

## **Embracing Our Uniqueness**

*Mary Bauernschmidt*

### Introduction

The Colonial School District where I teach is a grades kindergarten through twelve public school district located in New Castle, Delaware. My school Pleasantville Elementary where I will be implementing my unit is part of Colonial School District. I have been a Colonial School District elementary teacher for twenty four years. For twenty of those years I have been at Pleasantville Elementary School. This past year was my second year teaching third grade. Previous to third I had been a fourth, first and kindergarten teacher. The profile for Pleasantville is as follows: African American (43.21%), White (32.59%), Hispanic or Latino (20.49%), Asian American (1.48%), Multi-Racial (1.73%), Native American (0.49%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (Protected). Our English Language Learners population is about 21%, low income 48% and special education 13% . My school is a title one school and qualifies for free breakfast and lunch.

### Rationale

In my spiritual journey I've been drawn to being mindful of moments in life and paying attention to them. Before walking through the doors of the DTI curriculum showcase thoughts of my student's diversity were being laid on my heart. I had just accepted the role of tutoring English Language learners for two days a week. These nine students from such varied backgrounds and experiences looked at me with wide eyes as I looked back at them wondering how best to make a connection with them. They each have their own story and journeys that brought them to Pleasantville Elementary and then to my classroom. From Africa to Mexico to the Dominican Republic. And now they are faced with learning English in this strange new environment that must be vastly different from the homes they have left behind. Aside from my tutoring assignment, my classrooms for the past 25 years have included students with diverse backgrounds, belief systems, and levels of experienced trauma. So when I heard Dr. Adam Foley begin his presentation I felt immediately drawn to his spoken words. I agree with Dr. Foley that young people are seeing and interpreting everything going on in their world and this has an impact on their learning. I'm so interested in examining myself and going on a social justice journey. This journey will positively impact my students as I hope to enhance my multicultural -

inclusive classroom. I would write a unit that would include diverse literature and would include English Language standards; speaking and listening.

## **Learning Objectives**

### **Standards**

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.A

Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B

Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.C

Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.D

Provide a sense of closure

## **Strategies**

The teaching strategies that will be used in this unit are brief focus lessons. Brief focus lessons are designed from instructional protocol of the program Daily 5, these lessons take on a purposeful and explicit tone, last about 7-10 minutes, and maximize student potential for engagement and retention. Each of the lessons will follow the brief focus lesson template as described below. This will be the basic structure with flexibility as needed as well. Teachers are encouraged to add their own experiences when sharing out with students.

Goal : Identify the goal

Strategy: Identify the strategy

Observe/Relate: (1-2 min) The teacher provides a stimulus that relates students to the lesson content. Remember when we... What do you know about...? Have you ever... Yesterday we learned...

Teach and Reinforce: (2 – 3 min.) Establish purpose – Today we are learning to... Create urgency – We are learning to \_\_\_\_ because... Explicit teacher modeling – Teacher thinks aloud as he/she demonstrates a clear, multi-sensory model of a strategy or concept.

Practice: (2-3 min) The children have a chance to try the new strategy or concept in order to deepen their understanding. Turn and talk to your elbow buddy about... On your dry erase board (or post it note)... Think of one way you could... Who would like to share? In the process of using the strategy, ask students to help.

Encourage and Plan: ( 1-2 min) Reflect on new learning and summarize. Provide students with connections to what they are doing as readers and writers each day in the classroom. Pose questions or ideas for how this learning can be continued. Encourage students to be an active part of the closure of the lesson to ensure they get the most out of what was taught. We just learned... Today when you are reading or writing I want you to...

When is a good time to use this strategy? Who will use this strategy when they read/write today? I will also return to the messages taught in this unit in subsequent days/weeks throughout the school year by implementing read alouds of books that address embracing our uniqueness. Such titles may include but are not limited to *All the Colors of the Earth* by Sheila Hamanaka, *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox and *The Day You Begin*: Jacqueline Woodson. Students will be asked to make connections to their own lives as the teacher proceeds through read alouds.

