

# SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS

THE LEARNING FOR JUSTICE  
ANTI-BIAS FRAMEWORK



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#### **ABOUT THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER**

The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Alabama, is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) civil rights organization founded in 1971 and dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society. It neither endorses political candidates nor engages in electioneering activities.

#### **ABOUT LEARNING FOR JUSTICE**

Learning for Justice seeks to uphold the mission of the Southern Poverty Law Center: to be a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

We support this mission by focusing our work with educators, students, caregivers and communities in these areas:

1. Culture and Climate
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Leadership
4. Family and Community Engagement

Since our founding as Teaching Tolerance in 1991, we have had a strong foundation of providing educational resources, and we are building on that foundation with expanded engagement opportunities for communities, especially in the South.

Our free educational resources—articles, guides, lessons, films, webinars, frameworks and more—help foster shared learning and reflection for educators, young people, caregivers and all community members. Our engagement opportunities—conferences, workshops, and school and community partnerships—provide space where people can harness collective power and take action.

Through this continual cycle of education and engagement, we hope that we can build and maintain meaningful relationships with communities and we can all move from learning for justice to creating it.

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# Introducing Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice Standards, a road map for anti-bias education at every grade level.

The Social Justice Standards are a set of anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes divided into four domains—Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action (IDJA). The standards provide a common language and organizational structure: Teachers can use them to guide curriculum development, and administrators can use them to make schools more just, equitable and safe. The standards are leveled for every stage of K–12 education and include school-based scenarios to show what anti-bias attitudes and behavior may look like in the classroom.

Teaching about IDJA allows educators to engage a range of anti-bias, multicultural and social justice issues. This continuum of engagement is unique among social justice teaching materials, which tend to focus on one of two areas: either reducing prejudice or advocating collective action. Prejudice reduction seeks to minimize conflict and generally focuses on changing the attitudes and behaviors of a dominant group. Collective action challenges inequality directly by raising consciousness and focusing on improving conditions for under-represented groups. The standards recognize that, in today's diverse classrooms, students need knowledge and skills related to both prejudice reduction and collective action.

Educators can use the Social Justice Standards as the basis for building custom learning plans on [tolerance.org](https://www.tolerance.org). Free registration is required.

# Anchor Standards and Domains

## IDENTITY

1. Students will develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.
2. Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
3. Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.
4. Students will express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
5. Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture and other cultures and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces.

## DIVERSITY

6. Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
7. Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
8. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
9. Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.
10. Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

## JUSTICE

11. Students will recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups.
12. Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).
13. Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
14. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.
15. Students will identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

## ACTION

16. Students will express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they themselves experience bias.
17. Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.
18. Students will speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.
19. Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.
20. Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.

# K-2 Grade Level Outcomes and Scenarios

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Identity 1	ID.K-2.1	I know and like who I am and can talk about my family and myself and name some of my group identities.	For show and tell, Joi brings in a picture of her family on a church camping trip. “My family goes camping a lot. I like camping,” she says. “I’m a Christian, and sometimes my family goes camping with the church. I’m also a big sister, so I have to help my parents take care of my little brother, especially when we go camping.”
Identity 2	ID.K-2.2	I can talk about interesting and healthy ways that some people who share my group identities live their lives.	
Identity 3	ID.K-2.3	I know that all my group identities are part of me—but that I am always ALL me.	
Identity 4	ID.K-2.4	I can feel good about myself without being mean or making other people feel bad.	
Identity 5	ID.K-2.5	I see that the way my family and I do things is both the same as and different from how other people do things, and I am interested in both.	
Diversity 6	DI.K-2.6	I like being around people who are like me and different from me, and I can be friendly to everyone.	As children are funneling into her classroom on a Monday morning, Ms. Franklin overhears a conversation between two students.
Diversity 7	DI.K-2.7	I can describe some ways that I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.	“What did you do last weekend?” Kevin asks Lisa. “My moms took me to the zoo!” Lisa replies.
Diversity 8	DI.K-2.8	I want to know about other people and how our lives and experiences are the same and different.	“You have two moms? Do you call both of them Mom?” “I call them Mamma Kendra and Mamma Sam,” Lisa says.
Diversity 9	DI.K-2.9	I know everyone has feelings, and I want to get along with people who are similar to and different from me.	
Diversity 10	DI.K-2.10	I find it interesting that groups of people believe different things and live their daily lives in different ways.	

