In-service: Addressing Social Justice for Young Adults in the School Library

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LIS 60630: Reference Sources and Services for Youth

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Rationale

Social justice can be a divisive or unifying phrase, and the facets of its work can be ignored, feared, or embraced. Many libraries, including school libraries, are positioned on the positive side of this work, yet there is still a need for more education and training, more support, and more transparency. As Taylor, Jaeger, and Gorham (2016) state, "library literature contains many discussions of human rights and social justice issues as very small-scale activities – such as a particular service, program, outreach effort, or issue – but these are rarely labeled as human rights and social justice activities, and discussions of large-scale human rights and social justice activities are very limited" (p. 6). The goal of this in-service is to help prepare school librarians to address social justice in their schools; it should also increase middle and high school librarians' agency to discuss these issues with students and tie any smaller work into the larger frameworks of curriculum, research, professional development, and society as a whole.

The in-service is intentionally designed to cover a broad range of concerns around social justice for the diverse populations that school libraries serve. In the YALSA post "Libraries and Social Justice," Wetta (2016) states,

> 2016 has been a year that has brought many important conversations about social justice to the forefront: Black Lives Matter, immigration, gender equality, the rights of indigenous people, poverty and economic inequality, LGBTQ rights. Libraries across the United States have responded to these conversations in various ways, and within our profession, valid questions have been raised about the role of libraries in social discourse.

While it is important to break down these concerns into smaller sections and attend in-services, read articles, and participate in other professional development activities to address each in more depth, this in-service should provide the context for how these areas fit together in our field.

Social justice is being discussed in other arenas as well and there are many particularly helpful resources from the field of psychology. In one article, Motulsky, Gere, Saleem, and Trantham (2014) share that "awareness, knowledge, and skills have been posited as the three essential components for service delivery models that provide culturally competent counseling (Sue, 2006)" (p. 1061). They go on to highlight,

> Sensitivity to injustice is only the beginning; the social justice work of counselors and psychologists involves being change agents, which is defined as 'professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to tools of self-determination' (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 795). (p. 1059).

Like others across many fields, school librarians can be change agents if we address social justice in our work. Doing so fits with current tenets of the profession such as advocating for students and developing their skills in critical thinking and empathy; it also complements our current structure, as the school library itself is already and can continue to grow to be a safe space for students dealing with concerns of social injustice.

Another goal of the in-service is to build a sense of community and a network of allies. Beyond background knowledge and reinforcement of key ideals, participants will be encouraged to implement and share work with each other, online, and opportunities like Roald Dahl's Miss Honey Social Justice Award (American Association of School Librarians).

Ohio Educational Library Media Association (OELMA) Conference Proposal

☑ Primary Speaker Information

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Related Strands and Guidelines

☑ Strands: Informational Resources, Reading Resources, Instructional & Management

Information about School Library Media programs, Formational Information, Reading

Encouragement, Transformational Knowledge Creation, Use, Production, Dissemination &

Values

☑ Guideline 1: Library Management Strategic Planning, Library Management, Library

Policies, Statistics & Data, Communication & Public Relations, Staff Roles, Program

Evaluation

☑ Guideline 2: Collection Development & Curriculum Academic Content Standards,

Collaboration, Collection Development

☑ Guideline 3: Literacy & Reading Support Authors, Best Books, Reading Initiatives,

Storytelling, Readers Advisory

☑Guideline 5: Information Literacy Library Usage, Copyright/Responsible Use, Intellectual

Freedom, Research Process, Life-Long Learning

☑Guideline 7: Media Literacy Communication Competencies & Critical Thinking Skills to

Access, Evaluate, Communicate Information through Media

☑Ohio Research Study Strands

      Resources

      Information Literacy

      Knowledge Values

Intended Audience: Librarians serving students in school library media centers, educators who

collaborate with school librarians, and/or other invested community members and library

volunteers.