Lessons:

In this unit I will be using three mentor texts; storybooks. The first one is *The Boy with Pink Hair* by Perez Hilton and illustrated by Jen Hill. It's the story of a little boy who is born with pink hair, who is teased by other children at school for being different. His parents tell him to ignore those who make fun of him and support him in his passion for cooking. His best friend appreciates his uniqueness and parents love and support him. Then the boy with pink hair ends up learning that you can do just about anything you put your mind to. The second book is *I love my hair* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley and illustrated by E. B. Lewis. In Tarpley's wonderfully told story, a young African American girl celebrates her lovely head of hair as part of her heritage. Each evening, Keyana's mother lovingly combs out her tangles before bed and, when it hurts, Mama assures her that she is very lucky to have such hair ""because it's beautiful and you can wear it in any

style you choose." Lewis's realistic illustrations by watercolors take fanciful flight as parent and child describe what can be done with the girl's locks: braids at the top of Keyana's head become hoed rows of vegetables in a field behind her as Mama explains that she can "plant rows of braids along your scalp, the way we plant seeds in our garden"; and, pictured against the night sky, the child's Afro-styled hair metamorphoses into an image of the earth as she notes that, when she lets it "go any which-way it pleases," her hair surrounds her head "like a globe." But the style also has historical importance, for, as her teacher tells her, "wearing an Afro was a way... to stand up for what they believed." Both author and artist sends a reassuring message for all children about the importance of appreciating what they look like as part of who they are. The third book is *And Two Boys Booed* by Judith Viorst and illustrated by Sophie Blackall. This narrative story is written as first person and it's about the day of a the talent show, a boy is ready to sing his song, and he isn't one bit scared because he has practiced a billion times, plus he's wearing his lucky blue boots and his pants with all ten pockets. But as all of the other kids perform before him, he gets more and more nervous. He ends up overcoming his fears and embracing his unique talent. After each storybook is read allowed we will as a group pull out the unique characteristics of each of the main characters. These may include but are not limited to the characters, thoughts, actions or feelings. These characteristics will be recorded by the teacher onto a graphic organizer. There will be certain characteristics the teacher will be ensuring get placed on the graphic organizer. The students will then be prompted to make connections between the two mentor texts; *I love My Hair* and *The Boy with Pink Hair* Leading them to the idea that we are unique in our own special way. Students will also have a discussion on fiction and nonfiction texts and will identify the features in each of the mentor books. A list of various descriptors will be provided for students. These include but are not limited to; favorite food, hair, type of home, talent, language spoken at home, home country, memorable experience, family members, favorite artists, dreams for themselves, and skin features. Each one will be placed inside an envelope and students will pick their favorite ones to help them fill in their own unique character graphic organizer. For example if they choose hair color they would write black curly hair on the graphic organizer. Teacher will model her own character map filling it up with real descriptions. For example, freckles, dog bite, living in an old home and loving hot yoga. A lesson on narrative writing "moment in time" will be taught with other mentor texts being read aloud to show the example of "moment in time." Students will be given the opportunity to choose to write their narrative writing piece as a fictional for nonfiction story. A narrative writing graphic organizer will be presented to the students and their decision will be indicated at the top of the graphic organizer. Students will fill out this graphic

organizer which will serve as their map when writing their final story. Teacher will model parts of her narrative writing graphic organizer.

#### Activating Strategy:

I will stand up next to the white board/poster and ask the students to tell me anything about hair. I will allow them to shout out any answer that comes to mind when they think about hair. I will write all of their answers on the white board. If the students need prompting to help them think about hair, I will ask them questions such as, “What color can hair be?”, “What shape can hair come in?”, etc. I will let the students shout out answers for a couple minutes. I will explain to the students that our hair styles are unique to us, and hair may tell stories about us. I will tell them that in the African American culture, hair style is extremely important to people. I will ask the students why they may think this is. After the students provide some answers for why they think that African Americans believe that hairstyle is very important, I will tell them that it is because each hair style means something different to them. For example, when people first started wearing their hair in an afro, it meant that they were proud of their culture and of who they were and they were proud of everything that they have achieved. I will then tell the students that I am going to read a story to them. This story is called *I Love My Hair* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley. This story is about a young African American girl who has her hair combed and styled every night. Even though it is sometimes a painful process, she loves the way her hair looks afterwards. Every day her hair is styled in a different way. For example, her mom spins her hair, parts it into straight lines of braids, puts beads on the ends, styles it into an afro, or puts it into straight pigtails. This young girl comes to appreciate how special it is that she can style her hair in so many ways and she recognizes how truly beautiful her hair is.

#### Lesson 1

I will review the description of the book I told them about during the activating strategy. That it’s a story about a young girl their age who struggles with her hair but in the end - ends up loving it so much. I will remind them that the book is titled, *I love my Hair* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley. I will ask students to think about a time when they struggled with loving something about themselves. I will give them an example personal to myself such as not always loving all my freckles. They will turn and talk and tell their partners a short description of when they haven’t been so happy about something in their lives.

