

## DRIVING WITH SELVI



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# DRIVING WITH SELVI

Directed by Elisa Paloschi

2016 | UK | 52 min

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Driving with Selvi* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

### The Film

Selvi, like so many girls living within India's patriarchal culture, is forced to marry at a young age, only to find herself in a violent and abusive marriage. One day in deep despair, she chooses to escape, going to a highway with the intention of throwing herself under the wheels of a bus. Instead she gets on the bus, choosing to live... and goes on to become South India's first female taxi driver. We first meet 18-year-old Selvi at a girls' shelter in 2004—timid, soft-spoken, a fresh runaway from a difficult life. Over a 10-year journey, we see a remarkable transformation as Selvi finds her voice and defies all expectations—learning to drive, starting her own taxi company, leading seminars to educate other women and much more. This character-driven story highlights the challenges that millions of devalued women and girls in India face. In a society where women are often considered expendable or worthless, Selvi refuses to accept this estimation for herself, moving beyond the pain she's experienced to create an entirely new life. Through Selvi's eyes, the audience is taken on an intimate journey of healing, overcoming obstacles and fulfilling dreams. And throughout this journey, Selvi's unwavering spirit shines through. Wildly charming (without even realizing it), remarkably strong and utterly courageous, by the end of the film Selvi speaks almost as a sage or our wisest teacher, sharing important, hard-won secrets about happiness and life.

Source: <http://drivingwithselvi.com>

### The Filmmaker

Elisa Paloschi is a documentary director, producer, cinematographer and photographer who is drawn to stories with a human voice. She is president of Eyesfull, a Toronto-based independent production company dedicated to making non-fiction documentaries with social relevance that reflect the diversity of the human condition. With more than 20 years' experience in every aspect of documentary production, Elisa has taken her camera into the Roma camps of Palermo, the depths of the Coral Sea in Australia and the breathtaking landscapes of Karnataka, to name just a few. Her work has been screened at festivals in Germany, Italy, Greece and Canada, and has been broadcast on numerous Italian television stations. She completed her feature documentary, *Embracing Voices: The Woman Behind the Music of Jane Bunnett*, in 2012.

Source: <http://drivingwithselvi.com>

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## VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three sub-sections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

### Pre-Viewing Activities

Before watching the film, have students read the BBC's country profile on India (<http://www.bbc.com/> Type "India country profile" into the search function of the website) or use the country profile from National Geographic Kids (<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/> Type "India" into the search function of the website). This will provide students with context on the country. They may wish to revisit the country profile tools after the film.

Have students create a KWL chart for the following terms: (a) child bride, (b) arranged marriage, (c) dowry, (d) sexual assault and (e) gender violence. Students can add to this chart after they watch the film.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide. Have students share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

### Viewing Activities

Have students keep track of any words, terms or ideas they don't understand. After viewing the film, have students look up the definitions.

Have students jot down two to three ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

### Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the film, Selvi, her family and the traditions in India. How did your students' feelings evolve over the course of the film?

Show the students their quotations from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their opinions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film.

Show students two world maps in the feature "A Strange Map of the World's Child-Marriage Laws" in *The Atlantic* magazine that examine where 15-year-old girls can be legally married around the world, as well as the minimum age at which a girl can get married with parental consent (<http://www.theatlantic.com/> Type the name of the feature into the search function of the website). What did students learn as a result of looking at the maps? Is there anything surprising about the maps? Do the maps challenge students' prior knowledge of child marriage laws? Use the maps as prompts for a class discussion, or as foundations for additional research. The maps can be examined in more detail by clicking on the links below the maps, which lead to the websites of the Clinton Foundation and the World Policy Forum.

In the film, Viji reflects on Selvi's accomplishments and says, "When Selvi decides to do something, she does it. She's very brave. To be honest, my wife Selvi is much more courageous than I am. She's already achieved a lot and she's going to achieve a lot more." In a written entry, class discussion or personal action plan, have your students reflect on their own dreams and consider what actions are needed to achieve their dreams. What obstacles may they face and how can they overcome these obstacles?

In the film, Selvi says, "There is the dowry system. I always felt it was wrong. It's when the girl's family has to give the boy's family money and goods for the marriage. All girls go through the same thing. It doesn't matter how poor they are or how hungry. They must keep giving to the boy's family." Have students read about the history and ongoing complications with the dowry system in the article "The Despicable Persistence of the Dowry in India" (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website).

Individually, in pairs or in small groups, have students discuss the different types of familial relationships that are presented in the film, and reflect on their own familial relationships. They may wish to present this information in a drawing or a written reflection.

