

Revolutionizing the Classroom

Transforming Mainstream Curriculum into Social Justice Teaching



NYCoRE ItAG 2009

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“Social Justice”: A Collaborative Definition

Social Justice to us is...

- Dual: Process and goal concerning equal access to opportunities
- Creating an understanding and consciousness that brings equality and justice to everyone
- Process must involve consensus between all parties (instead of deciding what's best for society)
- Keep Humanity
- Validating others through EMPOWERMENT
- Being Honest to yourself as an educator (and to your students)
- Taking Social Action in your small world—Personal sphere of influence... How can students make a difference?
- Seeing your teacher as a student → use what students know to drive social justice
- Creating and living possibilities where everyone has access and is given the means to experience other and choose self.

Methods of Social Justice Teaching: Questions for Our Practice & Planning

What does Social Justice look like in your classroom, home, school and world?

CLASSROOM CULTURE

1. What are your methods for deconstructing discussions? How do you invite people to participate positively and equitably?
2. What is your classroom routine - is it clear and consistent?
3. Are we transparent about why and how we are asserting our authority in the classroom?
4. What values and hidden assumptions do our classroom structures embody?
5. How are students empowered by our classroom structures?
6. How does the set up in your classroom share power? (Are we sitting in a circle? In rows? In clusters? Do students have a voice in where they sit?)

METHODS: ACTIVITIES & ASSESSMENTS

1. How are all talents and abilities given an opportunity to shine?
2. What talents and abilities are emphasized in each activity and assessment?

3. How do power dynamics differ in different activities?
4. Does the class debrief the values and power dynamics embedded in different activities?
5. How can collaboration be encouraged by our activities and assessments?
6. How can independence and critical choice be encouraged by our activities and assessments?
7. What values are reflected in our grading policies?
8. Is our assessment used to judge or foster growth?

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE SCHOOL

1. How is your classroom's understanding and practice of justice supported by your school? the NYCDOE? our city? your curriculum choices? the world? Are the differences and similarities discussed and clear?
2. Are discipline incidents practiced as opportunities for responsibility, community restitution, and growth?
3. Are perpetrators asked to consider the effect of their actions vis-à-vis the community and its values?
4. Are we treating all members of our school community treated as we want to be treated?
5. Are adults keeping their egos out of power struggles?

CURRICULUM: CONTENT

1. Is content shared in a variety of ways?

2. Who chooses the content? Who presents it?
3. What cultural or political values are inherent in the content? What cultural or political bias is inherent in the content?
4. How are different perspectives consistently emphasized and analyzed?
5. How is social justice emphasized?
6. Is social action emphasized?
7. Do students understand themselves as agents of change?

CURRICULUM: SKILLS

1. How are skills framed?
2. How is “success” determined?
3. Are skills framed in terms of accessing the culture of power?
4. Does political or cultural bias favor the teaching of certain skills over others?
5. How does each skill empower students?
6. Which skills are most critical for social justice?
7. Are interpersonal skills incorporated into our goals and grading?

Unit Planning Template

Course: _____ **Name** _____
Unit Plan: _____ **Time Frame:** _____

DESIRED RESULTS	
Overall Objective:	
Standards:	
Social Justice Understandings (big ideas):	Learning Strategies:
Students will know: (Content)	Students will be able to: (Skills)
Assessment Evidence	
Performance Tasks/ SJ Action Plan: (Authentic Tasks to demonstrate mastery of objectives at multiple levels of Blooms)	Other Evidence: (Homework, tests, discussions, journals)

Unit Plan Model

Course: U.S History II

Name: Ms. Ortiz

Unit Plan: Westward Expansion

Time Frame: 1.5 Wks.

DESIRED RESULTS	
<p>Overall Objective: Students will understand how the U.S. has grown as a nation, and the effects of this growth.</p>	
<p>Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the interrelationships between world events and developments in New York State and the United States (e.g., causes for immigration, economic opportunities, human rights abuses, and tyranny versus freedom) • compare and contrast the experiences of different ethnic, national, and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in the United States, explaining their contributions to American society and culture 	
<p>Social Justice Understandings (big ideas):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who wins land? Who is losing land? ■ Who holds the power and why? ■ Who resisted? How did they organize? What was the form of resistance? Was it successful? ■ Does the end justify the means? 	<p>Learning Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visualization ■ Making Connections ■ Inferencing ■ Evaluating/Critiquing
<p>Students will know: (Content)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Homestead Act of 1862 ■ Oklahoma Land Rush ■ Indian Wars ■ Wounded Knee Massacre ■ Mexican-American War ■ Manifest Destiny ■ Migration/Geography ■ Indian Boarding Schools ■ Assimilation 	<p>Students will be able to: (Skills)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Perspective writing ■ Compare and Contrast ■ Defend a stance with evidence (oral and written) ■ Analysis of text (photos)
Assessment Evidence	
<p>Performance Tasks/ SJ Action Plan: (Authentic Tasks to demonstrate mastery of objectives at multiple levels of Blooms)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compare and Contrast the experiences of different groups of people experiencing the Westward growth and then writing a story from their perspective. ■ Which group of people had it the worst/ best, defended with evidence. ■ Westward Expansion Quest 	<p>Other Evidence: (Homework, tests, discussions, journals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discussion on current day Assimilation and what it means to 'assimilate' into AMERICAN CULTURE ■ Journal Entry: Brainstorm alternative actions the U.S. could have taken.