Next, I will read the story book aloud while stopping to show pictures. The pages do not have numbers on them however each page's illustrations of the main character's face is clearly represented. I will ask volunteers to tell me the feelings they think she has and why? At the end of the story the students will then turn and talk about why the character in the story ends up loving her hair so much by the end of the story. In the day/s between lesson 1 and Lesson 2. A poster will hang in the room titled "Parking lot: for the book *I Love my Hair*" I will explain to the students that this is where they can use post it notes to write questions about things they don't understand about the character/s in the book. Post it notes will be made available and students will place them directly on the poster. I will tell the students that the next time we meet we will be filling out this graphic organizer. I will show graphic organizer and describe each part of the map. I will ask the students to think of one personal characteristic of the girl to share out at our next session. As a way for the students to have an opportunity to make connections between the characters and their own lives the students will fill out an exit ticket. This exit ticket will include the following writing prompt; The character in the story was teased about her hair at school. Her teacher then helped her and she ended up loving her hair. Describe a time that either you or a friend were teased at school. How did it end? Did a teacher help?

## Lesson 2

I will ask the students to give me a thumbs up if they remember me reading "I love my Hair" I will read the questions that have been placed on the parking lot and we will have a class discussion addressing each question. I will then provide a brief description of characteristics that are used to describe characters in a story. Such as actions, feelings, thoughts, motives, physical features. I will make an anchor poster for the students to hang in the room. Then I will ask to put a thumbs to their chest when they have thought of one unique characteristic of the girl. I will take volunteer's ideas and I will record them on chart paper with the outline of the graphic organizer/character map. I will have the "answers" hidden from the students but in my view to be sure we identify all the unique characteristics that are important for the students to identify. I will tell students that they all have unique characteristics just like this girl and we will be learning about those over the next few weeks. I will tell them that in our next lesson I will be reading about a boy who has PINK hair.

## Lesson 3

I will stand up next to the white board/poster and ask the students to tell me about anytime when they ended up feeling upset about being different. I will take only volunteers and I will explain to them that their stories are valued and will be respected. I will talk to the students about what that means. I will write all of their experiences in short form on the white board. If the students need prompting to help them think about an event, I will ask them questions such as, “Where were you?”, “Where did it happen?” etc. I will let the students share out until I get a read that all students who want to share have been given the opportunity. I will explain to the students that we all experience things in our lives that is upsetting and those experiences help to make us unique. I will tell them that in the book we are able to read the main character has pink hair. I will have students tell their turn and talk partner if they think this book will be fiction or nonfiction and why. I will tell the students that as I read this story I want them to think about the boy’s special characteristics that we will be able to record on the posted character map. I will review the character map anchor poster. I will read *The Boy with Pink Hair* aloud stopping to highlight the major events. Such as, the page where he was called weird, the page where he makes a cake for a friend, when he solved a problem for the school and when he discovered his difference made a difference etc. Any page the teacher stops at can be reviewed for the event’s importance. Students will get in pre set groups of three and share with each other what special characteristics of the boy they thought of as I was reading the story. One designated student will record their ideas on a character map. After I ring the chime I will ask one member of each group to share one characteristic that was recorded. I will tell the students that the next time we meet we will be recording all those ideas onto the class graphic organizer. I will collect the maps from each group.

#### Lesson 4

I will ask the students to give me a thumbs up if they remember me reading *The Boy with Pink Hair* I will then provide a brief review of characteristics using anchor poster. Then I will ask to put a thumbs to their chest when they have thought of one unique characteristic of the boy. I will take volunteers and I will record their ideas on chart paper with the outline of the graphic organizer/character map. I will have the “answers” hidden from the students but in my view to be sure we identify all the unique characteristics that are important for the students to identify. I will tell students that they all have unique characteristics just like this boy and we will be learning about those over the next few

weeks. I will tell them that in our next lesson we will be making personal connections between the characters in the two stories and their own lives and feelings. As a teacher I will be prepared to value judgments the students may make about hair or other characteristics by saying things like “So you are saying....”

#### Lesson 5

I will start today's lesson by writing the quote “Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.” by Oscar Wilde on the front board. I will tell the students close their eyes (they don't HAVE to) and I will set a timer and they will think about what that means to them for one minute. No sharing will take place. I will have the word card of various traits or personal identity preferences pre cut in an envelope. I will model taking a card out and doing a think aloud deciding if I want to write about that trait or not. I will model deciding on a few cards and model writing about them under the elmo for all students to see the written words on the graphic organizer. I will tell the students they need to write about at least five trait cards. Students will be given a list of various traits or personal identity preferences that make them unique. A few choices are favorite food, hair, type of home, talent, language spoken at home, home country, memorable experience, family members, dreams for themselves, and skin features. Once the students cut the words apart they will be placed in their own personal envelope and they will pull out the words one at a time. If they like the word card they will fill their personal information onto their graphic organizer. For example if they like language spoken at home they could write “Spanish” on their organizer. Or if they want to write about their hair they might write “dreads.” I will encourage them to add a few details to make it more specific like I did at the start of the lesson. These graphic organizers will be saved for use in an up and coming lesson.

