

Tolerance as a Vehicle for Improving the Speaking Proficiency of ELLs

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Introduction and Discussion

This unit was written as part of the Delaware Teacher's Institute, a subgroup of an organization created by Yale University. Written during the 2017-2018 school year, its purpose was to introduce topics which would allow students to interact with meaningful, culturally relevant texts and explore how they could turn spoken ideas into written thought. The idea of cultural relevance to a text was presented by David and Yvonne Freeman, as an article published for *¡Colorin Colorado!*¹ The Freemans advocate for the use of texts which are relatable to students' specific background and culture, arguing that students are likely to be more engaged in literacy when they see the subject as relevant to them. As a result, they are able to more rapidly acquire literacy and comprehension skills. Cultural relevance is a topic that, in my observation, has a huge influence on how well students can connect with curriculum material, and how likely they are to retain skills learned in that curriculum.

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards² has made it difficult for diverse groups of students to access texts whose topics are valuable to them. As English Language Learners who are new to the country, their lack of comprehension has much deeper roots than simply gaps in vocabulary and the application of phonics. Their true issue is that they are being presented with materials based around ideas for which they have little to no background knowledge or experience. This unit aims to provide them with access to texts that reflect the values, experiences, and knowledge of the cultures from which they come. Its goal is to use below-level texts to convey grade-level concepts focusing not only on reading comprehension, but on a subject which will be imperative for them to understand as they transition to life in the American school system: the idea of tolerance.

Given that the students in my class are all recent arrivals to the country, I place particular emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills as a foundation for the development of literacy. Creating realistic opportunities for speaking practice is always a challenge in a newcomer classroom in a reading and writing-focused

curriculum. My realizations about the importance of cultural relevance made me confident that choosing relatable texts would be the key to encouraging meaningful use of spoken language; It also led me to the assumption that the students' diverse backgrounds and varying experiences automatically gave them an understanding of what it means to be a tolerant individual. However, the more opportunities I gave my students to explore stories that were culturally relevant to them, the more I realized that they were actually quite the opposite. While they were highly engaged with texts to which they themselves related, they were often rude and dismissive about the subject matter and details of the ones from the cultures of others'. I had the epiphany at that point that all of them were from homogenous home countries and cultures. While they craved input that catered to those norms, they had absolutely no idea how to interact with anything outside of that because they had never really been in a heterogeneous environment prior to emigration. This unit is intended to provide students with both structured opportunities for the oral production of language, but the tools to interact with others in the tolerant manner expected of them as a part of the American public sphere.

Tolerance is a crucial value in American schools. It is deeply woven into the texts, materials, lessons, and activities that students encounter at every grade level. So much so, that in order to be successful, the students would need to understand tolerance just as much as they would need to be competent in all four domains of language. Therefore, my goal with this unit was to explore tolerance through the lens of all of the cultures represented in my classroom while simultaneously developing English speaking (and subsequently writing) skills by creating vlog-style "YouTube videos" discussing their reactions and reflections on the texts and other sources examined.

In rushing to help English Language Learners to close the gap between their performance and that of native English-speaking peers, we often forget that language acquisition occurs in a very specific sequence. Reading and writing are preceded by speaking and listening skills, and student scores in literacy on the Assessment of Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS)³ support the importance of allowing students to develop their oral language to serve as a springboard for the mastery of grade-level skills in reading. If students can't say what they write, they can't write what they say. My intention with this curriculum is to utilize the trajectory of language development to help my newcomer show growth in their overall English proficiency.

Scenario

The students to whom I am teaching this unit have been placed in the newcomer program at Calvin R. McCullough Middle School in New Castle, Delaware. McCullough is a Title I school where 60% of the students come from low-income homes and about 8% are identified as English Language Learners.⁴

The newcomer program at McCullough is an intensive language support context created primarily by English as Second Language teacher Keri Wilson. It was designed as a response to the large influx of newcomer students at that middle school level in recent years. These students were not able to function in general education classes and required a higher level of support than ELL students with social English. It currently accepts all Colonial School District students in grades 6-8 who enroll with an ACCESS screener score indicating an English proficiency score of developing or below. The program is designed to shelter students until they either acquire enough English to succeed in regular grade-level classes or move to the newcomer program at the high school level.

