

Math Lives Here: Helping Social Justice Take Flight

Math Lives Here: Culturally Responsive Practice and Social Justice

>> Okay. Learning walk time!

>> Look at this!

>> We're going bridge hunting, let's go! Right beside your partners!

>> A hunting we will go!

>> What about the lamppost? Okay, so we're going to decide, we're going to use the balloons to measure the height of the bridge and decide if it's taller or shorter than all the things around it. I definitely do approach unit planning now with two things in mind. How can I create cross-curricular links between either math or literacy or both in these units? But also, how can I create an opportunity for my children to affect change? Teachers always need to be prepared to give their students that opportunity to create change and support them in whatever way they see fit. I think that it's important for us as educators to see, to realize that our students are agents of change now, not necessarily when they graduate, post-secondary, or when they get that job. But now in our classes, they can be agents of change. And we have the power to support them in that.

>> Ninety-two people did not know that Metrolinx is going to build a bridge.

>> People will be surprised that there will be something beside their house.

>> A hundred and forty-five wanted to build a tunnel.

>> And do you think that the 145 people who voted for the tunnel were persuaded by your writing and by your little speech?

>> Yes.

>> Last year, what we did was, we looked at carding. So we looked at the statistics for carding in Toronto. As a white woman as well coming in and using this material, I mean, I was very up front when we started, and I said, "You know, I will never be carded." And one of my boys said, "You can't be sure of that." And I said, "No, I can be absolutely sure." I mean, there's so much from the students. I think that's a big part of it, right? I just feel that we're a community together, learning. So I might be facilitating things, but I'm not going to stand up in front of the class and pretend that I'm disseminating knowledge about this.

>> Is there anywhere that they can go to a website, and find out where you build a website to go with it?

>> Yeah, we could do that. And there's also supposed to be, like –

>> I think the biggest thing was actually their feeling and voice. And that what was happening to them matters. What they're feeling is real, and that there is an injustice happening. And they have the power to change that.

>> I really figured out more about the community through the students. That's how the project started, because I didn't know how they were feeling about this community until asking them, and hearing what they had to say, and getting their feedback about certain things, about the feeling of being displaced, or the community, without them saying the word, "gentrified." Actually feeling like this community is changing.

>> Zero. Up to there.

>> When you present problems, or when you are in tune with issues or concerns or even just wonders about a child's local community, you're beginning to shape your lessons around things that are actually going to matter in that child's specific life, not necessarily always inside the classroom, but continue on outside the classroom in their home life, in their social life, eventually in their employment.

>> I've always considered myself a co-learner, but now with this pedagogy, I'm finding myself more so. I also find that I assist in facilitating, but predominantly it is the student who engages in the inquiry and becomes very, very engaged with the subject matter. So I'm sometimes there almost for the ride, so to speak.

>> Staff want to discuss what's happening in the classroom. They want to showcase what's happening in the classroom. They want -- it's the student learning to be impactful, so they find ways for students to be engaged in social process, in making a change in the community. So the level of engagement for staff, students and parents is probably the most remarkable thing about introducing culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy into the curriculum.