Module 1: Defining Environmental Justice

Basic Information

Overview

The purpose of this module is to introduce learners to the concept of environmental justice as social justice. Learners will begin with a virtual "gallery walk" looking at images from different environments and reflecting on similarities and differences, framed through a lens of fairness. Learners will then identify words and concepts related to environmental justice in the context of stories about these issues.   Learners will then represent their understanding of EJ in a creative work.

Essential Question:

- What is environmental justice?
- What does it mean for something to be fair or just?
- How did things come to be unfair/unjust?
- What perpetuates environmental injustice?
- What can we do to restore fairness/justice?

Learning Targets

1. Create a personal definition of environmental justice
2. Understand basic ideas related Environmental Justice
3. Build background knowledge through storytelling and discussion
4. Understand concept of benefits and burdens
5. Understand community member perspectives
6. Evaluate rights of people, and earth

Grade Level	Teaching Format	Lesson Duration
6-8 th grade	Asynchronous or Synchronous	90
Keywords		**Real world location**
environmental justice fair just		Rochester, NY

Standards

1. NGSS Cross Cutting Concept: Influence of Engineering Technology and Science on Society and The Natural World
2. NGSS Practice: Obtaining Evaluating and Communicating Information
3. ELA Common Core: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1
4. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Key Tasks / Protocols

- Side by side gallery walk
- Analysis of stories
- Synthesizing discussion
- Creative final product

Guiding Documents

1. Principles of Environmental Justice - https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html
2. Environmental Justice: New York State Department of Conservation - https://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html

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Introduction

The underlying ingredients for physical wellbeing (clean air and water, healthy food, sanitation/waste management, and protection from climate extremes by shelter, clothing and heating/cooling) and mental health (nature, social communities, beauty) are not equally distributed. Understanding the roots of environmental injustice requires learners to grapple with both the biological/ecological as well as historical/political roots that have yielded our current lived environments. This introductory model is designed to invite learners to reflect on observable differences in living environments in different communities. The module starts with a gallery walk of side-by-side images of an element of the environment from two different communities. After making connections to feelings, thoughts, and firsthand experiences of fairness and unfairness in the environment, learners then read sample stories of various aspects of environmental injustice, both historical and contemporary. A group label protocol aids students in mapping particular words and phrases central to the concept of environmental justice. This structure allows students to think critically about how ideas fit together and synthesize an understanding of themes. Learners then use creativity to integrate their understanding of environmental justice through producing artwork that reflects what they have internalized from the module.

Background Information

Environmental Justice

Defining text: *Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.*

Photos:
Videos:

Instructions

Exploratory Activity (10 minutes)

A. Introducing the guiding questions with a side by side gallery walk
  1. Share the side by side gallery walk documents with students
      a. At the end of this document

  2. Ask students to reflect on the following questions:

a. What does it mean for something to be "fair" or "just"?
b. How do these images make you feel?
c. What are your thoughts about these images?
d. Can you connect with these images?
e. What examples of differences in living environment have you noticed or experienced?

Building Background (40 minutes)

Examine stories for patterns using a list group label protocol

This can be done individually or in groups.
1. Have students read one or more of the stories about environmental justice.
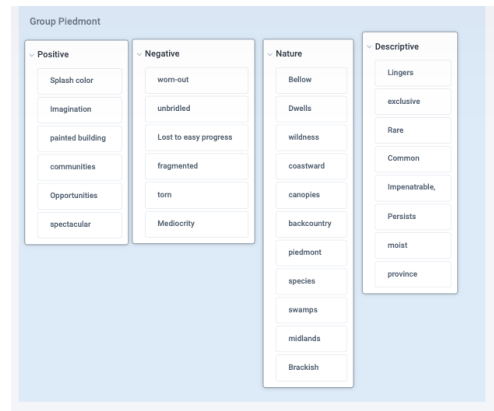   a. COVID-19
      i. Title: COVID-19 Disparities In Rochester, NY: The Legacy Of Redlining In The City Of Frederick Douglass And Susan B. Anthony Link: https://empirejustice.org/news/covid-19-disparities-rochester-ny-legacy-redlining-city-frederick-douglass-susan-b-anthony/
      ii. Early pandemic statistics: https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/04/09/coronavirus-data-shows-rochester-black-latino-residents-hit-hard-covid-19/2970512001/

HOSPITALIZED, NON-ICU	% OF TOTAL HOSPITALIZED, NON-ICU	REFERENCE MONROE COUNTY
ASIAN	2.3%	3.7%
BLACK	27.9%	16.2%
HISPANIC	18.6%	9.0%
WHITE	51.2%	70.3%
OTHER	0.0%	0.8%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%

