

SJ 101:

The ultimate beginner's field guide to social justice integration

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Introduction

social justice: *so·cial jus·tice; n.*
Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society

As educators in formal and informal spaces, we are in the middle of an educational reform around social justice. More and more people are starting to think about things like equity, privilege, systems of oppression, and how it relates to their students.

However, teaching for social justice is not a new concept. In fact, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, William Ayers, and all of the people who contribute to Rethinking Schools Magazine explain it much more eloquently than I could ever imagine. (Don't worry, they are all listed on the resource pages in the back of this guide). This guide is intended to be an entry-point for that world. You can print it, scribble all over it, share it with your friends, ...whatever. Let this be the beginning of your conversation with social justice education, not your only resource for integration.

Before we go any further, maybe you should know a little bit about me. My name is Cyd and I work at DreamYard. I consider myself to be a radical educator, program innovator, and snarky writer. I have conversations with young people (usually ages 11 - 21) about identity, equality, equity, -isms, oppression, liberation, revolution, and privilege (just about anything from the pre-colonial/Columbus problem to the complexity of American Apparel's "Made in Bangladesh" campaign) on a pretty consistent basis. I also have these conversations with adults who then turn to me in shock and say "You talk about this stuff with middle schoolers? HOW?!" I'm going to stop answering that question and just send them this guide.

To be fair, I was able dig fast and deep into my social justice pedagogy practice because I worked at a place like DreamYard. DreamYard is an arts education non-profit that has made an organizational commitment to social justice. It is also a place that "went with" all of my social justice teaching experiments that have since solidified into my current teaching practice.

DreamYard Mission Statement

DreamYard uses the arts to inspire youth, public schools and communities. DreamYard programs develop artistic voice, nurture young peoples' desire to make change and cultivate the skills necessary to reach positive goals. By committing to sustained learning opportunities along an educational pathway, DreamYard supports young people as they work toward higher learning, meaningful careers and social action. We believe that young people in the Bronx need a continuous set of supports to help them towards positive outcomes as they navigate their educational pathway. We have every expectation that through offering sustained and meaningful supports our youth will develop the tools to become creative and engaged citizens, life-long learners and the leaders and innovators of the 21st century

DreamYard Art Center Programs Mission Statement

The mission of The DreamYard Project's Art Center Programs is to empower all those who are a part of the work to be confident, creative leaders through rigorous artistic practice, academic enrichment, and a commitment to social justice.

Core Values (and guiding questions)

Empower

- *Who am I?*
- *Where am I?*
- *What can I do?*

Create

- *Who/What inspires me?*
- *What do I want to say?*
- *How can I effectively express it?*

Connect

- *What is community?*
- *Who and What do I care about?*
- *What builds and breaks down community?*

Instructional Voice

We provide an educational experience that inspires all students to develop character, scholarship and artistic voice to create change. These core values describe our commitment to teaching for equity, justice and hope. At DreamYard art is action.

Artistry

- *DreamYard teachers and students develop technical skills to express our artistic voice.*
- *DreamYard teachers and students use our artistic voice to respond, connect and “talk back” to the world.*
- *DreamYard teachers and students explore culture, self and history, to learn how art becomes action.*

Character

- *DreamYard teachers believe students are active citizens who understand and analyze themselves, their society, and their ability to make a positive change.*
- *DreamYard teachers believe students are collaborators, working effectively with others and engaging with their family, school, neighborhood, city, and world communities in both critical and meaningful ways.*
- *DreamYard teachers believe students are determined to persevere in their lives as artists, learners and activists.*

Scholarship

- *DreamYard teachers are devoted to pushing academic rigor through a variety of instructional strategies.*
- *DreamYard teachers position students to ask essential critical questions about what they’re learning and how it relates to their society.*
- *DreamYard teachers provide opportunities for student learning to be self directed and shared with the larger community.*

There are many ways to approach the “how” of Social Justice pedagogy, even within our own organization. This guide is my attempt to unpack my personal teaching process in a way that raises questions and allows for multiple points of engagement with a rich world of critical thinking, reflective teaching, and creating a more just world for everyone.

