

# English Language Arts

## Curriculum Connections

The English language arts curriculum for grades 4 to 7 includes prescribed learning outcomes related to

- use of oral language to discuss concerns and resolve problems
- reading and viewing stories representing a range of cultures
- reading and viewing stories that introduce unfamiliar contexts.

Such expectations are readily compatible with a focus on social justice, since choice of content and text is largely up to the teacher. Indeed, selection of text (video or print, in any of the various genres) contributes significantly to the opportunities to discuss diversity and social justice issues. See Appendix A for a list of resources that can be used as a starting point for classroom discussions and activities.

## Diversity and Social Justice Extensions

In addition to studying texts (including non-fiction texts and audiovisual media) that deal fairly overtly with themes or situations relating to social justice concerns, English language arts teachers can use virtually any text to teach a method of textual analysis (critical thinking) that will help further students' awareness of social justice implications. For example, students can be encouraged to

- identify perspective and point of view in texts, including those brought to the text by the author and those brought by the reader/viewer
- look for ways in which the “silences” in texts (e.g., aspects of a story that are not developed) reflect assumptions or biases, including preoccupations or interests that are typical of a given author or period
- examine characterization for indications of assumptions or bias (recognizing that a text may sometimes expose one form of oppression while accepting/perpetuating other forms)
- consider how the narrative (i.e., in novels, stories, films) might have been different if a given character were a boy instead of a girl or vice versa, had a different sexual orientation, ethnic background, family structure, socioeconomic status, etc.
- construct their own meanings from the material presented in or omitted from the text (recognizing that there is not always one “right” interpretation, but that interpretations must be supported by evidence and careful argument in order to be credible)

*Name demeaning, exclusionary language and behaviour as a form of oppression or as a practice that sustains the way certain groups have been historically disadvantaged.*

- produce texts (e.g., media messages, protest songs) reflective of their own social justice interests or concerns.

In addition, teachers may find the following approaches helpful in furthering a social justice agenda:

- Use an anticipation guide to help students identify their own preconceptions, and to examine those ideas via the text. Present the class with a series of statements related to a story, and ask students to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement (either in writing or through “voting with their feet”—standing on one or other side of the room based on whether they agree or disagree). Have them explain their thinking. After reading or viewing the story, revisit the statements and have students compare their responses. What changed? Why?
- Use texts to look for ways to empower students who may feel marginalized (e.g., with students for whom English is a second language, have them create a dual language story book for a younger student incorporating their home language; or, read a story in English, and have a parent read or tell the same story in their language).



## Sample Lesson Plan

### Grades 6-7

using *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

As an anticipation guide exercise, give students a list of some of the euphemisms and other words used in specific ways in the novel (e.g., release, nurturer, elsewhere, The Giver, community). Ask students to predict what each of these terms means. Revisit the euphemisms after reading the book. What does the author mean by each of these terms? What euphemisms do we have in our society, and why do we use them?

Assign groups or individuals questions such as the following:

- What kinds of people are marginalized in this society? What people are valued?
- Does this story depict ageism (“putting away” the elderly)? How does this relate to how we treat the elderly in our society? How should we treat our elderly?
- What does this novel say about security vs. freedom? Which is valued more? Can you have full security and full freedom at the same time? Which do you think is more important? Are there any parallels to our society?
- The father kills a child without thinking about it. What kinds of actions do we do unconsciously? What does that say about what we value and don’t value?
- What is the purpose of the rites of passage in this book? (e.g., giving of bicycles, wearing pigtails).
- After time for discussion, have each group prepare a brief presentation on their assigned question.

Talk about how easy it is for people in the community to remain complicit in injustices. Are there any things that we are complicit about? (e.g., bullying) Read the poem, “First They Came ...” by Pastor Martin Niemöller (note that there are many variations of this poem).

First they came for the Communists,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant.  
Then they came for me,  
and by that time no one was left to speak up.





