Social Justice/Human Rights Curriculum

Overall Aim
To understand and exercise basic concepts in the Human, Environmental, and Animal Rights field, the overarching issue of Power, and the engagement of concerned activities in our world for the benefit of all.

Class 1: Introduction

Class Objective: Context for the Social Justice Program
- Introduce the Theme of Power
- A “Zoomed Out” perspective of a shared humanity
- Some Basic Critical Thinking Tools
- Basic Terms: Power, Social Justice, Activism, Environment

I. Introduction
Welcome everyone
Community Introductions (5 min)
Activity: Who are you (name and home-school)?
- Do you have a particular Social Justice Concern? If so, what?
- What is your favorite thing that you can do? Something you think is interesting about you!

Activity: The Chocolate Game (brief version for 2nd interview: no more than 10 min)

Exploration Discussion:
- What is this game about?
- Power
- Two Kinds of Power: Shared vs. Localized
- Scapegoating/Structural Violence
- Conflict – Why and How does it happen?
- Conflict Resolution – Why and How does it happen?
- Who really has the Power in The Chocolate Game?

Writing Exercise - How does the issue of Power pertain to your Social Justice issue? (5-10min.)
- What else is this game about?

Video (2 min):
- Chocolate Industry Video (0 – 1:45)
  - Chocolate!: Deforestation, Indigenous Rights
  - Fair Trade, Child Labor

Writing Exercise – What are some issues that your Social Justice concern includes?
Overview
Thank you again for signing up for this great opportunity to work together. I hope it’s as fun, informative, and engaging as you’d like it to be! A little overview of our collective project:

The Chocolate Game...If we’re going to talk about and act for Social Justice – and especially against Social Injustice - then we have to talk about Power – what it is, how it appears, and how people generally have related to it. Because whether we’re talking about bullying or racism, the exploitation of workers or the suppression of women, civil rights, voting rights, immigrant rights, the right to an education – whatever measure of health or oppression we’re discussing - we’re discussing Power, what it is, and how it appears and lives in the world.

i. Half of the way we do this is by looking at how Power operates in the world – this is always a study of both protections and violences - both informal and those built into a system - and how they are connected and co-habitate - just like in the Chocolate Game.

ii. The other half of the study of Power – and I think the most important piece – is looking at the heartbeat of Power: how it appears, what moves it, and what helps it grow or die - this is called “Human Behavior.” For instance, Oppression is always accompanied, in part, by the creation of a Scapegoat – someone or group of people framed as those to blame for a real or perceived problem. From playground bullying to Nations bullying their own citizens or other nations, this is the case.

Through whatever topic you, as citizen-student-teacher-activist (because we’re always all of these) decide to explore here regarding Social Justice and Activism, your particular concerns will always be tied to this overriding concern of Power, and your ability to think critically about your issue, your world, their relationship with each other, and their relationship to Power. The more we understand about ourselves and Power, the less likely we are to be exploitive or exploited by its presence and the more likely we are to make positive change.

As citizen-student-teacher-activists, we’re informed by the past tense, while living in the present tense, and working in the future tense. This is key.

We’re going to practice looking at the issues of Social Justice that interest you - defined by your concerns and informed by your experience. In addition to checking out important media on your chosen issue (videos, websites, writing, etc.), we’ll get out of the house and do some observations, go visit some very important places, and talk to some very interesting people – critiquing them all as we gain tools to practice seeing our world with a keen, informed eye.

Finally, because we should never carry around a problem without bringing a solution, too, we’ll explore many ways and tools that you may counteract injustices.
This project is about you honing your ability and skillset to deeply see and effect the world in which we live, through the issue which you deem important, by honoring your ability to see, to have your voice heard, to acquire tools, and to practice an intelligent and courageous personal and social activism.

A couple of ground rules:
Activity: (ask students what they feel works best for class discussions/projects in order to work together)

My offerings:
1) One Mic – if someone's speaking, the rest of us are listening
2) Listen to Understand - If someone presents an idea, it is honored and gets explored
3) Safe Space – everyone is honored and is honoring and respectful of others
4) Step Up Step Back
5) Share the Air

II. Spiral 1 – Ourselves and The Human Family
Activity 1: Identity Chart
Material: Paper & Pen/Pencil

Activity 2 (5 min.): “My Favorite Summer Day” exercise
Break into pairs and share

Video (3:30): Children of the Ikpeng (post 1:10 min)

Activity (10 min): What similarities are there between your life and the Ikpeng?
Between your summer day and theirs?

Here, the first thing we did was to look at some similarities between our lives and those in a region of the world few even know exist. Because, sometimes, its easier to view one's own situation by seeing it first in the lives of another culture. This is called “objectivity” and is one tool of critical inquiry.

Question: What are some other examples of “objectivity”?
III. Critical Thinking
As we find common themes arising between cultures, especially in light of cultural differences, we can start to give these situations “themes”. We’re going to use the overarching topic of the Environment to begin to see themes in our own issue. Of course, feel free at this early stage to switch to another issue, if you wish.

Handout: United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
Brief overview of the history of the UDHR and the United Nations
Breakout groups – Each takes five “Articles” to describe as a group
(15 min)

Activity (Crystallization of Human Rights Exercise)
Handout: Identification, Representation, Standards, Education, Responses

Activity: Video – “Trading Bows and Arrows for Laptops” (first 3 minutes)
Break into 5 groups
Discuss videos given your group’s topic
Present summary of group for class discussion
What do you see?
What power relations/conflicts/co-operations do you see?

What is “critical thinking”?

We’re going to get critical about the world we live in. Not necessarily negative, but perceptive. Critical inquiry, critical thinking, and constructive criticism. Our project is about learning to engage the world fearlessly, to see it clearly, and to put ourselves into action in whatever way we are called to.

We’ll be triangulating:
   Yourself and your experience
   Systems concerned in your issue
   The issue of Culture in relation to your issue