My Assumptions Checklist

I believe that checking one's assumptions should be a key part of any attempt to build a community, form relationships, collaborate, and *ahem* *teach*.

Since I'm writing this, have no idea who you are, and can't speak to you in person, I'm going to start this off by breaking my own rule and making some assumptions about you:

- You are an educator
- You work with (or have experience working with) a group of students
- You sometimes assign educational tasks to be completed by said students
- You plan curricula as a structure for assigning said tasks
- You sometimes ask you students to share their work with others
- You are interested in incorporating social justice issues into your teaching practice
- You believe in equity for (not equality... that's something different) and the humanity of all people
- You can get down with the definition of social justice provided in the introduction
- You will answer all of the questions in this guide honestly... especially the uncomfortable ones
- You will google unfamiliar terms... all of them
- You will READ real books, articles, and blogs on social justice practices and pedagogy after this. There's a whole world out there and research is FUN(damental)!
- You will put information into action
- You actually care about what I have to say (thank you!)

Let's get started!

The "WHY?"

1st question... why do **YOU** want to integrate social justice into your teaching practice?

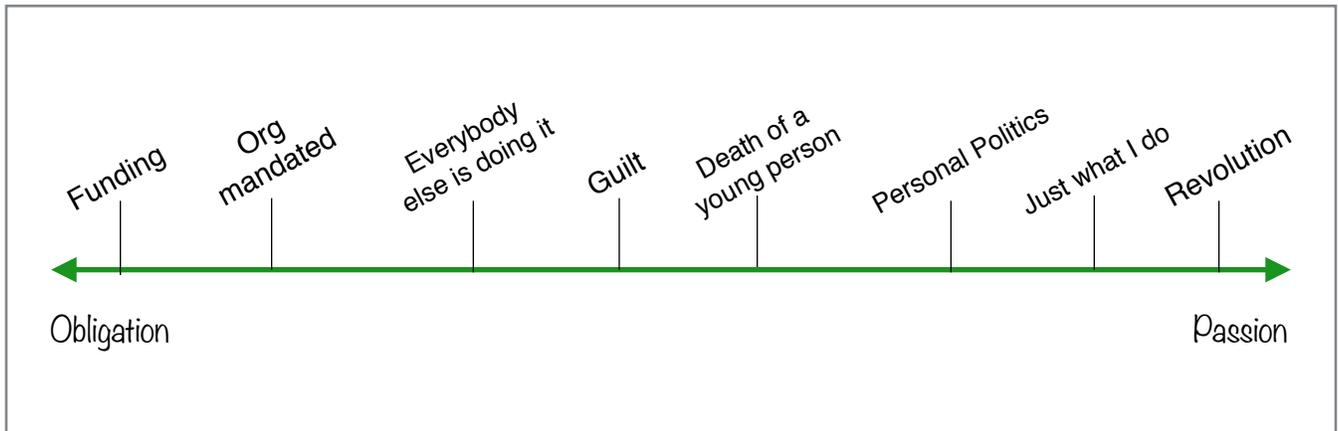


Fig. 1: *Reasons why people tell me they want to tackle social justice integration*

There will always be an ever-changing, sliding scale to describe an individual's motivation for integrating social justice principles into their curriculum. Hopefully if you are reading this, you are leaning more towards the passion side of things. Take a moment, check in with yourself, and figure out **YOUR** motivation for social justice teaching.

Reason #1:

Reason #2:

Reason #3:

My reasons for my social justice teaching practice:

- I was raised to be a critical thinker, learner, and observer. / I was taught to question everything, especially systems of power.
- I grew up in (and identify with) many marginalized communities and I feel a strong sense of obligation to youth from communities like mine
- At an early age I surrounded myself with social justice teaching practitioners who helped me turn my passion into action.

Know Thy Org...

