



Spring 2021 Teacher Impact Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vocal Justice Teacher Fellowship selects, trains, and compensates middle and high school educators to facilitate Vocal Justice's curriculum at their schools. In January 2021, we selected our first cohort of fifteen high school educators from across the U.S. to implement the Vocal Justice program within their schools. Collectively, our teachers engaged over 150 high school students in our program.

By the Numbers

- 100 % of Fellows would recommend our fellowship to another educator.
- 10 out of 15 Fellows rejoined the program next school year.
- Teachers averaged 4+ out of 5 for both Learning and Enjoyment each Teacher Training Session.
- When asked "On a 1-10, how well did this session go?" Fellows averaged 8.36 across all sessions throughout the duration of the twelve weeks.

METHODOLOGY

Selection Process

Preference were granted to educators who can (1) enroll Black and Brown students who are disengaged academically and not civically engaged, (2) are able to integrate the Vocal Justice program into an existing class, including a homeroom period, have a comparable group of students they work with that won't participate in the Vocal Justice program, and (2) have facilitated social justice programs before, either as a teacher or in another capacity.

After reviewing over 80 applicants, we selected 15 teacher fellows for the inaugural cohort and fully participated in the program. Fellows came from ten states and Washington D.C. Eighty-percent of fellows identified their gender as woman or non-binary, and about seventy-percent are people of color. Three fellows worked at an alternative school, including one for youth recovering from substance abuse.

Data Collection

Fifteen teacher fellows provided feedback on the inaugural program through four channels:

Teacher journals¹, completed weekly throughout the program, asked the same detailed questions consecutively to provide us with metric points and insights on their overall experiences throughout the duration of their fellowship program.

Exit surveys² were collected at the end of monthly teacher fellow sessions and asked questions meant to gauge how much teachers were enjoying and learning from regularly meeting as a cohort.

Teacher cohort feedback surveys³ anonymously asked questions meant to measure how many teacher fellows would recommend the program to other teachers, impact on fellows and students, how many hours were put into the program, rooms for improvement, and other general feedback. These were completed once at the end of the program.

¹ Appendix A: Teacher Fellow Journal Entries

² Appendix C: Cohort Exit Survey

³ Appendix B: Teacher Teacher Cohort Feedback

1:1 Check-ins⁴ were conducted once throughout the duration of the program to gain context beyond survey questions on the teacher experiences and hear feedback on overall fellowship experience.

Analysis Framework

The weekly teacher journals and teacher cohort feedback form utilized a range of scales, starting with the [Semantic Differential Scale](#), a numeric range asking a straightforward question to gauge teacher fellow satisfaction with the sessions. It measures teachers' happiness with the experience by using direct questions, such as: "On a 1-10, how well did this session go?" with 1 being worst and 10 being best and "How much did you ENJOY today's session?" with 1 being worst and 5 being best. They were then followed up by a series of open-ended questions that leave room to share why they chose their selected number, significant takeaways, and ability to flag their concerns or room for improvement after each session.

The cohort feedback form, filled out by teacher fellows at the completion of their fellowship, starts off by requesting a [Net Promoter Score \(or NPS\)](#), a metric used to measure loyalty to the fellowship program by asking "How likely is it that you would recommend the Vocal Justice Fellowship to another teacher?" It is another datapoint that is inserted to gauge fellows' experience, this time in hindsight as opposed to throughout the duration of the program. It then asks a series of open-ended questions: glows and grows, impacts of the fellowship on them as educators and young leaders they served, and advice for future teacher fellows. It also calls for them to answer whether or not they would be interested in renewing their fellowship for the upcoming academic year.

The one-on-one check-ins provided space to have in depth conversations covering teacher sentiment towards the curriculum, observations of their young people, and feedback of the fellowship overall. Open-ended questions were asked to allow teachers to get as detailed as possible about their experiences in a manner that had not been possible through the survey questions or teacher journals. And the cohort feedback surveys covered teacher experiences within the teacher cohort sessions, asking questions about efficacy of these sessions and changes they would've liked to see, if any.