#### Lesson 6

I will hold up a real magnifying glass. I will ask if anyone knows what it is or what it is used for. I will take a few ideas from volunteers. The magnifying glass will get passed around for students to get a chance to look through it. We will then have a class discussion about how it helps makes things look bigger. I will tell them that in today's lesson we are going to learn about small moments in time. It's like we are using the magnifying glass to look at something that happened in our lives or the lives of a character in a book. Students will turn and talk about what they think small moment means to them and writing. I will interject if needed. I will then write an anchor poster for



them with information that a small moment focuses on a small part of your life or a small part of an event. It is not a story that lists all the events of your life. I will show students the book, *And Two Boys Booed* by Judith Viorst and illustrated by Sophie Blackall. I will tell them that in this story the author stretches out a small moment of time. It is written in first person and the boy in the story after a billion practices, he felt ready to sing his song on the morning of the talent show. His confidence weakens as the other kids perform and he gets more and more nervous. He overcomes his fear of performing in front of the class by changing his performance many times before finally singing the song he had practiced. The other kids encourage him with applause and cheers and smiling faces ...all except for the 2 boys who booed. I will tell the students to think about how this story connects with our previous lessons on personal uniqueness. I will aloud the story stopping to show pictures. After the story we will have an informal discussion on these questions, Why did the 2 boys boo? How did the boy feel when he heard the boos? Did he stop trying when he heard the boos? What is the boy's unique characteristic? This story was chosen specifically due to its message. And because it is written as a narrative in first person. It is a moment in time where the boy is being judged due to being unique as displayed by the boos. It is a story relatable to third graders.

#### Lesson 7:

Pictures from the book *And The Two Boys Booed* will be displayed for the students. I will explain to the students that these are the small moments in time for this boy. I will write sequencing sentencng under each picture. I will share out my thinking and use transitional words. They will need to identify the small moments in their own lives that they will want to write about soon. I will tell them in order to help them understand what it means to be a small moment of time they will do a group activity. This lesson will help students identify small moments before having to write one on their own about themselves. Students will be in groups of three. Each group will get a picture of an avent. At the bottom , there will be a space to write an example of a small moment. I want you to think about the big event and then write small moments. I will discuss the example. Give students time to add a few small moments in time to the worksheets under each big moment in time. Once done the worksheet will be displayed in different areas of the room. Students will do a gallery walk to be able to read all the examples of small moments in time. I will tell them to think about small moments in their life that are meaningful to them.

#### Lesson 8:

I will ask who remembers what are some moments in time was for the characters in *And the two boys booed* and *I love my Hair* and *The Boy with Pink Hair*. I will take volunteers to share out a few examples. I will ask what are some of your own ideas for a small moments in time that would be good to write about. Student responses will be recorded on a poster. Each story will be record succinctly. I will make decisions in sentence structure and use of transitional words. To keep the flow of the lesson. I will provide a few ideas from my own life. One of the moments in time that I will share out is the time I got bit by a dog and how that dog bite left me with noticeable scar on my face. I will tell them that I have learned to be proud of my scar since it is part of my uniqueness. I will remind students that these moments in time can be real or nonfiction. We will discuss how the hair story was real and how the pink hair story was nonfiction. Students will be given time to think about the moment in time to share out later with a partner. Later in the day we will revisit this moment in time lesson. Later in the day I will partner up the students. I will tell the students that the expectation is that they remember their partners moment in time. This moment could or could not include being judged or made fun of. They will share out their moment in time using rock -paper- scissor to determine who shares out first. I will set the timer for 10 min. As the students are sitting across from each other, I will walk around the room monitoring their sharing. Once pared sharing is over the students will sit in a circle and they each will share out a short description of their partner's moment in time.

#### Lesson 9:

Students will be given back their my own uniqueness character maps they filled out earlier. They will be given a worksheet titled: Narrative Writing rough draft that has a place for six pictures and lines underneath. Students will start to map out their story by drawing pictures first. They will be told that their main character is themselves. They must write themselves into the story and incorporate as many unique qualities about themselves as they can. I will model my story map of the time when I was younger at the park and was bitten by a dog. It's a moment in time for me that I will always remember. As a child I was left feeling different due to the scar on my face. I have had times in my life where people have said unkind things about the scar.