Myth: Social justice teaching won't fit in with my org's mission statement or current curriculum. It's just not what we do.

Unless you work for a confederation of Sith Lords on another planet, some level of social justice integration can work for your organization without compromising your current practice. With a little imagination, dedication, and research, talking about oppression, equity, and justice can blend seamlessly into the work you already do with your students.

Think about your organization.

If you don't know an answer to one of the following questions, now might be a good time to go find out.

My Organization's Full Name:

My Organization's Mission Statement:

3 things that define what we do:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 things we definitely DON'T do:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 things we're working on:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Year founded: _____

Location: _____

Type of org:

- School
- Museum
- Library
- Community
- Other

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- In between
- Planet Xenon

Strong community ties:

- Yes
- No

Strong parent ties:

- Yes
- No

Structured learning spaces:

- Yes
- No

Other: _____

Who or what was in that space

before your org?: _____

3 things we want young people to know when they leave our space:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 deal breakers (things that would make your boss freak out if they knew it was happening in your space:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. ~~Young people rioting in a mutinous rage against you and your org.~~

←-- That's not going to happen.

What is Social Justice Teaching?

Now that you have really thought about your organization, take a look at the following segment (*liberated* from the Instructional Voice document I mentioned earlier) that shows the six main elements of social justice curriculum design. If someone asked me to define “Social Justice Teaching”, I would point them here:

Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design

Bree Picower, 2007

- 1. Self-love and Knowledge:** Teachers provide opportunities for students to learn about who they are and where they come from. A sense of dignity in their culture, heritage, ethnicity/race, religion, skin tone, gender etc. is cultivated in the classroom. Students learn about different aspects of their identity and history associated with it. Negative stereotypes about students' identities are deconstructed.
- 2. Respect for Others:** Teachers provide opportunities for students to share their knowledge about their own cultural background with their classmates. The goal is to create a climate of respect for diversity through students learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers. Students deconstruct stereotypes about their peers' identities.
- 3. Exploring Issues of Social Injustice:** Teachers move from "celebrating diversity" to an exploration of how diversity has differently impacted various groups of people. Students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance etc. and how these forms of oppression have affected different communities. Teachers make links that show how the historical roots of oppression impact the lived experiences and material conditions of people today.
- 4. 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. Rather than leaving students feeling overwhelmed and defeated, teachers help students understand that working together, ordinary people have united to create change.
- 5. Raising Awareness:** Teachers provide opportunities for students to teach others about the issues they have learned about. This allows students who feel passionately about particular issues to become advocates by raising awareness of other students, teachers, family and community members. It is important to recognize that while raising awareness is a necessary and important precursor for action, it by itself does not translate into change.
- 6. Taking Social Action:** Teachers provide opportunities to take action on issues that affect students and their communities. Students identify issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand.

* Challenge yourself to see where and how each of these practices can live within your existing programmatic structures. Start small and set goals for moments where you can embed each of these elements into your curriculum development strategy. *

Notes on Community

Building a strong classroom community is a great way to begin building a strong culture of respect and empathy that will, in turn, support your goal for building a safe space for your students. All of us already belong to so many types of communities and those affiliations strongly influence our individual sense of identity. We inherited communities/identities at birth; some we choose as we learn and grow.

Think about your classroom. What communities are already represented in the space? Use the list provided as a jumping off point. If you have less than 10, do it again.

Some **examples** of types of communities

- neighborhood
- family
- regional
- national
- ethnic
- religion
- belief-system
- artistic
- interest-based
- socio-economic
- gender
- age group
- grade
- music genre
- dietary
- fashion
- organizational
- social group
- institutional
- international

Your community representation

Identity vs Stereotype

Please keep in mind, there is a very thin line between “identity” and “stereotype”, especially when defining community, **ESPECIALLY** when you’re trying to define communities other than your own.

identity: *i·den·ti·ty*,
/ˈɪdɛn(t)ədē/; n.

