

NURFC Educator Materials

Our Mission

The mission of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (NURFC) is:

To pursue inclusive freedom by promoting social justice for all, building on the principles of the Underground Railroad.

Education is at the core of this mission. Therefore, we provide educator resources designed to support teachers who want to teach for social justice. Social justice is not a singular topic to be “covered.” We encourage educators to utilize social justice as a lens through which they and their students evaluate the past and present all year long. To support this method of teaching, NURFC educator materials expand beyond the historical events of the Underground Railroad to include a range of topics from various periods in history across the four core disciplines of social studies (civics, economics, geography, and history). In addition, these educator materials expand beyond social studies and provide opportunities for cross-content collaboration.

Teaching for Social Justice

We believe that through the deliberate practice of teaching for social justice, teachers and students can engage in civic discourse in preparation for future democratic decision-making. Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, and Henning (2016) describe teaching for social justice as follows:

Social justice-oriented social studies teachers work intentionally to challenge normative thought by integrating multiple perspectives into the curriculum, especially the voices of those dominated, marginalized, or traditionally excluded in texts. They connect the stories of struggle and resistance to contemporary social justice issues and make connections between historical events and present-day circumstances. In addition, teachers and students work collaboratively to make change in their school community. (p. 7)

Throughout our educator resources, teaching for social justice is reflected in the following ways:

- Sources that reflect multiple perspectives, with emphasis on the voices of those traditionally overlooked or purposefully disregarded,
- Development of critical literacy skills,
- Connections between past and current events, and
- Student empowerment to generate change outside of the classroom.

Our educator resources challenge normative thought, utilize multiple perspectives, and promote critical literacy with the intent of engaging students in social justice practices. We believe teaching for social justice can empower teachers and students to participate in the civic engagement needed to reshape our institutions and communities for the better.

Critical Literacy

In adherence to teaching for social justice, our educator resources encourage students to be critical consumers of information. Thus, we endorse the practice of critical literacy in classrooms. As stated by Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, and Henning (2016), “When a teacher works to develop critical literacy in her

students ... she is equipping her students with the skills they need to critically question the world.” Critical literacy requires students to examine texts by questioning its intent, bias, accuracy, and use of language. Instead of passively accepting all texts as absolute fact, students learn to accept, reject, or reconstruct ideologies presented in texts to accurately discern facts from opinions and to reflect multiple perspectives. We believe students who learn these skills are better prepared to pursue inclusive freedom in the world.

Educator Resources

There are several types of materials included in our collection of educator resources. Informational texts, activity packets, and professional development materials are labeled “resources.” “Lesson plans” are materials designed to engage students for one or two class sessions. “Inquiries” are materials created using the C3 Framework and Inquiry Design Model.

Teachers are encouraged to modify all educator materials to best fit the needs of their classrooms and students. Texts can be utilized as teacher resources or for student use. Importantly, our inquiries are not designed to address one supporting question per day. Depending upon your students and needs, you may dedicate more than or less than a single class meeting to engage with a supporting question.

C3 Framework and the Inquiry Design Model (IDM)

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) is an approach to creating curriculum and instructional materials that, “honors teachers’ knowledge and expertise, avoids over prescription, and focuses on the main elements of the instructional design process as envisioned in the Inquiry Arc of the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (2013)*” (C3 Teachers). Instead of traditional lesson plans or units, the IDM focuses on an *inquiry*, a series of supporting questions and text analysis designed to examine a compelling question. Additionally, each inquiry is designed to prepare students to construct and support an argument and take informed action related to the topic addressed. The IDM presents each inquiry as a blueprint, a one-page representation of the questions, tasks, and sources that define a curricular inquiry (C3 Teachers).

Our curriculum reflects the IDM inquiry blueprint model. Each inquiry includes a blueprint and a more detailed description of how the inquiry is intended to promote teaching for social justice. Our goal is not

to provide prescribed minute-to-minute lesson plans, but to provide teachers with the core inquiry design and materials needed for high quality instruction.

In addition to Ohio and Kentucky state social studies standards, our inquiries align with the National Council for the Social Studies' C3 Framework (2013). With a focus on inquiry, the C3 Framework includes four dimensions: 1. Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries, 2. Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools, 3. Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence, 4. Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. We believe these dimensions reflect teaching for social justice in that students are encouraged to question, critically evaluate, and take action.

Moving Forward Together

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center acknowledges that teaching for social justice requires a network of educators who adhere to our principles of *courage*, *cooperation*, and *perseverance*. In this spirit, we present our collection of educator materials as a living document. Our intent is to continue to create new resources and to grow our collection over time. We hope that educators who utilize our resources provide us with feedback. We also hope to collaborate with educators who wish to contribute to our growing collection. We can be reached by email at abottomley@nurfc.org. Contact us with your question, concerns, suggestions, and ideas. Finally, educators engaging in teaching for social justice need support. Indeed, it requires *courage*, *cooperation*, and *perseverance* to embark in social change, and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is here for all who venture on this journey. Check out our website, www.freedomcenter.org, for support materials and virtual and in-person training and learning opportunities.

Thank you for your commitment.

Dr. Amy Bottomley, Ed.D.

Director of Educational Initiatives

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Compelling Question			
State Standard(s)			
C3 Framework Indicator(s)			
Learning Goals	Students will understand		
	Students will be able to		
Supporting Question	Supporting Question	Supporting Question	Supporting Question
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT		
	EXTENSION		
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND		
	ASSESS		
	ACT		

References

Agarwal-Rangnath, R., Dover, A. G., & Henning, N. (2016). Preparing to teach social studies for social justice: Becoming a renegade. Teachers College Press.

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