The Newcomer Program teaches all four core content areas in the same manner as the general education program. Students are divided into two groups and spend half the day with me for ELA and Social Studies and the other half with my colleague for Math and Science. The curriculum utilizes textbooks created for ELLs by High Points and National Geographic⁶, but in large part the materials used were adapted by teacher Keri Wilson herself over the course of several years and have been created specifically for use in this program.

All materials are differentiated for students according to their language proficiency level, ranging from entering (no English) to high beginner. Some students are just starting to acquire language and others are nearly ready to exit the program, or have already exited in other content areas and are only taking Social Studies and ELA. Some are educated and literate in their home language, while others are not. With such varying proficiency levels, it can be challenging to find texts that provide accessible content for all students. For this reason, visual supports are imperative to my teaching and picture books are frequently chosen to convey more abstract concepts.

While this curriculum has been very successful in transitioning students to general education classes, the students' semi-isolation in courses with other ELLs for the first

year or two of their studies in the United States means that they are not afforded many opportunities to develop their oral language. This unit seeks to meld culturally responsive pedagogy with the space to do so.

Demographics

All students in the class have been living in the United States for two years or less. They are predominantly emigrants from countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean with a few students from the Middle East and Europe.

Home languages spoken include Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic, and Polish, as well as some local dialects and pigeons that exist in their native countries. Only about 75% of the students were educated in their native language. Of that number, very few are considered “on grade level” within the Common Core State Standards due to the differences in rigor and expectations that exist between the educational systems of different countries. The remaining group has little to no education in their first language, and in some cases they are not literate at all.

In addition to the language barrier, about 25% of the students are dual identified as Special Education. Their needs range from dyslexia (diagnosed in the home country) to cognitive delays, to behavior issues stemming from mental health disorders.

All of the factors influencing this context further necessitate that opportunities be created for students to use and engage with language in a meaningful way. While meaningful use will be discussed further in the research section of this unit, it is important to note that the emphasis that is placed on building literacy skills as a means of accessing and acquiring grade-level content area concepts often supersedes the importance that newcomer students learn to communicate using oral language as well as the written word.

Research and Rationale

I made the choice to participate in the DTI seminar entitled *Comparative Religions* because I felt that it was not only the most closely related to the areas that I teach, but also a topic on which I had the most background knowledge-- or so I thought. I had always viewed my students through the lens of what I knew about their cultures and the associated religions practiced by those cultures. In particular, I was accustomed to teaching students from rather insular backgrounds. For them, ideas about religion were very black and white, and it was often hard to address them in the classroom. In a sense, whenever I get a new student, I cannot help but hold preconceived thoughts about what they do or don't believe and how those beliefs will manifest themselves before I have even met them.

However, on the first night of our seminar, Alan said one thing that changed my whole perspective on what religion means: "*Everyone has values*". As simple a statement as it was, the statement and the ensuing conversation surrounding it made the inspiration for this unit click in my head. A person's religion is nothing more than their interpretation of a set of values. That interpretation is highly varied among individuals, even those who purport to come from the same organized group of beliefs. As we began to explore Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*⁷, it became clearer to me that no two people have the same *axis mundi* or center of the world because no two people have interpreted their values in exactly the same way. Therefore, the "black and white" dichotomy of religion is not truly as hard and fast as is traditionally believed.

In designing this unit, I first consulted my knowledge of how a student learns language. According to Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisitions⁸, the Input Hypothesis tells us that any linguistic utterances students are exposed to must be comprehensible for their instructional level in order for them to use it to acquire language. Simultaneously, the affective filter must be low. This means that students must feel their environment is a safe space to take risks in using language with as little anxiety as possible. This is particularly important for my students because they are not only developing social and academic language simultaneously, but they are approaching the end of critical period where language acquisition becomes more of an explicit learning process. Along with the onset of puberty comes this critical age, and along with it a self-awareness that can make it very difficult for some students to want to place themselves under the pressure of exposing their lack of language. This is the case even in my sheltered instruction-style classroom.

Therefore, I needed unit which would increase the amount of time my students were spending responding to the comprehensible input provided by speaking. This would serve to develop their oral language according to Communicative Language Teaching, 9which focuses on interactions that simulate real-world contexts where language use and transaction takes place. To facilitate meaningful use, students need to care about what they're saying. All of this led me to the idea of using video to create lesson activities, which will be detailed further later in the unit.