The fact of being who or what a person or thing is

↑ = **self-identification of person** (I am Dr Who fan), **absolute fact without assumption of behavior** (I am a New Yorker), **undeniable social construct accepted as fact** (I am a person of color).

stereotype: *ster·e·o·type*,
/ˈsterēə tīp/; n.

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing

↑ = **assumption that all people of a certain community share the same beliefs and behaviors** (All blonde people are ditzy), **often not a choice or self-identification but a label assigned by someone outside of the community**, there can be **positive stereotypes** but **assigning labels to people without their permission is not cool... no matter how you try to justify it.**

In my experience, finding ways to highlight the things we all have in common, planning opportunities to learn about new communities from the perspective of a member, and celebrating our differences helps to build community in my classroom. Icebreakers, team challenges, and (non-judgemental) karaoke sessions work too!

Who's in the room?

Check out this chart of social identity groups *liberated* from The National Intergroup Dialogue Institute | The Program on Intergroup Relations | University of Michigan. It is by no means a comprehensive list. Feel free to use your own words to define *YOUR* identity.

Social Identity	Group Membership
Gender	Woman, Man, Transgender, Post-Gender, GenderQueer, Cisgender
Sex	Intersex, Female, Male
Race	Asian Pacific Islander, Asian American, Native American, Latino/a, Black, White, Bi/Multiracial
Ethnicity	Irish, Chinese, Haitian, Puerto Rican, Italian, Mohawk, Jewish, Korean, Guatemalan, Lebanese, European-American, Ashanti
Sexual Orientation/Attractionality	Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pan-Attractional, Questioning, Heterosexual
Religion/Spirituality Faith/Meaning	Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Yoruba, Jewish, Christian, Pagan, Agnostic, Goddess Worshipper, Atheist, Secular Humanist
Socio-economic Class	Poor, Working Class, Lower-Middle Class, Upper-Middle Class, Owning Class, Ruling Class
Age	Child, Adolescent, Young Adult, Middle-Aged Adult, Senior, Elderly
(Dis)Ability	People with disabilities (cognitive, physical, emotional, etc.), Temporarily able-bodied, Temporarily disabled
First Language	Tagalog, Urdu, Spanish, Kreyol, English, Mandarin, Bengali, French, Swahili
Nation(s) of Origin and/or Citizenship	United States, Nigeria, Korea, Turkey, Argentina
U.S. Citizenship Status	Undocumented, Asylee, Internally Displaced Person, Student Visa, Work Visa, Permanent Resident, Naturalized Citizen, U.S. Born
Tribal or Indigenous Affiliation	Mohawk, Aboriginal, Navajo, Santal
Body Size/ Type	Fat, Person of Size, Thin
Parenthood	Married parents, Two-parent household, Parents through Adoption Without Children, Same Gender parents, Kinship parents, informal parenting network

Your Social Identity:

Some of your students' social identities:

DO NOT write down anything you don't absolutely know to be a **FACT** about any of your students or their communities.

What's your "stuff"?

As human beings who navigate a world full of other human beings, we collect experiences that inform how we continue to move through the world/interact with other people. We all have "stuff" (or baggage, or a collection of experiences) that we bring with us to any given space. As an educator I believe that in order to hold the space (more on that later) and keep it safe for young people I have to (1) identify my "stuff" so that I am able to (2) check it at the door when the first student arrives. If you are trying to build an educational experience for young people around dealing with social justice issues and you haven't explored your own relationship to privilege and oppression, you are drastically reducing your chances of having a safe, productive experience for everyone. **Here are some of the questions I have learned to ask myself:**

What are some examples of your privilege? What do you take for granted?:

When are you (or your community) a target of oppression? By who/what?:

When do you feel powerful? Why? Is it tied to the oppression of others?:

What gives you the most hope? Why?

