

From Harm to Hope: Addressing the Impact of Gendered Expectations on Diverse Students

This workshop session will explore the impact of violence in the lives of students, how it affects their learning, their sense of academic potential and vision for their future. Participants will discuss how we as teachers and administrators can collaborate to create learning environments that are responsive and flexible in addressing students' diverse needs. Policy implications and recommendations will be an anticipated outcome of interactive activities.

Over the last two decades in Canada and around the world, there has been great commitment to create safe university and college campuses and to address issues of violence in intimate or dating relationships. Yet little has been done proactively to acknowledge and address the needs of students who have experienced violence or harm in their home. Women students and those who identify as LGBT are particularly affected by the trauma of violence in their lives. They are often not able to concentrate, complete assignments, feel confident or engage in class or co-curricular activities.

For the past twenty years the focus of my work has been on issues of violence and safety. Most recently, in partnership with a local community organization we received a grant from Status of Women Canada to "engage young people to prevent violence against women on campus." This workshop will not only host a discussion but will have interactive planning exercises to explore practices and innovative initiatives to address student needs -- needs in the words of one student "to be safe to talk about safety." Teachers are often the first ones with whom students share their experiences. Responding to the harm in their lives is critical to the success of our increasingly diverse student populations - it's a new dimension to our work in leading learning for change.