



Addressing Environmental Justice in Local Communities

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MAEOE

Maryland Association for Environmental &
Outdoor Education



naaee

North American Association
for Environmental Education

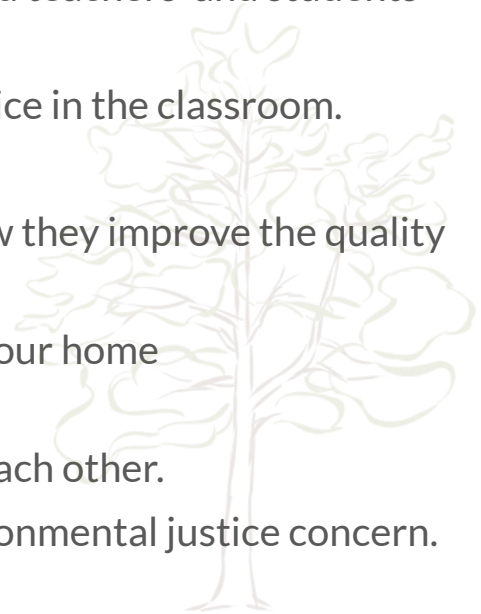


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Workshop Objectives

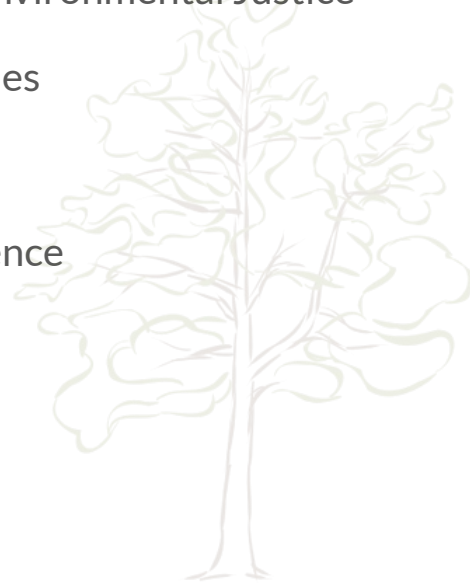
- Create a group definition of environmental justice centered around teachers' and students' lived experiences.
- Explore materials and activities for addressing environmental justice in the classroom.
- Identify an environmental justice concern in school communities.
- Become familiar with Community Engagement Guidelines and how they improve the quality of EE practice.
- Identify tools for fostering community engagement strategies at your home organizations/contexts.
- Provide opportunities or participants to network and learn from each other.
- Implement a student action project to address the identified environmental justice concern.





Workshop Outline

- December 13 Defining Our Relationship with the Environment and Environmental Justice
- January 10 Identifying Locally Relevant Environmental Justice Issues
- February 21 Crafting an Action Plan
- March 6 NAAEE Community Engagement Guidelines for Excellence
- April No meeting, check in via email*
- May 8 Action Plan Results and Reflection





Student Action Projects

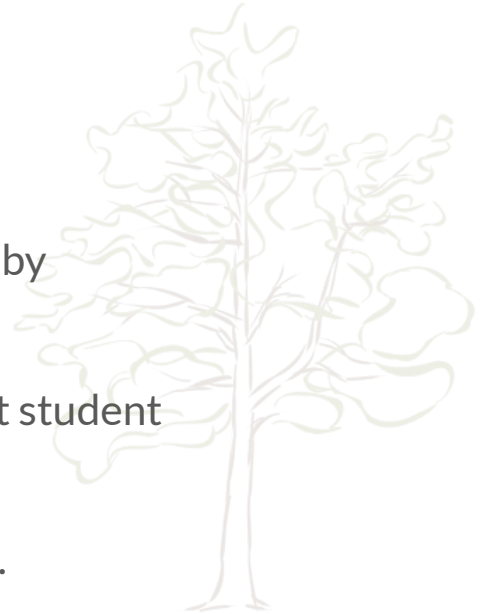
Student action projects should be:

- Student-led
- Sustainable
- Completed by June 7, 2024

Teachers can receive up to \$500 to support student action projects by [submitting an application](#) on our Green Schools website.