Audio Visual/ Room Setup: This in-service includes a PowerPoint presentation, so a laptop or

desktop computer connected to a Smart Board or overhead projector and screen will be

needed. If possible, the room set up should be conducive to movement and conversation as

well, either with small group tables or informally spaced chairs.

Program Information

      Program Title (less than 10 words): Social Justice for Young Adults in the School

      Library

Program Description (50-75 words): Young adults are increasingly affected by and aware of

social justice and many issues surrounding equity, empathy, and education. Therefore, it is

critical for school libraries to advocate for student empowerment and wellbeing by addressing

social justice. This in-service will provide background knowledge, synthesize research and

considerations, and provide resources and ideas for practice.

Outline

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

    A. Background

        1. Share personal connection to topic and development story (HS club, college experiences, diversity/multiculturalism in Education courses at UIUC and LIS courses at Kent, significant other's dissertation and workshops in Psychology), explaining that it is a lifelong process and that self-reflection is major part of productivity.

        2. Discuss definitions of vocabulary:

            Social justice librarian: a "librarian [who] has made a significant effort to teach the concept of social justice in creative, inspiring ways. This might include, but not be limited to, teaching about civil liberties, human rights, international justice, genocide studies, and local issues of justice...[Those who] follow the 'spirit' of social justice in their classroom; namely, those who possess the ability to expose injustice while at the same time inspiring their students to repair the world through justice, service, or advocacy" (AASL & ALA, 2017).

            Tolerance: "respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). Verbally explain this resource, click on link to page and explore, or pass out Teaching Tolerance brochure

(http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20brochure%202012.pdf).

II. Research and Considerations (15 minutes)

    A. Research

        1. Share overview of statistics and research into social justice in society and in

        the library. Discuss scarcity and highlight action research opportunities.

        Robins (2015) states, "The third lineage, political action research, is intended

        to produce social progress. Historically, this is where action research has its

        roots. Because education is inherently a political sphere, AR in education seeks

        'to create social change toward greater social justice through the use of

        research' (Noffke 1997, 305)" (p. 3). Highlight Harper and Deskins' (2015)

        use of action research in the LIS field and bring up other ways we can

        contribute, such as journals, blog posts, listservs, and social media.

    B. Considerations

        1. Recognize emotional impact to professionals, students, and community

           members.

        2. Complete a quick reflective exercise to assess personal feelings or concerns.

        3. Highlight sources for support when these considerations impact practice.

III. Resources and Practice (20 minutes)

    A. Resources

        1. Look for local events and groups related to social justice. Find key people in

        your school, district, and community with whom you can network and

        collaborate.

        2. Explain bibliography. Pass out copies and/or pass around one copy of the

        article "Check It Out" by Joe Hansen (2014), highlighting the quote, "Seeking

out and promoting materials that represent diverse identities and experiences is just one way librarians can foster more inclusive school environments. Some librarians also take on instructional roles, working closely with teachers to incorporate culturally responsive materials into the curriculum. Others create library-based programming designed to engage students, enhance their research skills and promote intellectual curiosity" (pp. 21-22).

B. Practice

    1. Go over ideas for internal practice, including the following strategies:

        a. Assess the library collection for bias in the following areas, adapted from a list in Wetta's (2016) post: race (Black Lives Matter), immigration, gender equality, the rights of indigenous people, poverty and economic inequality, and LGBTQ rights.

        b. Assess collection displays and passive programming and identify opportunities for change.

    2. Go over ideas for interactive practice, including the following strategies:

        a. Discuss getting students involved! Use the library space to host groups such as Students for a Better World or Social Activism Club. Explore Teaching for Change's (2016) articles about how students can help assess collections, among other suggestions.

        b. Discuss getting the school involved (see We Need Diverse Books, 2017, Teaching Tolerance, 2017, and Harmon, 2015). This includes collaborating with teachers. Collaboration with English or Writing

teachers can be done with We Need Diverse Books but there are

various other connections that can be made in any content area.

c. Discuss getting the community involved (see Harmon, 2015). Use the

library space for parent education meetings and community

volunteering events, forums, or vigils.

