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A Novel Approach to Social Justice Education

Jennifer R. Banas

Sara Gershon

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Jennifer Banas
Northeastern Illinois University

Sara Gershon
Deerfield High School

*S*ingular efforts in PK-12 settings to instill a social justice mindset will not achieve the same outcomes as social justice education infused throughout content area instruction. In collaboration with 10th-grade teachers, we developed and implemented a biblioguidance curriculum to develop students' social justice and content area competency. Evaluation findings from the pilot implementation indicate there was a significant impact on some social justice competencies and all targeted content area competencies. Also, students appeared to recognize the benefits of a biblioguidance approach. In light of the outcomes, we celebrate the curriculum's successes and offer suggestions for ongoing improvement.

Introduction

Building human capacity for doing anti-racist work must begin early and occur often. Per Bell (2016), social justice is both a goal and a process. Singular PK-12 efforts to instill a social justice mindset will not achieve the same outcomes as social justice education infused throughout content area instruction (Hackman, 2005). To increase exposure, teachers must identify ways to foster students' social justice competency in tandem with content-area knowledge and skill development. A biblioguidance-based curriculum is a way teachers could accomplish this.

This article reveals the evaluation findings from our pilot implementation of a social justice biblioguidance curriculum in a required high school content area course. We describe the curriculum, discuss the implications of the findings, and make recommendations for future implementation. Also, we provide a website link to a teacher's guide we have created to support the curriculum's implementation and evaluation and we invite teachers to contribute to the curriculum's improvement and distribution.

Background

What Is and Why Social Justice Education?

For young people to survive and thrive, knowing how to live in a pluralistic, diverse, multicultural, and inequitable world is an essential skill (Derman-Sparks & ABC Task Force, 1989). This requires gaining insight into one's identity and others' perspectives, understanding the role of lived experiences and basic human needs, valuing differences in society, having emotional conviction and critical thinking skills, and being able to manage difficult situations even when they seem unfair. Without these understandings and skills, young people are left

vulnerable to navigating potentially harmful and divisive messaging on their own (Derman-Sparks et al., 2019). Teachers can help develop these understandings and skills.

Social justice education centers around raising students' consciousness about inequity in everyday social, environmental, economic, and political situations and provides them with the lens to recognize and the skills to interrupt inequitable patterns and practices in society (Hammond, 2020). It also includes helping students explore how their stories fit into the larger national and global story (Torres, 2015). With the support of their teachers and ongoing instruction, young people can develop the insight, skills, and strength to live in a complex society alongside others who may or may not share their identity groups (Derman-Sparks et al., 2019).

What Is and Why Biblioguidance?

The basic premise of biblioguidance (also called bibliotherapy) is that information, guidance, and solace can be found through reading (McNicol & Brewster, 2018). In the early days, much of the focus was on self-help resources as an intervention to address specific health conditions among adults and primarily took place in clinical settings. In recent decades, biblioguidance has been delivered to youth, expanded formats to include fiction, graphic novels, and poetry, and has been implemented in new settings to support mental health and overall wellbeing.

"Books provide a safe medium for children to explore different concepts, feelings, and attitudes...and to better understand their environment, community, and societal expectations" (Tielsch Goddard, 2011, p. 57). For example, Betzalel and Shechtman (2017), implemented a youth-focused biblioguidance intervention consisting of superhero short stories and films. Their goal was to present positive, strong models with whom the youth could identify and connect the characters' feelings and pain to their own. Based on their findings, they argued that biblioguidance provides children with an opportunity to build hope and it encourages them to take action and make changes in their lives.

In school settings, biblioguidance can be a structured curriculum during which students read selected books to identify with the characters, observe how they transcend challenges, and support social and emotional needs (Gladding & Gladding, 1991; Heath et al., 2017). For example, after Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, teachers used a fiction literature curriculum to help students cope with anxiety, displacement, and loss and to increase self-esteem, decrease levels of hopelessness, and improve academic engagement (Stewart & Ames, 2014). Similarly, school counselors found that biblioguidance was a means to offer youth insight into personal dilemmas, teach cultural traditions, and assist in nurturing identity development during both individual and group work (Byrd et al., 2021). Simply put, books can provide the context and the stage for young people to develop life skills.

How Can Biblioguidance Support Social Justice Education?

