



# FLY FiVE®

The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND REPRESENTATION





In our increasingly interconnected world, it is important for schools to implement socially responsible best practices and teach socially responsible concepts. Social responsibility refers to an ethical framework in which individuals and organizations have an obligation to act for the benefit of society as a whole (Wittmann, 2018). When one behaves in a socially responsible way, they deliberately make choices that contribute to the welfare of society overall and abstain from behaving unethically (Planken, 2013).

Teaching social responsibility encourages students to contribute meaningfully to solving social problems and become responsible, caring members of their community who see themselves as capable of responding adequately to problems (Merrifield, n.d; Burgos & Carnero, 2020). One way to foster social responsibility in students, as well as fulfill a socially responsible mission, is to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom.

- Diversity refers to the different perspectives, experiences, lifestyles, and cultures that one brings to a situation. Diversity initiatives entail not just bringing diverse viewpoints to the table, but ensuring that all perspectives are respected and valued (HUD, n.d.).
- Equity is the quality of being fair and impartial. Promoting equity involves the recognition of differing circumstances among individuals and groups and the allocation of resources to ameliorate the specific problems faced by those individuals or groups (Waterford.org, 2020).
- Inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources and meeting the needs of all individuals (HUD, n.d.). Inclusive classrooms make sure that all students feel intellectually and socially supported and experience a sense of belonging, regardless of their identity, learning preferences, background, or education (Yale, n.d.).



Regardless of the demographic diversity present in a school, educators and school leaders can work together to bring diverse, authentic literature and media into classrooms. All educational stakeholders can advocate for more inclusive representation, as students' experiences with diversity matter. Students who attend educational institutions with more racial and ethnic diversity have been shown to:

- Encounter a broader variety of experiences, perspectives, and ideas that can enhance their education (Wells et al., 2016).
- Demonstrate increased civic engagement and transition more smoothly into the workforce (American University, 2019).
- Be more open-minded and engaged in the classroom, experience improved cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, and have fewer implicit biases and greater cross-cultural/racial understanding and empathy (Wells et al., 2016).



Fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment is a multi-pronged project, but focusing on increasing representation through classroom materials is a worthy starting point. School leaders, teachers, and even students and their families can come together to learn more about people who are different from them through diverse materials. As students engage with a range of perspectives, they build empathy and draw connections between themselves and others. In nurturing a mindset that envisions each one of us as part of a greater whole, students improve their ability to show up as socially conscious, responsible individuals.

# References

---

American University. (2019, July 24). The benefits of inclusion and diversity in the classroom. School of Education Online Programs. <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/benefits-of-inclusion-and-diversity-in-the-classroom>

Burgos, J., & Carnero, M. C. (2020). Assessment of social responsibility in education in secondary schools. *Sustainability*, 12(12), 4849. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12124849>

Merrifield, J. (n.d.). The three Ss: Social responsibility, social service, and social justice. British Columbia Teachers' Federation. <https://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Publications/The%20three%20Ss%20social%20responsibility%20social%20service%20SJ.pdf>

Planken, B. (2013). Definitions of social responsibility. In S. O. Idowu, N. Capaldi, L. Zu, & A. Das Gupta, (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Volume 2, pp. 768–772). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8\\_476](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_476)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (n.d.). Diversity and inclusion definitions. [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/admabout/diversity\\_inclusion/definitions](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/admabout/diversity_inclusion/definitions)

Waterford.org. (2020, May 2). Why understanding equity vs. equality in schools can help you create an inclusive classroom. <https://www.waterford.org/education/equity-vs-equality-in-education/>

Wells, A. S., Fox, L., Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). How racially diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students. The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>

Wittmann, V. (2018). World society: An ice-breaker for a global shift in sociology? In I. Muenstermann, (Ed.), *Social Responsibility*. <http://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.75048>

Yale. (n.d.). Inclusive classroom climate. Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning. <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/ClassClimates>