The majority of the texts chosen for this curriculum were selected using the Cultural Relevance Rubric¹⁰ as presented by Freeman. The rubric includes criteria which measure how similar various elements in a text (characters, setting, plot, language use, etc.) compare to the characteristics of the students and their culture. This was done to ensure that the students were exposed to literature which was an accurate representation of their experiences and contexts. The remaining texts were chosen because they bore little to no relevance to the countries and cultures of any student in the class and were intended to be “universally interpretable” examples of the concepts of diversity and tolerance.

Learning Objectives

Although my students are not using the same texts as their peers in general education classes, they are still focusing on differentiated lessons aligned to the grade level Common Core and Delaware State Standards for grades 6, 7, and 8 respectively. Since unit is unique in that it is intended for a classroom with multiple grade levels represented, it will allow students to place emphasis on the specific standards of their grade level as connections to the WIDA English Language Development Standards, rather than the typical practice of focusing more intently on content standards with the language component as a secondary priority.

The WIDA performance indicators¹¹ provide expectations for what students should be doing with language in each of the four domains (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing) at their given proficiency and specifies the connection that each performance description has to a grade level content standard. Using the WIDA rubrics for *Standard 1: Language of Social Interaction Content Objectives* and *Standard 5: Language of Social Studies*¹², I have selected the following Common Core State Standards for each grade. In order to ensure that the learning outcomes were appropriate for each grade

represented in the class, I selected the following standards which resemble one another as closely as possible¹³: *CCSS.SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly, CCSS.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly, and CCSS.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*

Within this unit, students will complete activities which focus on helping them to express ideas more fluently using oral English. This does NOT mean that students will be expected to hold discourse level discussions or speak at length for any set period of time. It also does not necessarily mean that they will be required to use more than one phrase or sentence at a time, depending upon their proficiency level. The goal is instead that they practice using their speaking skills to express an idea or group of ideas in some form and that they learn to react appropriately to the expressed ideas of others using English. In this way, they acclimate to taking risks with the language in a sheltered environment and can begin working to build the confidence needed to do so outside of my classroom.

Students will learn how to respond orally in English to the texts and other sources on the subject of religion studied in three different modalities (1) Partner and/or group discussion (2) Oral presentation using visuals and (3) individual YouTube videos.

The unit will primarily focus on Delaware History Anchor Standard Four¹⁴: “*Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history*”. It will be divided into three general sections: (1) What are the major world religions? (2) What are the differences between these religions? And (3) How can people navigate these differences in a tolerant manner? Students will complete the unit with an understanding of the characteristics and practices of the studied religions, their similarities and differences, and how to approach situations where belief systems vary in the real world using the appropriate lexicon and pragmatics.

Content Objectives

The Social Studies content area in the Newcomer program is taught using the topics found in the *Longman Social Studies* textbook. It is geared toward students acquiring English as a second language and provides “a standards-based social studies program with a broad overview of World and American history”.

Unit 3 of *Longman*, which is usually the final unit taught in a given school year, covers the subject of the Middle Ages. It includes subtopics about the Crusades and the Muslim Empires which briefly mention the concept of religion and how it influenced events during that period. However, there is no further elaboration on what religion actually is and why different religious beliefs amongst people causes conflict. I elected to insert my project as somewhat of a “Unit 3a” following the study of the above.

The Delaware State K-12 History Standards state: “*An organized mental framework of events, people, trends, and other historical phenomena is essential to understanding, evaluating, and constructing historical interpretations. Such a framework allows us to draw logical inferences concerning the continuing impact of the past on the present. Individual periods, regions, or events should not be studied in isolation but rather in comparison to one another. Nor should the broad sweep of events or an emphasis on leaders, great works, and pivotal events obscure the importance of seeking to understand the everyday life of ordinary people in other times and places*”. In short, in order to understand the everyday life of followers of the world’s major religions, students must first have an understanding of what they are. As aforementioned, the overwhelming majority of my students are from culturally and religiously homogenous countries, and have little exposure to anything outside of that. Thus, the first section of this unit will explore this subject.

What is Faith?

Laura Buller’s book *A Faith Like Mine*¹⁵ presents the concept of religion and worship in language that is clear and easy to understand while still being developmentally appropriate for a group of middle school-aged students. Using rich images to accompany short paragraphs, it incorporates the theme of having a face to associate as it explains the tenets of each belief system (“The children in this book will tell you why their faith is important to them”). Most importantly, it scored very well when applied to the previously discussed Cultural Relevance Rubric as created by Freeman. Its visual aids, as

well as the backstories of children from each religious group, represent accurate portrayals of customs and cultures relatable to those of my students.

