



Social Justice in Education: What is it, and how do we do it?

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In this presentation, we will explore definitions of equity, diversity, and social justice, identify the impact of power and privilege on educational systems, and review a variety of models of social justice. Participants will engage in dialogue and activity to explore the following questions:

- **What is social justice?**
- **What is the relationship between equity, social justice, and diversity?**
- **How is a social justice framework a fundamentally different way of doing our work?**
- **What are the knowledge and skills needed to create an equitable and socially just organization?**
- **How do we make our personal, professional, and institutional commitments to social justice clear to those we work with and serve?**



Definitions:

Equity

Diversity

Power and Privilege

Social Justice



Identifying Equity Issues

- **Describe your work and your organization- what do you do? How do you do it?**
- **Identify equity issues that impact your department/work.**
- **Do you share responsibility for those issues with others?**
- **What are you currently doing to address those issues?**

Systems of Privilege and Power

- ✓ Race/Ethnicity
- ✓ Social Class
- ✓ Gender/Sexuality
- ✓ Ability
- ✓ Language
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Citizenship
- ✓ And many more.....



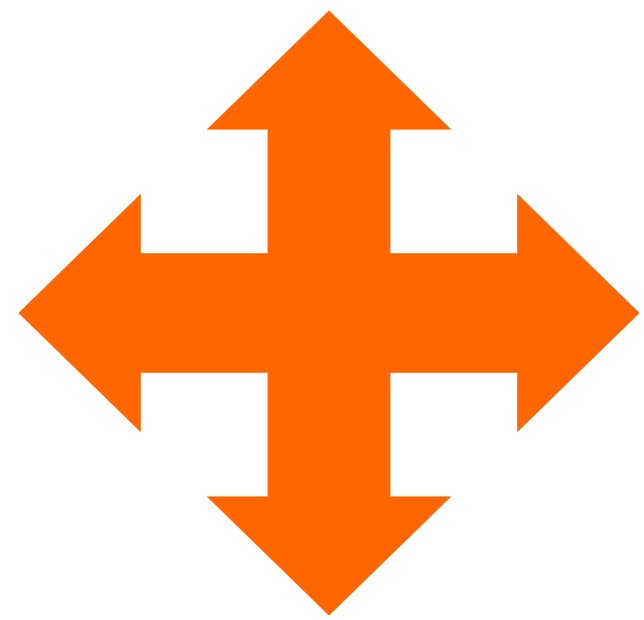


Forms of Power



**Cultural and
Institutional**

**Economic
Governmental
Political**



**Media
Knowledge**

**Personal
Situational**

John S. Atlee, Tom Atlee

Activity: Identifying Structures of Power and Privilege



- **What power and privilege structures exist as a result of the way school has been, and is, structured?**
- **How do these manifest in your School, District, or Community?**
- **How have they been perpetuated or dismantled?**



Social Justice...

- An ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same basic rights, protections, opportunities, obligations and social benefits

Social Work Dictionary, 19th ed.



Social Justice...

"The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure."

Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. Edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (2007)



Social Justice...

“The theory and practice of undoing the inequities and inequalities many groups of people must live with because of who they are.”

The Office of Social Justice Education, Rutgers University



Social Justice Agenda in Teacher Education



“is to prepare teachers who can teach all students well, not just those traditionally well served by schools, so that, as adults, all are able to participate equitably in the economic and political life of the country.”

- Ana Maria Villegas, p. 372



Types/Concepts of Social Justice

1. **Procedural/Legalistic** – “fair treatment”, removal of legal barriers
2. **Compensatory** – “fair share” of benefits and resources, affirmative action
3. **Participatory** – knowledge is rooted in social relations and is most powerful when produced collaboratively through action, rethinking the game



‘Surface’ Model

- Focuses on a merely cosmetic understanding of other cultures and developing “tolerance”
- Designed to be ‘comfortable’ for the majority culture
- Generic information; stereotyping
- Fails to provide students with authentic experiences with oppressed groups

Social Justice Model



- Emphasis on equity and **taking action**
- Understanding the dynamics of **oppression**
- Making an **impact** on student success
- Working from a **systemic** perspective

Shifting to The New Paradigm



'Surface' Model →	Social Justice Model
Equality	Equity
Identifying "at-risk" students	Acknowledging a broken system
Color-blindness	Self-examination
Learning about "other cultures"	Dismantling systems of power and privilege
Celebrating diversity	Advocating and fighting for equity
Focus on intent	Focus on impact

Banks Framework



Level One: Contributions

- Heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements

Level Two: Additive

- Content, concepts, themes, perspectives **added** to the curriculum without changing structure

