UNITING OUR MEMBERS AND THE NATION

Empowering leaders, educating students, strengthening communities

Our Association in Action: Creating Change Through Social Justice

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Adrienne Bowden, Ohio
COMPETENCY: ADVOCACY

- NEA Leadership Competency Progression Level(s).
  - Level 1: Foundational
  - Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building
  - Level 3: Agenda Driving
COMPETENCY: ADVOCACY

• NEA Leadership Competency Themes:
  – Leverages advocacy practice
  – Engages community around issues supporting student learning
  – Interprets and acts on social justice initiatives
  – Leads public education policy reform
  – Acts as a political advocate
NEA Strategic Goals and NEA Organizational Priorities:

• NEA Strategic Goals
  – Strategic Goal 1: Strong Affiliates for Educator Voice and Empowerment
  – Strategic Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

• NEA Organizational Priorities
  – Early Career Educators
  – My School, My Voice
  – Racial Justice in Education
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.
Objectives - continued

• Be able to propose ways you as individuals can help to create more just learning conditions for students and better working conditions for educators.

• Willingly seek opportunities to engage in social justice activities and events.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Norms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay engaged</td>
<td>Don’t check-out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak your truth</td>
<td>Say what’s in your heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience discomfort</td>
<td>Connect with your feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect/accept non-closure</td>
<td>Agree to disagree</td>
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Adapted from Singleton & Lipton, *Courageous Conversations About Race*, 2006.
Community Norms - 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.
The NEA Vision Statement

“Our vision is a great public school for every student.”
The Mission Statement of the 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’s vision, mission, and core values statements 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 Include:

- 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

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# Social Oppression: Levels & Types

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<td>Heterosexism in Education</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>When students bully other students who are perceived to be LGBTQ, educators often look the other way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism in Education</td>
<td>A teacher believes that children of color cannot learn.</td>
<td>There are significant racial disparities in school expulsion and suspension rates at national, state, and local levels.</td>
<td>“Heroes and holidays” approach to multicultural education, rather than routinely incorporating cultural appreciation into every aspect of education</td>
</tr>
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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.
The 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.

Source: Iris Marion Young, 1990.
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.)
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 actions in the matrix.
What Can I Do?
Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

– Serve as an advocate for students and public education.

– Create more just learning conditions for students and better working conditions for educators.

– Seek opportunities to engage in social justice activities and events.
Closing

• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session by using the NEA Summit Mobile APP!

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment
Thank you!

• For information, questions, or comments please contact Anthony Brisson, abrisson@nea.org - NEA Human & Civil Rights, Center for Social Justice.