Students will participate in guided reading about the basic principles of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. They will incorporate their knowledge of maps and timelines from previous Social Studies units to help them understand which areas of the world follow these religions and when they first appear in the chronology of human history. In addition, they will familiarize themselves with the details about the specifics of each religion's important figures, holidays, and places of worship, among others.

The purpose of this section of the unit is not simply to have students memorize facts about each religion, but rather to convey the concepts regarding how different groups of people define what is sacred and what is profane to them. Students will go on to examine, in the words of Eliade, their own *axis mundi* and how it manifests itself in their daily lives in the form of their place of worship (or lack thereof), clothing, diet, rituals, etc.

The second section of the unit will draw on students' prior knowledge about religious conflict by referencing their study of the Crusades and the Muslim Empire in the previous chapter of their textbook. They have already encountered the idea the crusades were an attempt by Christians during the Middle Ages to forcibly regain control of the city of Jerusalem, regarded as the center of their religious beliefs, from the opposing Muslim Turks who want a holy land of their own. Students will use this background knowledge as an introduction to the effects of conflict between differing religious groups.

Images of Intolerance

My original idea when searching for a text that would make the idea of clashing religious belief systems comprehensible to my students was to use a book I had read in college entitled *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*¹⁶. *Maus* is an excellent story about religious intolerance and genocide regardless of one's first language, but it is an exceptional resource for the ESL classroom because it is a graphic novel which presents the World War II near-extirmination of Europe's Jewish population using the visual metaphor of all Jewish characters being depicted as mice and the Nazis as cats. However, upon further research and analysis of the text I felt that the language used was too advanced and mature for most native English-speakers to comprehend, let alone my newcomers.

I then began the search for a similar book more appropriate for the needs of my class and came upon *Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust*¹⁷ by Loric Dauvillier, Greg Salcedo, and Marc Lizano. In a similar vein as *Maus*, *Hidden* is a graphic novel. Each page includes clear images and short speech bubbles that feature the story of a grandmother sharing her experiences as a Jewish little girl in Nazi-occupied France during the second World War. Although the characters in the story are white, the text still scored favorably on the Cultural Relevance Rubric because the entire premise of the story surrounds the interactions between a grandchild and grandparent, a relationship that is very common within the family-oriented cultures of my students. Moreover, the tradition of oral storytelling seen in the book is also highly familiar to them.

In studying this story, students will encounter the concepts of religious intolerance, discrimination, and the ways in which differences between religions can and do result in conflict between groups of people. Students will discuss any personal connections they have to the subject of intolerance as it relates to the differences between themselves and others from different cultures with whom they now interact as immigrants to the United States. Students will compare and contrast the religions that they learned about in the first section of the unit and examine how certain specific differences, when presented by either side as an absolute truth, may cause conflict.

Can't We All Just Get Along?

For the final section of this unit, students will focus on the ways in which being a tolerant individual can prevent the dissonance between belief systems from becoming inflammatory. According to Cortes (1995)¹⁸, the foundation for a child's beliefs and, by extension, their prejudices, is laid by the family and environment in which they spend the early years of their development. That said, the idea of helping students dissect and navigate their feelings and values regarding relationships with individuals different from themselves can be a daunting one for any educator, let alone one teaching a diverse class of students who have literally just stepped off a plane from a part of the world where equality and equity are not promoted as important themes of interaction in between people in the education system nor the public sphere.

The best way that I could think of to convey the idea of tolerance to my ELL students was in a format I typically avoid with language learners: a Dr. Seuss book. Normally, Dr. Seuss does not lend itself well to use as a form of comprehensible input because the majority of the words are nonsensical. It becomes too difficult for English Language

Learners to distinguish which ones are the intended “silly” words and which ones are the real words necessary for comprehension. However, *The Sneetches and Other Stories*¹⁹ conveys the idea of equality and tolerance as a metaphor using imaginary creatures called “star-bellied sneetches” more clearly than any other text I have found. Even students who typically struggle with critical thinking skills in their first language are able to surmise that when the sneetches change physical characteristics, it is apparent that they were never really different from one another in the first place.

