

Social Justice Spotlight

Introduction



grades 4/5



35 minutes

“When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up.
You have to say something; you have to do something.”
– John Lewis

Lesson Summary

This lesson introduces the idea of social justice and encourages students to identify opportunities in their communities where they can take action to create a more just and equal society. Students use a KWL Chart to begin exploring ideas about social justice, then an activity to consider how social justice actions take varying amounts of time, energy, and courage.

Students will Examine

- The definition of social justice.
- Ways to identify opportunities to make a difference in their communities.
- The importance of consistent, small actions to make change.

Pre-Activity Prep

- Print the KWL Chart ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) or prepare chart paper (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Print the Worksheet: Social Justice Actions Come in All Sizes ([PDF](#)) (1/student) or prepare chart paper (1/group) (REFLECT section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
 Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
 KWL Chart ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
 Chart paper
 Worksheet: Social Justice
 Actions Come in All Sizes ([PDF](#))
 Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Introduction](#)
 Video: [How to Change The World \(a work in progress\)](#) (3:43)

SHARE

Nothing for the Introduction, no actions to share yet!

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Explain: Today, we are starting a project called ThinkGive. The project's central idea is that taking positive action to impact others—noticing others, understanding others, and including others—creates a better world. Let's see what Kid President has to say about this topic.

Watch: [How to Change the World \(a work in progress\)](#) (3:43). Kid President explores people's ideas about improving the world.

Discuss:

- What changes our world for the better?
- What are some actions we can take to improve the world?

Hand out or digitally share the [KWL Chart \(PDF | Google\)](#) (1/student) or use chart paper and develop a collective KWL Chart throughout the program. Complete the first two columns as a group (below); students will complete the third in another lesson.

Ask: What do you know about social justice?

As students respond, they add their and others' ideas to the first column on their KWL Chart (or add ideas to the first column on the collective KWL Chart).

Ask: What do you want to know about social justice? What do you wonder about it?

As students respond, they add their and others' ideas to the second column on their KWL Chart (or add ideas to the second column on the collective KWL Chart).

Explain: During this Social Justice Spotlight, we'll start recognizing opportunities in our communities where we can take action to create a world that is equal and fair to everyone.

DIGGING DEEPER

- What does power have to do with making positive change?
- What does power have to do with social justice?
- To what extent does power, or the lack of power, affect people?
- Some assume that young people don't have much power. What do you think?



SOCIAL JUSTICE

noun; the idea that everyone deserves equal rights, fair opportunities, and to feel respected, valued, and safe.

REFLECT

Suggested time: 15 minutes

What does Social Justice Look Like in Action?

Explain: Just like Kid President said, “The world is changed by ordinary people. Little people living out big love!” There are many ways of taking action for social justice. Every social justice action we take requires a different amount of time, energy, and courage—but they ALL have a positive impact. Let's categorize different social justice actions into small, medium, or large categories according to the amount of time, energy, and bravery they might take us to do.

Show slides 8-19. For each, students decide the size of the action (the amount of time, energy, and bravery that action would demand of them) and explain their reasoning.

Explain: Social justice is the idea that everyone deserves equal rights and fair opportunities and feels respected, valued, and safe. Unfortunately, there are many social injustices in our society. There is a lot that needs fixing! Social justice might feel like a big idea, but all change happens through small, consistent actions. We all have the power to take small actions to create positive change in our communities.

Students form pairs or small groups. Hand out the [Worksheet: Social Justice Actions Come in All Sizes \(PDF\)](#) (1/student) or have students write their ideas on chart paper. Together, they brainstorm actions for social justice that require small, medium, and large amounts of time, energy, and courage.

CONNECT + CLOSE

ThinkGive Three (Optional)

Introduce students to the ThinkGive Three, a guide for how to give. Every prompt will revisit these ideas so students can incorporate them into their thinking. Hang a [ThinkGive Three Poster \(Yellow PDF | Purple PDF\)](#) in your class to remind you throughout the program.

1. TRUE. Be your authentic self in your actions and words.
2. SMALL. Small is all! Everything we do and say matters, and everything we do and say has an impact—no matter how small.
3. BRAVE. Step into your courage zone; challenge yourself to be brave with your actions and words.

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
 2. Small: small is all
 3. Brave: step into your courage zone
-

Take Action

Explain: Between now and our next ThinkGive session [give date], notice social justice actions of all sizes happening in your communities. Who is taking action? What actions do they take? Do you notice situations where action is needed, but nobody steps up?

Things to Consider

- Social justice starts with small actions.
- Taking action for social justice requires varying amounts of time, energy, and courage for each individual.
- Social justice makes the world a better place.

Closing Quote

Use this quote to close out the lesson. The reflective questions could serve as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

“When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something.” – John Lewis

- Who do you know who speaks up or takes action when they see things that aren’t fair or right?



TEACHER TIP

Consider integrating the ThinkGive Three into the Things to Consider, which mentions focusing on small acts of kindness.



CONNECTION

John Lewis (1940–2020) was an American politician and civil rights activist. He was the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) from 1963 to 1966 and helped organize the 1963 March on Washington.

Reflection Questions

- 🗨️ What social justice action did you notice?
- 🗨️ How might this action make our world fairer and more equal?
- 🗨️ Is this an action you could take? Explain why or why not.

Student Journal

- 🗨️ If you could change one thing, what would you change and why?
- 🗨️ How do some social justice actions start with one person?
- 🗨️ Describe a time you took a social justice action on behalf of another person.
- 🗨️ Why can it be hard to take social justice actions?