## Sample Lesson Plan

### Grade 7

using *The Scream* by Laura J. Wieler

Anticipation guide: provide students with the following pre-reading statements. Ask them if they agree or disagree with these statements. Students can respond in their journals then share with a partner, or use a class “vote with your feet” activity. Have students give reasons for their thinking.

- Shy students should get involved with drama classes and plays in order to overcome their shyness.
- Good teachers need to be really loud and forceful.
- School bullies are almost always boys.
- Disruptive students should be immediately expelled from class.
- Screaming is a good way to relieve stress and tension.
- In order to have high self-esteem, you need to be really good at some skill or activity.

Read *The Scream*. What are the author’s opinions on these statements? Who are the bullies in the story? Is Ms. Draginda a good teacher? Was Todd treated fairly? Why does Eliza feel good about herself and about the class at the end of the story? What should the teacher do to make all the students feel good about themselves and to make all of them feel that they are a part of the drama “team?”

Ms. Draginda is in a position of power in this story. Does she make it easier for students in the class to be bullies? Is she herself a bully? Does she abuse her power? If so, how? What other ways do people in authority abuse their power? Use this discussion to introduce the concept of oppression, and to make the distinction between bullying (incidental, occurring among peers) and oppression (systemic, perpetrated by people in authority, often to protect institutionalized power and privilege).

Discuss how Eliza is made to feel better about herself. What could be done to bring Todd and Melissa Downing along in their relationships with “social misfits.” What are things we can do in our class, school, and community to make people feel welcomed and valued?

Conclude by having students write a RAFT response in which they take the role of someone who will comment about what has happened in the story.

**R = Role:** Who are you? (not yourself) You may be Eliza, Melissa, Todd, Ms. Draginda, or a character not mentioned (e.g., the parent, sibling, friend, or co-worker of one of the characters)

**A = Audience:** Whom are you communicating with? Are you Todd writing a note to his friend in the next period's class? Are you Eliza writing in her diary? Are you the principal talking to Ms. Draginda about her teaching style?

**F = Format:** What is the form of your communication? Is it a letter? A diary entry? One side of a conversation?

**T = Topic:** What is your reason for communicating? Think of a strong verb. Are you criticizing Ms. Draginda's opening day activity? Are you complaining about the first day of drama class? Are you praising Ms. Draginda as a teacher?

## Using Existing Curriculum-Based Materials

- Grade 6, Oral Discussion and Presentation: Heroes and Idols (p. 557)—Focus on characteristics of diversity (e.g., race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex, mental and physical ability) represented in students' idols and heroes. Which characteristics are represented? Which ones are not? Why? Are these characteristics relevant to what makes someone a hero or idol? Why or why not? Are any of these heroes role models for social justice?
- Grade 6, Independent Novel Study: Literature Circles (p. 563)—Look for evidence that students are able to make connections with and demonstrate empathy for characters.



## Fine Arts: Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts

### Curriculum Connections

From grades 4 to 7, the four fine arts subject areas (dance, drama, music, and visual arts) provide multiple opportunities for students to learn about and value a wide variety of cultures. Specifically, the fine arts curricula include expectations for students to learn about

- dance, drama, music, and visual arts from a variety of historical and cultural contexts
- purposes of the arts in various cultures
- roles portrayed in a variety of dances and dramas
- influence of cultural and social contexts on art and artists.

In addition, as students grow in their abilities to create personally meaningful works of artistic expression, the fine arts subject areas provide opportunities for students to

- use dance, drama, music, and visual arts as means to communicate thoughts and feelings about a range of social justice topics (e.g., responding to and promoting the prevention of bullying and harassment; promoting respect for diverse viewpoints)
- identify and respond to examples of dance, drama, music, and visual arts works about a range of social justice topics
- develop co-operation and responsible group behaviour skills through the collaborative creative process (e.g., ensemble performance)
- use dance, drama, music, and visual arts as a means to explore resolutions to problems and conflicts (e.g., school bullying)
- celebrate their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds by sharing works from their cultures with the rest of the class.