A novel-based curriculum is an optimal way to promote social justice. Reading novels exposes youth to individuals who are different from themselves and to situations they have not yet or will never experience. Through a guided curriculum, students can acquire critical thinking skills necessary to understand multiple viewpoints, respect differences, and become more self-aware

(Dover, 2016; Hendrickson, 2018; Thibault, 2004). This concept is supported by the belief that "human development occurs through developmental interactions and in dynamic intersection with settings and contexts" (Jones et al., 2019, p. iii). Further, books can help students "examine sophisticated and politically charged topics in uncomplicated ways" (Dover, 2016, p. 522). Additionally, the reader may even develop what Giroux (1987) referred to as "civic courage." By prioritizing the reading of multicultural texts and examining injustice in literature and life, teachers can use literature to engage students in examining issues of equity and justice (Dover, 2016).

Evaluation Questions

The centerpiece of our project is a young adult novel curriculum implemented in a 10th-grade required course. The goal of the curriculum is to develop *both* social justice and content area competencies. Based on the principles of biblioguidance, students read young adult novels and complete learning activities to achieve these competencies. The purpose of this pilot implementation was to study the following research questions:

1. What impact does the curriculum have on students' social justice competency?
2. What impact does the curriculum have on students' ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health? [a national standard skill]
3. What do students perceive as the biblioguidance benefits of the curriculum?

Methods

The Curriculum

As indicated previously, the project's centerpiece is a young adult novel curriculum infused into a content area course. Though suitable for multiple content areas, including English language arts and social sciences, we piloted the curriculum in a health education course. In this section, we describe our book selection process and identify the curriculum's pedagogical and theoretical frameworks. Thereafter, we summarize the curriculum's components and the assessment tool.

The Novels

The foundation of our curriculum is a curated collection of young adult novels. This collection includes literature whose culturally responsive themes focus on identity, diversity, and social justice and whose characters' behaviors afford discussions about content area focus, advocacy for health. We used the following novels during the pilot implementation:

- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds
- *Boy 21* by Matthew Quick
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin

Selecting these novels was a multi-step process. First, we assembled a list of "maybes" from recommendation lists compiled by international organizations (e.g., the International Literacy Association), national organizations (e.g., Teaching for Change), and public libraries. We also

selected several books highlighted in Boyd and Darragh's (2019) *Reading for Action: Engaging Youth in Social Justice through Young Adult Literature*. Next, with the assistance of the school librarian, we narrowed our list based on reading level, content area match, and availability. Finally, we informed the school counseling team about the project in case any of the novels' topics triggered students in a way that they might need support. The school principal was also informed.

Pedagogical and Theoretical Concepts

Social Justice Standards. To help teachers make decisions about age-appropriate social justice competencies to develop, Learning for Justice, a social justice education program established by the Southern Poverty Law Center, offers K-12th grade social justice standards (2018). These standards are based on Derman-Sparks' research and the ABC Task Force's (1989) goals for anti-bias education and are divided into four domains: identity, diversity, justice, and action. The standards guide teachers in supporting students' development and recognition of their identity without needing to feel superior to others; an acknowledgment and acceptance of human diversity; a sense of fairness and justice; the skills of empowerment; and the ability to stand up for themselves or others. Our curriculum and assessment align with the 9th-12th grade outcomes of these standards.

Phases and Benefits of Biblioguidance. The seminal research into the benefits of biblioguidance, which stems from psychology and psychoanalytic theory, identifies three beneficial phases of bibliotherapy: identification, insight, and catharsis (Russell & Shrodes, 1950; Shrodes, 1955, 1960). Since then, there has been much research into using text to elicit these phases and understanding better what happens in them (Hendrickson, 2018; McPherson-Leitz, 2018). We summarize literature about these phases in the first three columns of Table 1.

Consensus shows that during the identification phase, readers undergo some type of transformation. This notion aligns with reader-response theory which regards reading as a transaction between the reader, the author, and the text (Rosenblatt, 1994; Wilhelm, 2016). Per Wilhelm (2016), this transaction consists of ten dimensions which he categorizes into evocative, connective, and reflective. In passing through these dimensions, the reader is reshaped and empowered to reshape the world. For example, one of Wilhelm's case study students commented, "I feel like reading a good book makes me someone new" (p. 63). In other words, she has been transformed. This transformation happens not at the beginning, but towards the end of and after having completed a book. For this reason, we believe that transformation, rather than being embedded into the identification phase of biblioguidance, is a product of the other three phases and should be the ultimate and final phase. To that end, we added a fourth column to Table 1 that is dedicated to transformation.

For a more extensive review of the benefits of biblioguidance and ways to implement it, we refer readers to the award-winning thesis (2018), written by English language arts teacher Kristy McPherson-Leitz, which can be accessed online at https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/coeawardhonor/11. In the next section, we expand on the transactional aspects of reading and the skills required to do so.

