

Western University

Scholarship@Western

Inspiring Minds – A Digital Collection of
Western's Graduate Research, Scholarship and
Creative Activity

Inspiring Minds

November 2022

Principals' understandings and promotion of equity in virtual schools

Ruth Nielsen
rnielse4@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/inspiringminds>

Citation of this paper:

Nielsen, Ruth, "Principals' understandings and promotion of equity in virtual schools" (2022). *Inspiring Minds – A Digital Collection of Western's Graduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity*. 320.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/inspiringminds/320>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario principals were asked to create virtual schools using little but the framework of past experience. After nearly two years, many of these schools have become permanent options for students and families. Students and families of virtual schools experience many of the same inequities as brick-and-mortar schools: disengagement, discrimination, systemic oppressions, etc. Virtual schools also pose new equity concerns such as data security and social disconnection.

In this qualitative study, I use semi-structured interviews to investigate how virtual school principals understand and promote equity in this new environment. I explore the challenges principals face, and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. Preliminary results show that principals understand equity as access, accessibility, safety, engagement, and anti-oppression. Principals are facing challenges relating to unsuitable provincial policies, but experienced principals use their political acumen to interpret policies to better suit the needs of the virtual school.