# **Chapter 5: Activities**

## **Addressing Diversity**

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The following activities help raise awareness of social justice issues. Each activity can be tailored to address a specific issue.

# 1. Identity of Place

This activity, geared toward grades 4 through 8, prompts students to think about the influence of place on social identity.

***Instructions***

1. Show pictures of well-known places and ask students to identify them. Then initiate a discussion about place and how it relates to identity.
2. Take students on a walk in the schoolyard or neighbourhood.
3. Explain to students that they need to research this place by using various methods (e.g., observation, interviews, scholarly research) and paying close attention to the place’s local history and cultural traditions. Here are some possible guiding questions:

* Who was here before now?
* What was here before now?
* How was this place used in the past?
* When did this place change to what it is now?
* Where did the need to change this place come from?

1. Ask students to represent their research findings in a format of their choosing (e.g., essay, painting, map, quilt, video, zine).
2. Have students share about their experiences of exploring the place and showcase their final representations.
3. To debrief the activity, have students discuss the effect of place on their sense of self: How much does place influence individuals and society, and how much do individuals and society influence place? Then link the discussion to health and physical education by asking students to reflect on how place affects their experiences of living healthy and active lives.

***Variations and Differentiation***

* Invite students to pick a place that they would love to visit or learn more about, then complete the same activity for that place.
* Focus the activity on the outdoors and ask students to represent their places through the use of natural materials (e.g., leaves, rocks, water, branches, dirt, gravel, grass).
* Encourage students to talk with people to inform their research.

***Assessment Look-Fors***

The goal of this activity is for students to examine the influence of place on themselves and on society. Their work should be assessed in terms of their engagement with the research and their representation of place.

***Safety***

* Know your school regulations for taking students outdoors and on field trips.
* Encourage students to come prepared to be outdoors; ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the weather.

# 2. Cultural Assumptions Treasure Hunt

This activity encourages students in grades 4 through 8 to explore the school building with the goal of examining the cultural assumptions that go into buildings, landscapes, and materials. For example, school desks often do not allow for a diversity of body sizes but instead are built on the assumption that one size should “fit all.” As examined in this chapter, however, bodies come in a diversity of shapes and sizes.

***Equipment***

Observational equipment (e.g., notepads, iPads, cameras)

***Instructions***

1. Have the students walk around the school or playground.
2. Instruct students to observe how things are built or structured and document factors that make cultural assumptions about people or society.
3. Invite students to document their “treasures” (i.e., their findings) by taking pictures or making drawings and then describe their findings to the rest of the class.

***Variations and Differentiation***

* Students conduct the treasure hunt in the broader neighbourhood around the school.
* Students conduct the hunt online.

***Assessment Look-Fors***

Debrief the activity with students and look for engagement in the activity. How many treasures did they find? How well did they make connections between their treasures and relevant cultural assumptions?

***Safety***

* Know your school regulations for taking students outdoors and on field trips.
* Encourage your students to come prepared to be outdoors; ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the weather.

Adapted by permission from L. Fawcett, A. Bell, and C.L. Russell, Guiding Our Environmental Praxis: Teaching for Social and Environmental Justice. In *Teaching Sustainability at Universities: Towards Curriculum Greening,* edited by W, Leal Filho (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 223-228.

# 3. Shifting the Media Message

This activity, geared for students in grades 4 through 8, encourages them to think about media messages about individuals and society that are related to healthy, active living.

***Equipment***

* Magazine pictures
* Markers
* Crayons
* Glue
* Scissors

***Instructions***

1. Show students a variety of examples (e.g., magazines, TV ads) of how healthy, active living is portrayed by the media. Ask students what they notice about the examples in terms of who is portrayed as healthy and active. Ask them to list the dominant messages about healthy, active living.
2. After discussing those dominant messages, tell students that this activity is about shifting to a more positive message that is inclusive and represents the diversity present in society.
3. Tell students that they are future media directors and have the opportunity to shift the message; it is their job to come up with a more inclusive message.
4. Their task here is to design a new magazine cover or advertisement that is inclusive.
5. They will be then encouraged to share their creations with the rest of the class.

***Variations and Differentiation***

This activity can be adapted to encourage a higher level of creativity; for example, students can be tasked with creating a video.

***Assessment Look-Fors***

Students are engaged in the activity, and their final creations represent their learning related to shifting the message.

***Safety***

This activity can be sensitive and thus requires students to focus on being respectful. With this reality in mind, be thoughtful about when to use the activity; in other words, do not try to use it too early before trust has been established in the classroom and among the students.