Table 1
Phases and benefits of biblioguidance

Identification	Insights	Catharsis	Transformation
By comparisons and verbalization of emotions and thoughts about the characters and the story, readers might experience or engage in: • Affiliation • Reflection • Self-examination and self-appraisal of thoughts, feelings, qualities, and/or experiences	By observation and interpretation, readers might gain insight into: • Others' lived experiences, perspectives, values, and attitudes • New knowledge, skills and behaviors • Cause and effect relationships, correlations, "ways of the world"	By connecting to characters and the story, readers might experience: • Feelings of solace, hope, or relief • Affiliation • Dispelling feelings of isolation • Reduction of anxiety • Freedom to discuss fears or problems • Validation of self and others	By way of identification, new insights, and possible catharsis, readers might evolve in these ways: • New awareness and comprehension • New appreciations and/or interests • New perspectives, accommodations, and/or respect • New skills and behaviors • New or renewed commitments

English Language Arts Literacy. Being able to extract and analyze key ideas and details is essential to fully experience literature in ways that elicit the benefits of biblioguidance. For this reason, and to ensure quality, we aligned our curriculum with the Common Core English language arts literacy standards for reading literature (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2021). Specifically, we aligned with = *key ideas and details*, *craft and structure*, and *integration of knowledge and ideas* standards.

We also aligned our curriculum with the aforementioned dimensions of reader response (Wilhelm, 2016). Per Wilhelm (2001, 2016) only expert readers, who can evoke, elaborate, evaluate, and use textual worlds, can experience this literary transaction. Fortunately, he also believed that teachers can engage, support, and foster these skills among all readers by way of a developmental, guided curriculum that adheres to 10 behavioral dimensions. These dimensions reflect the actions effective readers take when they create, experience, and respond to literary worlds. We use these dimensions as one of the pedagogical frameworks for our project's curriculum. Detailed descriptions of and guidance for evoking these dimensions are provided in Wilhelm's (2016) *You Gotta BE the Book*.

Content Area Standards - Health Education. We implemented our curriculum in health education classes, therefore we turned to the content standards for that area, the National Health Education Standards (NHES), to ensure appropriate alignment. The NHES provides a framework of health literacy skills and learning expectations to establish and support health-enhancing behaviors for K-12 students (Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards, 2007).

There are eight NHES. Of these, we paid particular attention to standard #8: *Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health*. The 9th-12th grade indicators for this standard are as follows:

- 8.12.1 Use accurate peer and societal norms to formulate a health-enhancing message.
- 8.12.2 Demonstrate how to influence and support others to make positive health choices.
- 8.12.3 Work cooperatively as an advocate for improving personal, family, and community health.
- 8.12.4 Adapt health messages and communication techniques to a specific target audience.

The Joint Committee's rationale for this standard is that advocacy skills help students to adopt and to encourage others to adopt healthy norms and behaviors. We felt these skills complemented the *justice* and *action* outcomes of the social justice standards and should be our content-area focus.

Curriculum Components

The primary components of the curriculum include journals, discussions, and supporting instructional activities. In this subsection, we describe each.

Journal Entries. Journal entries are a primary component of the curriculum. By way of six sets of guided reading prompts, students get to experience the benefits of biblioguidance. Each set prompts students to consider the characters in the novel, the story, and themselves. The first set is introductory and intended to prime students about what they will be reading and learning. Subsequent sets focus on one of the social justice domains (identity, diversity, justice, action) and the content area standard.

We organized prompts based on Wilhelm's (2001, 2016) 10 dimensions of reader response. Passing through these dimensions supports readers in using the same skills and engaging with the novels in ways similar to "expert" readers. Without this engagement, it is difficult to elaborate, evaluate, and use text in meaningful ways. See Figure 1 for a sample set of prompts. Note that for some questions, students may choose which prompts to respond to and how many. This allows for advanced readers to go deeper into their analysis, while still ensuring all readers gain benefits from reading the novel. Also, in this particular set, note that some prompts indicate there is a biblioguidance focus. This is because some prompts serve a dual purpose. In other sets, some prompts are biblioguidance-focused only.

Discussions. Like the journals, discussions are a primary component of the curriculum. Run like book clubs, we intended them to be relationship-building safe spaces where students can identify with others, share perspectives, gain insight, practice skills in authentic ways, and even, perhaps, experience catharsis. Discussions occur in small-group and whole-class formats. Small groups consist of 3-5 students reading the same book and whole-class discussions include students reading the same or different books. Conversations are based on the most recent set of journal entry prompts. Discussing the prompts helps students to reflect together on what they have learned holistically and transfer new knowledge, skills, and dispositions into their lives.