3. Discuss that all of these practices do not need to be done. Suggest adding a

few to the calendar right away and keeping track of ideas to review for future

implementation.

IV. Conclusion (15 minutes)

A. Takeaways

1. Look at the big picture by reviewing all concepts covered. Share personal

takeaway and/or favorite resource and ask for others'.

B. Questions, Discussion, and Evaluation

1. Explain and pass out question form for written questions that can be

submitted and address anonymously or that can have contact information

written on them for individual responses. Provide 3 minutes for reflection and

response writing.

2. Ask for questions from audience for group discussion, collaboration, or

 presenter response. Collect written question form from everyone and look

through forms to cover any questions submitted this way.

3. Pass out evaluation form and provide 5 minutes for response. Put up thank

you and contact information slide and tell participants they are welcome to

contact you and promote contact sharing among participants as well.

Program Details

This one-hour in-service would be presented at the 2017 OELMA Conference on October 18-

20 in Columbus, Ohio. More information about the conference and the scope of the

organization can be explored at the following link: http://www.oelma.org/looking-ahead-to-

the-2017-oelma-conference/. The program would be included in digital and print conference

materials and shared on OELMA, Kent State, and other organizations' listservs and/or

websites. School librarians and other stakeholders will also be personally invited, and email

communication and marketing will highlight that teachers, volunteers, and community

members invested in school libraries can attend. A digital version of the in-service, such as a

video, may be created and shared online, and the handouts and other presentation materials

may be made available online as well.

Supplemental Materials

The in-service includes many supplemental materials:

1. Copy of bibliography, Hansen (2014) article and Teaching Tolerance brochure, if

possible

2. Access to Prezi presentation here

3. Access to Bibliography here

4. Print question form

5. Print evaluation form

6. Links to articles, videos, and other resources as they are included in the presentation

Question Form

Please write down any questions you have if you wish to share anonymously, or write your

name and contact information if you wish to be contacted at a later date to talk together.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name (optional): _____ Email (optional): _____

Evaluation

Please select your current position(s).

☐ K-12 school media specialist

☐ Teacher

☐ Administrator

☐ Library and/or school volunteer

☐ Librarian or teacher educator

☐ Community member

☐ Children's or young adult public librarian

☐ Other (please specify): _____

What was the most helpful aspect of this in-service (a particular quote, concept, handout,

connection, etc.)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you plan to use these ideas and this material in your work? If so, please explain how. If

not, please explain why not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please use this space for any further comments or feedback.

_____

_____

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_____

 Your participation is very appreciated. Thank you!

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Presentation

The presentation can be viewed online at the following link:

http://prezi.com/qplxwqml1-n_/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

Conclusion: Review of Content, Choice of Topic, and Resource

Social justice is a relevant topic and I believe it was a good choice for my in-service

development. While working on the project, I received an email from the PUBYAC listserv

titled "Chapters Sought for Anthology" for the book *Tolerance: Social Justice and Activism in*

Libraries, Moving Beyond Diversity to Action (McFarland). I am also attending the 33rd

Annual Virginia Hamilton Conference on Multicultural Literature for Children in April of

2017, and the conference theme and title is *Social Justice: The Struggle Continues*. This

spring, I also participated in School Library Journal's blog Teen Librarian Toolbox, which is

hosting a project called Social Justice in Young Adult Literature or #SJYALit. Last year, I

created a sample funding proposal for public libraries to increase their LGBT material in the

collection, which is included in the bibliography and which could be used a template or

resource for others' when working for social justice in a variety of ways, not just for LGBT

students. The content of the in-service should show thorough research and understanding of the topic and illustrate that I am a knowledgeable and passionate advocate. The one resource that I used to develop the in-service that would be particularly helpful to other librarians is the Southern Poverty Law Center's project Teaching Tolerance, as it provides further professional development, classroom resources, film kits, and webinars; it would be an especially powerful tool for curriculum collaboration with teachers, library programming with young adults, and advocacy with administrators and other library stakeholders.