



Toronto District School Board

Social Justice Action Plan

TDSB Social Justice Action Plan

Background

From its inception, the Toronto District School Board has been strongly committed to principles of fairness, equity and human rights. This commitment has been illustrated through a long and rich history of advocating for a more socially just world. There are literally hundreds of examples across the TDSB that support social justice initiatives both locally and globally. Some examples:

- Our staff have a long standing commitment to donating to charity organizations such as the United Way.
- Our schools have fund raised for disaster relief in countries around the world and continue to work with agencies such as the Red Cross and Unicef.
- The Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS), an arms length charity of the TDSB, advocates for students and initiates programs to deal with hunger, poverty and violence. One out of three children in Toronto live in poverty and more than 90,000 TDSB students rely on breakfast, snack and lunch programs to make it through the day.
- In 2005, Models Schools for Inner City Schools was launched to support students who face socioeconomic challenges.
- Every year we recognize an elementary and secondary school with the Anne Hope Award for excellence in equity and social justice.
- Our Equity Foundation Statements are heralded around this province as being innovative and ahead of the time.
- In 2008, the TDSB was awarded the prestigious Carl Bertelsmann Prize, an annual international award that honours innovative ideas and exemplary solutions to pressing social issues.
- This past September, the Grove Community School, a school born out of a commitment and dedication to ecological sustainability and social justice, was opened.
- Other alternative schools unique to the TDSB, such as the Triangle School and the Africentric School, focus intently on social justice issues.
- Many TDSB schools participate actively in character development programs and are increasingly involved in both community and global initiatives to help make our world a better place for everyone.

Social Justice is a specific habit of justice that is based on concepts of human rights, equity, fairness, and economic egalitarianism. Social justice requires inspiring, working with, and organizing others to collaboratively accomplish a goal consistent with these concepts. As such, it is an activity that requires a broader range of social skills than do acts of individual justice. These skills are considered fundamental to a civil society. Social justice is, in plain terms, the movement towards a more socially just world through the actions of a group of individuals working together to achieve its goals. Students and staff who participate in social justice actions often categorize their efforts as attempts to “give back” or to contribute to the greater good in their community or abroad.

In September 2009, the TDSB sent a team of principals, teachers, students, a trustee and a superintendent to attend We Day Vancouver with Free the Children as ambassadors to further develop partnerships to support our social justice agenda. This team was responsible for the creation of this Social Justice Action Plan.

The TDSB has served as a developing partner in the creation of We Day Toronto, and as a collaborator, catalyst and model for the full spectrum of Free the Children's programming.

Since 2007, We Day has been the cornerstone of Free the Children's youth programming and of its engagement of TDSB students in social action. The largest one-day event of its kind, We Day is an annual celebration of the power of young people to change the world. We Day features a series of inspirational and motivational speeches by top leaders and social issues activists, speakers and entertainers.

The purpose of the event is to inspire participants to commit to social change. Students are encouraged to take action throughout the year through campaigns to raise awareness and funds for local and international initiatives. Donations support local charities and build schools and provide clean water and alternative income streams for some of the most impoverished people in the world. Free The Children delivers more programs to more schools in the TDSB than anywhere else, facilitated by and resulting in a deep partnership that supports innovation for excellence in global education and student leadership.

This past year, more than 200 schools attended We Day in October.

On November 4, the TDSB and Free the Children followed up We Day with an in-service at OISE to provide an opportunity for teachers and students to share ideas and resources to help make schools' year-long commitment to social justice action a success. The workshops provided teachers and students with best practices and tangible leadership skills to develop action plans for carrying out the local and international actions in their commitment to change.

More than 100 schools were represented at the We Day in-service in November.

Vision statement:

The primary purpose of the Social Justice Action Plan will be for all schools in the Toronto District School Board to have an opportunity to learn about local and global issues and to participate in actions that affect positive change.

The creation of a Social Justice Action Plan for our district will allow for a deepening of the work that has already begun on social justice issues and will coordinate and align similar work and learning opportunities already existing within the Board, providing a more strategic approach to contributing to a more socially just world and positioning the TDSB as a leader in this movement.

Rationale:

The TDSB has a shared responsibility to contribute to positive social change both locally and globally. Learning about and engaging in social justice issues (such as equity, diversity, abuse against women, poverty reduction, and environmentalism) will make school more relevant and meaningful for all students. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that students gain through their studies and experiences in social justice issues will deepen their understanding of their place in their community and in the world and how they, as individuals and in groups, can positively affect change.