Figure 1

Sample set of journal entry prompts

Journal Set: #2

When: Week 2, after reading ~ 25% of the novel

Theoretical and pedagogical alignment

Wilhelm Reader Response Dimensions:

      2. Evocative: Showing interest in the story.

      3. Evocative: Relating to characters.

English Language Arts Standards: RL9.10.1, RL9.10.2, RL9.10.10, W9.10.9

Biblioguidance Benefit: Identification

Prompts

Wilhelm Reader Response Dimensions

1. In reading 2-3 chapters, what has caught your attention? What are you liking or disliking about the story so far? What feelings are you experiencing as you read? [Biblioguidance: Identification]

2. What led to the events or situations presented in these first chapters? What do you think will happen next or how do you think the story will unfold?

3. Select one (must do), two (should do), or three (aspire to do):

    a. Describe the main character's personality traits and what they value. What do you dislike? Provide reasons that include the character's personality traits and values.

    b. What do you think the main character(s) may be dealing with? Specifically, what struggles or problems do you think they may have? What do you think led to or caused these struggles?

    c. Thinking about the main character's struggles or problems, what decisions do you think the main character(s) will need to make? And why? Explain with specific examples.

4. What experiences have you had that might help you to understand the main character(s), their problems or, struggles, or the decisions they will need to make? [Biblioguidance: Identification]

Social Justice Domain: Identity

1. What is an influence? Describe in your own words. Give an example.

2. What or who do you think influences your beliefs and behaviors?

3. How might your experiences or other aspects of your identity (e.g., family history, cultural background, and social groups) influence how you read this book?

Supporting instructional activities. The curriculum also includes supporting instructional activities including introductions to the curriculum as a whole, the novels, and the standards. To introduce the novels and the curriculum, we used a book talk format. Book talks are short presentations designed to foster curiosity and interest in a book. The presenter gives hints about the plot, characters, or themes; but excludes the ending or major plot points. For our project, the teachers gave book talks about the four novels from which students could choose and then previewed the curriculum's pacing. To introduce the standards, the teachers utilized a jigsaw approach. Small groups of students were assigned a standard to discuss and define, and then they shared those definitions and examples back with the larger group. The teachers then corrected, clarified, and/or elaborated as needed.

Curriculum Delivery

In education, teachers rarely have enough "space" in their curriculum for an additional curriculum. Further, students need time to read and process the novels. For these reasons, our curriculum is designed to be implemented in parallel with "regular" content area instruction over five weeks. The pacing guide in Figure 2 reveals when we implemented each component.

Evaluation

Setting and participants

Three teachers administered the curriculum to 10th-grade students in a required health education course at a suburban school outside of the city of Chicago. Economically, the majority of the school's surrounding community is middle or upper-class. The Illinois Report Card website (2021) shows the school's enrollment to be ~1500 students, of which 86% identify as White, 6% as Hispanic, 4% as Asian, and < 1% each as Black, American Indian, or Pacific Islander. We chose to work with these teachers based on an existing research partnership. Further, we believed the lack of racial and economic diversity among their students compared to schools in surrounding communities made this school ideal for piloting a social justice curriculum.

Per our IRB's guidelines, to participate in the study, students were required to obtain written parental consent and to provide their own assent. Of 137 students exposed to the curriculum, 91 met this requirement. All students completed the pre and post-test as part of regular classroom instruction and received points for participation. We only reviewed the data of study participants for research. Students did not know which classmates participated and we de-identified all data with a number code.

Data Collection

To evaluate the curriculum's impact on students' social justice and advocacy competency, we created and administered a pre and post-test electronically via Google Forms. This test consisted of 27 social-justice statements aligned with the Learning for Justice's 9th-12th grade learning outcomes and 16 NHES #8 statements aligned with the NHES #8 9th-12th grade indicators. See Appendix A. For each statement, we asked students to rate their agreement on a 4-point scale,

Figure 2

Curriculum pacing guide

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 1	Pre-test Book talks Book selection & distribution (add days as needed)	Introduction to the curriculum, and the social justice and content standards Homework: Journal #1	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Discussion #1 (whole-class) Homework: Journal #2
Week 2	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Discussion #2 (small group) Homework: Journal #3
Week 3	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Discussion #3 (small group) Homework: Journal #4
Week 4	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Discussion #4 (small group) Homework: Journal #5
Week 5	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Related or other content area instruction	Discussion #5 (whole-class) Post-test Homework: Final reflection (Journal #6)

ranging from *a lot true for me* to *not true for me*. Because there are only four 9th-12th grade indicators for NHES #8 and those indicators are dense (i.e., need to be "unpacked" before using them for instruction), we based our advocacy items on RMC Health's interpretation of the standard. RMC Health, a non-profit school health organization, breaks down the NHES grade-level indicators into teachable subskills and provides supporting educational resources. Their advocacy subskills served as inspiration for many of our test items (2022).