K-2 GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES AND SCENARIOS (CONT'D)

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Justice 11	JU.K-2.11	I know my friends have many identities, but they are always still just themselves.	Shawna timidly approaches her teacher, Mr. Bradley, after school. She explains that her uncle, who picks her up from school, frequently says negative things about black people, and it has been making her feel uncomfortable. “He says that I shouldn’t be friends with Renee and Jeffrey anymore because they’re black,” Shawna says, “but I love all my friends!” Mr. Bradley tells Shawna that he’s proud of her and is sorry that she has to deal with something so difficult. He knows that Shawna’s parents would never approve of the way her uncle is talking and promises to call them that evening to discuss the situation.
Justice 12	JU.K-2.12	I know when people are treated unfairly.	
Justice 13	JU.K-2.13	I know some true stories about how people have been treated badly because of their group identities, and I don’t like it.	
Justice 14	JU.K-2.14	I know that life is easier for some people and harder for others and the reasons for that are not always fair.	
Justice 15	JU.K-2.15	I know about people who helped stop unfairness and worked to make life better for many people.	
Action 16	AC.K-2.16	I care about those who are treated unfairly.	At recess, Joe notices that Stephen has chosen to play with a baby doll. Joe snatches the doll away from Stephen, saying, “Dolls are for girls, not boys.” Anne notices the incident from across the room and decides to intervene. “Don’t be mean to Stephen. It’s OK that he likes different things than you or the other boys. How would you feel if someone told you that you couldn’t play with your favorite truck?”  Their teacher, Mrs. Johnson, has taken notice of the situation. “Anne is exactly right,” she says. “As long as no one is being hurt, you shouldn’t judge someone for what they like.”
Action 17	AC.K-2.17	I can and will do something when I see unfairness—this includes telling an adult.	
Action 18	AC.K-2.18	I will say something or tell an adult if someone is being hurtful, and will do my part to be kind even if I don’t like something they say or do.	
Action 19	AC.K-2.19	I will speak up or do something if people are being unfair, even if my friends do not.	
Action 20	AC.K-2.20	I will join with classmates to make our classroom fair for everyone.	

# 3-5 Grade Level Outcomes and Scenarios

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Identity 1	ID.3-5.1	I know and like who I am and can talk about my family and myself and describe our various group identities.	<p>Omar’s mother is serving as a chaperone on her son’s field trip. On the bus ride, the teacher, Ms. Robin, overhears a conversation between Omar and Peter. “What is your mother wearing on her head?” Peter asks.</p> <p>“It’s called a hijab,” Omar replies. “Many Muslim women wear them.”</p> <p>“Why does she wear it?”</p> <p>“Our religion teaches us that the hijab is a way of being humble and modest. Muslim women wear it to show they love God.”</p>
Identity 2	ID.3-5.2	I know about my family history and culture and about current and past contributions of people in my main identity groups.	
Identity 3	ID.3-5.3	I know that all my group identities are part of who I am, but none of them fully describes me and this is true for other people too.	
Identity 4	ID.3-5.4	I can feel good about my identity without making someone else feel badly about who they are.	
Identity 5	ID.3-5.5	I know my family and I do things the same as and different from other people and groups, and I know how to use what I learn from home, school and other places that matter to me.	
Diversity 6	DI.3-5.6	I like knowing people who are like me and different from me, and I treat each person with respect.	<p>Ms. Ramirez has divided her class into small groups for a mapping activity. As the students are gathering to begin work, she overhears one student, Joao, tell the others that he doesn’t want Jonah, a classmate who uses a wheelchair, in his group. Just as Ms. Ramirez is about to intervene and facilitate a discussion with Joao and the rest of the group, she hears another student say, “Joao, Jonah has a lot to share with our group. It’s important for us to all work together. You shouldn’t think that his physical disability makes him a less important member of our group.”</p>
Diversity 7	DI.3-5.7	I have accurate, respectful words to describe how I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.	
Diversity 8	DI.3-5.8	I want to know more about other people’s lives and experiences, and I know how to ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally.	
Diversity 9	DI.3-5.9	I feel connected to other people and know how to talk, work and play with others even when we are different or when we disagree.	
Diversity 10	DI.3-5.10	I know that the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, is a part of what makes them who they are.	



3-5 GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES AND SCENARIOS (CONT'D)

