

Building an Inclusive Community

Sarah Kriebel

Introduction

*Ms. Kriebel, he called me racist because I said he was Black. Is that racist?*¹

*White people are mean*²

-whispered by a 4th grade student after reading a text about Harriet Tubman.

Over the past two years of teaching, my fourth graders have shared their thoughts and concerns with me in unexpected ways. As a first-time DTI fellow, I was excited to plan my first curriculum unit aligned to 4th grade standards and based upon what I have been learning from Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning*,³ seminar discussions, and my readings. With the current students I have been teaching, we have had conversations that stem from statements like the two above concerning racism, discrimination, segregation, and justice in history and our communities today. Many of these discussions have been sparked by current events and reading passages. They want to talk about what they observe, their curiosities and ideas, and why things happen the way they do in their school, communities, and in the news. I want to make this unit an opportunity for teachers to delve into these questions and concerns that students have in a way that opens their minds to being accepting of others, using critical thinking skills, problem solving, and educating themselves and others on social issues.

Rationale

Personally, I have been exhausted with the White-washed version of world history that I was taught through curricula and a large amount of children's literature, all of which still exist. White people, and people in general, find racial questions to be intimidating. Often afraid to show our bias and lack of knowledge to other people, we avoid difficult conversations because we don't want to appear racist or offensive, and we don't always know how to have a productive conversation about something that is seen as a sensitive topic. Often times we are asking a question or making a comment that someone else has already wondered or posed. Nothing can be answered by ignoring or avoiding the

¹ Fourth grade student, 2019

² Whispered by a Fourth grade student, 2019

³ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2017))

conversation. The way we approach these conversations and voice our intentions makes a difference. We can make it clear to someone that we want to be educated and inclusive as a member of a community, rather than wanting to place blame on others and perpetuate stereotypes and racist ideas. I want my students as well as my own children to grow up in a society where education is valued, full of enrichment, engaging, inclusive, and representative of our community members.

When I took a history class at the University of Delaware, I was surprised by the impact on my understanding of relationships between nations, advancements in technology, colonization, and more because the curriculum implemented by my professor was worldview rather than Eurocentric, monocultural, or solely focused upon the development of the Americas. I want my students to have a worldview understanding of history that is developmentally appropriate for fourth-graders but also sheds light on the inequalities and injustices in history and our present society. My hope is that my students will develop critical thinking skills not only for academia but also for the social political world within which we live. To think for themselves, not accepting everything they read or hear as truth, is an important skill that they need in order to analyze what is happening in their communities at school and at home as well as our more global communities. Thinking, speaking, and teaching in a way that celebrates differences will facilitate a movement of inclusion and social activism within and outside of our classrooms.

Demographics

As the 4th grade Special Education teacher, I have the privilege to teach and learn from a diverse group of students at William B. Keene Elementary. Serving a total of 540 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade, Keene Elementary is a Title 1 school in Newark, Delaware within Christina School District. The majority of Keene's students come from the nearby Newark and Bear neighborhoods. A minority of the student population is "choice," attending Keene instead of their feeder school, or English Language Learners from various countries including Saudi Arabia. Over 44 percent of the student population identifies as African American; 13 percent identifies as Hispanic or Latino; more than 7 percent identifies as Multi-Racial; nearly 3 percent identifies as Asian American; and 31 percent identifies as White. This school year, 53 students were identified as English Language Learners, 80 students were identified as students with disabilities, and 184 students were identified as low income.

For the school year 2019-2020, fourth grade includes three classrooms with support from myself and from an additional special education teacher who has a split schedule to teach fourth and fifth grade students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This year, I am supporting 11 students in one classroom to provide accommodations and instruction for students who have IEPs due to learning disabilities (LD) and other health impairments (OHI) such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In class, I assist the classroom teacher to provide our students with access to the general education curriculum by scaffolding the instruction and providing accommodations which include reading materials aloud to them, prompting and refocusing their attention, and providing sentence starters for written responses to questions. Additionally, I instruct students in a small group setting to work with them on their IEP goals. Students receive supports in areas of reading fluency, decoding, reading comprehension, mathematical computation, word problem solving, and written expression, which are components of all grade level subject areas including science and social studies.