⁴ Appendix B: Teacher Teacher Cohort Feedback

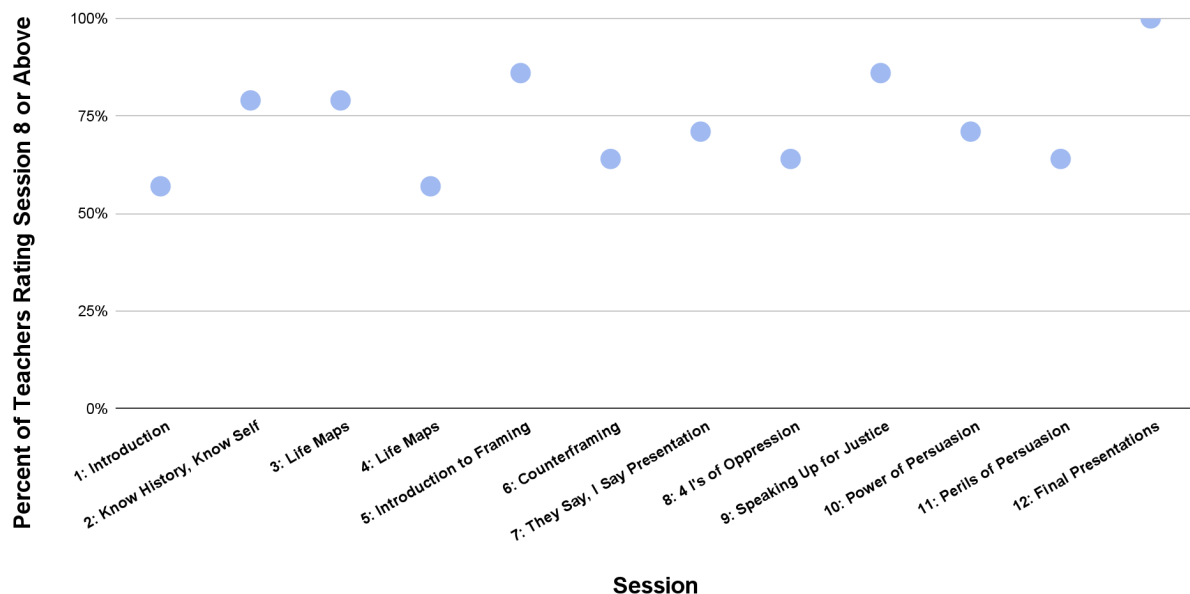
Data Received

Fourteen out of the fifteen teacher fellows completed journal entries, with 11 teachers completing at least 80% of the journal entries. Nine fellows filled out the teacher cohort feedback surveys throughout the six sessions and eleven fellows out the exit surveys, making it completed by 92% of the cohort.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Findings in the general analysis of the four survey forms completed by teacher fellows illustrate the impact on the teachers within the realms of teacher confidence, connection to their young people, connections to other educators and perception of how their young people grew. To understand the relevance and importance of each theme, we quantified the number of times a theme came up in each of the surveys. When asked "On a 1-10, how well did this session go?" In the teacher journal, teachers averaged 8.36 across all sessions throughout the duration of the twelve weeks.

Figure 1: Curriculum Ratings by Session



As illustrated above in Figure 1, a vast majority of fellows rated a session positively. We used an 80% threshold for positive indication to ensure that a session was well received. To ensure representative data accuracy, the number of teacher fellows rating each session is depicted through percentages rather than raw numeric value since not every teacher fellow filled out a teacher journal entry for each session.

Strengthening Relationships Between Teachers and Young People

Teachers indicated a multitude of ways in which their confidence grew through the participation of this program, namely serving as confidants to students, understanding that they were offering a sacred space not otherwise available, and deeply resonating with the students' stories as they related to aspects of their own lives.

Bridging Contemporary Events & the Curriculum

Vocal Justice's curriculum aims to be consistent yet relevant to everchanging times. The malleability offered allows each cohort engaging with our material to bridge our frameworks with current events relevant to them; a living, breathing curriculum that reflects the people it serves.

One teacher notes how their students were able to understand the world through a new lens while they were able to learn about the "many forces that try to silence them." Throughout the duration of the twelve weeks, it was pointed out five times in the teacher journals that some teachers had inspiration to bring in contemporary issues tied to curriculum topics, citing the curriculum's importance and relevance. Young people actively connected curriculum topics to ideas learned in outside classrooms, theories, or current events that came up sixteen times.

