



## A Truly Great Curriculum is Never Finished, but Grows Alongside the People it Serves

Pollyanna released its free K-8 Racial Literacy Curriculum in 2019. Since then, it has been downloaded thousands of times by educators across the country. We are so grateful to the committed teachers, administrators, and families who have utilized the Curriculum as a resource for bringing thoughtful conversations about race, racism, and racial literacy to their communities

Educators have also spent the last two years navigating the seismic changes brought about by COVID-19 and the movement for racial justice that found new energy and voices in the summer of 2020. Since then, educators adapted and evolved, often at a moment's notice, to introduce new technologies and explore important ideas with their students.

Pollyanna is committed to evolving and adapting alongside educators. Our Curriculum must remain fresh, vital, and centered on helping today's students shape a more racially just and equitable world.

The first step in this process was to complete an internal review comparing the K-8 Racial Literacy Curriculum to the [Social Justice Standards](#) set forth by Learning for Justice, a renowned and respected leadership organization in the work of racial and social justice. The Learning for Justice website explains:

*"The Social Justice Standards are a road map for anti-bias education at every stage of K-12 instruction. Comprised of anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes, the Standards provide a common language and organizational structure educators can use to guide curriculum development and make schools more just and equitable."*

In our internal process, we reviewed each lesson in the K-8 Racial Literacy Curriculum, and asked questions such as:

- *In what ways does each lesson meet the anchor standards set forth by Learning for Justice?*
- *Which standards are consistently met throughout the scope and sequence of the Curriculum?*
- *How might the alignment of the Pollyanna Curriculum with the Learning For Justice standards inform future work to revise and improve the Curriculum?*

Our assessment process was both affirming and constructive. Our most important initial findings include:

**1. THE CURRICULUM IS PARTICULARLY STRONG IN MEETING STANDARDS IN THE DIVERSITY AND JUSTICE DOMAINS THROUGHOUT THE K-8 SCOPE AND SEQUENCE.**

Among other standards, lessons throughout the Pollyanna K-8 Racial Literacy Curriculum consistently ask students to *“express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people,” “respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection,”* and *“examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.”* Affirming that these standards are present throughout the K-8 Curriculum reinforces our core value of utilizing racial literacy for creating a more just world.

**2. THE LENS OF THE LFJ STANDARDS SUPPORTS THE FACT THAT THE POLLYANNA K-8 CURRICULUM IS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE.**

- In the review, K-2nd grade lessons focus mainly upon the Identity and Diversity domains, supporting the notion that, at the youngest ages, the Curriculum is geared towards helping students build a positive sense of themselves and others. The lessons consistently ask students to *“develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society,” “recognize that people’s multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals,”* and *“express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.”*
- In the 3rd-5th grade units, as the content becomes more historical in nature, lessons focus more strongly towards Diversity and Justice. These lessons consistently ask students to
  - i. *“recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups”*
  - ii. *“analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today”*
  - iii. and *“identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.”*
- As students mature and become more curious about how the world and culture around them came to exist, the Pollyanna Curriculum grows alongside them by offering voices and perspectives that ask students to view human development through the lens of justice, rather than through “winners and losers.”
- In the 6th-8th grade units, focus on the Diversity and Justice domains remains consistent, but standards from the Action domain are also woven in. In the lessons, students are asked
  - i. *“to recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice,”*
  - ii. *“speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias,”*

iii. and *“make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.”*

- As students move through middle school, they often move from simply wanting to know about the world to knowing that they have the agency to make important changes. The Pollyanna Curriculum recognizes this developmental shift and positively supports it.

**3. OUR CURRICULUM IS STRONG AND IT MUST CONTINUE EVOLVING.** In the same way that doctors, lawyers, engineers, and a host of other professionals must consistently stay abreast of emerging technologies, resources, and ideas, so must we continue to make sure the Curriculum reflects the moment in which we live. Holding up the Pollyanna Curriculum to the LFJ standards led us to ask questions such as:

- *What resources have recently become available that we might include in the Curriculum?*
- *How might we make the Curriculum even more user-friendly for classroom teachers?*
- *How might the experiences of the last two years be reflected in the Curriculum?*

To these ends, we will continue to reflect, learn, and attempt to make important, meaningful changes without compromising the bedrock values that already define the K-8 Racial Literacy Curriculum. Additionally, we are always open to feedback from teachers and administrators who have implemented the curriculum in their school communities. Your feedback matters.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote: *“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”* We feel the only way to accomplish this goal is to continue asking challenging questions about our own work. A truly great curriculum is never finished, but grows alongside the people it serves.