We tested the internal consistency of our instrument and found it to be quite reliable. After grouping items based on domains, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for each social justice domain was as follows: identity ($\alpha = .787$, diversity ($\alpha = .870$), justice ($\alpha = .834$), and action ($\alpha = .872$). After grouping items for each NHES #8 subscale, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were as follows: self ($\alpha = .870$, others ($\alpha = .880$), justice ($\alpha = .937$). These values, all above .70, suggest a high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2006).

To evaluate the biblioguidance benefits of the curriculum, we randomly selected 15 student journals and studied their responses to the biblioguidance prompts in their final reflection (i.e., Journal #6). Those prompts were:

1. What do you think you gained by reading this story? In other words, what did you learn? [Insight]
2. What did this story confirm about your own lived experiences, thoughts, or feelings? Explain. [Identification]
3. Sometimes, by connecting to characters or a story, readers experience feelings of hope, feeling less alone, relief, or reduced anxiety. Did you experience any of these while reading or after finishing the story? If yes, explain. If not, could you imagine someone you know experiencing these things? Explain. [Catharsis]
4. Sometimes stories change people. By reading this story, have you changed? If yes, explain. If not, could you imagine someone you know changing because of this story? Explain. Change might include, but is not limited to, new awareness, understanding, perspectives, appreciations and respect, skills, behaviors, or new or renewed commitments. [Transformation]

As delineated in brackets, prompts were aligned to the aforementioned beneficial phases of biblioguidance: identification, insight, catharsis, and transformation. They also aligned with Wilhelm's (2016) connective and reflective dimensions of reader-response.

Data Analysis

To analyze the closed-ended data, we used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26. Specifically, we performed paired samples t-tests (also referred to as repeated-measures tests) to calculate differences between pre and post-test scores, as well as means and standard deviations.

To analyze the journals, we randomly selected and de-identified ten students' (~ 11% of the participants) journal entries. We independently read the journals to gain an overall sense of students' experience with the curriculum. Next, we discussed our interpretations, seeking agreement. Then, we each returned to the journals to select representative excerpts that would best demonstrate the student experience. Finally, we discussed these excerpts, selected the best representations, and took notes on ideas share for our future implementations of the curriculum.

Results

The purpose of the evaluation was to analyze the curriculum's impact on students' social justice and advocacy competency and to study its biblioguidance benefits. In this section, we share our findings.

What Impact Does the Curriculum Have on Students' Social Justice Competency?

Paired-samples t-tests showed a statistically significant increase for the social justice domains *diversity* and *action*, and approaching significance for *justice*. There was not a significant impact on the *identity* domain. See Table 2. A closer look at the descriptive statistics for this domain indicates that there was an increase, but not significantly. See Table 3. In scanning individual *identity* test items, there was no instance of significant change for any.

Table 2
Impact on social justice competencies

SJ Area	*M*	*STD*	*STE*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	*t*	*df*	*p*
Identity 1 & 2	-0.06	0.40	0.04	-0.14	0.02	-1.50	90	0.14
Diversity 1 & 2	-0.60	0.33	0.03	-0.67	-0.54	-17.66	90	0.00
Justice 1 & 2	-0.08	0.39	0.04	-0.16	0.00	-1.91	90	0.06
Action 1 & 2	-0.10	0.45	0.05	-0.20	-0.01	-2.23	90	0.03

Table 3
Social justice competencies descriptive statistics

SJ Area	*M*	*N*	*SD*	*SE*
Identity 1	3.40	91	0.42	0.04
Identity 2	3.47	91	0.45	0.05
Diversity 1	3.09	91	0.32	0.03
Diversity 2	3.69	91	0.46	0.05
Justice 1	3.58	91	0.44	0.05
Justice 2	3.66	91	0.47	0.05
Action 1	3.40	91	0.54	0.06
Action 2	3.51	91	0.54	0.06

What Impact Does the Curriculum Have on Students' Ability to Advocate for Personal, Family, and Community Health?