Teachers were empowered and equipped to help students process the ever-changing world that they are growing up in. From COVID-19, to police brutality, to other contemporary news coverage and the mere turbulence of being a teenager, teachers found that students became armed with tools that could help them combat whatever was ahead.

"At the beginning of the semester, my students answered 'no' to the question of whether racism affected them. By the end, they understood that racism in America is structural, silent (at times) and consequential. They are armed with tools to combat it."

Vocal Justice created a space that allowed students to reflect on societal issues. Additionally, teachers acknowledge that student knowledge in regards to social justice increased through conceptual learning and vocabulary development, ultimately aiding them to take on more leadership roles and responsibilities throughout their schools.

Providing Stability Amidst COVID-19 Uncertainty

The COVID-19 pandemic halted in person gatherings globally and called for reimagining what connection looks like amidst high levels of uncertainty. Teachers felt reassured that amidst a turbulent time, they were able to play a role in providing stability through their facilitation and support.

"The biggest impact was to have a really solid curriculum during a really difficult time of the year. From there, it felt like I could focus on being a facilitator and supporting my students' voices."

Teacher fellows highlighted how VJ was an opportunity that allowed them to support students as they shifted how they look at society and the challenges that shape their ideas on issues important to them.

"It was the first time during the whole pandemic that they [youth participants] felt at ease about school."

Teacher Fellows Building Community with Young Leaders

As an effective indicator of community building, eight out of fifteen teachers cited 'connection' throughout their journals. The VJ teacher fellows conveyed connecting to their young people on a deeper level that online teaching did not always allow.

"The fellowship gave me the resources and confidence to implement the sort of community-building curriculum that I've wanted to facilitate ever since I started teaching."

There was a mutual respect between teachers and young people in the commitment to this program, which was felt by teachers when students would text

or call if they were unable to attend. Teachers were impressed by young peoples' growing ability to advocate for themselves and communicate how they feel.

Teachers also stressed the expansive realization that their students had a tremendous impact on their community, with one pointing to a *"consistent cohort developing self-confidence, critical consciousness, and collective action to speak up for change in their classrooms, school, and community."* Cumulatively, young people connecting with each other came up seven times and teachers connecting with young people came up three times. The community-building efforts were exemplified when in one of our chapters, a cohort of students continued to meet bi-weekly to refine their spoken word poems after the school year ended. One member even went on to perform said poems, with the support of their cohort by their side throughout the entirety of the process.

"I witnessed a consistent cohort of five teenagers develop self-confidence, critical consciousness, and collective action to speak up for change in their classrooms, school, and community. For example, in order to procure district-level support for our program next year, this cohort arranged a meeting with our district's DEI officer and testified to the program's value in their lives; a week later, the administrator emailed me to ensure that 'Vocal Justice would be a sanctioned club at Abilene High School next year.'"

Young Leader Impact Beyond the Classroom

Liberatory education extends far beyond the classroom. Teacher fellows were closely observing how much the information presented throughout the curriculum ultimately translated to practice amongst the young leaders. Cumulatively, it was pointed out eighteen times by eight different teachers in the teacher journals that the space creation occurred throughout the duration of the Vocal Justice curriculum, noting the comfortability and allowance for students to express themselves, sometimes for the first time ever, in this manner.

Teachers witnessed the growth of young leaders throughout the duration of the program as they took hold of their agency in numerous ways. In one VJ Chapter, a teacher noted

"When I read the program overview six months ago, I knew that my students could testify that the status quo doesn't work for them, but I

never imagined the ways Vocal Justice would, by helping them harness the power of their voices, actually equip them to change our little world here in rural west Texas."

Teachers were overwhelmingly impressed with the culturally responsive curriculum that VJ provided, with three teacher fellows noting in the cohort exit surveys that it equipped them to support their young people with what they were already experiencing through "new found language to articulate it with power and precision," as well as providing standard guidelines for how to navigate difficult conversations. They appreciated the curriculum scope and sequence, finding them to be appropriately scaffolded so as to develop students' self-confidence, critical consciousness, and collective action. What many noted to be particularly unique was the curriculum's ability to begin with personal expression and then reframe the personal as political. Though the curriculum was easy to implement, they noted its adaptability and malleability to additive components if they so choose.