Objectives

My curriculum unit will address the following Common Core standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text, and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. This unit also connects to the Delaware History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history [Content]. Finally, the unit addresses the Civics Anchor Standard Three: Students will understand the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of United States citizens [Citizenship]. Students will be engaged in texts that discuss segregation, discrimination, inclusion, justice, Black leaders in U.S. history, and relevant topics that they can connect to their own histories and communities. Within the fourth grade ELA curriculum, our teachers often utilize texts of various genres that include topics relevant to community and social justice. This unit will expand upon these reading lessons and implement more texts about and written by people of color.

Lessons within this unit will also address my students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) reading comprehension goals. My students are given accommodations and small group instructional support to help them meet their goal of respond to reading comprehension questions using relevant, specific details from the text to support their answers in complete sentences. The activities within my unit can be used to monitor students' progress toward their IEP goals for reading comprehension whether they be for showing their understanding with multiple choice questions and/or open-ended questions as well as written response comprehension questions. I have given a reading comprehension journal for each of my students to use while reading and responding to questions concerning the novel Sugar.⁴ Notebooks or journals help students and teachers stay organized and build their knowledge of the text we are working on by starting with

⁴ Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Sugar*. New York: Little, Brown, 2013.

what they know and what they want to learn, followed by a “working list” of characters before the comprehension questions and notes begin.

My goals for this curriculum unit are the following: students will identify their own communities such as their neighborhood, school, homeroom class, etc. and describe examples of inclusion within their communities. Students will also define segregation and discrimination, discuss how discrimination and segregation began, and describe why both are harmful to communities. Students will describe the connection between justice and inclusion within communities such as our school and beyond. These Enduring Understandings are formed from District and Common Core standards and integrate character education and higher order thinking.

This instructional unit will be divided into four sections: (1) Identifying Communities, (2) Inclusion in a Diverse Community, (3) Brief History of Segregation and Discrimination, and (4) Justice in an Inclusive Community. Students will be reading and discussing a variety of nonfiction and realistic fiction texts including The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage⁵ and Sugar.⁶ This will develop their reading comprehension skills across genres and support their understanding of the history of segregation and racism and why it is important to have an inclusive community inside and outside of the classroom.

Guiding this unit are the following Essential Questions: (1) *What makes a community?* (2) *How does inclusion impact me and my community?* (3) *What is segregation? What is discrimination? How do they impact history and relate to my community?* (4) *What are some examples of ways I see inclusion and social justice in my life and community? What can I do to better my community?*

I have chosen these topics and essential questions to develop student ownership in their learning and social activism. One of the texts I have already used with my students to promote social activism is Be the Change, Make it Happen: Big and Small Ways Kids Can Make a Difference.⁷ They seem to really enjoy the activities and discussions we have that are inspired by this text and their own creative minds. One of our first projects was to make our school community aware of an endangered species, and they voted upon which endangered species they would make a poster for and have been researching the Amur Leopard. This has engaged them in many ways while still working on skills such as decoding, reading and typing fluency, researching, collaborating with peers, writing,

⁵ Alko, Selina, and Sean Qualls. *The Case for Loving: the Fight for Interracial Marriage*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Russell, Bernadette. *Be the Change, Make It Happen: How You Can Make a Difference*. Tulsa, OK: Kane Miller, a division of EDC Publishing, 2016.

summarizing, and problem-solving. Our future project will be focused upon inclusion within our school community at the lunch tables, recess, during group work throughout the school day, and before/after-care or playtime outside of school.

Content

Race

I used to think that race itself was something that did not need to be focused upon if we wanted the hatred and racism in our communities to stop. I had often heard the term “color-blind” and wondered how that impacted relationships and self-identities. I never realized that my race was more of an unspoken identity that I didn’t think mattered or that I should even consider as a part of my identity beyond a simple check mark on a medical form. I didn’t really think about how this was one of the many parts of my own White privilege and bias. Being White means I have certain privileges that people of color have not been able to share because “White” often means “the norm.” From the first session of Dr. Adam Foley’s *Stamped from the Beginning: Unpacking the History of Race in America and Facilitating a Multiculturally-Inclusive Classroom* seminar, I began to examine my own role in understanding the history and current experiences concerning race, bias, discrimination, and representation as well as the educators’ role in bettering our own communities through inclusive, multicultural curricula.

