Our Association in Action
Creating Change Through Social Justice

Presenters:
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Competency: Advocacy

- **Competency progression level:**
  - Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building

- **Competency theme:**
  - Leverages advocacy practices
  - Engages community around issues supporting student learning
  - Interprets and acts on social justice initiatives
Course Goals

• To develop and engage educator/leaders who will be guided by principles of social justice as they assume leadership roles in advocating for, “student-centered” approaches to public education.

• To equip educator/leaders to serve as advocates for public education and activists working to ensure a great public education for every student.
Objectives

• Demonstrate openness to new ideas about social justice and social oppression.

• Be able to identify forms of social oppression in public education (specifically in your workplaces and association).
Objectives - Continued

• Discover that social oppression is systemic and systematic; shows up in all kinds of –isms; and operates on individual, societal and institutional levels.

• Be able to describe how social justice principles are relevant and useful to you and your work.
Ground Rules

Stay engaged  →  Don’t check-out
Speak your truth  →  Say what’s in your heart
Experience discomfort  →  Connect with your feelings
Expect/accept non-closure  →  Agree to disagree

Adapted from Singleton & Lipton, *Courageous Conversations About Race*, 2006.
Ground Rules - Continued

Maintain confidentiality → What is said here, stays here

All participate → No one dominates

Honor time → Use the parking lot for off-track topics
What is social justice?
Definition of Social Justice

Social Justice is a goal –

a vision of society in which:

• Distribution of resources is equitable,
• All members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, and
• Individuals are self-determining and interdependent.
NEA Vision Statement

“Our vision is a great public school for every student.”
The Mission Statement of NEA

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.
Summary

• Social justice tenets are embedded in who we are and what we do.

• NEA vision, mission statements, and core values are rooted in social justice.
What happens in the *absence* of social justice?
Social Oppression

A social system that maintains advantage & disadvantage based on social group memberships.

One group systematically enjoys privileges while the other group or groups systematically experience disadvantage.
Forms of Social Oppression Includes:

- Ableism
- Ageism
- Classism
- Ethnocentrism
- Heterosexism
- Racism
- Sexism

...And countless others

*Just as in the larger society, we see these play out in our schools.*
Common Pitfall:
Creating a Hierarchy of Social Oppression

“Whose water is colder?”

• It’s a trap; avoid it.
• There is no hierarchy.
• All forms are interconnected.
# Social Oppression: Levels & Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual (Beliefs, Behaviors)</th>
<th>Institutional (Policies, Practices, etc.)</th>
<th>Societal/Cultural (Norms, Values)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Intentional or Unintentional (Conscious or unconscious)</td>
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<td><strong>Heterosexism in Education</strong></td>
<td>A parent asks to have his/her child removed from a gay teacher’s class.</td>
<td>A state and/or school district does not extend workplace benefits to same-sex partners of school employees.</td>
<td>Only “straight” couples and “traditional” families are depicted in most textbooks and recommended reading.</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Racism in Education</strong></td>
<td>A teacher believes that children of color cannot learn.</td>
<td>ESEA and other “one size fits all” national, state or local educational policies.</td>
<td>“Heroes and holidays” approach to multicultural education, rather than routinely incorporating cultural appreciation into every aspect of education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of Identifying Levels and Types

• We’ve learned to accept status quo.

• Contacts with individuals, institutions, and culture pass along beliefs.

• If we identify these beliefs, we can question their truth.
Five Faces of Oppression

• Criteria for determining whether individuals and groups are oppressed.

• Illustration of commonalities among/across the various “isms.”

• Presence of any one “Face” indicates social oppression.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
Exploitation

A state of domination that occurs through a steady process in which the results of the labor of one social group are transferred to the benefit of another group.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
Marginalization

The exclusion of a whole category of people from useful participation in social life and their disrespectful and demeaning treatment by societal institutions and services.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
Powerlessness

A people’s lack of access to participation in making decisions that affect the conditions of their lives and actions.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
Cultural Imperialism

The widespread dissemination of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment of this experience and culture as the norm.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
Violence

The random, unprovoked attacks against members of social groups and their property with the primary motivation to damage, humiliate, or destroy, in a context that is tolerated or even enabled by institutions and social practice.
Activity – Part 1

1. Write one or more examples of social oppression you have experienced or witnessed in your workplace or association.

(Use one Post-it for each example.)
Activity – Part 2

2. For each example:
   • Identify which “Face” the example represents.
   • Identify the level on which social oppression is being manifested in this example.
   • Silently post the example on the appropriate place on the newsprint sheet.
Summary

• Categories can overlap.

• Presence of any one “Face” indicates social oppression.

• Young’s work describes and categorizes systemic and systematic patterns.
Principles of Social Justice

• Celebrate/Acknowledge diversity.

• Understand mechanisms that perpetuate social oppression.

• Address oppression and discrimination head on.

• Take positive actions to eliminate discrimination and social oppression.
Group Exercise

• Choose one example from “Five Faces of Oppression” activity.

• Identify actions at each level to combat this example of oppression.

• Try to apply social justice principles.

• List these activities in the matrix.
What Can I do?
• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!

• For more information about Creating Change Through Social Justice, contact:
  Pat Wright at pwright@nea.org

Thank you for your participation!
Session Outcomes

• The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:
  – Developing advocacy and strategic plans to address social justice issues
  – Increasing awareness and knowledge of issues that impact educational practices, policies and procedures