The results show a significant impact on all three advocacy subscales: self, family, and community. There were increases for all three areas. See Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4
Impact on NHES #8

NHES Standard Area	M	STD	STE	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	t	df	p
Advocacy for Self 1 & 2	-0.16	0.56	0.06	-0.27	-0.04	-2.65	90	0.01
Advocacy for Others 1 & 2	-0.15	0.53	0.06	-0.26	-0.04	-2.76	90	0.01
Advocacy for Community 1 & 2	-0.18	0.59	0.06	-0.30	-0.05	-2.83	90	0.01

Table 5
NHES #8 descriptive statistics

NHES Standard area	M	N	SD	SE
Advocacy for Self 1	3.45	91	0.49	0.05
Advocacy for Self 2	3.61	91	0.48	0.05
Advocacy for Others 1	3.32	91	0.53	0.06
Advocacy for Others 2	3.47	91	0.53	0.06
Advocacy for Community 1	3.29	91	0.58	0.06
Advocacy for Community 2	3.47	91	0.56	0.06

What Do Students Perceive as the Biblioguidance Benefits of the Curriculum?

A scan of randomly selected responses to the final journal reflection prompts indicates that students did experience biblioguidance benefits. Associated with the identification phase, students used words that reflected affiliation, reflection, and self-examination. When talking about the book characters, they indicated that they gained new perspectives and understandings, both of which are associated with the identification phase. Even when a student did not personally experience one of the beneficial phases, as reflected in example 2 for catharsis, they were able to envision the benefit for someone else. Regarding transformation, one student

expressed newly found gratitude, and another indicated a new way of looking at the world. Examples of students' perceptions in each of the four biblioguidance benefit phases appear in Table 6.

Table 6
Examples of biblioguidance benefits

	Example 1	Example 2
Identification	I am similar to Gabi because just like her I have a close relationship with my mom and she is protective over me. Her and her family are really close and I believe this is very similar to my family. I also like to surround myself around people I like, and so does Gabi. Also, Gabi has trouble with her confidence at times and I, too, feel this way sometimes in my life.	I saw myself most in Quinn because we shared the most similar identity in our physical appearance such as skin color. I also found myself feeling like if I were to be in this situation, I would most likely be in Quinn's position as not the person hospitalized, but the person who is standing up for the hurt person. I would protest for Rashad if I was in this situation because it was not right that Paul beat him up for not doing anything, just as Quinn did.
Insight	I think from reading this story I learned to not judge people by their cover. Even the most popular girl or guy can be going through extremely hard times. Georgina was super popular and never nice to Gabi; however, she was getting abused at home. While that isn't an excuse to be rude to others, she was going through a lot. Gabi was able to be kind to her and help her out even when she didn't have to, and I think that's something I will take with me.	I think now that I have heard Riley's story, I have a better understanding of what it means to treat people equally and I really understand the importance of standing up for the people close to you if they can't do it themselves. In the future, I will be more aware of how I talk to people but will also stand up for people who might not be able to do it for themselves.
Catharsis	I think I definitely felt a sense of comfort while reading the book. It taught me to realize that nobody is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. It made me realize that I'm not alone, and everything that I'm feeling is valid. Gabi expressed a lot of her inner thoughts, and I found myself agreeing with a lot of it. This gave me a sense of comfort as it was a good thing for me to accept... Meaning simply that it's okay to feel these emotions.	I did not experience these feelings personally, but I could imagine that for many people, books like these can impact their lives in a great way. If someone can relate very closely to one of the characters, a feeling of not being alone can take someone a long way. It can change the course of their life and even inspire them to do better things.

| Transformation | I have definitely changed after reading this story. My perspective of the world has changed and I now have more empathy. I feel more grateful for the little things in my life, like my supportive family. I have also learned to not let what other people think to affect me as much. Reading the story, I saw how devastated Gabi would be when she didn't live up to someone's expectations, and I don't want to live my life trying to make sure that I live up to everyone else's expectations because then I won't even be living. This book has definitely changed me. | By reading this story I have changed because I formed a new understanding and awareness of the lives people can live outside of [hometown]. This is through Finley growing up in a run-down town and having to worry about acts of violence that can occur. He is given minimal opportunities and has to struggle with a traumatic story from the past. However, since I have been raised in a town where I feel secure and safe and those violent activities don't take place where I live, I wasn't very knowledgeable about the realities of life and what a lot of other people on this earth are experiencing. While reading the book, I was able to better relate to Finley, and that allowed me to be more grateful for my family and the opportunities I have. |

Discussion

Our findings indicate the curriculum made an impact on some aspects of students' social justice competency and all aspects of the content area focus. Further, based on our scan of journal entries, students *did* appear to receive the benefits of biblioguidance. In this section, we connect these findings to the literature, identify opportunities for improvement, and offer suggestions for practice.

