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Revisiting Social Justice Research in the High School English Classroom

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.02.03
by Amy Brazauski

Today’s educators are familiar with the practice of social justice and the ideals of teaching students to think about their position as young agents of change. However, there is a risk of “performing” social justice that emphasizes rhetoric without leading to concrete action. Leaving students disengaged from both the classroom and the community. In this unit, “Rethinking Social Justice Research in the High School ELA Classroom,” educators are asked to reexamine their understanding and practice of social justice by considering the connection to Critical Race Theory and the essential role of educator and student action beyond the classroom. The unit encourages educators to challenge the dominant way knowledge is traditionally positioned in their curriculum. Inspired by the work of Communal Cultural Wealth (Yosso) and Indigenous researchers, the unit welcomes community sources of knowledge as essential to the research process. Students in turn are empowered to hold and lead conversations to engage differing perspectives amongst their peers as well as larger communities. The unit culminates in a Social Justice Symposium that invites community leaders and family members that have inspired and engaged students throughout their learning process and give students the opportunity to share their collected knowledge with their community. Throughout, students collectively contribute to a website that documents on-going research on social justice issues in their community.

(Developed for English, grade 10; recommended for English and History, grades 9-10)

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