### Using Existing Curriculum-Based Materials

- Drama Sample 3, Grade 5: Role Drama (p. D-38)—When conducting this activity, focus on how each individual’s role contributes to the well-being of the community as a whole. Relate to present-day community structures, and how working together promotes social justice aims.
- Drama Sample 4, Grade 6: Play Building (p. D-41)—Use the scenario from the sample to help students recognize that all humans have similar needs, and that working together collaboratively is an effective way to solve problems. Extend the unit by using the playbuilding process to focus on conflict resolution using situations from students’ own lives.

# Health and Career Education

## Curriculum Connections

The health and career education curriculum in grades 4 to 7 provides multiple opportunities for teaching diversity and social justice. Whether taught as a discrete subject or integrated with other subjects, HCE 4-7 provides opportunities for students to

- learn about the dynamics of bullying and harassment
- develop healthy interpersonal skills.

Specific curriculum connections related to diversity and social justice at the 4-7 level include the following.

Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choices for emotional health</li> <li>• interpersonal skills in relationships</li> <li>• recognizing negative group dynamics</li> <li>• strategies for responding to bullying behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• healthy lifestyle planning</li> <li>• physical, emotional, and social changes at puberty</li> <li>• assessing own interpersonal skills</li> <li>• characteristics of safe and caring schools</li> <li>• behaviours that have a negative impact on a school environment and ways to address them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• benefits of attaining an emotionally healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• respecting developmental differences at puberty and adolescence</li> <li>• definitions and consequences of stereotyping and discrimination</li> <li>• responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying behaviour</li> <li>• policies and strategies for preventing and responding to discrimination, bullying, and harassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• co-operation and teamwork as a transferable skill</li> <li>• strategies for maintaining emotional health</li> <li>• influences on relationships</li> <li>• prevention of discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying</li> </ul>



Additional opportunities for addressing diversity and social justice apply in relation to

- work and jobs (inclusion of individuals representing diversity in ethnicities, ages, mental and physical abilities, etc.)
- healthy food choices—specific food items representing a range of cultures and belief systems (e.g., religions, ideologies such as vegetarianism); comparing foods represented in the various cultural food guides (e.g., Aboriginal food guides, Vietnamese food guide, Punjabi food guide)
- consideration of how specific food choices relate to social justice issues (e.g., global food equity, fair trade, buying locally, organics, sustainable food resource practices)
- how positive interpersonal skills for preventing and responding to bullying create social justice in the school environment.

### **Using Existing Curriculum-Based Materials**

The following units from the Classroom Assessment Model for the Health and Career Education K to 7 IRP (2006) can be used to address diversity and social justice topics:

- Grade 4, Unit 3: Personal Responsibility (p. 183)
- Grade 5, Unit 4: Building Healthy Relationships (p. 197)
- Grade 6, Unit 4: Healthy Relationships (p. 216)
- Grade 7, Unit 2: Relationships (p. 229)



# Mathematics

## Diversity and Social Justice Extensions

Teaching mathematics provides opportunities to address social justice by expanding students' understanding of the world around them. In particular, mathematics activities can examine issues such as:

- government spending (e.g., on health care, education, the military, the environment, foreign aid)
- corporate profits; wages and benefits
- natural resource distribution
- infant mortality rates, literacy rates, incarceration rates
- statistics related to family structures
- how media present statistical data on a range of issues.

As students are introduced to the concept of mathematical equality, it is also possible to begin examining equality and inequality with reference to real-world situations that have a social justice aspect. For example, students can look at numbers that reflect inequalities of income or inequalities (disparities) with respect to various indicators of wellbeing (e.g., resource distribution, mortality rates, rates of access to particular forms of health care) in different cities and countries. To extend discussion arising from observations about such inequalities, students can be asked to speculate about possible reasons for some of the disparities identified, recognizing that isolated and decontextualized sets of numbers do not always provide a complete or accurate picture of a situation.