Which social identities (from the previous page) are you most aware of? Why?:

Which social identities do you think about the least? Why?:

Which conversations about social identity make you most uncomfortable? Why?:

When do you find yourself speaking on the behalf others without their permission?:

When do you find yourself making assumptions about someone or their community?:

When faced with an accusation of perpetuating oppression, what is your defense mechanism?:

Which social identities are the most complicated for you? Why?:

What stereotypes were taught to you as child? What did you have to unlearn?:

What is your self-care strategy after having difficult conversations about identity, privilege, and oppression?:

Go do that right now.

20 Tips for Creating a SAFE Classroom Culture

There isn't any particular order to this list but these are all things I think about when I consciously try to create a safe, equitable learning environment for all of my students.

1. **Community Guidelines:** The first thing I do when I have a new group of students is to set community guidelines or ways we can all agree to learn and grow in the space. Setting community guidelines is a collaborative process between the students and myself. I ask them, individually, what they would want to include in the guidelines and then we structure them, together as a group, into rules we can all live by in the classroom. Six guidelines I always include: Respect, "One mic", "Step Up/ Step-back," "Oops/Ouch," "Don't yuck my yum," and Be Present. If you set the community guidelines early in the class, it is so much easier to refer to them if a student (or the whole class) breaks one of the agreements.
2. **Respect:** This one seems pretty obvious but it is actually a hard concept to explain. I usually ask the students to tell me how respect feels, is shown, and how they would want to be treated if they were to be given "respect". Don't forget to add in respect for the space, the community, and anyone else you may encounter during your class time (like security guards, office folks, etc.)
3. **One Mic:** If one person is talking (or has the floor) everyone else is NOT talking and listening.
4. **Step Up/Step Back:** Ask your students to check in with themselves throughout the class. If they notice themselves speaking a lot, answering the most questions, or taking up the most space they should (figuratively) "step back" and let someone else have time to shine. Conversely if they notice themselves not contributing to the conversation, they should push themselves to "step up" and become a more active part of the community. Once this guideline is set, as a facilitator you can gently nudge people in both directions throughout their learning time.
5. **Oops/Ouch:** The Oops/Ouch guideline is a way for us to be able to make mistakes with each other, address them, and then have a way to quickly move towards a solution. I often tell my class "We are a community and if one of us is hurt, all of us are hurt." If something hurtful is said, the person who has been hurt can say "Ouch." Once the ouch is said, the class stops, we ask "what happened?", the person who caused the hurt sincerely apologizes, we ask "what can we do to make it better?" as a group, and then find a solution. A wise facilitator once compared to this interaction to accidentally elbowing someone in the face. No matter the intent, if you elbow someone in the face, their nose is broken, and they're bleeding you don't say "I didn't mean to do it" and walk away. You say you're sorry and try to help the person stop bleeding. On the other hand, if someone says something hurtful (to someone in the room or towards a community) and they catch their mistake, they can say "Oops." Once the oops is said, the person owns up to their mistake, sincerely apologizes, and then finds a solution for not perpetuating the hurt.
6. **Don't Yuck My Yum:** If one person likes something, it is rude and disrespectful to offer your negative opinion on the thing they like. I often use this example "You are sitting in the cafeteria, enjoying your favorite _____. I came up and said 'ewwwwwww that's gross how could you ever eat that?' how would that make you feel?" Same concept applies to favorite colors, TV shows, and music choices.

