Climate Hope Pedagogies

Hope & Emotion in the curriculum

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June 2024
Climate Optimism talk
Our students face a world of social problems
We all want students to work toward a better world
Our focus on social problems may not help students understand what can be done to address them
Politics of despair
“When we are hopeless, and especially when we are in despair, not only are our individual lives more difficult but also our social and political lives suffer.

We find ourselves disempowered, unable to solve shared problems and create improved ways of living and working together.”
When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark

Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
For your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone
Believing in the possibility of better futures
Challenge

Youth apathy, detachment, & dispassion

Why should I care?

I don’t care, it doesn’t affect ME!!!

It’s not my concern!

Who cares???
Challenge

Feelings of anxiety, despair, grief, fatalism, and hopelessness

‘It makes you a bit panicky and stuff. Like oh I’m going to die, what’s the point of doing anything, we’re all going to die.”

I’d cry to mum and be, like, “mum, we’re going to die” and she would be like “why”, and I was like “because we’re killing our planet that’s why!!”
Challenge

Feelings of helplessness

“It’s like you’re stuck, you learn about the drastic stuff that’s happened, and not even how we can do anything!!”

“That it was something we were learning about, but we weren’t learning what to do or how to cope with it”
Why is hope important?

- greater sense of agency
- increased confidence & self-worth
- positive emotions
- ability to identify alternate pathways to achieve goals
Hope provides

✓ increased motivation to take action
✓ Psychological and emotional well-being
Michaela (Grade 8)

“[Hope] gives us a way forward. Without hope everything would be doom and gloom”

Kurt (Grade 8)

“Hope is really important. Without hope, there is nothing.”
The curriculum is implicitly hopeful, but we have to be more direct and systematic in centering hope.
Schools should highlight realistic, hopeful examples far more than they do now.
Dreams

• “Dreams belong in a timeless and spaceless realm; they do not demand any commitment from the person having them. For some they may be daydreams in a more conventional sense, while for others they can have more concrete or tangible aspects” (p. 178)

Hopes

• “Hopes are more tangible and concrete in the sense that they are seen as within the realm of the possible having space and time associations, however vague.” (p. 179)
Plans

• “Plans are the most concrete of these concepts. They have a set time horizon, and also a space or place association, in that they are normally expressed in connection with something the person in question has a certain feeling of control over.

• The time horizon is very short... Therefore they can be seen as no more than a short-term projection of the present into the immediate future, or indeed an orientation to the extended present.” (p. 179)
What kind of hope?
Passivity is the opposite of hope

Real hope requires action and engagement
Hope depends on knowledge

➢ Possibilities
➢ Goals
➢ Pathways
Types of hope

➢ Pragmatic hope

➢ Visionary hope
Pragmatic hope

The belief that a better future can realistically be attained in the near future through feasible strategies that are currently available.
Pragmatic hope

Characteristics:

- **Goals** that can be achieved in a reasonable time frame, even if they are ambitious—goals that are bounded and concrete, rather than grandiose or amorphous.
  - E.g., “ending poverty” vs “increasing affordable housing”

- Teachers need to **select and frame social issues** in ways that are manageable in scale and scope in order to avoid demoralizing students.
Pragmatic hope—Goals
Bounded and concrete, not vague or grandiose
Characteristics:

- Teachers need to help students understand the pathways that contribute to change through the use of concrete case studies
  - E.g., Strategies that can be used
  - E.g., Factors that affect success or failure

- Case study example: efforts by physicians, scientists, and environmentalists beginning in the 1940s to prohibit the use of DDT and similar persistent organic pollutants
Pragmatic hope-Pathways

What work goes into making change successful
**Characteristics:**

- Teachers need to help students increase their sense of agency and belief in future possibilities by introducing successful cases of social movements
  - E.g., Women’s suffrage
  - E.g., Fight for civil rights

- Case study example: AIDS Coalition to Unearth Power (ACT UP) achieved numerous targeted victories designed to address the AIDS pandemic—more funding for research, new regulatory procedures for drugs, and an end to discrimination against people with AIDS.
“It’s just as important to fight smaller, more local battles that you have some realistic hope of winning ...
keep trying to save what you love specifically—a community, an institution, a wild place, a species that’s in trouble—and take heart in your small successes.”

(Franzen, 2019)
Visionary hope

The belief that people can actively and collectively reconfigure the future to advance a profoundly different vision of society
Visionary hope

Characteristics:

- **Goals** that are motivated by idealistic visions of human and environmental relationships. Envisions a future that may seem very difficult to attain, both in terms of scope and time scale.
  - E.g., climate justice

- Teachers need to expose students to the thought of visionaries who have imagined a very different world e.g., Mary Wollstonecraft, W. E. B. Dubois, Aldo Leopold
Visionary hope
Goals
Idealistic thinking
Characteristics:

- Teachers need to help students understand the pathways that can contribute to transformative or even utopian change over generations through the use of concrete case studies
  - E.g., Strategies that can be used
  - E.g., Factors that affect success or failure

- Case study example: The idea of climate justice may have seemed liked a fantasy 40 years ago, but decades of collective advocacy by small and developing nations eventually led to a global fund to provide compensation for the effects of climate change
Visionary hope
Pathways
The steps necessary for a better world
Visionary hope
Pathways

Analyzing how to get from here to there is an antidote to despair
Characteristics:

- Teachers need to help students increase their sense of agency and belief in future possibilities by fostering a belief that the world can be different than it is by helping students see how institutions, structures, norms, and practices have changed over time
  - E.g., Extraction of environmental resources; anthropogenic world views
  - E.g., Gender roles

- Case study example: The relational and spiritual beliefs and knowledge systems of the Menominee people have enabled them to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem while providing economic opportunities
Tree Keepers: Where Sustaining the Forest Is a Tribal Tradition
Summary

- Dreams
- Hopes
- Plans

Visionary Hope
- Goals
- Pathways
- Possibilities

Pragmatic Hope
What can teachers do?