See Appendix A for a list of resources that can be used to facilitate the integration of mathematics and social justice, specifically

- *If the World Were a Village* by David J. Smith
- *Math that Matters: A Teacher Resource Linking Math and Social Justice* by David Stocker.

*Social justice includes addressing injustice faced by those who historically have been and today frequently continue to be marginalized, ignored, or subjected to discrimination or other forms of oppression.*

# Physical Education

## Curriculum Connections

In grades 4 to 7, students are developing their understanding of “fairness” as it relates to physical activity. The PE curriculum for grades 4 to 7 includes opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to

- fair play behaviours such as encouragement and respect in pair and team activities
- modifying rules to improve the fairness and inclusiveness of a game or activity
- recognizing situations that may cause inappropriate emotional responses (e.g., “winning” or “losing” a game), and appropriate responses to these situations
- respecting individual differences and abilities during physical activity
- leadership in encouraging and promoting respect for individual differences
- respect and co-operation when following the leadership of others.

## Diversity and Social Justice Extensions

Have students

- work together to establish guidelines for conducting a game or co-operative activity
- work independently or in groups to create solutions, game adaptations, or courses of action that include all players
- respond to current events situations that involve social responsibility (e.g., giving advice to the girl in Quebec who was not permitted to play soccer because, in her culture, she wears a head scarf, and explaining how they would behave if this had happened to them or in their school)
- complete a journal reflection of their fair play behaviours, responding to sentence stems such as: I encouraged others to try new skills by ..., I praised others for ..., I helped my team mates by ...

Use video to record students' games, then have students work in partners to analyse and create a commentary of the activity. Focus assessment on the extent to which students

- make others feel safe and welcome in the activity
- show respect for other players
- act in a co-operative manner to achieve the goal of the activity
- work to include and are accepting of all players of all ability levels
- solve disputes or conflicts in a peaceful manner
- act as group leaders in physical activities (e.g., team captain, demonstrating and coaching specific skills)
- adjust activities to be inclusive of all participants
- allow everyone to have a chance to lead in the activity
- accept the outcome of the activity graciously
- demonstrate respect and co-operation when following the leadership of other students
- show knowledge that there are situations that may cause inappropriate emotional responses such as name-calling, being reprimanded, unsuccessful results (losing the ball, etc.) by
  - describing strategies to control or avoid these situations
  - sharing positive self-talk that they use
  - visualization
  - discussing how they could demonstrate respect and support for others who may have differences in skill level or ability.



## Science

### Curriculum Connections

The science curriculum in grades 4 to 7 provides opportunities to address

- sustainability, including Aboriginal environmental sustainability practices
- sustainability and stewardship as social justice concepts
- scientific thought and the difference between scientific and non-scientific approaches to the study of living creatures
- diverse science role models.

### Diversity and Social Justice Extensions

At the Grade 4 level, as part of a focus on the Aboriginal concept of respect for the environment, invite students to find out more about the extent to which Aboriginal peoples have been represented within British Columbia's resource industries and in what capacities (e.g., in the commercial fisheries of the late 19th and early 20th centuries). Compare the attitudes toward resource extraction in the early 20th century with attitudes today, and consider the extent to which this reflects greater public appreciation of Aboriginal and other rights and greater public participation in government decision-making (e.g., about environmental protection).

Also at the Grade 4 level, when looking at animal and plant habitats and communities, draw connections to the ways in which humans interact in societies to help meet their needs.

At the Grade 5 level, in discussing technologies that affect daily life, use the opportunity to have students consider how introduction of new technologies (e.g., labour-saving devices for the home) might have affected traditional expectations with respect to the differing roles of men and women. Extend the discussion to focus on how technology can increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

At the Grade 6 level, in dealing with the adaptation of organisms to their environments, have students consider to what extent the ability of humans to alter their environment makes things different for them, and to what extent this imposes special responsibility on humans. What responsibility do people have to consider animals and the environment in their actions?