7. **Be Present:** Being “present” refers to the students engagement with the space. If they are in your space to learn, they should be present mentally, physically (respectful body language), and emotionally (any drama from the outside world unrelated to class should be left outside). This is also good time to talk about phone/tablet usage, according to your org’s preferences.
8. **Be the Referee, Not the Dictator:** Once your community guidelines are in place, it is your job to hold everyone accountable to them, fairly. Try to make sure everyone, including yourself, follows the guidelines without flexing the “I’m the teacher, therefore I’m right” muscle. That is just another example of oppression and your students will point it out to you... I promise. On the flip-side, be careful of offering unearned privilege by letting some students (or yourself) break the guidelines while the others are told to uphold them.
9. **Transparency & Honesty:** You don’t have to know everything. You don’t have to be right all of the time. You are a human and make mistakes. If you try to pretend otherwise, your students will know and they will be less likely to find you a trustworthy source of information. You will also lose all cool points.
10. **More Questions than Answers:** One way to dismantle the traditional teacher vs student power dynamic is to try to ask more questions than demand answers. Example: If a student is late, ask why, let them answer, then ask why they think it’s important to be on time. Asking questions instead of lecturing is also a good way to keep students engaged. They feel more invested in the topic if they feel ownership over the learning process.
11. **Humanization:** Every one in the space is human with some awesome traits and some flaws. It is ok to disagree with someone. If do you disagree with someone, remember you are disagreeing with the information, not attacking aspects of the person’s humanity. Although this is something I’m working on, try to see the humanity in historical figures as well, especially the ones you hate.
12. **Dismantle Stereotypes:** Take a moment to define the difference between stereotype and identity with your class. Make sure to call out and unpack “the why” behind stereotypes whenever you hear them. It is tiring at first but it will create a self-policing culture in your space where stereotypes are not okay for anyone.
13. **Affirm Identities:** Make sure to acknowledge everyone’s self-defined and social identities as they surface. Celebrate the identities you have in common as well as the ones you don’t. Bring in, or have your students show you, examples of people with identities that resonate with different people in the room.
14. **Structure First:** It is much easier to have a plan, take a detour (and there will be detours), and then come back to the plan. There are many tangents in the world of teaching especially when students are actively learning. Don’t let tangents take over your teaching goals. I also find it helpful to put up a “Schedule of the Day” chart (without times) in my classroom. People are much more willing to go with the more difficult parts of your lesson if they can see there is an ending point.

15. **Scheduled Break Times:** Talking about identity, systematic oppression, and solutions to inequity are not every day topics for most people. Interacting with other people in a safe space format is not natural for most people. Be nice to yourself, and your class. Schedule in break times to process, check out, chill out, and recharge.
16. **A Pretty Space is a Happy Space:** Having a clean, welcoming learning environment goes a long way towards building a thriving classroom community. Find cool ways to share information (posters, projections, dance moves). Think of different ways to display student work (tap into your kindergarten teacher's bulletin board skills... they were onto something). Play music during group work, breaks, and reflection time (just make sure to match the music to the mood...and that it's appropriate for your space).
17. **Trauma-mining vs Problem Solving:** The end-goal of social justice teaching is NOT to make students focus on past or present personal/community trauma. You are not their savior (please go read about the savior complex). You are not a professional therapist (and if you are, you should know better). The purpose of social justice teaching is to learn from the past to find solutions for the present and build hope for the future. If you feel like your student has been triggered, make sure to find an immediate solution within org-acceptable boundaries and then point the student towards someone with a pro-level skill set for helping them (parents are important to loop in at this point).
18. **Reflect, Reflect, Reflect:** Take time at the end of each day to reflect with your students, even if you didn't get as far as you would have liked in your lesson. Make sure to have a way for students to reflect individually before they bring their reflections back to the group to share. Take notes on what they say so you can use their feedback to plan future lessons. After the students leave, take a moment to reflect on the day. Once you have completed an entire unit reflect on your process. Good reflection questions: What was my favorite part? What was the most challenging part? What did I learn? What would I have done differently? How can I use this information in another context?
19. **Holding the space:** As the facilitator/teacher/leader of the space please remember this is not your journey. This is not your therapy session. This is not YOUR time to grapple with your own issues about identity, community, politics, etc. It is easier for you to navigate difficult topics with your class as a neutral party with structured activities and facts with different viewpoints steeped in research (think tour guide. This is not your experience and you are not the participant (think tourist). It is also better for your young people, who are in the process discovering their own identities and opinions, to see you as a trustworthy facilitator rather than as a peer.
20. **Take Care of Yourself:** It takes a lot of mental, emotional, and sometimes physical energy to create and hold a safe space while tackling social justice issues. Figure out at least four or five self-care strategies that work for you. Listen to your body and brain when they are telling you something is wrong. Find your allies among other teachers/facilitators in the space. Remember, emotional meltdown or burnout are not the end-goals of this process. Ask for help if you need it.