Social Justice

Like Polleck (2010), our biblioguidance intervention positively impacted the *diversity* and *action* domains. Her findings showed that a biblioguidance book club implemented with urban, adolescent females, fostered new perspectives, empathy, and respect for others, all of which are components of the *diversity* domain. It also improved their decision-making skills and willingness to accept responsibility for their behavior, which are components of the *action* domain. However, we were not as successful as Byrd et al. (2021) whose biblioguidance curriculum implemented with adolescent Black boys resulted in greater self-awareness and a deeper understanding of systemic barriers, which are components of the *identity* and *justice* domains.

Ways we could improve upon the *identity* domain include adding journal prompts that have students imagining book characters' reactions if the students were part of the story. Other identity-focused learning activities could include students distinguishing between their visible (e.g., skin color) and invisible identities (e.g. religion or sexual orientation), their personal identities (e.g., beliefs and values), and their social identities (e.g., personality traits and group affiliations) (Learning for Justice, 2019). As for the *justice* domain, Learning for Justice (2020)

suggests using texts to help students recognize and celebrate justice and call out injustice when they see it. Our use of novels certainly abides by this suggestion, but perhaps we could include instruction that explicitly has students identifying and describing justice and injustice.

Content Area - Health Education

The curriculum positively impacted all three subareas for the selected content area standard, which was health advocacy for self, family, and community. This suggests that young adult novels with social justice themes can engage students in learning new content and support the development of content area skills. For example, Dover's (2016) research with 24 English language arts teachers revealed that a curriculum centered on young adult novels with social justice themes supported the development of English language arts skills and critical thinking. Extending this idea, Chisholm et al. (2017) used graphic novels to support students' achievement of social studies standards while also supporting students' development of emotive empathy. Their findings coupled with ours suggest that texts can be used to support both content area and social justice education.

Biblioguidance Benefits

A final takeaway from our findings was that the curriculum might support all beneficial phases of biblioguidance. The value of this finding is in how it relates to Hackman's (2005) and Heath et al.'s (2017) recommendations for social justice education. Per Hackman, students must understand not only how the material relates to their own lives but also how it relates to larger issues in society. The identification and insight biblioguidance phases are necessary for this understanding. And per Heath et al. (2017), effective social justice education "challenges, confronts, and disrupts misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination" (p.12). Without the transformation phase, and perhaps even catharsis, students might not engage in the kind of work necessary to improve equality in one's immediate environment or the larger society.

Limitations

The limitations of our study relate to generalizability. The first limitation is the sample size. Our data included fewer than 100 students and only 10 journals were analyzed. We will have more data points to study as we implement the curriculum in the semesters yet to come. We cannot yet generalize our results to future student groups until then.

A second limitation is the lack of a comparison group. The results might be very different in another school setting. For example, the second author previously taught at a high school that was more racially diverse and whose community was economically depressed. We implemented an early version of the curriculum with these students and attempted to evaluate it. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19 restrictions in the spring semester of 2020, we could not collect enough post-tests for analysis. However, a visual scan of their pre-test responses indicated they were quite different from the current population. Namely, the mean scores were lower in all social justice areas. We regret not being able to measure growth and would encourage others to study the curriculum's impact on diverse student populations.

A final limitation to our study relates to external factors. We do not know the impact of the content area instruction that took place outside of the curriculum but during the same time frame. Because the focus of that curriculum was neither social justice nor advocacy, we did not factor it into the analysis. However, should a teacher implement the curriculum with content that *does* focus on these areas, it might be difficult to separate which components were impacting the desired outcomes. An experimental design with a control group could facilitate a comparison.

Despite the limitations cited above, the pilot implementation was fairly successful and is worth continued enhancement, implementation, and evaluation.

Implications for Practice

Betzalel and Shechtman (2017) contended that biblioguidance could be tailored to meet a broad range of needs. This belief about the malleability of biblioguidance aligns with Gavigan (2012) who demonstrated how appropriately selected graphic novels can be used to educate youth on and foster conversation about a broad range of topics. She acknowledged that while "graphic novels for young adults are not a panacea for solving the challenging issues that teens face, reading about comparable experiences through the lives of fictional contemporaries can help to alleviate teenagers' angst and let them know that they are not alone" (p. 79). These findings, coupled with ours and the literature we have cited, demonstrate the many benefits of a biblioguidance approach. They also demonstrate that social justice education *can* be infused into content-area instruction.