#### Lesson 10

This will be an opportunity to come full circle and have students share out all the ways we had earlier discussed that people judge each other because of one aspect of themselves and how it makes them feel. We will sit in a circle on the rug and we will pass a ball to volunteers to share out. The person who is holding the ball is the only student talking while the rest of us track the speaker. Prior to this lesson I will chat privately with a few select students and ask them if they are willing to be the first, second or third student to share out. Once I get their consent we will discuss the expectations and we will also practice what they will say. It will be two fold, one the incident and two how it made them feel. Having students prepped and ready to share will hopefully move the discussion in the right direction and allow for deeper sharing.

Follow up lessons:

Students will use the writing process to create a short narrative that is rich in details and descriptive language. This can take place during independent writing time, as structured sessions, and as homework.

- **Drafting:** Ask students to write about their ideas and draw pictures on the narrative writing rough draft graphic organizer. Students can refer back to their graphic organizer/uniqueness map for ideas of details to include. Have students take short breaks to share with a partner what they are writing; they should discuss how they are adding details to help the reader to really understand their story.
- **Revising:** Have students reread and clarify their ideas. Model how you revise a sample piece of writing and/or providing shared revising activities that help scaffold students' understanding. You might do this by revisiting the graphic organizer to show students how you incorporate details from the organizer as you revise your writing.
- **Editing:** Focus students on grammar and spelling. Students should first self-edit their writing before submitting the piece for a peer or teacher edit.
- **Publishing:** Have students complete the writing process by writing a final draft of their narratives and sharing their writing with an audience (e.g., classmates, younger peers, or parents)

- Reflection: Have students write a paragraph identifying how they felt while writing about themselves. What did they notice about the experience? Would they like to write again about themselves.

The student's final products can be put together into one class booklet. Students can borrow this copy of all the stories to read during their independent reading time. Teachers can connect with school librarian to see if a copy of the titles could be included in the school library. I will have copies of the titles in the classroom and they can be checked out by the students so that they can bring them home to share with parents and guardians.

Appendix:

Tarpley, N., & Lewis, E. B. (2004). *I love my hair!* Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

Hilton, P., & Hill, J. (2012). *The boy with pink hair*. New York: Celebra.

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Hamanaka, S., & Patel, G. (1996). *All the colors of the Earth*. London: Mantra.

Fox, M., & Staub, L. (2017). *Whoever you are*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Woodson, J., & López Rafael. (2019). *The day you begin*. Toronto: CNIB.

### Exit Ticket

The character in the story was teased about her hair at school. Her teacher then helped her and she ended up loving her hair. Describe a time that either you or a friend were teased at school. How did it end? Did a teacher help? What lesson was learned?

Character Map  
Character's Name:

Feelings:

Description:

Behavior:
Personality Traits:

Character Map / Teacher Copy

Character's Name:

I Love My Hair

The Boy with Pink Hair

<p>Feelings:</p> <p>hurt</p> <p>nervous</p> <p>frustrated</p> <p>loved</p> <p>happy</p> <p>sad</p> <p>excited</p>	<p>Feelings:</p> <p>loved</p> <p>happy</p> <p>upset</p> <p>alone</p> <p>excited</p> <p>proud</p>
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<p>Description: young girl african american daughter</p>	
<p>Behavior: sucking in breath pressing hands together crying patient holding hands listening</p>	<p>Description: pink hair young boy son student</p> <p>Behavior: cooked went to school made friends</p>
<p>Personality Traits: respectful self control gratitude grit</p>	<p>Personality Traits: agreeable friendly cooperative</p>



**My Own Uniqueness**  
Name:

Word	Description


**Trait Card Choices**

<b>favorite food</b>	<b>hair style</b>	<b>type of home</b>	<b>talent</b>
<b>language spoken at home</b>	<b>home country</b>	<b>memorable experience</b>	<b>family members</b>
<b>dream for themselves</b>	<b>skin features</b>	<b>bedroom style</b>	<b>pets</b>
<b>clothing style</b>	<b>friends</b>	<b>helping at home</b>	<b>sports</b>

## **Small Moment Worksheet**



**Big Moment: Day at the park**

**Small Moments:**  
**Helping your cousin on slide**  
**Having a picnic**  
**Playing a game**



**Big Moment: Going to a Friend's House**

**Small Moments:**



**Big Moment: Second Grade**

**Small Moments:**



**Big Moment: Going Shopping**  
**Small Moments:**

**Narrative Writing Rough Draft**

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