Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility
Miriam Trehearne
Biggest Gaps in Education

MIRIAM TREHEARN: Very many people think the biggest gap in education is the gap between schools. So between this school and that school; maybe a socioeconomic gap. But actually, that's not the reality. The biggest gap is not between schools, it's within a school. It's a difference between teacher A and teacher B in any one building. It's a huge gap, 40 to 49 percent gap. That's one we have to close, because we know from Stats Canada that we have a huge number of Canadians, about 49, 50 percent of Canadians who as adults are functionally illiterate. That means between the ages of 16 and 65, they can't read or write at a grade five level. That's a huge number. It's shocking.

Whenever I work with schools, principals, school districts, they can't believe it's that high, but it is from coast to coast. And it's the same wherever I go. So we have to try and close that gap, because it's just not acceptable.

One mother said to me, "Miriam, it's like playing Russian Roulette, depending upon whose class my kid goes into." And she's right. It's the luck of the draw. And it shouldn't be. We know too much now in education to make it random, or this feels good to do this.