

Environmental Justice in Classrooms

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Abstract

Environmental justice is a movement towards a healthy environment, which is a necessary component of a healthy life. Here discussing environmental justice and its efforts to make everyone's environment clean, safe and healthy. There are several issues related to Environmental Justice like environmental pollutants, lack of healthy food etc. Federal agency called the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), National Institutes of Health, and Department of Health and Human Services, are dedicated to doing much of the research to spot environmental agents that cause illness and death. Here also discussing the Environmental Justice in classrooms and role of teachers to promote the same.

Key Words: Environmental Justice and Environmental Sustainability.

Introduction

When you think about the environment, your mind might call up images of rambling rivers, peaceful woodlands or scenic mountains. However, in broader concept of environment is the surroundings or conditions in which a person lives. By this concept, the environment would include your home, schools, place of work, and community parks etc. These are the places you spend your time, and they play a big role in your overall health, happiness and well-being.

Environmental justice is a movement towards a healthy environment, which is a necessary component of a healthy life. Here discussing environmental justice and its efforts to make everyone's environment clean, safe and healthy.

Environmental Justice is a newer term which simply means making sure that everyone has a fair chance of living the healthiest life possible.

The opportunity to have a healthy life often depends on where someone lives, plays, and works, and also it depends on their environment. So it is important that all environments are free of unhealthy materials because these can cause illness and sometimes even death. Environmental Justice consider to being sure that everyone has a fair chance of finding their living in a safe and protected environment.

Definition

According to **The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)** “*Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.*”

According to **State of Maryland** “*Environmental Justice means equal protection from environmental and public health hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture, and social class.*”

Norms of Eco-Justice Ethics

The basic norms of eco-justice ethics are:

1. solidarity with other people and creatures (companions, victims, and allies) in earth and reflecting deep respect for diverse creation.
2. ecological sustainability – environmentally suitable habits of living and working that enable life to flourish and utilize ecological resources.
3. sufficiency as a standard of organized sharing, which requires basic floors and definite ceilings for equitable or “fair” consumption.
4. socially just participation in decisions about how to obtain sustenance and to manage community life for the good in common and the good of the commons.

The solidarity norm comprehends the full dimensions of earth community and of inter-human obligation. Sustainability gives high visibility to ecological integrity and sensible behavior throughout the resource-use cycle. The third and fourth norms emphasize the distributive and participatory dimensions of basic social justice. These norms illumine to follow right relations in reinforcing ways that are both ecologically suitable and socially just.

Issues Related to Environmental Justice

Issues related to environmental Justice may be cover many aspects of community life. These issues can include any environmental pollutant, hazard or disadvantage which contributes to the health of a community or its residents. For instance, one of the environmental justice issue is inadequate access to healthy food. Certain communities, particularly lower-income or minority communities, often lack sources of healthy and affordable foods.

Another issue is inadequate transportation. While public transportation may be available in urban areas, policies must be monitored to avoid cuts in service and fare hikes that make it difficult for community residents to pursue employment or an adequate living standard.

Air and water pollution are major issues for environmental justice, because many lower-income or minority communities are located near industrial plants or waste disposal sites. If the air and water quality is not properly monitored can suffer.

These communities may also contain older and unsafe homes and older homes are more likely to have lead-based paint that can damage and finds its way into the dust and soil surrounding the home, leading to illness. These houses may also be lead to structural problems, mold or other hazards that put residents at higher risk of health problems.

Background of Environmental Justice Movement

The concept of environmental justice began as a movement in the 1980s due to the realization that a disproportionate number of polluting industries, power plants, and waste disposal areas were located near low-income or minority communities. The movement was set in to protect earth from environmental burdens.

Federal agency called the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), National Institutes of Health, and Department of Health and Human Services, are dedicated to doing much of the research to spot environmental agents that cause illnesses and death.

The information developed by National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences laboratories and NIEHS supported research laboratories around the country is then used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop laws that will help to promote healthy environments. Both NIEHS and EPA are involved with the "environment", but they have very different missions—in general, it is the responsibility of the EPA to make and enforce laws that promote healthy environments. To do this properly, NIEHS and other similar research organizations must first identify appropriate environmental issues.

Environmental Justice in Classrooms

Children deserve the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. Poor indoor air quality in schools can lead to lower academic performance and increased absences. Children are the ones who suffer the most from unhealthy indoor environments since they spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. Unfortunately, not all children have clean indoor air where they live, learn and play. That's where Environmental Justice comes in.

The goal of Environmental Justice is quite simple: to ensure that everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy

environment. It means reducing environmental risk disparities and educating the community about what these environmental risks are. It means making sure that every child has a clean, safe environment.

How Teachers Can Promote the Concept Environmental Justice in Students

School communities are increasingly becoming places where healthy habits can be practiced. Students who attend a healthy school can make informed, healthy decisions that affect their own lives and the lives of their families. Start small and build on programs like:

1. Engage children in efforts to identify and reduce environmental health hazards in school design, maintenance and construction through education, technical assistance and encouragement.
2. Have science teachers create Green Squad projects for students to learn about and assess environmental conditions in their schools.
3. Partner with local hospitals to offer asthma screening for children. Start small and grow. Our kids deserve it.
4. Promote organic farming in school.
5. Keep school environment clean and healthy.
6. Proper waste management by distinguishing food and plastic waste separately.
7. Conduct community service programmes such as cleaning public canals and drainage system, roads, slum areas etc.
8. Conduct seminars related to personal and environmental hygiene.

Environmental Justice and sustainability are intertwined in important ways that will offer educational openings for students. Both have innate geoscience elements which introduce students to a scientific understanding of the Earth and societal challenges.

Environmental Justice helps in the study of environmental issues because it includes the scientific examination of environmental issues in relation to its cause and effects. With such an emotionally charged topic, it is essential to understand both students and the affected populations.

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