HOSPITALIZED, ICU	% OF TOTAL HOSPITALIZED, ICU	REFERENCE MONROE COUNTY
ASIAN	2.6%	3.7%
BLACK	53.8%	16.2%
HISPANIC	5.1%	9.0%
WHITE	38.5%	70.3%
OTHER	0.0%	0.8%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%

   b. Food equity
      i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2021/02/09/no-hot-lunch-rcsd-students/4455251001/
   c. Redlining

i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/in-depth/news/2020/02/05/rochester-ny-kept-black-residents-out-suburbs-decades/2750049001/

    d. Structural racism
        i. Racism as a Public Health Crisis: https://thechildrensagenda.org/2020/06/30/racism-as-a-public-health-crisis/
    e. Air quality
        i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2017/12/05/rochester-prep-st-paul-rcsd-brownfield-tce/922745001/

2. As they read, ask them to select words or phrases in each article that they feel relate to the idea of "environmental justice".

3. Ask student to list words they found on post it notes / index cards or with a technology tool like plectica(https://www.plectica.com/) . They can work in a group to do this.

4. Once they have listed the words ask students to put them in groups. They are free to make whatever groups they like from the words.

5. The final step is to have students give the groups a descriptive label.

Diverse Points of View Discussion (20 minutes)

Discussing the Definition of Environmental Justice.
This can be done in small groups or as a class.
Different protocols are available to make this an equitable experience.
1. Discussion protocol 1 - Collaborative Conversation
2. Discussion protocol 2 - Socratic Seminar (https://curriculum.eleducation.org/sites/default/files/curriculumtools_classroomprotocols_053017.pdf)

Discussion Questions:

1. What themes or patterns emerged from the list group label activity?
2. Is it possible to fully define the scope of environmental justice in a couple of sentences?
3. What key ideas need to be included in a definition of environmental justice?
4. What are some things that you notice that are unfair/unjust about the environment today?
5. How did things come to be unfair/unjust?
6. What perpetuates environmental injustice?
7. What can we do to restore fairness/justice?

Synthesize Understanding (20 minutes)

Representing Environmental Justice in words and images

1. Ask students to represent what is meant by environmental justice in a creative way.
2. Possible Activities
    a. Write a poem

        b. Create a collage
        c. Acrostic
        d. 30 word essay
3. Examples of Environmental Justice Art:
        a. https://www.rlmartstudio.com/product/environmental-justice/

Extensions

1. Analyzing Environmental Justice Lesson Plan:
    https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/analyzing-environmental-justice
2.

Connected Current Events

Link to Blog / Current Events Page

Defining Environmental Justice

This lesson is designed to introduce you to the topic of environmental justice by having you consider different examples of environmental justice and injustice. The images and stories in this lesson will help you build your own definition of Environmental Justice. At the end of the lesson you will create something that demonstrates your understanding of environmental justice

Exploratory Activity (10 minutes)

Step 1: Take some time to look at the side by side photos that have been provided.

Step 2: Reflect on these questions after you have looked at the photos.

- What is environmental justice?
- What does it mean for something to be fair or just?
- How did things come to be unfair/unjust?
- What perpetuates environmental injustice?
- What can we do to restore fairness/justice?

Building Background (40 minutes)

Step 3: Read one or more of the stories about environmental justice and environmental injustice.

Step 4: As you read each article select words or phrases that you feel relate to the idea of environmental justice.

Step 5: Write each word or phrase on a post it note or use a tool like Plectica (https://www.plectica.com/) to do it digitally. This can be done in groups.

Step 6: Arrange the words into different groups based on whatever criteria should be used to group them.

Step 7: Give each of your groups a descriptive label.

Links to Articles

    a. COVID-19

   i. Title: COVID-19 Disparities In Rochester, NY: The Legacy Of Redlining In The City Of Frederick Douglass And Susan B. Anthony
Link:
https://empirejustice.org/news/covid-19-disparities-rochester-ny-legacy-redlining-city-frederick-douglass-susan-b-anthony/

   ii. Early pandemic statistics:
https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/04/09/coronavirus-data-shows-rochester-black-latino-residents-hit-hard-covid-19/2970512001/

 b. Food equity
   i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2021/02/09/no-hot-lunch-rcsd-students/4455251001/

 c. Redlining
   i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/in-depth/news/2020/02/05/rochester-ny-kept-black-residents-out-suburbs-decades/2750049001/

 d. Structural racism
   i. Racism as a Public Health Crisis:
https://thechildrensagenda.org/2020/06/30/racism-as-a-public-health-crisis/

 e. Air quality
   i. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2017/12/05/rochester-prep-st-paul-rcsd-brownfield-tce/922745001/

Diverse Points of View Discussion (20 minutes)

Discussing the Definition of Environmental Justice

Step 8: Discuss the questions below with classmates or record your thoughts about each question and share them with others.