"At the beginning of the semester, my students answered "no" to the question of whether racism affected them. By the end, they understood that racism in America is structural, silent (at times) and consequential. They are armed with tools to combat it."

Building Community Amongst Justice-Driven Teachers

On par with our community building value at Vocal Justice, most teacher fellows from the Spring 2021 term emphasized support and community-building happening as a result of this fellowship program, with individual check-ins happening at the beginning of every session that allowed them to network with one another before opening up to issues. The one-hour meetings ranged from community-building activities amongst the Teacher Fellows like the Life Map activity to professional learning sessions on youth voice and liberatory education, as follows:

- Session 1: Spring 2021 Kickoff
- Elevating Authentic Voices
- Storytelling Workshop
- Liberatory Education
- Closing Session



Engagement and enjoyability was exemplified through teachers averaging 4+ out of 5 for both learning and enjoying each teacher cohort session. Additionally, teacher fellows had access to and received one-on-one coaching, guidance, and feedback from the Vocal Justice CEO, which was taken up by seven members a total of twelve times throughout the duration of the fellowship.

Figure 2. Teacher Cohort Experience

Session Title, n = x	Average Enjoyment Score	Average Learning Score	% of 5's Given for Enjoyment	% of 5's Given for Learning
Session 1: N = 14	4.64	4.86	86%	79%
Session 2: N = 14	4.21	4.71	86%	57%
Sessions 3: N = 11	4.45	4.73	82%	55%
Session 4: N = 9	5	5	100%	100%
Session 5: N = 13	4.46	4.85	85%	62%
Session 6: N = 10	4.47	4.64	50%	50%

Session 2 ranked the lowest in enjoyment and learning scores while Session 4 overwhelmingly ranked the highest in both categories. Not included in the graph is the percentage of 1's and 2's given for enjoyment and learning by teacher fellows because for each session, the percentage came out to 0.

The teacher cohort sessions allowed VJ fellows the opportunity to engage with different exercise activities to develop their resource toolbox within their own development as educators as well as facilitate some of their learnings for their young people. These gatherings serving as a means of support came up eight times in the anonymous teacher cohort feedback throughout the duration of the fellowship. Sentiments of hope, inclusion, and support came up a collective six

times, as VJ teacher fellows connected the curriculum to their personal and career goals as well as praise for activities

"[The Life Map] showed me that not only are my peers and I different but we have some of the same experiences. It's amazing that our paths brought us all to the same place."

Similarly, there was strong approval (mentioned 8+ times by fellows) for the different activities offered to help teacher fellows engage in storytelling amongst each other as well as with their students when they reconvene.

"I will always have a support system within this cohort."

Through the monthly teacher sessions, VJ teacher fellows were able to regularly connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. Teacher fellows experienced comradery when facilitating sessions of the curriculum didn't go so well, with many noting a sense of belonging and greater purpose when they were able to teach about subjects they are passionate about all while learning from other educators how to best implement these teachings.

"There are other educators who share my mission! We can empower the next generation."

Throughout the one-on-one sessions, teacher fellows illuminated the isolation that comes up when you don't have like-minded teachers working alongside you; one fellow noted feeling less alone and more encouraged having the teacher fellow sessions as a resource of support.

Limitations and Moving Forward

The largest gap in teacher fellow disposition existed in the timeline not being as realistic and flexible for the school year as they'd like. The pacing of the curriculum did not account for unexpected school events like assemblies, field trips, snow days, etc. In response, the second iteration of the Vocal Justice Fellowship Program was extended to span over two semesters as opposed to the one semester experienced in Spring 2021. In a one-on-one survey, a teacher fellow noted appreciation for the teacher fellow sessions but inquired about more frequent, informal communication amongst the teacher fellows. As a response, Vocal Justice launched Wednesday Wine downs as an opportunity for teacher fellows to have recurring conversation that further establishes community between

