

MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER

A collaborative project of Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Educational Equity and the East Metro Integration District

"The Problem Solver"
Nzila Fetis h from Congo



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Social Justice Education

In December we had a wonderful panel presentation on *Developing a Social Justice Curriculum*. One of the panelists shared that she felt that Multicultural Education (MCE) was a dead end, meaning that it was not an end in itself, but that it either pushes one to seek justice or it merely articulates the status quo and reduces the struggles and successes of historically marginalized groups to being commentary. Social Justice Education (SJE) can fit neatly into MCE, and does in Banks' *Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform* (<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/curriculum/steps.html>). With so many interpretations of MCE out there, it's meaning has become a catch all or viewed as a way of addressing the increasing "diversity" of their school. It seems that everyone wants to be seen as having a multicultural education focus. Sometimes that well-intentioned focus can be tokenizing and counter-productive. The term Social Justice Education, however, leaves no confusion about what its focus is.

What does it mean to teach for social justice? It means recognizing oppression in its multiple forms, and then taking action in the classroom to interrupt the cycles of oppression. Social justice education is both a process and a goal. This means that the way social justice education happens is as important as the outcome it achieves. When teachers teach for social justice they are working to end the cycle of oppression. It is about empowering students, giving them a voice, and preparing them to become full participants in a democratic society by helping them to recognize bias, see multiple perspectives on an issue, and to speak up when they recognize injustice.

Social Justice education is not a political ideology, but often is viewed as such. Teachers often feel they are taking a risk by having such a focus in their classroom because the topics and conversations are "controversial". Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Education should be about teaching students to look for multiple perspectives in order to best make their own decisions about what actions to take. If this is your educational goal, consider joining us for the first meeting of the Social Justice Educators Network. Information about this event is on the next page.

Learn More About Social Justice Education Online...

<http://www.sojust.net> Collection of documents useful in teaching the history of social movements brought to you by edchange.org.
<http://www.rethinkingschools.org> Publishes Rethinking Schools, quarterly publication with a focus on Social Justice Education. Many of the articles are available on-line, but consider supporting them by purchasing a subscription.
<http://www.radicalmath.org/> Organization supporting SJE in math education. Lots of good lesson plans.
<http://www.tolerance.org/> Education arm of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Many good online lessons, grants, and articles. They also offer free video kits related to SJE topics.

Visit our website for additional links related to Social Justice Education.

MRC Steering Committee

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LaVonne Francis, SSD 006
Kathy Griebel, EMID
Mary Kozmik, ISD 625
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The staff at the MRC have helped me to see that I plan more thoughtful and engaging lessons and dialogues with my students. I enjoy being the learner alongside my students, and they are often the teacher.

I feel good knowing that I have a resource from which I can both educate myself continually about making my classroom a more comfortable place to feel included.

It has provided an awareness to those who are unfamiliar with other cultures by experiencing something new (windows) and reflecting on his/her own culture (mirrors). It has also helped students of these cultures understand a bit more about who they are and where they came from.

I have loved checking out the objects! It has been wonderful to have real objects to share with them to illustrate various cultures. The professional development resources (books from the MRC) have helped our school study group add strategies for working with urban learners.

Exciting Events Coming Up @ the MRC

Social Justice Educators Network ...Calling educators interested in sharing ideas and resources and supporting each other in teaching within a social justice framework. Join us for the first meeting of the Social Justice Educators Network on Tuesday, January 29th from 4-5:30 pm at the MRC. This is not a workshop, but a group forming in response to a recognized need. The group will evolve according to the interests and needs of its members. Snacks and good conversation will be the order of the day. Contact Jenny Eisele at Jennifer.eisele@spps.org to RSVP or for additional information.

Back by popular demand...MRC Movie Nights. Each month during the 2007-2008 school year, the MRC will host a *free* community film screening. Students, staff, and community members are welcome to join us. Films have been selected to compliment monthly staff development offerings. Discussions will follow the films. Lemonade, snacks, and clock hours will be available. See below for a listing of featured films and dates. Check our website for complete descriptions of the films. While registration for the Movie Nights is not necessary, an RSVP would be appreciated. All films are from 4 pm to 6 pm at the MRC.

What's Race Got To Do With It?, Tuesday, 1/22/08

N-Word, Wednesday, 2/27/08

Favela Rising, Tuesday, 3/18/08

Long Way From Home, Wednesday, 4/30/08

Transit Cafe, Tuesday, 5/20/08

The MRC offers monthly, evening staff development workshops focusing on a variety of issues. These classes are *free* to staff in Saint Paul Public Schools and other EMID-member districts. A light supper and clock hours will be available to participants. To register for these workshops, complete a registration form (available on our website) and mail or fax to the MRC by the Friday before the workshop. Suburban staff may register online at <http://mrc.spps.org> and SPPS staff through <http://pdexpress.spps.org>. Workshops will be held at the MRC from 4:30-7 pm.

A listing of workshops remaining for 2008 are below.

White Privilege, Wednesday, 1/16/08

Teaching African American Students, Tuesday, 2/19/08

Music and Social Justice, Wednesday, 3/12/08

Women and Hmong Culture, Tuesday, 4/22/08

Understanding Islam, Wednesday, 5/14/08

From the Interdistrict Partnership Coach:

The SPPS Interdistrict Classroom Partnership Office facilitates classroom partnerships and collaborations with nine suburban districts that surround Saint Paul. The Interdistrict Partnerships are a voluntary cooperation of SPPS teachers (K-12 classrooms) and administrators for the purpose of fostering understanding, cultural awareness and respect through enriching academic classroom/student exchanges. Please feel free to email or contact my office for further information on these opportunities. Principals, consider inviting me to a staff meeting to present these wonderful opportunities to your staff.