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Justice 11	JU.3-5.11	I try and get to know people as individuals because I know it is unfair to think all people in a shared identity group are the same.	<p>A class is discussing César Chávez and the American labor movement. Kelly mentions seeing on TV that most of the clothes sold in the United States are made in other countries where workers aren't protected the way U.S. laborers are. She notes that even though worker conditions have improved in the United States, it doesn't mean that we should ignore injustice elsewhere. She and several other students are inspired to go home and talk to their parents about purchasing clothes from companies that practice ethical manufacturing. They also plan to set up a clothes swap to help reduce wastefulness.</p>
Justice 12	JU.3-5.12	I know when people are treated unfairly, and I can give examples of prejudice words, pictures and rules.	
Justice 13	JU.3-5.13	I know that words, behaviors, rules and laws that treat people unfairly based on their group identities cause real harm.	
Justice 14	JU.3-5.14	I know that life is easier for some people and harder for others based on who they are and where they were born.	
Justice 15	JU.3-5.15	I know about the actions of people and groups who have worked throughout history to bring more justice and fairness to the world.	
Action 16	AC.3-5.16	I pay attention to how people (including myself) are treated, and I try to treat others how I like to be treated.	<p>Jessica notices that one of her classmates, Jeremy, always sits alone at lunch. She asks her friend Samantha if she knows why. "He's gross!" Samantha replies. "His family is super poor, and he's always coughing."</p> <p>"You shouldn't be so mean to him, Sam," Jennifer responds. "You don't know what his life is like. It's not fair to exclude someone because his family doesn't have as much money."</p> <p>"Maybe you're right. I'm sure it makes him feel terrible," says Samantha. "I have math class with him. I can try to get to know him better."</p>
Action 17	AC.3-5.17	I know it's important for me to stand up for myself and for others, and I know how to get help if I need ideas on how to do this.	
Action 18	AC.3-5.18	I know some ways to interfere if someone is being hurtful or unfair, and will do my part to show respect even if I disagree with someone's words or behavior.	
Action 19	AC.3-5.19	I will speak up or do something when I see unfairness, and I will not let others convince me to go along with injustice.	
Action 20	AC.3-5.20	I will work with my friends and family to make our school and community fair for everyone, and we will work hard and cooperate in order to achieve our goals.	

# 6-8 Grade Level Outcomes and Scenarios

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Identity 1	ID.6-8.1	I know and like who I am and can comfortably talk about my family and myself and describe our various group identities.	<p>Patrick is being raised in a traditional Christian home. This year in Mr. Sanderson's social studies class, he has been learning about the world's different beliefs systems. Patrick enjoys the company of friends from different religions and is interested in their beliefs and practices. Though he remains devout, he wonders if being curious makes him a bad Christian. Patrick talks to his Sunday school teacher Mrs. Patterson who assures him that he can be Christian and befriend and learn from people of different religions as well. In fact, her best friend of thirty years is a Jewish woman she grew up with.</p>
Identity 2	ID.6-8.2	I know about my family history and culture and how I am connected to the collective history and culture of other people in my identity groups.	
Identity 3	ID.6-8.3	I know that overlapping identities combine to make me who I am and that none of my group identities on their own fully defines me or any other person.	
Identity 4	ID.6-8.4	I feel good about my many identities and know they don't make me better than people with other identities.	
Identity 5	ID.6-8.5	I know there are similarities and differences between my home culture and the other environments and cultures I encounter, and I can be myself in a diversity of settings.	
Diversity 6	DI.6-8.6	I interact with people who are similar to and different from me, and I show respect to all people.	<p>Darius tells Melissa that he thinks he might be gay. Melissa is taken aback. She and Darius have been close friends for many years. No one in Melissa's circle identifies as LGBT, and she feels that her family would not approve. After gathering her thoughts, she hugs Darius and tells him she wants him to know he can be himself with her. She just wants him to be happy with himself. Because neither knows much about what it means to be gay, Melissa accompanies Darius to see their history teacher, Mr. Gilbert, who has a safe zone sticker on his door.</p>
Diversity 7	DI.6-8.7	I can accurately and respectfully describe ways that people (including myself) are similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.	
Diversity 8	DI.6-8.8	I am curious and want to know more about other people's histories and lived experiences, and I ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally.	
Diversity 9	DI.6-8.9	I know I am connected to other people and can relate to them even when we are different or when we disagree.	
Diversity 10	DI.6-8.10	I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.	

6-8 GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES AND SCENARIOS (CONT'D)