1. Develop curriculum that embraces a diversity of individual hopes.

2. Incorporate familiar and distant community, national, and global collective hopes.
If the knowledge students engage with is oversimplified, romantic, or lacking in evidence, it may provide false hope.
This knowledge must be complex, not simplistic

- Understanding the complicated and often unintended consequences of social action
- Putting change into historical and cultural perspective
- Drawing well-informed conclusions from carefully evaluated evidence
“Hope...does not ignore the worst dimensions of human suffering and exploitation;

on the contrary, it acknowledges the need to sustain the ‘capacity to see the worst and offer more than that for our consideration.’”

(Henry Giroux)
Curriculum Model for Climate Hope
Case Study

Louisiana’s Gulf Coast

Resolving Climate Change & Sea Level Rise

Visionary Hope

Pragmatic Hope

Political Advocacy

Habitat Restoration projects

Public education Projects
### Collaborative Deliberation for Justice & Harmony

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<td>an authentic societal problem that involves social justice and/or harmony and is appropriately bounded and feasible for students.</td>
<td>the societal problem in a way that avoids binaries and invites open-ended consideration and deliberation of the issue.</td>
<td>students with background material that helps them understand different dimensions of the issue and extend concern, empathy, and compassion to those affected.</td>
<td>students into smaller sub-groups to conduct investigations into specific aspects of the issue by collecting data and reviewing relevant research and empirical evidence.</td>
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<td>proposed responses by analyzing policy impact and effectiveness, deliberating collaboratively in small and large groups, and listening to voices that are geographically, culturally, and socially distant.</td>
<td>real-world examples and case studies that demonstrate pragmatic and visionary hopeful possibilities of individual and collective change.</td>
<td>diverse and inclusive forms of communication and expression while engaged in deliberation, including making space for emotion, passion, and the use of varied forms of evidence and data.</td>
<td>individual and collective wise action to implement proposed responses, after weighing the intended and unintended consequences of different solutions.</td>
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Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

Guideline #1

selecting a feasible societal problem that involves social justice and/or harmony

Examples

- Avoid issues e.g., “climate change,” “poverty,” and “racism”
- Why?
  - Instead, consider the scope and scale of the issue
  - E.g., climate change $\rightarrow$ sea level rise $\rightarrow$ increased flooding and loss of coastlines $\rightarrow$ impact on Indigenous communities in Louisiana
Guideline #2

framing the societal problem in a way that invites open-ended consideration of the issue

Joint, non-adversarial problem solving requires questions that invite open-ended consideration of a common concern or shared value rather than support for, or opposition to, a given policy.

Examples

- Should the state provide universal childcare? vs.
- How can working families have greater access to childcare? (framed as supporting working families)

- Should hate speech be permitted? vs.
- How can vulnerable groups be protected against verbal attacks? (framed as protecting the safety of a vulnerable group)
Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

Guideline #3

Engaging with background material that helps them understand the issue and extend concern to those affected

Learning about concrete circumstances that lead others to feel joy or suffering

Engaging with stories, words and images that convey experiences and feelings in emotionally compelling ways

Considering the impact of structural forces on people's lives
Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

Guideline #4

Organizing students into smaller groups to inquire into specific aspects of the issue

Problem: Destruction of coastal wetlands in Louisiana

E.g., How can we minimize coastal erosion and land degradation?

E.g., How can we mitigate impact of the loss of coastal wetlands on Indigenous communities?

E.g., How can we contribute to the healthy growth of coastal wetlands?
Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

Guideline #5

Evaluating proposed responses by deliberating collaboratively, including listening to distant voices

The curriculum should attend to what Amartya Sen (2009) calls “distant voices”

the ideas and perspectives of people who have differing experiences and backgrounds and who are distant, whether geographically or socially.
Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

Guideline #6

Seeking examples and case studies that demonstrate hopeful possibilities of collective change

Hope: a belief that there is still a possibility that there is something worth desiring or working towards (Foster, 2015)

E.g., Coalition to restore Coastal Louisiana

E.g., Recycling oyster shells to restore reefs

Provides students with an opportunity to experience the kinds of incremental changes and small-scale successes that can then serve as a foundation for more ambitious and complex goals
Case Study: Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana

Pragmatic hope

Restaurants in New Orleans are recycling oyster shells to save precious coastline
Case Study: Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana

Pragmatic hope
Case Study: Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana

Pragmatic hope (oyster shell recycling)
Guideline #7

*Embracing diverse forms of communication and expression while engaged in deliberation*

Establish inclusive norms of communication
- Make space for expressions of emotion and passion
- Introduce a range of communicative norms to students

Examples
- Encourage arguments supported by both personal testimony and other more traditional forms of evidence e.g., data and statistics
- Show when different forms of expression are most effective and appropriate
- Show how to attend to, make sense of, and respond to these varied formats (Andolina & Conklin, 2021).
Collaborative Deliberation Model for Hope

- Guideline #8

Taking wise action, individually and collectively, to implement proposed responses

- Examples
  - What outcomes do we want?
  - Which strategies will be most effective? What evidence do we have to support that conclusion?
  - Which organizations or individuals should we work with and why?
Wise Action: Decision matrix

Issue/Problem

Solution 1
Consequences

Solution 2
Consequences

Solution 3
Consequences

Consequences