cohort members. Another recommendation offered in the one-on-ones was tied to the curriculum's lack of specificity to have these injustices pan out in contemporary events, with hopes that in the future more examples of what social (in)justices can be tied to each theme in the curriculum. In tandem to the curriculum based discussions, one fellow suggested that students journal to document their experience, with the caveat that it may be difficult to implement given the time constraints and it seems like a chore to students. The end-of-session surveys expected from the young people were also difficult to acquire and track, with teachers asking for wiggle room and a possible streamlined process that would ease this task, especially with distance learning. Similarly, others pointed to the learning curve that came with diving right into the curriculum without much preparation in advance on how to actually administer the program for their young people.

"A full training on the curriculum (maybe a one day training) to help support full implementation."

We received a wide range of constructive feedback on youth programming, with one fellow noting there's a gender gap, where young men were not as involved as young women had been throughout some chapters. Another fellow found it advantageous to showcase relevant songs or video clips that tie to the lessons and asked for additional resources, in the form of a media menu, as a complementary aid to the curriculum.

Other feedback around the content of the curriculum pointed to lack of language catering to white students, and teacher confusion around engaging all young people in the space in an appropriate manner. With this being said, one of our guiding principles is to prioritize those closest to injustice, and therefore, our curriculum reflects that by centering the experiences of Black and Brown youth. However, we still aim to make social justice education accessible to all students and hope that moving forward we can prepare teacher fellows for engaging students of all identities and backgrounds. .

"I think one area of growth is just to have more opportunities for student-led activities. There were some lessons that I would have wanted to spend more time on. "

We also received constructive feedback on the teacher fellow sessions. In the anonymous teacher cohort surveys, one fellow suggested that trigger warnings

become a community norm, as topics of conversation within the curriculum—as well as teacher fellow spaces—tend to be heavy in a way that they were not prepared for.

Despite group activities serving as community-building efforts amongst the teacher fellows, it was noted in the feedback that amongst the virtual sessions, the transition from breakout rooms to the large group would benefit from a moment to share what has been learned or discovered from their peers, a feedback that has since then been incorporated in how sessions are facilitated. Moving forward, Vocal Justice intends on maintaining the values of community-building, education, and youth empowerment while incorporating suggestions noted in the weekly teacher journals, an exit survey from monthly teacher sessions, and a teacher cohort feedback survey through extending the timeline of the curriculum, emphasizing feedback form completion, and providing real time support to help teacher fellows administer the program successfully.

Appendix A: Teacher Fellow Journal Entries

On a 1-10, how well did this session go?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not Well

Very Well

Why did you choose the number you did?

Any success stories / big ah-ha moments you'd like to share?

What changes would you make to this session, and why?

Any major questions / concerns you want to flag for Shawon?

Would you like to schedule a 1:1 with Shawon to discuss anything?

Yes

No

Appendix B: Teacher Teacher Cohort Feedback

Full name:

How likely is it that you would recommend the Vocal Justice Fellowship to another teacher?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Unlikely

Very Likely

How, if at all, did this fellowship positively impact you AND your students?

What are 2-3 GLOWS of this fellowship? What's working really well?

What are 2-3 GROWS of this fellowship? What do we need to improve?

How many hours did you put into this fellowship between prep for sessions, teaching, and cohort sessions with other educators?

This year's stipend was benchmarked at \$30/hour (\$1500 total). What do you think about this amount?

What other benefits would you be OK receiving if we lowered the stipend to accommodate more teachers?

Would you like to be a fellow during the 2021-2022 school year? If you no longer want to continue with this fellowship, please share why.

What's one piece of advice you'd give future Vocal Justice Teaching Fellows?

Any final thoughts to share?

Appendix C: Cohort Exit Survey

Today's Date:

How much did you ENJOY today's session?

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all					Very much

How much did you LEARN from today's session?

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all					Very much

What is 1 thing you will remember from today's session?

Any feedback or thoughts to share?

Appendix D: 1:1 Check-ins

How has the programming been with students?

What's been the most challenging part for students?

What would you change about the curriculum?

How have the teacher cohort sessions been for you?

How does the fellowship experience compare to what you thought it would be like when you applied?

Any other feedback to share?