Do What You Know

Myth: I have to throw out everything I used to teach so I can focus on the "real issues."

Now that you have done work to create the space, what do you teach? This is actually the easiest part. You are already an educator. You already teach *something*. This is about integration, not reinventing the wheel.

This is what you already have... I promise:

3 tangible skills you want to teach:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 things you wish someone had taught you:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 awesome project ideas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 mandatory things to teach for your org:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3 learning goals you want your students to meet at by the end of their learning experience:

"By the end of this lesson/week/semester students will be able to..."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

And perhaps most the important things you already have...

- A location with a rich, layered history
- Students with complex identities and ties to many different communities
- Your own learning experiences

Digging for Holes

Once you have your idea for a skill or a concept, the “how”, it’s time to start thinking about the content of your lesson or the “what.” Here are some questions you can ask yourself during your planning process to make sure your content is more inclusive, more diverse, more equitable, and more critical of current systems of oppression.

- What is the history of this neighborhood/community?
- How is this neighborhood beautiful?
- How is the narrative of this neighborhood complex?
- What events/people/systems were oppressive within this community?
- What events/people/systems were empowering within this community?
- Who are my students ancestors?
- Who are my ancestors?
- What important contributions did they make?
- How were they complex humans and not cookie-cutter, flat, archetypes?
- How were their contributions valued?
- How were their contributions erased?
- Which stories are told? (on the news, in the media, in history books)
- Which stories are missing?
- Have we heard at least three sides of the story?
- Are all of your students identities represented in your teaching examples?
- Which parts of history are painful?
- Which parts of history are hopeful?
- Where do we see stereotypes in our lives and what are their histories?
- Who is dehumanized?
- Whose humanity is protected?
- Where do you see oppression?
- Who/what systems have perpetuated and/or supported it?
- Who was being oppressed?
- What was done to overcome oppression? What was the entire process? (classroom timelines are awesome for this)
- Where do you see unearned privilege?
- Who/what system decides who has privilege?
- What are ways privilege can be made more equitable?
- What is currently happening in the world around us?
- Is it fair for all the communities involved? Why/why not?
- Where have we seen similar events in the past?
- What was done to rectify injustice?
- What concrete strategies were used? (from different perspectives)
- What are possible solutions for a better future?

Research is FUN(damental)!

Reading and research is one of the most important parts of my teaching practice. I don't know everything about everything (surprise!) but if I am teaching a lesson about a particular community or moment in history, it is my job to find out as much as I can BEFORE I begin planning my curriculum. My students are inevitably going to ask questions that I have no clue how to answer... and I actually say "I don't know" when I don't know. But if I have a strong enough knowledge base about the subject, navigating difficult questions becomes a learning moment for everyone instead of a tangent that can derail the entire session.

Myth: You have to know everything about everything.

Here are some of the things I look out for when I'm researching a new topic. (If it's something you've taught before, find out something new!)

Consider the source

Wikipedia is a good starting point but you might actually have to hit up the library for this one.

- Who is this writer?
- What is their angle?
- Who is their audience?
- Was this meant for me?
- What are their sources?
- Am I on board with this?
- Can I use this for my class?

Heroes & Villains

As much as we want to live in a world where comic book rules apply to everything, humans are a little more complicated.

- How many sides did this story have?
- Which side wrote the story?
- How can the hero of this story be more complex?
- What were their flaws?
- How can the villain of this story be more human?
- What was their motivation? (money? power? fear?)
- Which side was backed by the system? Why?
- Who had to make a hard decision? Why?
- Under the same circumstances what would have I done?
- That was a cute, idealistic answer now what would I have REALLY done?

Windows and Mirrors

Diverse stories are a way to humanize everyone's identities. Go watch Chimamanda Adiche's "The Danger of a Single Story" then come back to this.