Students will use the understanding of tolerance and equality gained from *The Sneetches* as a transition into a more detailed study of tolerance as a theme in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*²⁰ by JK Rowling. While the original publication in and of itself is too long and linguistically complex for my newcomers, I discovered that illustrated versions of each book in the series exist. Excerpts of the full work were carefully chosen to target the overarching motif of magical people and muggles as separate races of people and Voldemort as a representation of racism, prejudice, and the result of a lack of tolerance on a society. Students will compare Voldemort and his followers to groups like the Nazis and discuss how characters like Harry, although technically a part of one group, is exercising tolerance in his attempts to thwart Voldemort’s cleansing of non-magical people.

The culminating activity for the unit will be a “YouTube” video that students will create explaining, through the modality of their choice (ie, a picture, a skit, a speech), what it looks like to respond using English to a situation involving diverse beliefs in a tolerant manner. They will submit this video to me and have the choice to allow the class as a whole to screen it.

Strategies

Along with my considerations regarding the theory of language acquisition and textual content, I knew I wanted to create something that utilized the basic methodologies of teaching ESL. While many programs rely heavily on the use of translation and computers to convey meaning of grade-level texts to students, I see them as a tool which can often become a crutch if overused. If students never learn to negotiate meaning in the second language, they will have a difficult time increasing proficiency.

Visual Supports

The literature incorporated in the unit will appear primarily in English include a strategy vital to any teacher of English Language Learners: visual support. While the picture books, by Common Core Standards, are not considered middle school level texts, the students will have the opportunity for exposure to more rigorous ones in the form of excerpts from larger works. As previously mentioned, Krashen (1981²¹) states that students require comprehensible input in order to increase their language proficiency. This means that information presented in a lesson needs to be $i + 1$, or just slightly above their ability to comprehend at their presented proficiency level, but ultimately accessible through the use of accompanying visual aids, video clips, audio, etc. The texts described above are all accompanied by rich imagery which supports comprehension.

Chunking

Texts will be presented in manageable chunks rather than as a whole. Separating reading materials into smaller sections is a proven method to increasing comprehension, especially for students who are still mastering fluency or lack the vocabulary necessary for comprehension (Casteel, 1989)²². In some cases, texts will be limited to certain excerpts which have been selected to focus on key vocabulary words and main ideas which will help students to more easily access the learning objectives. In addition to presenting students with chunked text, they will also utilize pre-reading strategies of identifying and defining unfamiliar words, using graphic organizers, and creating pictures to demonstrate comprehension

Vlogging

Hockly & Dudeney (2014)²³ propose three questions to evaluate whether the use of technology is effective for vocabulary instruction with English Language Learners: “Are we increasing their motivation and engagement?”, “Are we allowing them to practise and produce language in useful ways in class?” and lastly, “Are we giving them the opportunity to take their language learning out of the classroom and have extra exposure to English?” My context meets all three of these criteria by providing students with a way to interact meaningfully with language in a way that closely mirrors the ways in which they use it in real life (ie, watching YouTube videos, Facetiming, Skyping, etc.)

Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a pedagogical methodology developed by Asher (1969²⁴). This strategy teaches new vocabulary by requiring students to respond physically with gestures, props, etc. to input that they hear in the second language. Asher purports that students are more likely to process and internalize language when they involve a simultaneous response from the central nervous system. Total Physical Response can be as simple as one gesture to indicate the meaning of a verb, or a whole series of commands students must follow to pantomime the actions of characters in a text.

Activities

Since the main goal of my classroom is a acquisition of language through a communicative approach, students will spend a minimal amount of time as “receptacle” of information and instead use language to examine concepts in a meaningful way and engage their critical thinking skills to process ideas being presented in the second language (L2). In some cases, differentiated versions of materials will be provided to ensure language does not hinder comprehension of the content. Scaffolded materials may or may not include simplified English versions of worksheets or versions including first language support.

Information Gap

Following a read aloud of the text *What is Faith?* students will manipulate the input by helping each other understand the main ideas of each world religion. In this activity, students will receive a graphic organizer packet with boxes for each of the major world religions represented in the text. The boxes will be labeled with the subheadings *name*, *symbol*, *percentage of followers in the world*, *religious leaders*, *holy books*, and *basic teachings*. Each student’s packet will have a different one of the five boxes completed for them, detailing one of the faiths covered in the unit. Students will be given time to read their completed organizer and to ask the teacher any questions about it. Then, students will move about the room and find a student who has a different completed box from them. They will first make note of that student’s name on the corresponding page of their packet, to ensure they do not speak with the same person twice. Next, they will explain the information completed page of their organizer to the other student, allowing time for the student to copy the notes onto their own blank. Once they have done so, they will

have an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions before moving on to find a different student with a different completed page that they lack. They will repeat this process until their entire packet is completed and they have reinforced the new concepts by explaining and discussing them multiple times with other students.