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Justice 11	JU.6-8.11	I relate to people as individuals and not representatives of groups, and I can name some common stereotypes I observe people using.	<p>While Mrs. Douglas’ class is discussing immigration, some of the students start talking negatively about a Latino student in another class, accusing his family of immigrating illegally. Julian speaks up, telling his classmates that it’s not appropriate to use stereotypes and spread rumors about others. Julian tells them that the student’s family immigrated because they believe in American ideals and feel that the United States offers more opportunities. He urges his classmates to respect their decision and says that the family’s status is none of their business. “Life must be hard enough moving to a strange new country,” he says. “Don’t make it harder for him by saying that he doesn’t belong.” Mrs. Douglas affirms Julian’s sentiments and asks her class to think about how this discussion relates to the historical distrust and unfair treatment of other immigrant groups, such as those from Ireland or China.</p>
Justice 12	JU.6-8.12	I can recognize and describe unfairness and injustice in many forms including attitudes, speech, behaviors, practices and laws.	
Justice 13	JU.6-8.13	I am aware that biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.	
Justice 14	JU.6-8.14	I know that all people (including myself) have certain advantages and disadvantages in society based on who they are and where they were born.	
Justice 15	JU.6-8.15	I know about some of the people, groups and events in social justice history and about the beliefs and ideas that influenced them.	
Action 16	AC.6-8.16	I am concerned about how people (including myself) are treated and feel for people when they are excluded or mistreated because of their identities.	<p>During gym class, Jenny’s friends are making fun of a girl in their class for being fat. Jenny speaks up to tell her friends how harmful such speech can be. She calmly explains to them that a person’s weight is determined by a lot of different factors and that weight is not necessarily a sign of good or bad health.</p>
Action 17	AC.6-8.17	I know how to stand up for myself and for others when faced with exclusion, prejudice and injustice.	
Action 18	AC.6-8.18	I can respectfully tell someone when his or her words or actions are biased or hurtful.	
Action 19	AC.6-8.19	I will speak up or take action when I see unfairness, even if those around me do not, and I will not let others convince me to go along with injustice.	
Action 20	AC.6-8.20	I will work with friends, family and community members to make our world fairer for everyone, and we will plan and coordinate our actions in order to achieve our goals.	

# 9-12 Grade Level Outcomes and Scenarios

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Identity 1	ID.9-12.1	I have a positive view of myself, including an awareness of and comfort with my membership in multiple groups in society.	As part of a class project, Rebecca completes the following personal mission statement: “I am more than one identity. I will celebrate all of my in-group and out-group identities and work to understand how they overlap to make up who I am as an individual. I will not allow others to put me into boxes.” Rebecca explains to her peers in small-group discussion that being a student, sister, female, Latina, Spanish speaker and dancer are all interconnected and equally important. She displays her personal mission statement on the outside of her class binder.
Identity 2	ID.9-12.2	I know my family history and cultural background and can describe how my own identity is informed and shaped by my membership in multiple identity groups.	
Identity 3	ID.9-12.3	I know that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and that this is true for other people too.	
Identity 4	ID.9-12.4	I express pride and confidence in my identity without perceiving or treating anyone else as inferior.	
Identity 5	ID.9-12.5	I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.	
Diversity 6	DI.9-12.6	I interact comfortably and respectfully with all people, whether they are similar to or different from me.	Sheri is a student ambassador, welcoming new students and showing them around the school. She mentions to one new student, Kyle, that she helped found the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). Kyle confides in her that he is actually transgender and changed schools after beginning transition. Sheri tells him that she will be discreet and assures him that the administration is welcoming. Kyle recounts this story fondly at a later meeting with the school’s counselor.
Diversity 7	DI.9-12.7	I have the language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including myself) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.	
Diversity 8	DI.9-12.8	I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.	
Diversity 9	DI.9-12.9	I relate to and build connections with other people by showing them empathy, respect and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.	
Diversity 10	DI.9-12.10	I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.	

9-12 GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES AND SCENARIOS (CONT'D)

Anchor Standard	Code	Grade Level Outcome	Anti-bias Scenario
Justice 11	JU.9-12.11	I relate to all people as individuals rather than representatives of groups and can identify stereotypes when I see or hear them.	<p>Karen notices that many of her school’s facilities are not friendly to those with disabilities. Many students have difficulty navigating the school and are often late to class as a result. Karen decides to look into building plans to determine if any accommodations are present for those in the community with physical limitations. She forms a focus group of students and faculty to come up with effective solutions to the situation.</p>
Justice 12	JU.9-12.12	I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.	
Justice 13	JU.9-12.13	I can explain the short and long-term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.	
Justice 14	JU.9-12.14	I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.	
Justice 15	JU.9-12.15	I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.	
Action 16	AC.9-12.16	I express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when I personally experience bias.	<p>Lee has grown weary of the bullying he sees at his school each day. He discusses his concerns with classmates, teachers and administrators to develop a plan to combat the situation. Together, they plan Mix It Up at Lunch Day to promote a greater sense of cohesion among the diverse student body. The day is used to celebrate the launch of a new diversity club, aimed at bringing diverse students together and combating baseless animosity through ongoing intergroup activities.</p>
Action 17	AC.9-12.17	I take responsibility for standing up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.	
Action 18	AC.9-12.18	I have the courage to speak up to people when their words, actions or views are biased and hurtful, and I will communicate with respect even when we disagree.	
Action 19	AC.9-12.19	I stand up to exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, even when it’s not popular or easy or when no one else does.	
Action 20	AC.9-12.20	I will join with diverse people to plan and carry out collective action against exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and we will be thoughtful and creative in our actions in order to achieve our goals.	

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