



Moving from Reinforcement of the Status Quo to →

# Social Consciousness & Action

In the past, schools have often focused more on reproducing social patterns and norms than on empowering young people to make change in their communities and country. Practices such as tracking, segregation, unrepresentative and unbalanced curriculum, and more have reinforced the status quo in our educational system. In these environments, learners' experiences are situated within structures related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and more that are implicitly accepted, directly perpetuated, or studied in ways that do not motivate change. But, in order to prepare for tomorrow, learners must begin critically examining social problems and working toward a more fair and just world today. Doing so can have an immediate impact and will help all learners develop the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to improve the world in all of the ways they are motivated to improve it.

Ensuring learners have opportunities to tackle the injustices that surround them can foster feelings of empowerment and motivation. This is because these opportunities are relevant to learners' lives and, as a result, bring value to learning. They also provide learners with an authentic opportunity to impact change, and in doing this, foster agency or a sense of control. For learners who have personally experienced adversity or injustice, this can be especially empowering and may bring even greater meaning to learning. In addition, as our society becomes more and more polarized, it is critical for every young person to learn how to act against injustice in ways that are grounded in their own values and the values of their communities.

## This Leap Means...

- ▶ Learners discussing current and historical events from multiple perspectives to gain a more complete understanding.
- ▶ Learners developing the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to understand injustice and take action against it.
- ▶ Learners internalizing that their individual and collective actions can effect social change.
- ▶ Learners exploring and working to solve real social problems with the support to do so.



### Inequitable, Industrial-Era Learning

#### Reinforcement of the Status Quo

Learners' experiences are situated within societal structures related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and more that are implicitly accepted, directly perpetuated, or studied in ways that do not motivate massive change efforts.

### Equitable, 21st-Century Learning

#### Social Consciousness & Action

Learners critically examine social problems and work toward a more just world; they develop the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to continue taking anti-oppressive actions that disrupt and dismantle racism and other inequities.



Transcend's Leaps for Equitable, 21st Century Learning are informed by the [science of learning and development](#); equity in education; and [contemporary societal, political, economic, and scientific trends](#).

## Social Consciousness and Action at June Jordan School for Equity

The [June Jordan School for Equity \(JJSE\)](#) is located in San Francisco, California. The school's mission is not just to prepare students for college but also to prepare its graduates to be agents of positive change in the world. In order to achieve this, JJSE focuses on three key areas: community, social justice, and building independent thinkers. JJSE embodies the social consciousness and action Leap in a variety of ways:

- ▶ **Pedagogy** – JJSE describes their pedagogy as, “expressly designed to help our students understand the forces of marginalization they have experienced growing up, and thus to begin the process of freeing themselves from oppression, including especially the internalized oppression (or self-imposed limits) which we see preventing so many students from meeting their potential.” It is informed by critical consciousness theory and is characterized by:
  - Educators as warm demanders who develop students as human beings first
  - Safe classroom communities that protect students in a potentially dangerous world
  - Learning starting where students are, not where teachers want or imagine them to be
  - Students as intellectuals developing into a community of warrior-scholars
  - Educators as coaches who let the students do the work
  - A social justice curriculum that helps student understand the real world
- ▶ **Advisory** – These small, intimate groups are a key support system for students. In the ninth grade, advisors explicitly explore social justice in order to build knowledge, skills, and mindsets the students will use throughout their time at the school.
- ▶ **Electives/Activism Blocks** – JJSE is a small school and uses electives/activism blocks as a way to provide students with a great breadth of experiences and choice. Often these blocks focus on social justice and activism. Past blocks have included Urban Gardening and Food Justice, Art and Activism, and 415 Unidos: Immigration Rights.
- ▶ **Wellness Center** – The wellness center is a safe, supportive environment where students can go to discuss issues related to mental and physical health such as depression, self-esteem, family life, dating, sexual identity, and more. Like the school's pedagogy, wellness services reflect culturally competent approaches and are provided in a confidential, nonjudgmental, and professional space.

### Additional School Examples to Explore

[The Primary School](#) – The Primary School in Palo Alto, California has made explicit [anti-racist commitments](#). These include pursuing equitable outcomes for children and families; strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion practices with staff; speaking out and taking action; and staying active and accountable. For each commitment, the school has specific strategies in place.

[The School of Social Justice](#) – The School of Social Justice in downtown Los Angeles develops and guides students into becoming champions and role models of social change, justice, and equity for all. Students engage in a curriculum that explores issues of human rights and social concerns through a diversity of perspectives.

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