Throughout my entire education, I received partial truths and histories especially concerning the history of the United States which includes Black and Indigenous history. The “Founding Fathers” were glorified in my elementary school experience, and I was informed in my freshman year of college about what we could learn from Jefferson’s stance on public education. The racist ideas and horrible acts of rape, slavery, and genocide were hidden from us in a White-washed, Eurocentric curriculum within the textbooks we were studying to the films we were enjoying blindly. This misinformation was purposeful as the people in power historically have hidden the truths they don’t want the public to know; thus, perpetuating their power and privilege. As I expanded my resources for gaining knowledge, I was horrified and shocked to learn about the events and perspectives of Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Latin histories that were largely undermined in private and public education. It made me feel upset to be so ignorant and to have an ancestry of people who were oppressors. After a while, I began to realize this was not enough, and I needed to bring this awareness and new sense of responsibility to better my community to the people in my life, including my own students.

In the words of Gary R. Howard,⁸

“In relation to White multicultural identity development, I had now moved into a

⁸ Howard, Gary R. *We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. p. 19

time of positive activity [...] I wanted to invite other White folks into the worldview that had been given to me. [...] the appropriate response to learning about the realities of White racism in America is not rejection, guilt, denial, or distancing ourselves as White people, but rather direct action with others for positive change.”

My way of having direct action for positive change in my classroom is to implement what I have learned, include multiple perspectives from primary and secondary sources, and give appropriate representation through multicultural literature and texts in my own curricula. I recently purchased a few volumes of Black History Flashcards from Urban Intellectuals⁹ whose goal is to “educate, empower, and engage.” My students love these flashcards because it gives them exposure to Black leaders and innovators in art, education, engineering, government, mathematics, music, science, social justice, technology, and more. They see familiar names such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Michelle Obama as well as unfamiliar names including Dorothy Vaughan and Katherine Johnson.

One of my goals this year has been to show my students that they can be successful despite anyone who tells them otherwise. I have been facilitating student-student and student-teacher discussions about the Urban Intellectuals’¹⁰ flashcards, news articles, and other texts that represent people of color who are succeeding and proud of who they are. For example, Simone Biles recently won her 25th gold medal, and children look up to her as a role model for her determination, work ethic, and talent, as they should. When my students were reading a current article¹¹ about her successes and her struggles, they were excited and engaged. Ali Michael¹² said it best that students need to be supported in their identity development, and we as educators especially need to be showing our students that wealth and success is not something only White people can have. We can give students real-life examples of Black leaders and professionals to look up to and feel represented by through texts, multimedia, and our classroom libraries and posters.

Another goal for me as an educator is to no longer shy away from or avoid topics that concern racism, sexism, or classism but to address them appropriately. These three problems in society are interrelated, the latter stemming from racism. Students experience

⁹ “Educate. Empower. Engage,” Urban Intellectuals Store, <https://store.urbanintellectuals.com/>, accessed August 2, 2019

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Washington Post. 2019. “Simone Biles Becomes the Most Decorated Female Gymnast in History,” Newsela, <https://newsela.com/read/simone-biles-championships/id/2000000336/>, accessed October 11, 2019

¹² Michael, Ali. *Raising Race Questions: Whiteness and Inquiry in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2015.

forms of oppression and microaggressions at all ages, and they should feel safe to discuss these issues in a place where they will be heard and respected. I want that place to be our classrooms at the very least. When we are discussing Harriet Tubman and antislavery or when a student brings up a negative word and/or action that they have witnessed or personally experienced, we need to be prepared to support and educate them without judgment. As Michael discusses in Raising Race Questions: Whiteness & Inquiry in Education,¹³ we need to support students in developing positive racial identities by having the uncomfortable conversations about why the N word is negative or why they shouldn't laugh at or repeat the stereotypical joke they heard at lunch. Rather than shutting them down by saying, "That's inappropriate!" instead explain to them why it is hurtful, what the history and meaning behind it is. I have found through others' experiences and my own that our students are less likely to continue the negative behavior and feel that they can come to us about issues they face.