1. What themes or patterns emerged from the list group label activity?
2. Is it possible to fully define the scope of environmental justice in a couple of sentences?
3. What key ideas need to be included in a definition of environmental justice?
4. What are some things that you notice that are unfair/unjust about the environment today?
5. How did things come to be unfair/unjust?
6. What perpetuates environmental injustice?
7. What can we do to restore fairness/justice?

Synthesize Understanding (20 minutes)

Representing Environmental Justice in Words and Images

Step 9: Create something that demonstrates your understanding of Environmental Justice

Extensions

Connected Current Events

Link to Blog / Current Events Page

Materials for Side by Side Gallery walk.

Photo 1: The Vaccum Oil plant in the PLEX neighborhood has sat vacant on a brownfield for many years.

Photo 2: The Golisano Institute of Sustainability on the RIT campus is a LEED certified building that includes many features that limit it's environmental impact.

Number Two: Maps. [Higher Definition](#)
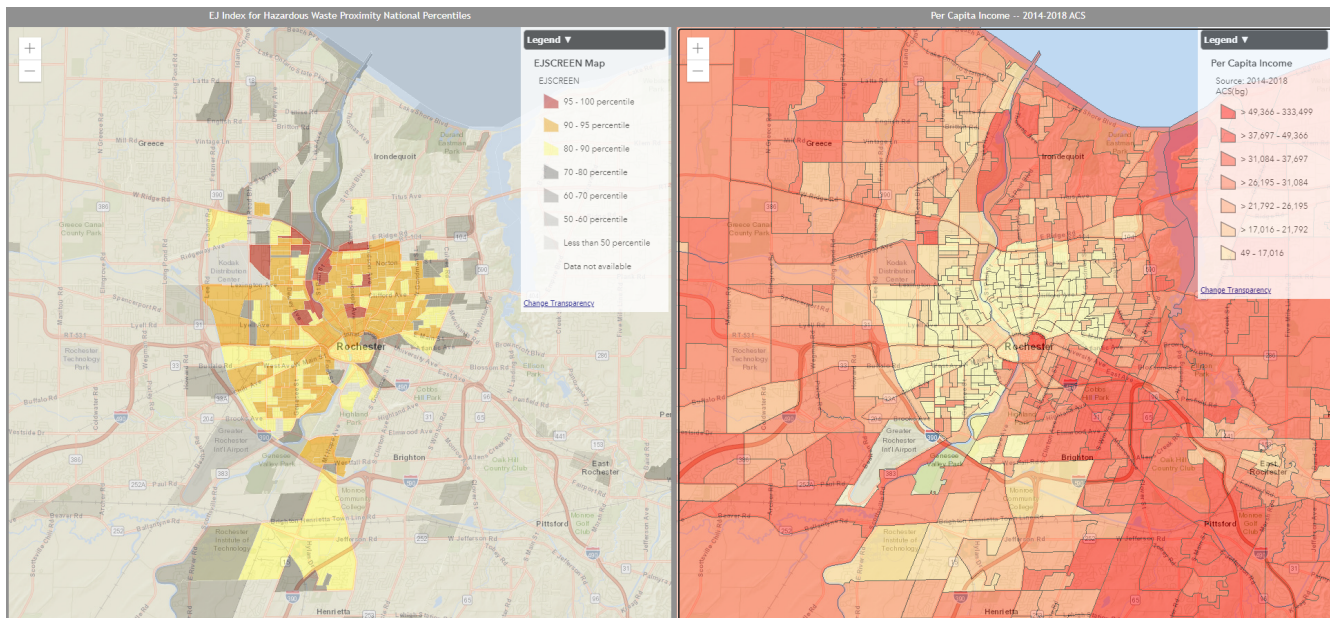
Map 1 shows proximity to hazardous waste site and Map 2 shows per capita income.

Waterfront photos:

Brockport bike trail

Photo 1 shows the canal trail in Brockport
Photo 2 shows the canal trail in the city of Rochester