Mirrors = stories that reflect and affirm my identity.

Windows = stories that allow me to connect to and build empathy for cultures, identities, and communities different than my own.

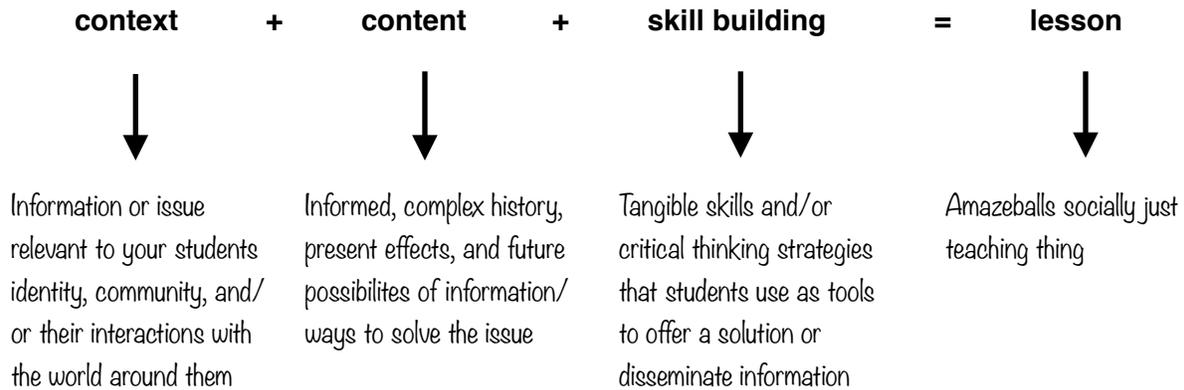
- Do these people look like me and/or my students?
- How are different cultures responding to the same issue?
- Can this information challenge my (or my students) preexisting stereotypes?
- Did I learn something new about my own identity?
- Would Chimamanda Adiche be proud of me?

Mixed Media

Sometimes the best way to teach something is to let the information teach itself. Media diversity is a lifesaver.

- Article
 - Interview
 - Newscast
 - Song
 - Comic
 - Poem
 - Documentary
 - Blogpost
 - Visual Image
 - Poster
 - Fiction
 - Script
 - Invention
- (you get the point)

Putting it All Together



Example:

Students are in a maker class. They are now a part of the maker community and being a "Maker" is a new part of their identity

- Examples of makers throughout history w/ & w/o privilege
- Makers are Steve Jobs and grandmothers in the Bronx
- As future makers, how are you going to make the world a better place?

- What was made out of necessity?
- What inventions oppressed others?
- Basic internet research skills
- Copy/paste skills
- Questioning resources
- Basic presentation skills
- Defining "maker"

- Students tell each other what they make
- Students share with the class who the makers are in their lives
- Each student assigned a maker to research
- Students make maker profiles
- Share back to the class and add to the class wall of makers next to their own photograph

Your idea:

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Lesson Template

Beginning of Class Ritual Something you do every time as students arrive	
Check-in How is everyone feeling? Class recap	
Introduction to the day Schedule & structure of the day	
Icebreaker/Community Building Activity Should happen every time, around the same time	
Main Topic Presentation of social justice content + resources	
Activity #1 (w/ brief share back to the group) Activity to learn more/process content	
New Skill Demonstration of new skill + examples	
Activity #2 (w/ brief share back to the group) Activity to practice new skill/demonstrate competence	
BREAK Should happen every time, around the same time	
Intro to Big Project Main activity that combines new content & new skill	
Big Project Project with extended working time for students to demonstrate what they learned with little to no teacher input	
Presentations of Big Project All students share their work with the class	
Reflection Opportunity to reflect on the day	
End of Class Ritual Something you do every time before students leave	

Happy reading!

Resources

This is by no means an exhaustive list of resources. This is just a first pass at the resources I tend to reference often in my own quest to become a better facilitator/teacher/social justice practitioner. I hope you fall down many liberating reading rabbit holes in the future.

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