



## Social Justice Conversation Starters

Being involved in Vinnies in any way involves learning about Social Justice. Learning about these issues should encompass things such as, acceptance of other people's cultures, responsible Earth citizenship and equality-promoting practices.

Below are a number of ways to start exploring Social Justice:

- Explore ethnic diversity in Australia to help students understand the importance of cultural sensitivity. Use census records and maps to show students where different ethnicities are distributed throughout the country. Ask students to hypothesise about why different ethnic groups are more heavily distributed in certain geographical areas.
- Allow students to voice their opinions on controversial Social Justice topics. Some students fail to pay attention to current social events. Encourage social awareness by regularly presenting them with information on controversial events, both domestic and foreign. Watch news coverage and read articles on current events and ask students to weigh in.
- Hold a culture day to increase student knowledge of different cultures. Divide students into groups, and assign each group a culture to study. Ask the group to create a presentation on their assigned culture, including information about the geographical location of the people, traditions, foods, clothing and social roles. Hold an open house and allow each group to present their findings to parents and others.
- Create environmental protection plans. Brainstorm a list of things that students can do to protect the environment. Ask each student to select one thing to do from the list. Keep track of the environmental protection efforts undertaken by each student, and ask them to report back regularly on the effectiveness of their efforts.
- Design acceptance posters to encourage the acceptance of all people. Ask each student to create an attention-getting poster that promotes tolerance and understanding. Place the student-created posters throughout the school or in other commonly frequented community locations so students can spread their positive message.
- Lemon Peel - Provide a lemon to each student. Have the students observe the lemon for identifying marks and "get to know" their lemon. After a few minutes, collect all the lemons and place them in a basket. Then have the students find their lemon. Most students will not have any issue finding their lemon out of the basket. Peel the lemons while the students are not in class. Place the peeled lemons back in the basket. Ask the students to find their lemon again. This demonstrates that everyone is the same on the inside, no matter how different they may look on the outside.
- "This Is Our House"- Read the book "This is Our House" by Michael Rosen. In this book, the main character, George, does not allow girls, twins, short people or children into his home. When he goes away for a while,





everyone jumps in his house and states that no red-haired people are allowed. George has red hair and his feelings are hurt. At the end, everyone allows George into the house. Discuss with the students whether they have ever been treated poorly because of the way they look. Have the students draw a picture of George and all his new friends together.

- Face to Face - Place students in pairs. Have students observe and interview each other. Students should list five things that are different and five things they share between them. The students should then consider if the differences they wrote about were physical. Ask them what they had in common. What things are most people born with? What things can people change? What things cannot be changed?
- Picture Drawings - Have students draw a number of pictures based on prompts provided. Ask the students to draw a doctor, nurse, teacher, scientist, basketball player and a volleyball player. Collect the drawings and tally up how many men and women were represented in each drawing. Provide the information to the children. Ask them why they think that more men were drawn in one scenario than another? Why were women drawn in another? Can both men and women do the things they were asked to draw?
- Game – “What should I do?” Make a set of cards with real-life scenarios relevant to the age of your class, and as a group work out ways to solve the situation. An example of a scenario is: I used to be good friends with the people in my group and then a new person joined who didn't like me. She turned everyone against me and now when I try to play or sit with them at lunchtime they tell me to go away. Some of the kids in the group told me they DO still like me, but they are scared that if they stick up for me, the new girl will turn everyone against them too. What should I do? Have the students sit around in a circle and take turns choosing a card, reading it out loud and then asking at the end "Can you help me? What should I do?" Students then discuss ways to solve the problem.

