

FUND FOR TEACHERS

6 Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design

Bree Picower, a well-known author and researcher, developed a progression to help teachers think through the steps necessary to set students, even young students, up to take action in their communities. This short resource is meant to be a tool for you to design upcoming units and leverage the power of your fellowship.

Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for Elementary Education

Self-love and Knowledge:

- Teachers provide students opportunities to learn who they are and where they come from.
- Students study different aspects of their identities and the histories associated with it.
- Negative stereotypes about student identities are deconstructed.
- *Classroom activities include: Where I'm From poems (Christensen, 2000), self-portraits that include skin tone identification, name poems, family interviews, grandparent guest speakers, cultural ABC books.*

Respect for Others:

- Teachers provide students opportunities to share knowledge about their own cultural background with their classmates.
- A climate of respect for diversity through students' learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers is created.
- Students deconstruct stereotypes about their peers' identities.
- *Classroom activities include: Sharing cultural ABC books, diverse family structures (including LGBT families), field trips to cultural museums, guest speakers from children's families and cultural centers.*

Issues of Social Injustice:

- Teachers move from "celebrating diversity" to an exploration of how diversity can be experienced as oppression that has differently impacted various groups of people.
- Students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance and how these forms of oppression have affected different communities.
- Teachers make links between the historical roots of oppression and the impact it has on lived experiences and material conditions of people today.
- *Classroom content can include: Native American genocide, slavery, the Holocaust, anti-immigration policies and sentiment, media (mis) representations, issues that face their own communities such as gentrification or police brutality.*

Social Movements and Social Change:

- Teachers share examples of movements of iconic and everyday people standing together to address the issues of social injustice they learned about in Element Three.
- Teachers help students understand that working together, ordinary people have united to create change.
- *Classroom content can include: Abolitionism, civil rights movement, the L.A. janitors' strikes, various labor movements, 1968 and 2006 Chicano student walkouts.*

Awareness Raising:

- Teachers provide opportunities for students to teach others about the issues they have learned.
- *Classroom activities include newsletters, public service announcements, letter writing campaigns, creating documentaries, blogging.*

Social Action:

- Teachers provide opportunities to act on issues that affect students and their communities.
- Students identify issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand.
- *Classroom activities include: Letter writing campaigns, petitions, linking with local grassroots organization campaigns, speaking at public meetings, attending and/or organizing protests.*

Picower, B. (2012). Using Their Words: Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*. 14(1).