Methods of Social Justice Teaching: Assorted “Best Practices” Activities

Table Rotation: Write different questions atop different charts and have groups rotate around to different tables/charts to read previous groups’ responses and add their own. This is a good entry into a unit or book (e.g. to start a unit on the Civil War, questions may include, “What’s worth fighting for?” “Why would a country fight a war against itself?” “What are the affects of war?” etc.). Giving strict time limits of 2-3 minutes per table/chart adds energy to the activity. Debrief responses afterwards.

Community/Class Opening: Freewriting (on or off topic with continuous writing); circle one favorite sentence & go-round share to create group-poem effect, with no comments or questions allowed (nonjudgmental listening), as entry point into day’s lesson. Examples of evocative lines: What inspires me is . . . Triangles show up . . . Music is . . .

Concept Map to begin unit: Place a big topic/concept in the middle of a large chart and create a web of as many ideas as possible branching off of central topic/concept.

Anticipatory Guide: Before launching a novel, ask the “issues” questions to elicit personal responses to get students thinking about the issues in a book on a personal level. (For example, if reading a book about prejudice, questions might be about times that students have been treated unfairly or judged.)

Provocative Line: Choose a provocative line from a text to jumpstart discussion. Use this discussion as the introduction to the reading of a text, so that students have already started thinking about the text without knowing it.

Four Corners: Controversial statements connected to curriculum (e.g. “The government should never be able to tell people what to do with their body.”); students write first and then go to corners (labeled “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree”); one person speaks at a time explaining why s/he is where s/he is in the room; students may move if/as their opinions change during discussion.

Vocab Review Game: Each person in a group has a clue & number: 1 has first letter of vocab term, 2 has how many words in term, 3 has the last letter of vocab term, 4 has the definition of term, 5 records the term/definition; take the vocab you're reviewing and each consecutive person adds a new clue until the 5th person guesses.

Test review: Teacher gives one grade for test review sheet and one grade for test. Teacher collects only one test review sheet from a group and may select from any student at the table, which forces students to support one another/collaborate on review.

Vocab Review Game: Alphabet Race: Write two alphabets on the board with sufficient space to write a word beside each letter. First team to fill in alphabet completely or team with most words at end of X minutes wins.

Daily/Unit Reflection: Choose format – journal entry or anagram or poem/song - connected to lesson/unit/topic, specific to what they've learned.

Critical Lens: Read with the purpose of looking for and highlighting what's missing in a text. Examine the point of view and what that teaches us.

Resources: Assorted Favorites

"A Talk to Teachers" by James Baldwin

Brother, Sister, Leaders, the Official Curriculum of the Brotherhood/Sister Sol, Ed. Susan Wilcox, Ed.D

Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics for the Classroom, Alan Sitomer and Michael Cirelli (Urban Word)

Reading, Writing and Rising Up, Teaching about Social Justice and the power of the Written Word, Linda Christensen (Rethinking Schools)

The Rough Guide to World Music, (For teaching geography/politics/spirit of region through music)

The Message 100 Life Lessons from Hip Hop's Greatest Songs , Felicia Pride

Alif Baa with DVDs, Brustad, Al-Batal, Abbas Al-Tonsi

The Little Book of Restorative Justice for Schools: Teaching responsibility; creating caring climates by Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz and Judy H. Mullet. The Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding.

"Why Fly That Way?" Linking Community & Academic Achievement by Kathy Greeley. This book narrates a year in the life of a diverse 7th-8th Humanities classroom, including their culminating project of writing and producing a production sharing their year's learning themes.

For a Better World: Reading and Writing for Social Action by Randy Bomer and Katherine Bomer. This book is good for bringing out the social justice elements in a reading & writing workshop.

"It's Our World Too": Socially Responsive Learners in Middle School Language Arts by Beverly Busching & Betty Ann Slesinger.

The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8 by Allan L. Beane. This is a great book for considering school/classroom climate and Advisory-type lessons.

What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide to Building Character by Barbara A. Lewis. This book has super anecdotes, scenarios, and activities for considering what contributes to "character."

Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities by Mara Sapon-Shevin

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James Loewen

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development by Enid Lee, et al

Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? by Beverly Tatum

Why Didn't I Learn This in College? by Paula Rutherford

One-Minute Discipline: Classroom Management Strategies That Work by Arnie Bianco

Black Ants and Buddhists by Mary Cowhey

Should We Burn Babar? by Herbert Kohl

Rethinking Mathematics (Rethinking Schools)

Rethinking Columbus (Rethinking Schools)

Girls, Social Class and Literacy by Stephanie Jones