Within her first marriage, Selvi was abused in many different ways by her first husband. She specifically discusses the sexual abuse that she experienced: "He told me to do unspeakable things. Children today know about sex but truthfully, I didn't even know what it meant. Men would come to our house and my husband would tell me to sleep with them for money. I was being tortured. But how could I tell anyone?" While rape is illegal in India, marital rape is exempt under the current laws, as of 2016. Have students individually read and annotate NPR's "Rape Is a Crime in India—But There Are Exceptions" (<http://www.npr.org/> Type the name of the article into the search function of the website). In groups, have students discuss their annotations and reactions to the article.

After she has her baby, Selvi says, "I have no problem working. Viji's the one saying I shouldn't work, not me. Since our baby was five months old, I've been asking to work again. If things are tough at home, then I should work. But nothing can be done. This is my fate." Have students reflect on Selvi's thoughts about her "fate" and write a one-page diary entry from Selvi's perspective.

Over the course of the film, Selvi is expected to act in certain ways because she is female. For example, her husband does not want her to work after their daughter is born. Have students create a chart to answer the following question: how do gender expectations in India (as presented in the film) compare and contrast with gender expectations in Canada? In small groups, have students compare their charts and consider the perceived similarities and differences between the countries.

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

## WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

### About the Film

<http://drivingwithselvi.com>

*Twitter:* <https://twitter.com/drivingwselvi>

*Facebook:* <https://www.facebook.com/drivingwithselvi>

### Additional Resources

*Malala Fund:* The goal of the Malala Fund is to ensure that girls around the world have access to a minimum of 12 years of safe and quality education. The Malala Fund works to share stories, invest in leaders and educational initiatives and advocate for educational resources and safe schools.

<https://www.malala.org>

*National Geographic:* Photographs and an interview with photographer Stephanie Sinclair, who has been documenting and photographing child brides around the world for over a decade, are presented in the feature "Documenting Child Marriage for Over a Decade."

<http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/> Type the name of the feature into the search function of the website.

*No Ceilings:* The No Ceilings initiative aims to realize the full participation of girls and women to achieve the global goals of reducing poverty, protecting the planet, improving health and increasing shared prosperity. The website includes data and stories that illustrate the gains that have been made for gender equality, as well as the gaps that still exist.

<http://noceilings.org>

*NPR:* In this special series, 15-year-old girls from around the world are looking to take control of their own lives in the face of parents, culture and traditional practices.

<http://www.npr.org/> Type "#15girls" into the search function of the website.

*Odanadi:* Learn more about the history and mission of Odanadi, the NGO that provides rehabilitation homes, programs and a helpline for India's victims of violence.

<http://www.odanadi.org>

*TED Talks:* In "Find Your Voice Against Gender Violence," Meera Vijayann discusses her firsthand encounters with gender violence in India, her work as a citizen journalist and the need for women to speak up in the fight against gender violence.

<https://www.ted.com/> Type the title of the talk into the search function of the website.

*The Guardian:* In order to combat the threat of public violence against women, an organization in India called Women on Wheels is training women to become taxi drivers. The resource "In the Driving Seat: India's School for Female Taxi Drivers" includes a series of photographs from photojournalist Claudio Montesano Casillas.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/> Type the title of the resource into the search function of the website.

*Too Young to Wed:* This is a non-profit organization that partners with the UN Population Fund, Equality Now, the Population Council, Timret LeHiwot Ethiopia and the Canadian and UK governments to advocate for the end of child marriage. The organization uses a travelling photo exhibit to increase the visibility of the issue, and is working on new initiatives to empower women who have been victims of child marriage and/or trafficking. Stephanie Sinclair is the founder and executive director of the organization.

<http://tooyoungtowed.org>

*UNICEF:* This 2014 report examines the current situation and the lifelong consequences of child marriage, as well as the progress and prospects surrounding the issue.

[http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR..pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf)

*United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women:* This committee monitors how countries around the world are implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The website includes an interactive map, country-specific information and useful links to additional resources on their work.

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

*United Nations Girls Education Initiative:* The aim of the UNGEI is to narrow the gender gap and ensure equal access to primary and secondary education around the world. Information is available on individual countries, and all annual reports are housed in the Resources section of the website.

<http://www.ungei.org>

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the different issues and themes that surface in this film?

What social and traditional obstacles and restrictions does Selvi face, and why? How would you react to these obstacles and restrictions?

What are women's expected roles in India? How does Selvi resist these expectations?

Why is it important to stand up for what you believe in, like Selvi does throughout the film?

Despite her experiences, Selvi is resilient and still has hope. Why do you think this is? How would you react if you were in her position?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Over the course of the film, Selvi provides details on her relationships with her mother, brother and aunt. What roles have Selvi's family members played in her life? How have they shaped Selvi?

How important is familial support during the teenage years? How does your family support your interests, and what other support systems do you have access to?

What human rights and freedoms should people be expected to have? How do the rights and freedoms of the girls in India differ from the rights and freedoms in your own country?

How is marriage perceived by Selvi and the women in her community? How did you react to the way that marriage is portrayed in the film?

