

Lesson Plan: Social Justice Vocabulary

(from [Making Space: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum](#))

Curriculum Connections

ELA 8/9 – Big Idea - Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.

ELA 10 – Big Idea - The exploration of text and story deepens our understanding of diverse, complex ideas about identity, others and the world.

ELA 8/9/10 – Curricular Competency - Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts

ELA 10 – Curricular Competency - Recognize how language constructs personal, social and cultural identity

Social Justice 12 – Curricular Competency - Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Content - various theoretical frameworks, interpretations, and concepts of social justice

Rationale

This lesson will explore language and vocabulary related to social justice issues, and will help students to examine connections between various forms of oppression and discrimination.

Teaching Strategies and Questions

Assign one of the following sets of terms to each student, ensuring equal distribution of each set across the class:

- Social justice, human rights
- Equity, equality, fairness
- Sexism/sexist, feminism/feminist, misogynist/misogyny
- Racism/racist, cultural imperialism, genocide
- Anti-Semitism, anti-Islam, anti-Christian, anti-faith
- Stereotype, discrimination, oppression
- Heterosexism/heterosexist, homophobia/homophobic.
- Gender normative, cisgender, transphobia/transphobic

Have students take a few moments to record their current understanding of their assigned terms. Then have them independently research definitions and usage of these terms in a variety of print and online sources. Students should try to identify several different usages in different media types and sources, including instances where they think the term is used incorrectly.

Have students form groups with others who have researched the same terms to share and discuss their findings. Encourage them to consider questions such as the following:

- How has your understanding of these terms changed as a result of your research?
- Are the terms used differently by different types of media stories? If so, how? Can you make connections between the author of the message and how they use the terms?

Provide an opportunity for each group to share their terms and definitions to the rest of the class. Summarize by discussing as a class:

- What other terminology related to social justice did you find during your research?
- Were there instances where you *didn't* find a term used where you thought it should be? Why might that be? (e.g., Is a racist, sexist, or homophobic/transphobic rant likely to identify itself as racist, sexist, or homophobic/transphobic?)
- How does our understanding of these terms evolve over time? Which terms would you expect to find or not find in articles and dictionaries from 20 years ago? 50 years ago?
- How does media usage of these terms affect the public understanding of social justice issues?