Informal educators: email engagement@maeoe.org to inquire about student action project funding.

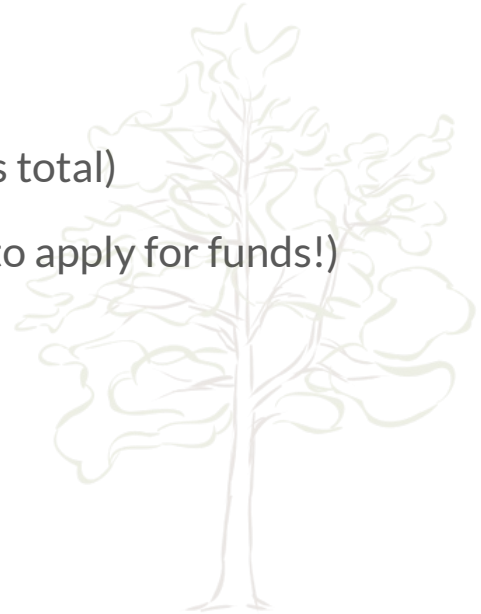
Grant questions? Email Carrie Shershanovich at grants@maeoe.org.





Qualifying for MSDE Credit and Stipend

- Attend all 5 virtual sessions
(12/13/2023, 1/10/2024, 2/21/2024, 3/6/2024, 5/8/2024)
- Complete monthly asynchronous (in-classroom) work (5 hours total)
- Complete the Student Action Project assignment (remember to apply for funds!)
 - Stipend Amount: \$125 received at completion of course
 - 1 MSDE Credit for certified MD teachers
(teachers will submit the form to their schools)



Session 1 Agenda

Objective: Develop a personal definition of environmental justice.

- 4:00 Welcome / Introductions
- 4:15 Observing Our Environment
- 4:30 What is My Healthy Environment?
- 5:00 What Does Justice Look Like?
- 5:30 Defining Environmental Justice
- 5:50 In Your Classroom / Wrap Up





Community Agreements

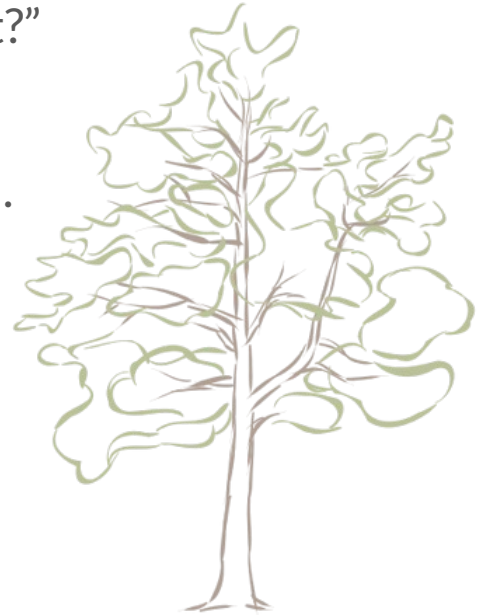
- Listen to understand
- Acknowledge and respect differences and similarities
- Actively participate; be fully present
- Lean into your learning edge
- WAIT: Why Am I Talking / Why Aren't I Talking
- Honor confidentiality; stories stay, learnings go
- Balance advocacy and inquiry
- It's okay to be raggedy
- Speak from personal experience with "I" statements
- Don't expect one person to represent all persons in their group
- Acknowledge any missing voices from these conversations
- Assume good intentions and acknowledge impact
- Address conflict or tension
- Take risks, ask questions, and be courageous
- Have some fun with this!



Word Cloud

What do you think of when you hear the word “environment?”

Have students post sticky notes on a whiteboard with their words, or use an app like Mentimeter to create a word cloud.



What Is the Environment?

