

## **Keynote speech: Social and Citizenship Education in a Disrupted World: empowering young people for these times**

Prof. Joel Westheimer

University Research Chair in Democracy and Education

University of Ottawa, Canada

Along with a world-wide pandemic, violence against Black and indigenous people, radical economic inequality, and global warming, a fifth crisis grips the globe: declining support for democratic institutions and governance. Belief in the fundamental power of education to renew our ability to work together to solve social problems has been long-standing. John Dewey famously noted that “democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.” But if we can agree that schools have an essential role to play in preparing students to be good citizens, we cannot seem to agree on what that means. The very same efforts that are applauded by some are viewed as misguided by others. The result for too many schoolchildren has been a mostly watered-down notion of civic identity that emphasizes obedience and routine over critical thinking and participation. What would it look like to educate as if democracy matters?