Students will expand their understanding of others and will gain greater insight on how all people are inter-connected and inter-dependent. Our 21st Century learners will engage in the issues that will help them to become empowered and contributing 21st Century Global Citizens.

Goals

- Every school in the TDSB will provide opportunities for their students to participate in learning activities that support understanding of local and global social justice issues.
- Every school will participate and report on one local action and one global action that will be reflected in their School Improvement Plan through the Community Culture and Caring aspect of their school plans.
- Teachers will continue to incorporate social justice learning activities into their classrooms to support student understanding of social justice and active youth citizenship.
- The TDSB and its partners will continue to provide resources (in kind and/or financially) that are focused on social justice to support teaching and learning in all schools.

Community and Local Responsibility

- The TDSB is an important and influential member of many local communities.
- Equipping students with a clear sense of civic responsibility, as well as the opportunities they have to shape their communities' social development, will encourage life-long citizenship, character development and other relevant skills.

Global Responsibility

- The TDSB is one of the most diverse school boards in Canada, with students representing all of the world's diasporas within TDSB schools.
- Engagement in social justice on a global scale will create opportunities for dialogue and action that will encourage the inclusion of these students' experiences and perspectives, promoting equity and enriching the lives of all students involved.

Critical Literacy and Social Consciousness Raising

- Students engage daily with their local and international communities in multi-faceted ways—most commonly through the consumption and creation of media. By educating and engaging students using a social justice lens, students will be more able to develop critical literacy skills while reflecting on the world around them through participation in social justice work in a meaningful and socially productive way.

Partners in Action

Every member of the TDSB will have a role to play in bringing this vision to life. They include (but are not limited to):

- Students
- Teachers
- Business and support staff
- Principals and Vice Principals
- Superintendents
- Teaching Federations ETT and OSSTF
- CUPE
- School Councils
- Parents and other Caregivers
- School communities
- Community partners (global and local not-for-profits)

There is also an understanding that local and provincial governments as well as post-secondary institutions play a vital role as partners and leaders in social justice issues and include the:

- Ministry of Education
- Municipal governments
- Other Provincial governmental agencies
- Universities and Colleges

Teacher Professional Learning and Engagement Opportunities

- Social justice lessons and relevant curriculum plans (e.g. elementary – social studies classes and secondary – civics and law courses)
- Teacher lessons and resources (e.g. books, videos, etc.)
- Full day sessions to support social justice curriculum implementation (2 per year)
- Demonstration schools or classrooms
- Networks for teachers (face to face and online) to share best practice
- Social Justice Summer Academy

Student Engagement

- Classroom curriculum opportunities
- Experiential opportunities (both classroom and extracurricular)
- We Day – Fall
- Social Justice Fair – Spring
- SuperCouncil
- Year Round Student Leadership Training Camps – (e.g. such as those offered through Toronto Police Service, Free the Children)
- Student speaking engagements
- Student leadership and mentoring opportunities
- Youth-led campaigns
- School visits/speeches
- School, Family of Schools and District opportunities

Accountability

Each school will complete one local and global social justice initiative each year as part of their School Improvement Plan within the Community, Culture and Caring aspect of the plan.

Superintendents can use FOS meetings to share ideas and plans centered on social justice issues and actions.

Student engagement can be measured through amount of community hours and credit accumulation in relevant course areas.

Celebrating Our Successes

- Year-end Social Justice Event – Committee underway to organize a major fundraiser to support cost of event and awards
- Principal Recognition Awards
- Teacher Recognition Awards
- Student Recognition Awards
- School Recognition Awards

Appendix

Courses Offered in Social Justices

The theme of social justice occurs in a number of our secondary courses. These courses are listed below with the descriptor from Choices 2009-2010.