The environment is the conditions and things that surround us. The environment includes conditions and things made by people and natural systems. Part of the environment is things created by people, such as roads and houses, and conditions created by people, like a feeling of love or social belonging. This human-created environment is part of the larger natural environment. The natural environment includes all living things. It includes systems like the ones that create rocks and the weather. The natural environment is not created by people, but people can harm or protect the natural environment.

The environment includes the conditions and things very near to you, like the ones found in your home, school, and neighborhood. The environment also includes things and conditions all around the world.

Sometimes it might be helpful to think about the local and global environments or the human-created and natural environments separately. But these environments cannot really be separated. They are all connected. You are part of the environment, and the environment is part of you.

In this guide, when you think about your environment you will be thinking about both the human-created environment and the natural environment.



Draw the Following Table

| | I Notice... | I Think... | I Wonder... |
|----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Indoors | | | |
| Outdoors | | | |

Adopted from Task 1 of [Smithsonian's Environmental Justice! guide](#).



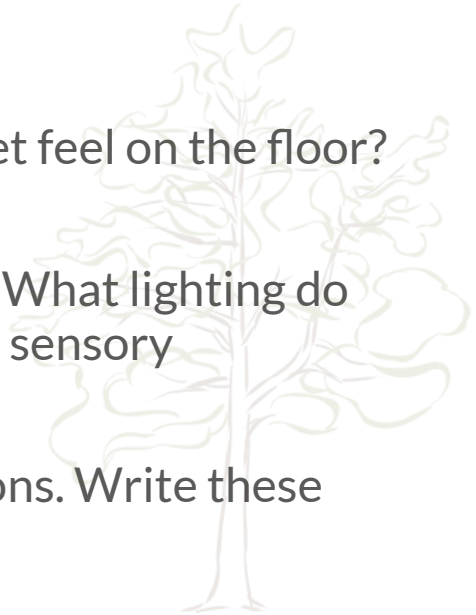
Observing Our Environment

Find a place to sit indoors and close your eyes.

- What sounds do you hear?
- How does your body feel in your seat? What do your feet feel on the floor?
- Do you notice any smells?

Open your eyes. What is the first thing that draws your eye? What lighting do you have? What else do you see around you? Record all your sensory observations under “I Notice...” for indoors.

Now find a place to sit outdoors and repeat these observations. Write these under “I Notice... for outdoors.

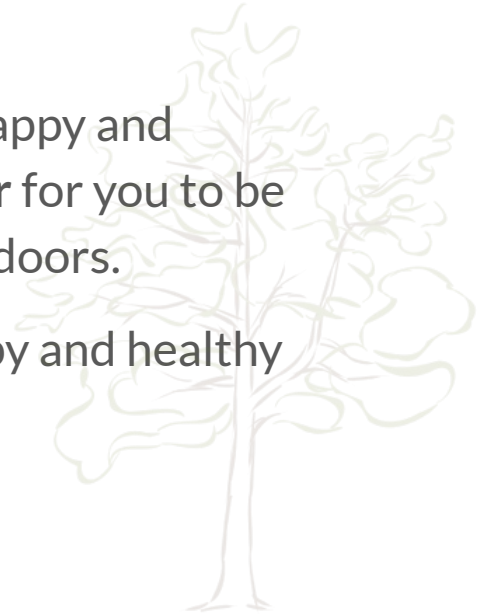




Observing Our Environment

Think about everything you noticed indoors and outdoors.

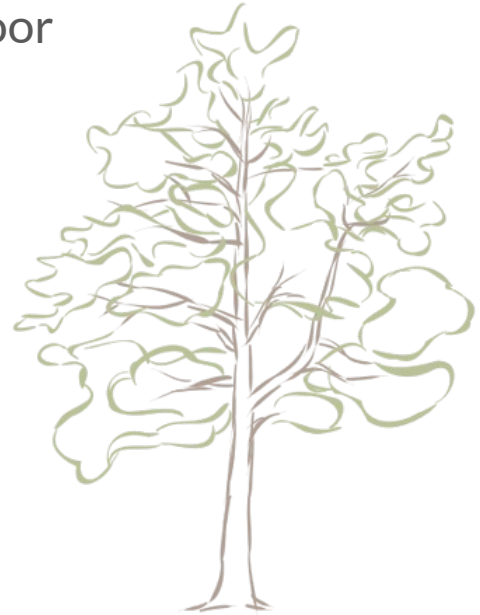
- What did you notice that made it **easier** for you to be happy and healthy indoors? What about things that made it **harder** for you to be happy and healthy? Write these under “I Think...” for indoors.
- What things made it easier or harder for you to be happy and healthy outdoors? Write these under “I Think...” for outdoors.



