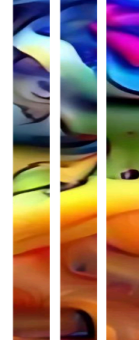


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CCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT REPORT

Climate Camp: Deepening Professional Learning in Climate Change Education for K-12 Teachers



Dr. Hilary Inwood and Dr. David Montemurro
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)
March 2025

Summary

Climate Camp is an immersive, intensive professional learning experience that aims to develop teacher capacity and leadership in CCE. Organized for the first time in August 2024 by the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) in collaboration with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, it provides K-12 teachers and OISE graduate students with three days of rich collaborative inquiry focused on the intersection of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, climate justice education and transformative pedagogies. A variety of keynotes, workshops, indoor and outdoor activities offer opportunities for experiential and holistic learning to help inservice and preservice educators prepare for teaching that centres equity, inclusion, justice and reconciliation as key tenets of CCE.

The TDSB's Mono Cliffs Outdoor Education Centre provides a generative setting of natural and purpose-built spaces that encourage all to deepen their knowledge about CCE, embrace justice-centred climate action, and nurture their resilience for leading

this work. Diverse perspectives, innovative approaches and compelling ideas are introduced as educators interact with CCE experts, Indigenous knowledge-keepers, youth activists, leaders from the TDSB Sustainability Office and OISE’s teacher education programs, and most importantly, with each other. Meals, breaks and evening social activities provide time for nourishment, self-care, reflection and nurturing relationships to energize and empower them for leading CCE in the subsequent year. Educators are invited to share their expertise and work collaboratively to reflect on and refine their practice in CCE for the coming school year.

Gaps & Needs Addressed

Since its inception in 2017, the TDSB’s EcoSchools Program has collaborated with OISE to offer a variety of professional learning opportunities for TDSB inservice teachers and OISE preservice teachers to help enact the educational components of the TDSB’s *Climate Action Report* and OISE’s *Sustainability & Climate Action Plan*. Over the past six years, K-12 teachers, staff and administrators have participated in integrated (inservice & preservice) professional learning experiences on a wide range of topics, from environmental racism and climate justice, to nature-based and outdoor learning, to youth-led climate action. These learning experiences have been offered in many different formats, including workshops, webinars, conferences, EcoFairs, and special events.

Climate Camp aimed to fill a gap in the TDSB/OISE collaboration to develop and strengthen relationships amongst educators in the school board and novice educators at OISE who are dedicated to learning about and enacting CCE, and who wanted to develop their expertise in this critical field through an immersive summer learning experience. By supporting the learning of these educational ‘champions’ in CCE, Climate Camp focuses on developing teacher capacity and leadership in CCE to impact their students’ learning and their influence in school communities in positive ways.

Theoretical Framework/s or Guiding Concepts

The design and implementation of Climate Camp draws on a variety of diverse theoretical frameworks:

- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being:** Centring Indigenous voices in CCE is a principal tenet on which the Camp is grounded. We drew inspiration from the writings and teachings of a diverse set of Indigenous scholars related to Land-based learning as well as those focused on Indigenous climate justice.
- **Climate Justice Education:** The Camp highlights the marginalized voices of people and



more-than-human beings who are most impacted by environmental inequities and climate injustice. It helps educators envision a new future that emphasizes relationality and reciprocity to ensure that all forms of life on the Earth have access to health and well-being.

- **Transformative Approaches to CCE:** The Camp introduces transformative pedagogy by modeling holistic strategies for learners to synthesize cognitive, affective and embodied forms of learning, integrating the 'head, heart and hands and spirit' into CCE. It combines this with transdisciplinary, Land-centred, and place-based education, providing opportunities for learning that is relational, community-engaged and action-oriented.

Outcomes

The outcomes of this first iteration of Climate Camp were most certainly achieved. There were 33 TDSB teachers involved (23 primary/junior and 10 secondary), 3 TDSB administrators (1 principal and 2 vice-principals), as well as 20 OISE graduate students. Along with the 6 organizing team members and the 8 workshop facilitators, there were a total of 70 people involved in teaching and learning at this year's Camp. The creation and strengthening of relationships at the Camp was strong, as was the flow of knowledge and expertise being shared between teachers, students and 'experts'. The culminating group projects centred on sharing the educators' visions for CCE in their classrooms through creative forms of storytelling that included dramatic, poetic and musical means.

Feedback from participants was collected in two ways: anecdotally over four days and through a feedback survey sent after the Camp. Ninety-two per cent of respondents rated the overall quality of their professional learning experiences at the Camp as 'very high' or 'high', suggesting that their learning needs were indeed met; this aligned with what the organizing team heard anecdotally; feedback was very positive throughout the Camp, with appreciation expressed for the efforts made in planning and delivering this experience. Many expressed a desire to return to Camp the next summer.



Successes & Challenges

As the first 'summer camp' professional learning experience in CCE led by the TDSB and OISE collaboratively, the organizing team was very satisfied with the results of this first year of delivery with the Camp. Participants were very happy with their learning

experience; many new relationships were established and existing ones strengthened. The logistics flowed smoothly thanks to an experienced group of organizing team and workshop facilitators.

One of the biggest successes was that the goal of capacity-building was met: 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge of climate issues improved, as did their understanding of Indigenous Education. Anecdotal evidence supported this; discussion about the concepts shared by the Indigenous speakers turned up repeatedly throughout the Camp. In addition, 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they improved their understanding about teaching strategies related to CCE and the types of climate action that can be taken with students. This was evident in the culminating CCE Stories, where teachers referenced and modelled the pedagogical strategies they learned about at the Camp.

- A flame was certainly lit, with 15 of the teachers choosing to continue their learning through the school year by joining in the TDSB’s Climate Literacy & Leadership Program that began in the fall of 2024.

Lessons Learned

While there are always changes to be made after the delivery of a new program, one of the most important lessons learned was to plan for even more outdoor learning to be embedded into Camp than was present in this first year. While there was a balance of indoor and outdoor learning, we heard clearly that the educators would like even more time on the Land, despite the cool temperatures at this year’s Camp.



Another lesson, counter to our expectations, was to offer fewer workshop choices; some expressed disappointment in not being able to attend all of the workshops, so fewer offerings would decrease their feelings of missing out on important learning opportunities. In planning for next year’s Camp, we will likely provide more time for reflection and rest; even though there were time slots with optional programming, many educators felt that they wanted to participate in everything offered, leaving limited time for rest. And with the request by many of the participants to be involved in next year’s Camp, it may prove possible for the Camp ‘alumni’ to join in a workshop day to continue their learning, and to share what they have been leading in CCE since attending the 2024 Camp.

Advice & Resources

Our best advice for others wanting to undertake a similar type of Climate Camp is to **collaborate** – find others in your community interested in doing this work and figure out ways to collaborate on it together. The collaboration between the TDSB and OISE in integrated professional learning in CCE has been incredibly beneficial for both organizations; sharing expertise and resources has only expanded the opportunities for inservice and preservice teachers to learn about CCE in depth and then deliver learning experiences to their students in it. Both the TDSB and OISE have been enriched by this collaboration and has inspired other organizations to try similar innovations. Certainly, the support of the ACCE-TE Project has also been greatly appreciated; it provided funding to support this first iteration of Climate Camp - thank you!



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