To support teachers in developing a content area biblioguidance curriculum, we developed a teacher's guide that can be accessed on this website: https://sites.google.com/neiu.edu/novelcurriculumteachersguide/home There, teachers can download our journal and discussion prompts, pacing guides, assessments, and suggestions for selecting novels. We also provide evaluation tools to ensure the curriculum's quality for social justice education.

Conclusion

This article shared the evaluation findings from the pilot implementation of a biblioguidance curriculum in a content-area course. Without sacrificing much instructional time, the curriculum appeared to make a significant impact on students' performance in two social justice domain areas and one content area standard. Even though we did not significantly impact all social justice domain areas, with the improvements discussed in the implications section, we are confident that we will be able to impact these areas in subsequent implementations.

We would like to emphasize again that while the curriculum was implemented in health education classes, this dual-purpose curriculum can easily be adapted to ELA and the social, biological, and physical sciences. It could also be implemented as part of school library books clubs, small group counseling, or with other extracurriculars and support services. As indicated in the introduction, social justice education is both a goal and process (Bell, 2016). Creative and intentional social justice education infused into PK-12 instruction not only helps students to thrive but also supports progress towards a more equitable society.

Author Notes

Jennifer Banas, EdD is a Professor in the Department of Health Sciences and Physical Education at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, IL. Her research interests include Health Education, Health Promotion Program Design, School Health, Public Health, Instructional Design and Technology, Curriculum and Instruction

Sarah Gershon is a health education teacher at Deerfield High School in Deerfield, IL. Her research interests include Health Education, Instructional Technology, Social and Emotional Health

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Jennifer Banas at j-banas@neiu.edu

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Appendix A – Pre and Post-Test

Directions: This pre-/post-test asks questions about things students your age might think or do when it comes to social justice and advocacy. Some of the terms might be unfamiliar to you. That's okay! You'll learn about them in upcoming lessons. After you've finished your novel, you'll answer the same questions to see if your thoughts have changed. Your answers will be kept private. There are no "wrong" answers. You will receive points just for completion. Read each sentence and decide how true each sentence is for you using the following scale:

- A lot true for me (4)
- Generally true for me (3)
- A little true for me (2)
- Not true for me (1)

Identity
1. I have a positive view of myself.
2. I know my family history and cultural background
3. I can explain how social groups influence my identity
4. I know that my social group identities make up who I am
5. I know that social group identities make up other people
6. I am proud of and confident about my identity.
7. I don't think of or treat anyone else as inferior
8. I am aware of how my identity might be interpreted by others
9. I am aware of how my identity might impact others

Diversity
1. I interact comfortably and respectfully with others, whether they are similar to or different from me.
2. I respectfully describe how people (including myself) are similar to and different from each other.
3. I respectfully express curiosity about the experiences of others.
4. I exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
5. I connect with others by showing empathy, respect, and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.
6. I understand that diversity includes unequal power relations that impact different social groups.

Justice
1. I relate to all people as individuals rather than representatives of groups
2. I can identify stereotypes when I see or hear them.
3. I can recognize and describe unfairness and injustice in society.
4. I can explain the impact of biased words and behaviors
5. I can explain the impact of unfair practices and laws
6. I am aware of the advantages/disadvantages I have because I belong to certain social groups

Action
1. I express empathy for people when they are excluded or mistreated because of their identity
2. I stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice.
3. I have the courage to speak up when someone's words, actions, or views are biased or hurtful.
4. I communicate with people respectfully even when we disagree.
5. I stand up when I see someone who is excluded, even when it's not easy or no one else does.
6. I stand up when I see someone who is shown prejudice and discrimination, even when it's not easy or no one else does.

Advocacy for self
1. I know when I have a personal health problem or challenge
2. I know how to research a personal health problem or challenge
3. I can decide if I need help with a health problem or challenge
4. I know whom I can go to for help with a health problem or challenge
5. I know the best ways to ask others for help

Advocacy for others
1. I know when someone has a health problem or challenge
2. I know how to research someone else's health problems or challenges
3. I know if/when I should ask for help with someone else's health problem or challenge
4. I know people I can go to for help with someone else's health problem or challenge
5. I can communicate with others about their health challenge
6. I can educate someone about positive health behaviors/choices

Advocacy for community
1. I can identify community health problems and challenges
2. I know how to research community health problems and challenges
3. I can come up with solutions to community health problems and challenges
4. I can defend (provide reasons) solutions to a community health problem or challenge
5. I know how to communicate solutions to a community health problem or challenge