Observing Our Environment

Under “I Wonder...” write one question about how your indoor environment might affect you or other people.

Do the same for your outdoor environment.



What is Your Healthy Environment?

What would need to change for your environment to have an even more positive effect on you?

Write a list of things a healthy environment would include for you.

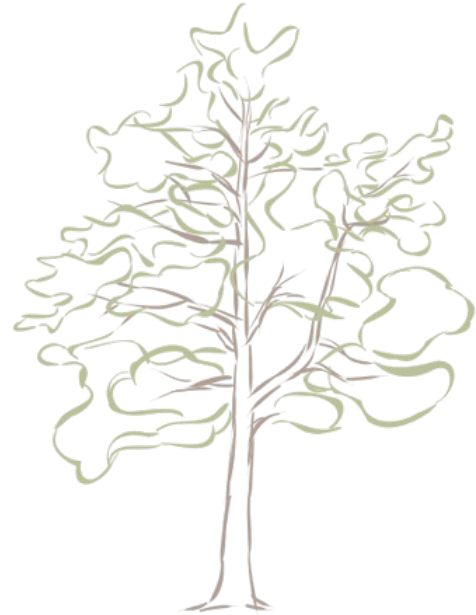
In breakout rooms, share your lists and note which things you have in common with each other. As you discuss, add those common things to our virtual whiteboard.



What is Your Healthy Environment?

Add sticky notes to our whiteboard answering the following prompts:

- How do you want your environment to positively affect you?
- How do you want to positively affect your environment?



Word Cloud

What does justice mean to you?

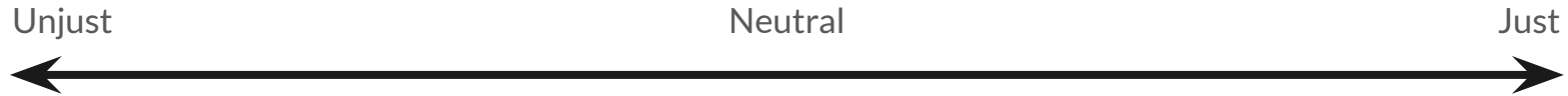
Have students post sticky notes on a whiteboard with their words, or use an app like Mentimeter to create a word cloud.





Defining Justice

On our whiteboard, you will see the following diagram:



In the whiteboard, create a sticky note with your name on it. For each scenario, move your sticky note onto the line to represent how just or unjust you believe the scenario is.

Scenarios can be found under Task 2 on page 12 of [Smithsonian's Environmental Justice! guide](#).

Defining Justice

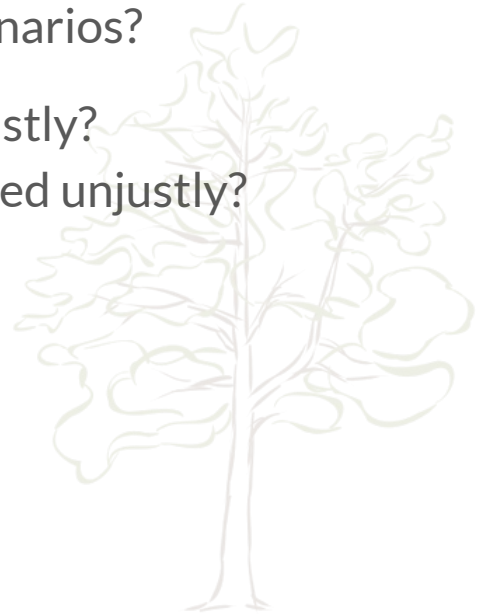
Have you experienced something similar to any of these scenarios?