What is the legal age for an individual to get married in India? How does this compare with other countries around the world?

In the film, Selvi says, "Just a month after I got my period, they forced me to get married. I was in the ninth grade." What did you know about child marriages before watching the film, and what did you learn about as a result of watching the film?

What can be done at the local, national and international levels to prevent child marriages and gender violence?

Before piercing her tongue, Selvi says, "I had a problem in ninth grade, so I made a vow. What I prayed for was granted. So now I'm fulfilling that vow." What kind of an impact does Selvi's faith have on her life?

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"More than 700 million women alive today were married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, 250 million before they turned 15."* (1:11)
2. *"I was married when I was 14 and my husband used to abuse me badly. I thought it was better to kill myself than to stay. So one day I waited for a bus to throw myself under it. But when it approached, I raised my hand and I got on the bus instead. I thought that if I died, I wouldn't be able to prove myself. That's why I ran away."* Selvi
3. *"Everybody refers to me as the first female taxi driver. This makes me proud.... I don't drive like a girl. I may look delicate but not in the driver's seat. When I sit in the driver's seat, I feel like a different person."* Selvi
4. *"I never had a real parent in my life."* Selvi
5. *"There are men who kill one wife and marry another."* Selvi
6. *"If she's independent and living on her own and falls in love and then wants to get married like we did, then okay. But she has to choose her own future."* Selvi
7. *"Only those who have suffered understand the difficulties faced by others."* Selvi
8. *"As a child, I always dreamt of studying. I never dreamt about being married."* Selvi
9. *"Tell me what you need, I'll do anything for you. Never feel that you are alone, I'm here."* Selvi's aunt
10. *"All I think about is driving."* Selvi
11. *"If I had studied, maybe I would have become something else. Now I'm a driver and a family woman, and that's perfect for me."* Selvi
12. *"My daughter will be my legacy. I'll give her all the encouragement that I can. I'll see that she gets everything that I didn't. One day I'll tell her my story so she doesn't get trapped in a bad situation. That's what I'll teach."* Selvi
13. *"Go to a new chapter, open that new chapter and try something new. Some roads are not good, but some roads are very good. Life is also the same."* Selvi

## CULMINATING ACTIVITY: POSTER CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT CHILD MARRIAGE

At the beginning of the film, the audience is presented with the following statistics: "More than 700 million women alive today were married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, 250 million before they turned 15."

Task:

Your task is to create a poster that can be used to educate people about child marriage.

Before you begin your poster, search "child marriage" using the news function of a search engine. Make notes on recent events and statistics that you find (and make sure to keep a list of these links).

After your initial research, you can begin your poster. Your poster should include:

- An original slogan
- Original visuals (photo or drawing)
- Three statistics that raise awareness about child marriage
- A works cited/references page for any information that is not your own

Posters can be displayed around your school, or you can consider posting them online.

After you have finished your poster, your class will brainstorm other ways that students can combat child marriage at the local, national and international levels.



# ACTIVITY RUBRIC: POSTER CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT CHILD MARRIAGE

## Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Understanding of child marriage	Student demonstrates a limited understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates some understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates a good understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates an extensive understanding of the issue	/5

## Thinking/Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Poster information and citations	Information is irrelevant or inaccurate, and has not been properly cited	Information is relevant but insufficient or inaccurate; citations are incomplete	Information is relevant and accurate; citations are complete with minor errors	Information is relevant, accurate and complex; citations are complete and have no errors	/5

## Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Understanding of poster design and layout	Layout is distracting and disorganized	Layout is somewhat effective, but needs more details and creativity	Layout is effective and organized	Layout is extremely effective and enhances the overall message	/5

## Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Text and visuals; audience	There is little or no interplay between the text and visuals; student shows a limited understanding of the intended audience	The text and visuals are somewhat effective; student has somewhat of an understanding of the intended audience	The text and visuals are effective and complementary; student shows a moderate understanding of the intended audience	The text and visuals are extremely effective and complementary; student shows an extensive understanding of the intended audience	/5

Comments:

Total: \_\_\_\_\_/20

## EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.</li> <li>• draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience.</li> <li>• use editing, proofreading and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression and present their work effectively.</li> <li>• identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.</li> </ul>
Grade 9-12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.</li> <li>• identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Media Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.</li> <li>• deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and explaining how they create meaning.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze, through examination and reflection, their initial response to media art works, using various strategies and modes of communication.</li> <li>• identify and explain the messages in and meanings of media texts.</li> <li>• describe the characteristics of particular media genres and forms, and explain how they help to convey meaning and influence the audience.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Politics in Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them.</li> <li>• explain the political importance of some current issues and analyze various perspectives associated with these issues.</li> <li>• analyze some issues of political importance in terms of their causes, their impact and ways in which they have been addressed.</li> <li>• identify and analyze a political issue, with the goal of developing a personal plan of action to address this issue.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events and developments of national and international political importance.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of various political ideologies, theories, and concepts and analyze their relevance to Canadian and international politics.</li> <li>• analyze how social, economic and geographic factors influence contemporary politics in and relations between various countries around the world.</li> <li>• explain violations of human rights in Canada and abroad as well as the role of Canadian and international laws, institutions and processes in the protection of human rights.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Dynamics of Human Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain how self-concept and self-esteem influence personal well-being.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of how self-concept influences an individual's interactions with others.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of various social and cultural influences on relationships.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Family Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of the role parents play in affecting how children form relationships within and outside the family.</li> <li>• identify and describe environments provided by families, care-givers and others that offer positive conditions for child development.</li> </ul>

Grade 12 Family Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze theories and research on the subject of individual development, and summarize their findings.</li> <li>• analyze theories and research on the subject of parent-child relationships and their role in individual and family development, and summarize their findings.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of the critical role that a family plays in the socialization of its members.</li> <li>• analyze the many relationships that are a part of human development.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Gender Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of how attitudes, behaviours, roles and norms relating to gender are socially constructed, and of the complexity of gender as a concept and as a lived experience.</li> <li>• analyze sexism and the dynamics of power relations with respect to sex and gender in a variety of contexts.</li> <li>• analyze representations of women and men in media, popular culture and the arts, and assess the effects of these representations.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of concerns and objectives of women's rights movements and men's movements, and explain issues related to the rights of sexual minorities.</li> <li>• analyze a range of social, political, economic and environmental issues relating to gender in Canadian and global contexts.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of homophobic and gender-based violence in both Canadian and global contexts, and of violence-prevention strategies.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 World Religions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore topics related to world religions and belief traditions, and formulate questions to guide their research.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of terms and concepts related to the study of world religions and belief traditions.</li> <li>• outline the central tenets, practices and teachings of various religions and belief traditions.</li> <li>• identify and analyze ways in which various religions and belief traditions are embodied in cultural forms.</li> <li>• analyze the interaction between society and various religions and belief traditions.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore topics related to equity, diversity and/or social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research.</li> <li>• create research plans, and locate and select information relevant to their chosen topics, using appropriate social science research and inquiry methods.</li> <li>• assess, record, analyze and synthesize information gathered through research and inquiry.</li> <li>• communicate the results of their research and inquiry clearly and effectively, and reflect on and evaluate their research, inquiry and communication skills.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of a range of historical and contemporary Canadian equity and social justice issues.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of how social activism can be used to support equity and social justice objectives.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 Human Development Throughout the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of threats to healthy development throughout the lifespan and of a variety of protective factors that can increase an individual's resilience and reduce the impact of these threats.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of social-emotional development throughout the lifespan and of ways of influencing such development.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of various influences on personality development and identity formation throughout the lifespan.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of how factors affect social-emotional development, with an emphasis on the process of socialization.</li> </ul>

Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore topics related to equity, diversity and/or social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research.</li> <li>• create research plans, and locate and select information relevant to their chosen topics, using appropriate social science research and inquiry methods.</li> <li>• assess, record, analyze and synthesize information gathered through research and inquiry.</li> <li>• communicate the results of their research and inquiry clearly and effectively, and reflect on and evaluate their research, inquiry, and communication skills.</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of a range of perspectives on and approaches to equity and social justice issues, and of factors that affect inequity and social injustice.</li> <li>• analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization.</li> <li>• evaluate the contributions of individuals and groups and/or movements identified with specific aspects of the struggle for equity and social justice.</li> <li>• compare policies, strategies and initiatives used by various groups, including indigenous peoples and women, to address equity and social justice issues in a variety of jurisdictions.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 World Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of the elements and functions of culture and of the nature of cultural influence.</li> <li>• analyze how cultural identities are socially constructed, preserved, transmitted and transformed.</li> </ul>
Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use a psychological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape human mental processes and behaviour.</li> <li>• use a sociological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group social behaviour.</li> <li>• use an anthropological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group social behaviour.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 World History since the 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze the significance of various social, economic and political policies, developments and ideas in various regions of the world since 1900.</li> <li>• analyze interactions between various groups since 1900 and how key individuals and social, economic and political forces have affected those interactions.</li> <li>• analyze the development of the rights, identity and heritage of different groups around the world since 1900.</li> </ul>
Grade 12 Canadian and International Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain the principles underpinning human rights law and the legal significance of those laws, in Canada and internationally.</li> <li>• analyze issues associated with the development of human rights law, in Canada and internationally.</li> <li>• compare the roles of the legislative and judicial branches of government in protecting human rights and freedoms, with a particular emphasis on Canada.</li> <li>• analyze various contemporary issues in relation to their impact or potential impact on human rights law.</li> </ul>

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>