Teacher Activism: How to Get Involved
Coaching Guide

Module Summary
In this module teachers will:
• Identify ways to get involved as a teacher activist.

Module Key Takeaways
Essential knowledge:
A teacher becomes an activist when he or she believes that positive change is needed in the profession and/or community and takes action both inside and outside the classroom (NYCoRE, 2003; Picower, 2012).

Teachers decide to become activists for many reasons, but regardless of the reason they tend to demonstrate three qualities:
• A sense of empathy
• An understanding of community
• A feeling of armed love (Darder, 2011; Freire, 2005; Picower, 2012; Stern & Brown, 2016; Zinn, 1999).

Before engaging in activism, make sure you learn about your students and community, do your research and seek out grassroots organizations who are already involved in the work (Berliner & Glass; Gay, 2002; Hammond, 2015; Martias & Liou, 2015; Ravitch, 2014; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Activism could involve taking action inside and outside of the classroom. It is important to have a social or academic justification for the content you cover in class and be upfront in your communication with parents and administration about the content that you are covering.

Essential mindset:
Teachers can be agents of positive change for issues that affect their profession and the lives of their students and families. It is important to learn about the issues that are important to our students and the community rather than impose our own agenda.

Skill in Action
• The teacher has taken the time to respectfully inquire into the issues that students, families, and community members care about.
• The teacher has proactively communicated with parents, students, and school leadership about upcoming activism projects that will involve class time. This includes informing stakeholders about any important content that will be discussed in class and any activities that may occur outside of class.
• Great care is taken in presenting multiple sides of an issue so that students develop and substantiate their own opinions rather than regurgitate those of the teacher.
• The teacher carefully considers any activism that he or she personally plans on engaging in. He/she has researched any state or district policies that deal with teacher activism and carefully differentiates between actions taken as a private citizen versus others aligned to their official duties as an educator.
## Questions for Discussion

The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- What were your big takeaways from this module?
- Are there any particular issues that you are passionate about?
- What issues are important to your students? To the school? The community? Why are those issues of importance to them?
- What do you think are your next steps for taking action?
- What struggles or challenges may you face in your pursuit of resolving this issue?
- Why might these struggles or challenges arise? How can you overcome them?
- How can I support you in your activism project(s)?

## Standards Alignment

**InTASC: 10e:** Working with school colleagues, the teacher builds ongoing connections with community resources to enhance student learning and well-being.