If you felt a scenario was unjust, who was being treated unjustly?

Are there certain identities related to those being treated unjustly?

What identities might not be aware of this injustice?

What might we change to make the scenario just?

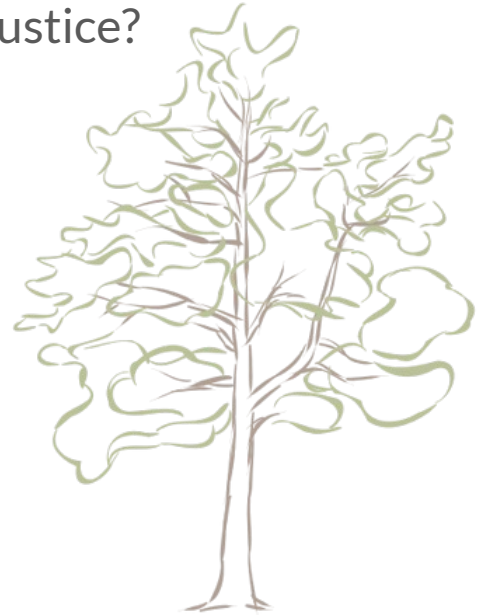



Defining Environmental Justice

Based on this activity, how would we define environmental justice?

- How can an environment be just or unjust?
- What would a just environment include?

On our whiteboard, create a group definition of environmental justice.





“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. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys:

- A. The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and*
- B. Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.”*

- US Environmental Protection Agency

How does our group definition compare to the EPA definition?





Defining Environmental Justice

Take a moment to review the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#) from the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.

Did any principles stand out to you?

Do you recognize any of these related terms?

- Climate justice
- Environmental racism





Climate justice:

“Climate Justice recognizes the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income communities and communities of color around the world, the people and places least responsible for the problem.”

University of California Center for Climate Justice





Environmental racism:

“The intentional selection of communities of color for wastes disposal sites and polluting industrial facilities, essentially condemning them to contamination.”

“It is racial discrimination in the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste disposal and the siting of polluting industries. It is racial discrimination in the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in communities of color. And, it is racial discrimination in the history of excluding people of color from the mainstream environmental groups, decisionmaking boards, commissions, and regulatory bodies.”

Civil rights activist and former NAACP Executive Director Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

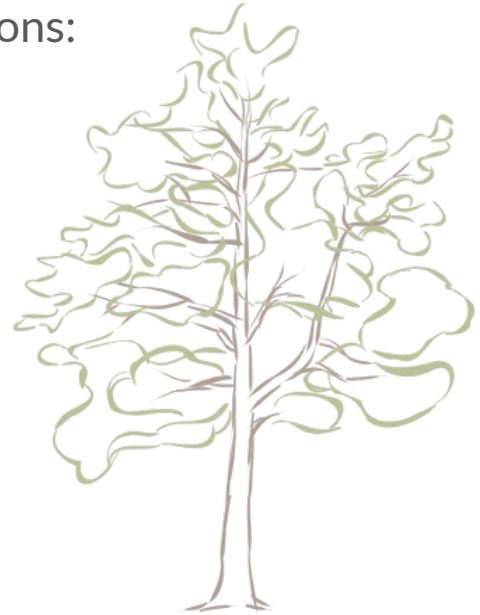


Next Session: January 10th

Implement today's activities in your own classrooms/organizations:

- Establish community agreements
- Observe your indoor/outdoor environment
- Define a safe and healthy environment
- Evaluate environmental justice scenarios
- Create a group definition of environmental justice

Write a short reflection on your experience with these activities and post it on our Padlet!





Resources

[Environmental Justice!](#)

by the Smithsonian Science Education Center

[Principles of Environmental Justice](#)

from the first National People of Color
Environmental Leadership Summit

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