

IDEA 60b Learning to teach for social justice in a context of neo-liberalism

Today's urban teachers are being stifled by school policies that are often in conflict with their own desires to work for more just societal conditions for their students. They see schools across the country under attack by a broader neo-liberal agenda that is severely limiting opportunities for equity and justice in education. Such neo-liberal forces push private control of public schools, thus pillaging public funds, implementing ethno-centric mandated curricular programs, and using high-stakes testing to justify A-F school ratings used to increase privatization via so-called "Innovative" and "Autonomous" schools in urban districts like Indianapolis.

This predicament raises these questions:

- How can the Indianapolis community support teachers who find themselves complicit in a system in which they are forced to reproduce the very inequalities they went into teaching to eradicate?
- What strategies do teachers use to stay true to their vision of teaching for social justice despite the challenges they face in their school environments?
- How can pre-service and regular teachers connect with broader social movements so they learn how to critically recognize injustice and have opportunities to be an activist in order to teach their students how to be activists and engage in social change?
- How do we prevent teachers, who enter the field specifically with the hopes of working toward social change, from quickly leaving the profession as they find themselves alienated and alone while trying to navigate highly political terrains inside and outside their school?

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