At the Grade 7 level, as part of discussions of environmental interdependence and sustainability, explore the social justice implications of failure to respect or protect the environment (e.g., Who benefits when an industry is allowed to extract resources? ...to pollute? Who pays the price? Are there alternatives? What would be the economic and social impacts of not allowing resource use to take place? How can unfairness in connection with such situations be avoided or addressed?)

*Students do not live in isolation from the world, and teachers play an important role in providing appropriate context to enhance students' understanding of the world in which they live.*



# Social Studies

## Curriculum Connections

Specific social studies curriculum connections related to diversity and social justice include the following.

Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strategies for addressing problems</li> <li>• alternative perspectives on issues</li> <li>• diversity of traditional Aboriginal cultures in BC and Canada</li> <li>• positive and negative effects of interaction between European and Aboriginal cultures</li> <li>• bartering and monetary systems of exchange</li> <li>• relationship between people and the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan of action to address a selected problem or issue</li> <li>• experiences of immigrants in Canada</li> <li>• contributions of significant individuals to the development of Canada's identity</li> <li>• importance of sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan of action to address a selected problem or issue</li> <li>• Canadian identity and how individuals experience cultural influences</li> <li>• Canada's justice system</li> <li>• equality and fairness in the Charter</li> <li>• individual and collective rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• role of Canada in the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defending a position on an issue</li> <li>• social roles in ancient cultures</li> <li>• rules, laws, and government in ancient civilizations</li> <li>• how laws and government in ancient civilizations contributed to Canadian political and legal systems</li> </ul>

Additional opportunities for addressing diversity and social justice arise in relation to

- various cases and examples of human rights in Canada and globally (e.g., Aboriginal land claims, same-sex marriage and adoption, women's suffrage, the internment of Japanese-Canadians during WWII, the Holocaust, various incidences of genocide)
- nature and extent of pluralism and equity in various ancient cultures (e.g., Roman acceptance of homosexuality and bisexuality; Celtic property rights for women and provisions for the elderly and the disabled; Parthian pluralism in relation to culture, religion, and language)
- diversity in key figures studied (e.g., Hatshepsut, Hypatia, Plato, Sappho, Socrates, Wu Zetian).

## Sample Lesson Plan

### *Social Justice in Canada* *Grade 6*

Begin with a class brainstorm, asking students what it means to them to be Canadian. Use guiding questions to help them describe characteristics of Canadian culture and identity (e.g., education, health care, official bilingualism, religions, military, special interest groups, service organizations, sports and recreation activities, stamps and currency, multiculturalism and the “cultural mosaic”). Discuss how characteristics of Canadian culture are affected by influences such as the media and immigration.

Next, conduct a class brainstorm around the term “social justice.” Ask students what this means to them. Introduce and discuss how concepts such as the following relate to social justice:

- equality and fairness (e.g., based on ethnicity, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomics, mental and physical ability)
- acceptance, respect, and inclusion
- conflict and peace
- the environment and the economy.

Create a class web of these terms. Discuss: What characteristics of Canadian society support social justice? Which do not, or could be improved?

Have students work in groups to prepare and present a slide show of images and text with examples of social justice and/or social injustice in Canada.



## Using Existing Curriculum-Based Materials

The following units from the Classroom Assessment Model for the Social Studies K to 7 IRP (2006) can be used to address diversity and social justice topics:

- Grade 5, Canadian Heroes (p. 185)—Use this unit to focus on contributions of significant individuals to the development of Canada’s identity as “a just society.”
- Grade 6, The Horn of Africa (p. 190)—Use the unit to help students understand that human needs and human rights are universal, and to develop empathy for those whose needs or rights are not being met.
- Grade 6 Canadian Identity (p. 194)—Focus on aspects of Canadian identity related to diversity and social justice (e.g., the *Charter*, the many and varied interpretations of “Canadian identity,” the ways in which Canada’s treatment of minority groups has evolved and continues to evolve).