Canadian and World Studies:

- CHC2D and CHC2P: **Canadian History Since World War I**, Grade 10 Applied and Academic: This course explores the local, national and global forces that have shaped Canada's national identity from World War I to present.
- CPC30: **Canadian Politics and Citizenship**, Grade 11, Open "This course explores the role of politics in people's lives and the importance of being and active citizen in a democratic society/"
- CHV201, **Civics** (.5 Credit) "This course explores what it means to be an informed, participating citizen in a democratic society."
- CHG381: **Genocide: Historical and Contemporary Implications**, Grade 11, College/University Preparation: "Students investigate the terms genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and explore them through the lens of historical analysis."
- CHH3C1: **Canadian History and Politics Since 1945**, Grade 11, College Preparation, "Students will expand their political understanding through an investigation of Canada's efforts in areas such as **social justice** * and human rights, multiculturalism and international relations."
- CAS331: **History of Africa and Peoples of African Descent**, Grade 11 Open, "Students will analyze diverse societies and cultures with particular regard to the social, economic and political structures and historical forces that form the foundation of these communities."
- CHI4U1: **Canada: History, Identity and Culture**, Grade 12 University Preparation: "Students will examine the social, political and economic forces that have shaped Canada from the pre-contact period to the present and will investigate the historical roots of contemporary issues.."
- CLN4U: **Canadian and International Law**, Grade 12 University Preparation: "course examines elements of Canadian and international law in social, political and global contests."
- CLU3E1: **Understanding Canadian Law**, Grade 11, Workplace Preparation: "Students will examine the need for laws in society, the roots of Canada's legal system, the rights and freedoms that people in Canada enjoy and the basic elements of criminal law and dispute resolution."
- CLU3M: **Understanding Canadian Law**, Grade 11, University/College Preparation: "Students will investigate fundamental legal concepts and processes to gain a practical understanding of Canada's legal system, including the criminal justice system."
- CHT30: **World History Since 1900: Global and Regional Perspectives**: Grade 11 Open, "Students will investigate the causes and effects of global and regional conflicts and the responses of individual and governments to social, economic and political changes."

- **CHY4C: World History: The West and the World**, Grade 12 College Preparation. Students will learn about a variety of economic, social and political systems and changes they have undergone over time.”

Some other related social justice courses:

- **BOH4M1 – Business Leadership: Management Fundamentals**, Grade 12, University/College Preparation “Effective business communication skills, ethics and social responsibility will be emphasized throughout the course
- **BBI1O, BBI2O – Introduction to Business**, Grade 9 or 10 Open “Students will develop and understanding of the functions of business, including accounting, marketing, information technology, human resources, and production and the importance of ethics and social responsibility”
- **NBV3E (through e-Learning) Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society**, Grade 11 Workplace .Sample Assignment: Students learn about issues such as racism experienced by Native American people within the Canadian justice system. In this activity, students learn about how the penal system is attempting to address injustices and improve access to more culturally relevant and socially effective measures of restorative justice for Native American people. Students engage in questions designed to extend thinking surrounding issues discussed within the content of the lesson.
- **SVN3E1, Environmental Science**, Grade 11 Workplace Preparation: Students will explore a range of topics, including the impact of human activities on the environment. Example assignment related to Social Justice: Finally, you will research a specific waste management strategy and examine the political and economic factors that have influenced it. The importance of considering the social justice aspect of our waste management practices as they may affect people in developing countries is emphasized in this activity.
- **HZT4U, Philosophy: Questions and Theories**, Grade 12, University Preparation: This course addresses three (or more) of the main areas of philosophy: metaphysics, logic, epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy and aesthetics.
- **CGW4U: Canadian and World Issues: A Geographic Analysis**, Grade 12 University Preparation “This course examines the global challenges of creating a sustainable and equitable future, focusing on current issues that illustrate these challenge



Social Justice in the Curriculum

January 2010

A select list of current materials

Books:

- Bigelow, Bill, et al. (2001). *Rethinking our classrooms, volume 2: Teaching for equity and justice*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools. 370.117 Ret
- Davis, Bonnie M. (2006). *How to teach students who don't look like you: Culturally relevant teaching strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. 370.117 Dav
- Freire, Paulo. (2007). *Daring to dream: Toward a pedagogy of the unfinished*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Pub. 370.115 Fre
- Harding, J Craig. (2008). *Take Action, make a difference: A social studies handbook*. Don Mills ON: Pearson Education. 361.25 Har
- Hoover, John. (2009) *Differentiating learning differences from disabilities: Meeting diverse needs through multi-tiered response to intervention*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. 370.117 Hoo
- Johnson, Holly. (2005). *Developing critical awareness at the middle level: Using texts as tools for critique and pleasure*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. 370.115 Joh
- Larsoem, Marianne, (2007). *ACT! Active citizens today: Global citizenship for local schools: Middle school teachers' resource kit*. London, ON: University of Western Ontario. 323.042 ACT
- Pransky, Ken. (2008). *Beneath the surface: The hidden realities of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse young learners, K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 370.117 Pra
- Stocker, David. (2006-2008). *Maththatmattes: A teacher resource linking math and social justice*. 2nd ed. Ottawa, ON: CCPA Education Project. 372.7 Sto
- Au, Kathryn. (2009, Dec.). Culturally responsive instruction: What is it, and how can we incorporate it in the classroom? *Reading Today*, 27(3), 30-31.
- Bemak, Fred, & Chi-Ying Chung, Rita. (2008, Summer). New professional roles and advocacy strategies for school counselors: A multicultural/social justice perspective

- to move beyond the nice counselor syndrome. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(3), 372-382.
- Berthelot, J. (2008, Oct.). Education and the common good. *Our Schools, Our Selves*, 18(1), 101-126, 258.
- Bonner, E. (2009). Achieving success with African American learners: A framework for culturally responsive mathematics teaching. *Childhood Education*, 86(1), 2-6.
- Boutte, Gloria Swindler. (2008, July/Aug.). Beyond the illusion of diversity: How early childhood teachers can promote social justice. *Social Studies*, 99(4), 165-173.
- Brown, Monica R. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43(1), 57-62.
- Carlisle, Leonore Reilly, Jackson, Bailey, W., & George, Alison. (2006, Mar.). Principles of social justice education: The social justice education in school project. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39 (1), 55-64.
- Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at-risk for disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3) 351-371.
- Castagno, A. & Brayboy, B. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 941-993.
- Edwards, Sarah, & Kuhlman, Wilma. (2007, Summer). Culturally responsive teaching: Do we walk our talk? *Multicultural Education*, 14(4), 45-49.
- Enright, Mary Schaefer, et al. (2008, Winter). Building a just adolescent community. *Montessori Life*, 20(1), 36-42.
- Fiedler, Craig, et al. (2008, May/Jun.). Culturally responsive practices in schools. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(5), 52-59.
- Giroux, H. (2007, Oct.). Educated hope in dark times: Critical pedagogy for social justice. *Our Schools, Our Selves*, 17(1), 195-202.
- Hunter, Tiffany J. (2008, Sept.). Creating a culture of peace in the elementary classroom. *Education Digest*, 74(1), 54-58.
- Jones, Shelley. (2007, Nov/Dec.). Culturally responsive instruction. *Leadership*, 37(2), 14-17, 36.

- Kraft, Matthew. (2007, Mar.). Toward a school-wide model of teaching for social justice: An examination of the best practices of two small public schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 40(1), 77-86.
- Lalas, Jose. (2007, Fall). Teaching for social justice in multicultural urban schools: Conceptualization and classroom implications. *Notes & Abstracts in American and International Education*. 104, 1-11.
- Landorf, Hilary, & Nevin, Ann. (2007). Inclusive global education: Implications for social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(6), 711.
- Ryan, James. (2006, Mar.). Inclusive leadership and social justice for schools. *Leadership & Policy in Schools*, 5(1), 3-17.
- Schellenberg, Rita, & Grothaus, Timothy. (2009, Aug.). Promoting cultural responsiveness and closing the achievement gap with standards blending. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 440-449.
- Sheets, R. (2009). What is diversity pedagogy? *Multicultural Education*. 16(3), 11-17.
- Schmidt, Laurel. (2009, May). Stirring justice. *Educational Leadership*, 66(8), 32-36.
- Shujah, Shazia. (2008). Pedagogy for social justice: Critical teaching that goes against the grain. In *Doing democracy: Striving for political literacy & social justice* (pp. 351-365). Retrieved online from Ebsco Education Research Complete.
- Shultz, L. (2007). Educating for global citizenship: Conflicting agendas and understandings. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 53(3), 248-258.
- Singer, Jessica, & Shagoury, Ruth. (2005/Dec.-2006/Jan.). Stirring up justice: Adolescents reading, writing, and changing the world. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(4), 318-339.
- Steele, J. (2008). [Preparing counselors to advocate for social justice: A liberation model.](#) *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 48(2), 74-85.