

Environmental & Climate Justice Curriculum

Introduction Lesson Plans for High School Students

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Curriculum Objectives

This curriculum seeks to empower high school students by connecting civil rights and the environment justice, in order to fill an existing gap in environmental education programs in the area of the Bronx, where the curriculum is now implemented. The curriculum covers environmental justice topics covering modern-day and past environmental justice activists and projects. It consists of 4 modules:

- 1) *Environmental & Climate Justice*; 2) *Sustainable & Equitable Land Use*;
- 3) *Public & Climate Health*; and 4) *Global Climate Crisis*.

Each class will be structured to include short teacher-led instructional learning, project-based learning through hands-on activities, and debrief and reflection time. Our targeted program at the High School for the Teaching and Professions capitalizes on a knowledge base of environmental authorities in the Bronx and Harlem (one of the most dire places of environmental injustice in the United States) and uses a city/state/national politics lens to view and address these issues.

Curriculum Breakdown

Module 1: Environmental & Climate Justice

- This module includes an introduction to what environmental justice is, the history of environmental justice, introduction to civics, advocacy, social justice, definitions of key terms, and overview of major environmental justice issues in Harlem/Bronx.
- Students will also learn about local initiatives and strategize on ways they can organize their communities to create meaningful change.

Module 2: Public & Climate Health

- This module provides a broad understanding of the effect of climate and environment on public health with special emphasis on local issue areas. It will include a case study lesson that will help students learn the importance of accessing and contributing to communal care and services (e.g. access to healthy food and green spaces), as well as the importance of learning about health in relation to their locale (e.g. asthma and heat strokes).
- Students will learn about two additional sustainability areas, effective waste management, and green living habits, with regard to carrying out daily personal care whilst understanding their impact on the overall environment and their health. The second half of the module is a workshop where students will make soap, a multi-purpose cleaning solution, and simple moisturizing lotion.

Module 3: Sustainable and Equitable Land Use

- This module covers the intersections of gentrification & climate justice, the history of redlining, structural forms of oppression, land valuation, history segregation, and indigenous land struggles.
- The students will get a deeper understanding of how politics, laws affect their everyday lives and how they can influence local, state, and national policy.

Module 4: Global Climate Crisis

- This module gives students a broad understanding of the inequality between the Global North and the Global South, as well as its history of colonization and the differences between the Global North and South. Additionally, the statistics on total carbon emissions emitted per country; US & EU trash dumping patterns and the effect on the global environment; supply chains, consumerism, and the role of corporations in climate change; indigenous solidarity and island nations; and evaluating international political action (i.e Paris agreement, UN sustainability goals).
- The last part of this module will serve as a reflection period where students will have to break down and connect the varying issue areas: injustice, land use, health, and other global inequalities, in order to make further connections to their role within their community and how they will implement their capstone project. During this time, students share insights and have help designing and partnering with outside organizations and/or individuals for their capstone project.

Supplementary Activities

1. Problem-Solving Project

The students will decide upon an issue they want to address and will spend time creating steps to a solution throughout the course of the program.

2. Guest Speaker Talk

- a. “DoSomething”’s Head of Campaign, Genisha Metcalf, will come talk to students about using your perspective and story as a strength in fighting for social justice.
- b. Van Cortlandt Park Alliance’s Environmental Education Manager, Sara Kempton, will come talk to the students about the importance of green spaces, conservation, and gardening.

3. Field Trip

- a. Students will participate in methods and modes of field analysis used by biologists and research ecologists working in urban freshwater and forest ecosystems and learn about gardening, and storm water management at Van Cortlandt Park.
- b. Students will attend an event hosted by NYU’s EarthMatter and present on Environmental Justice and issues affecting their community.

c. Students will host a workshop on environmental racism in New York City at Zero Hour's Climate Summit in April.

4. School Garden The students will plan, build, maintain a school garden with fresh fruits and vegetables.

Contact

Email us at info.startempowerment@gmail.com to learn more, partner with us, and bring social and environmental justice education to your school!