You can reach me (Steve Severance) at Stephen.severance@spps.org or 651-487-7363 or Linda Lamprecht at 651-487-7365 or Linda.lamprecht@spps.org.

Check It Out...Resources on Social Justice Education Available at the MRC

Creating Balance in an Unjust World : Conference on Math Education and Social Justice.

These DVD's contain two panel discussions, Keynote Address from Bob Moses, founder of the Algebra Project, and handouts and Powerpoint presentations from various conference workshops. Conference sessions examined the connections between math education and social justice, and explored questions crucial to math education, including: how has math literacy been a gatekeeper to educational and personal success.

Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice By The Numbers, by Eric Gutstein and Bob Peterson. In this unique collection, more than 30 articles show how to weave social justice issues throughout mathematics curriculum, as well as how to integrate mathematics into other curricular areas. The MRC has a number of other Rethinking Schools resources in its collection.

Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference, A Sourcebook for Middle and Upper School Teachers by Stephanie Kempf. Explanations of global hunger are usually too simple and often wrong. The manual is based on the belief that children can be helped to understand the real causes of hunger and learn to change them. Each lesson leads the student through exercises that teach such things as the pain of hunger, the importance of food, the inequity of its distribution, the curious lack of relationship between hunger and population density, and the links between poverty, hunger, joblessness, and homelessness in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Open Minds to Equality—A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity by Nancy Schneidewind and Ellen Davidson. An educator's sourcebook of activities to help students understand and change inequalities based on race, gender, class, age, language, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability, and religion. The activities also promote respect for diversity and interpersonal equality among students, fostering a classroom that is participatory, cooperative, and democratic.

Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Social Justice, vols. 1 and 2 by Rethinking Schools. Packed with compelling articles about teaching, as well as curriculum ideas, lesson plans, and resources, all grounded in the realities of the classroom. It is an invaluable tool for educators striving to promote social justice and high-quality student learning.

Readings for Diversity and Social Justice by Adams, et al. Covers six thematic issues: racism, sexism, Anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism. The reader contains a mix of short personal and theoretical essays as well as entries designed to challenge students to take action to end oppressive behavior and to affirm diversity and racial justice. Each thematic section is broken down into three divisions: Contexts; Personal Voices; and Next Steps and Action. The selections include over 90 essays from some of the foremost names in the field. Companion reader, ***Teaching For Social Justice***, also in the MRC collection.

Social Studies for Social Justice by Rahima Wade. This book goes beyond theory and idealism to fully explore the value and impact of implementing social action and social justice activities in the elementary school classroom. Informed by the experiences of more than forty teachers across the country, this thoughtful resource provides examples of how teachers across the country use the social studies curriculum to teach about and for social justice and the challenges they face. This book also offers classroom activities and "Reflection Exercises" and "Teaching Ideas" to provide teachers with practical applications for the topics discussed; and includes a list of children's literature books, curriculum materials, and websites.

Class Actions: Teaching for Social Justice in Elementary and Middle School by Jobeth Allen. This volume provides vivid pictures of classrooms whose teachers have made education for social justice central to their curriculum. While the goal may be idealistic, these class actions are profoundly practical.

Freire for the Classroom by Ira Shor. An anthology of essays by teachers using Paulo Freire's methods in their classrooms. The articles show the creative enthusiasm many teachers gain from Freire's ideas, as well as the critical literacy and political awareness students gain through this approach. The book offers critical theory side by side with actual reports of teaching practice, so that philosophy is brought down to earth in terms familiar to practicing teachers.

Browse our on-line catalog to discover more great resources for your classroom!
<http://mrc.spps.org/Catalog.html>

Multicultural Resource Center

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Saint Paul
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



About the Multicultural Resource Center...

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally. Multicultural education acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice. ~Paul Gorski (<http://www.edchange.org>)

The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) facilitates access, for teachers, to the necessary tools to infuse learning experiences with Multicultural Education. The MRC is part library, part museum, mostly a place where educators can come to build their capacity in working with diverse students and find resources to support this new capacity.

The goal of the MRC is to promote the creation of equitable learning environments infused with multiple, authentic viewpoints that confront the norming of whiteness. Through curricular support, lending out materials to support such an environment, and providing modeling through class visits and staff development opportunities, social change will occur. Please explore our website to gain a better understanding of the MRC's various roles.

Browsing Hours...Stop On By!

While the MRC is available for class visits and meetings during the day, we have set aside the specific times below for patron browsing and check-out. It is best to call before you come to ensure that someone will be available to assist you.

Mondays and Thursdays, 1 pm-4 pm

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2 pm-6 pm

Other times, by appointment.

Check out our website for policies and procedures for reserving the MRC.

Other Opportunities...

Did you know that the East Metro Integration District (EMID) has a new series of staff development offerings? Interested staff may register for year-long SEED courses and individual Lecture and Learning series. Register online at http://www.emid6067.net/pro_dev.html or contact Stacie Stanley at 651.379.2707. Registration and substitute costs are covered through EMID collaborative funding.

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