Level Three: Transformative

- Structure of curriculum **changed** to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from diverse perspectives

Level Four: Social Action

- Students **make decisions** on important **social issues** and **take actions** to help solve them. [interdisciplinary, infused approach]



Voltz Framework: Urban Teacher Competencies

- **Socio Cultural--** the awareness of and understanding of the impact of social, cultural and historical influences on learning and behavior, ideas of social justice.
- **Affirmative Attitude--** the impact of teacher expectation, developing caring relationships, ongoing reflection, respect for student/family/community cultures, commitment to issues of equity
- **Collaborative Skills**—skills to collaborate and problem solve with students, families, communities, and other professionals, and to understand own areas of influence within larger system.
- **Pedagogy Diversity**—specific knowledge and skills around culturally responsive instructional, accommodation/modification, management, assessment, and curricular strategies and resources. Addresses issues of differentiation, grouping, and tiered interventions.

Gorski Framework: Shifts of Consciousness



1. Cultural Awareness Is Not Enough
2. Justice First, *Then* Conflict Resolution
3. Rejecting Deficit Theory
4. Transcending the Dialogic Surface
5. Acknowledging Sociopolitical Context
6. “Neutrality” = Status Quo
7. Accepting a Loss of Likeability

A Model for Cultural Change



Personal Practices

Professional Practices

Institutional Practices



Personal Practices

Individuals...

Value cultural diversity as well as cultural similarities, holding respect for the unique characteristics of each individual, and acknowledging the similarities we all share as well.

Believe in the relevance of learning about and valuing customs, traditions and beliefs he or she is unfamiliar with, in order to understand and appreciate cultural diversity better.

See themselves as agents of change, assuming the role and responsibility of providing students with empowering instruction, being committed with the political nature of their work.

Are aware of the influence cultural knowledge that children bring to school has in their way of thinking, behaving, being and learning.

Are interested in knowing about the lives of their students, getting to know more about student's experiences outside school.

Professional Practices



Educators...

Value individual's cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills, using them as resources for moving ahead, instead of focusing on differences or deficiencies

Hold high professional and personal expectations for others

Treat others as competent, assuming their success.

Encourage others to develop a broader and critical consciousness about social inequalities and the status quo.

Facilitate going beyond the constrained ways of knowing, and a single version of truth.

Build bridges between everyday experiences and new ideas

Encourage individuals to apply cultural knowledge in their work



Institutional Practices

- **Leadership...**
 - Provides organization members with opportunities to consume and create new knowledge, by embracing a “culture of inquiry”. Active work as scholars allows them to address problems or questions through the systematic study of teaching and learning.**
 - Promotes a collaborative environment, by providing time for teams to share read and think together about what they are doing and how it improves cultural practice.**
 - Encourages and organizes the use of staff resources to gather and develop knowledge about culturally responsive practices, inside and outside the organization.**
 - Makes effective use of everyone’s time, responsibilities and materials to provide learning opportunities about culturally responsive practices in daily work.**
 - Embraces organizational values, beliefs and norms that support culturally responsive professional communities.**
 - Adopts leadership styles that allow collaborative work at the different administrative levels.**



How do we get to a socially just system on all levels?

1. What needs to happen for all people in the SEHD to develop these skills?
2. What are the key questions or principles that run across personal, professional, and institutional practices that need to guide all decision-making, actions, etc...?

Sample Questions for Teachers



- How do we encourage teachers to take ownership of the instruction in their classroom and the way it limits student access to education?
- How are schools building on the strengths of diverse learners?
- How are schools communicating with all levels of the community, and all groups represented within the school?
- How is are issues of power and privilege being discussed and addressed within classrooms and within the systems of the school?
- What are our motives for equity? Are we here to “save” students from their deficits? Or, are we here to provide access to educational opportunities that allow students to maintain their individual identities?
- How can our school’s mission, vision, values, and goals provide ways to keep the “question” of power and privilege at the forefront of conversation?



Who are the key people doing social justice work that you know?

**What are key equity/diversity/social justice readings in your field/
content area?**

**What are the current equity/diversity/social justice issues in your
field/ content area?**

**What are some exemplary equity/diversity/social justice
programs/centers/projects in your field/ content area?**



Questions to Consider...

- What does it mean to have a social justice approach in the in your work?
- How do we make our personal , professional, and institutional commitments to social justice clear to those we work with and serve?
- How is a social justice approach fundamentally a different way of doing our work?
- What are the knowledge and skills needed to work towards equity and social justice?



What are the questions you will use to guide all of your work and interactions and decision making?