M&M Similarities and Differences

This activity will personify the black-and-white, absolutist thinking of an intolerant person. Students will be divided into groups of four and each provided with a bag of M&Ms candy, a pack of Post-It notes, a paper plate, and two pieces of sticky chart paper labeled with the headings *Same* and *Different*. Students will begin by taking a Post-It, and writing their favorite color of M&M on it before placing it aside for use later. Then, students will be asked to pour some of the M&Ms onto the paper plate and begin examining them. As they do so, their group's task will be to list as many characteristics about the M&Ms as possible that make them the same (i.e., they all taste like chocolate, they are all round, they all have a letter "m" imprinted on the front). They will do the same with contrasting characteristics, eventually realizing that the only observable difference about the candies is their color. The teacher will then select one student to represent each group and ask them to stand at the front of the room. Students will close their eyes and hold out their hand to accept and eat a randomly chosen color of M&M. Students will then share their preferred color with the class, at which point the teacher will ask, "Did you know that the M&M you ate was not your favorite color? Why not?" with the expected student response to be that all of the colors taste the same. The students will then refer back to their t-charts about the M&Ms and asked to make another-- this time about people. Students will return to their groups to complete the task, in which they will come to the realization that the only observable differences between people center around their physical traits. The teacher will draw attention to this and the activity will culminate in with the idea that people, like M&Ms, are not really very different from one another beyond physical traits and therefore favoring one type over another serves little to no purpose.

Vlogging

Students will be asked to reflect on a time where they experienced or witnessed intolerance. They will begin by completing a reflection sheet detailing the specifics of the situation they will talk about. They will use a concept web-style chart to make notes under the following sub-topics: *who was there? what did they say or do that was*

intolerant?, how did it make you feel/react?. Students with lower levels of English language proficiency will draw and label pictures under each section in lieu of writing notes. Then, using sentence stems created using the same language as the concept web, students will film an individual vlog about their experience. The vlog will be viewed by only the teacher, and the teacher will then meet privately with each student to discuss how they can improve both the content of their message and the mechanics of their language use. This will be one of several uses of the vlogging activity to allow students to build confidence in their speaking as well as their understanding of tolerance and intolerance as the central ideas of the unit.

Role Play

The students will be divided into groups to role play a scenario exemplifying religious intolerances. First, two of the students will use a provided script to perform their group's scenario. Then, they will work with their group to alter it by creating a modified version where the third student steps in and acts in a tolerant manner. They will incorporate all that they have learned about the idea of intolerance throughout the unit to demonstrate their understanding that tolerance is not agreeing without everyone, but rather the ability to agree to disagree.

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Appendix

I have selected the following Common Core State Standards for each grade. In order to ensure that the learning outcomes were appropriate for each grade represented in the class, I selected standards which resemble one another as closely as possible:

Grade 6

CCSS.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grade 7

CCSS.SL.7.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grade 8

CCSS.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

The unit will primarily focus on Delaware History Anchor Standard Four: “*Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history*”. It will be divided into three general sections focusing on the following **Essential Questions**: (1) What are the major world religions? (2) What are the differences between these religions? And (3) How can people navigate these differences in a tolerant manner? Students will complete the unit with an understanding of the characteristics and practices of the studied religions, their similarities and differences, and how to approach situations where belief systems vary in the real world using the appropriate lexicon and pragmatics.

The **Enduring Understandings** for this unit are based off of the Delaware state recommended curriculum for students in grades 6-8 as it relates to the concepts

surrounding general history and civics. Following this unit, students will recognize the *basic characteristics of the major world religions*. They will know that *differing belief systems sometimes result in feelings of intolerance and that the actions of intolerant individuals are not conducive with effective citizenship*.

Students will work simultaneously throughout the unit to develop their spoken English. They will be able to use their oral language to identify instances of intolerance, express their feelings about being treated intolerantly, and react appropriately to demonstrate an attitude of tolerance in their daily interactions.

Notes

1

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/choosing-childrens-books-cultural-relevance-rubric> (accessed on October 16, 2017)

2 <http://www.corestandards.org/>

3 <https://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS20.aspx>

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