions along their career pathways. They recommend that schools strengthen transition supports for students and help level the playing field for under-represented groups.

The central component of the Reference Framework is a series of benchmarks intended to support and promote good practice in student transitions.



The tools and resources available through Elementary Careers address all of these priorities outlined in the framework:

- Wraparound supports (i.e., supports that are community-based, culturally relevant, individualized, strength-based, and family-centred) should be made available
- Address attitudinal barriers that implicitly or explicitly limit career choices
- Student diversity is considered in all career education programming
- Career programming actively seeks to challenge stereotypes and raise aspirations among under-represented groups
- Career services are tailored to individual student needs

NEXT STEPS

Traditional career education has been failing young people for decades, not because of the quality, but because of its timing.

Without early intervention, career practitioners are left with the unenviable task of challenging stereotypes and attempting to broaden the horizons of students that have been conditioned to believe certain biases for well over 10 years. This is not only an extremely difficult task, but one that is completely avoidable.

By incorporating the world of work into learning and play from a young age, and by selecting books and resources that represent a wide diversity of people in a variety of careers, educators can have a huge impact on the potential outcomes for children in their care.

Your students can change the future. Will you help them?



To find out more about creating equitable classrooms for your students, contact:

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