Missing Pieces

While reading Stamped from the Beginning,¹⁴ I found that I had many gaps in my knowledge of American history. As Howard explains, "[...] the educational process has allowed those in power to selectively control the flow of knowledge and inculcate into young minds only those 'truths' that solidify and perpetuate their own hegemony."¹⁵ White dominance in education as well as society in general has been perpetuated by the "assumption of rightness, the luxury of ignorance, and the legacy of privilege" that began centuries ago.¹⁶ These processes are also connected to religion throughout history, which has also historically impacted society and education.

Kendi¹⁷ describes the connections Puritans made between religion and racist beliefs while they attempted to justify their actions and ideas about people of color or non-Puritan people being inferior to them. According to many similar thinkers, a human hierarchy was God-given. The construct of prejudice that occurred well within the ancient world laid the foundation for racism, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, and homophobia that followed throughout history into today. What started as keeping people of color as "perpetual servants"¹⁸ became enslavement within the 1600s. However, kidnapping and enslaving people was happening long before in the 1400s throughout Europe. According to Kendi, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to bring Africans back as slaves to Europe through traveling the Atlantic.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 50.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 19

In the 1600s, Cotton Mather did his best to maintain that people who were “beneath” the white male were there because God and nature had made it so. In more recent years, this assimilationist idea continues to resurface and focus on the poverty and crime rates, purposefully ignoring institutionalized racism and the barriers that those in power have kept in place (i.e. disparities in wage, education opportunities, etc.).¹⁹ As Howard explains, much of the things we discuss in history such as religion, land theft, and our system of education are all intertwined in colonization and genocide and rooted in racism²⁰. It is important for us to understand why those in power have put barriers, implicit or otherwise, in place. For example, students are often not taught about the people of color who were vital to industrialization, engineering, and exploration. We need to break down these barriers and show students the many examples of successful people of color who have been purposefully hidden as a form of oppression.

Another purposeful missing piece of history within texts and curricular materials is that our Founding Fathers were slave-owners. This important aspect of their lives is usually left out of the history textbooks for our elementary students because the authors and leaders of education often want to sweep the dirt of our ancestors under the carpet and only focus on White leaders’ successes and contributions to society.²¹ As critical thinkers, we need to model for our students how to acknowledge the past in its entirety at an age-appropriate level, and decide what we can do to better our current communities and work toward goals for an inclusive, antiracist society.

While educators may highlight people of color during an assigned month of the year, the rest of the social studies and supplementary reading materials are usually focused on White, European historical figures. When lessons and texts do include people of color, it is too often done so in a way that shows fighting for justice and civil rights as being only a thing of the past.²² Students are fed this misconception when teachers ignore and gloss over the current events in our society. Rather we should integrate multicultural literacy, not only in this unit but throughout the year, and celebrate people who look like our own students, whether they be contemporary or historical.

Implications for Educators

¹⁹ Flannery, Mary Ellen. “The Cancer of Institutionalized Racism.” *NEA Today*, October 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Adam Foley, Seminar Discussion Notes, 5/13/2019

²² Andrews, Dorinda Carter, and Frank Tuitt, eds. *Contesting the Myth of a "Post Racial Era": the Continued Significance of Race in U.S. Education*. New York: PETER LANG, 2013.

As educators, our policies and our curricula should reflect an anti-discriminatory approach that shows an understanding and welcoming of students and their diverse backgrounds. As a special education teacher, it is important to be aware that students may be stereotyped and impacted by their disability as well as their race, socioeconomic status, and/or gender.

For fear of having the uncomfortable conversations, sometimes we stray away from the teachable moments that come up in read-alouds or student questions. However, we should arm ourselves with knowledge and multicultural literacy and use curricula that develops students' understanding of the history and continuation of working for the rights of people of color, people with disabilities, women, and the working class. Additionally, we need to celebrate our students' diversity and provide enriching representation appropriately through the curriculum and our classroom libraries.²³ The purpose of this unit is also to move away from a special month approach to teaching our students' history and to move toward seamless integration of multicultural literacy and Black history throughout multiple disciplines. Students and families need to feel heard, recognized, and represented respectfully. As educators, we need to build a school community that acknowledges and celebrates our students' differences and identities.

When discussing students' background or progress, family and home-life usually make up a large component of the discussion among team members (i.e. classroom teacher, special education teacher, administration, school counselor, etc.). School team members may have a negative outlook on parents and family members of students who are assertive or don't meet our standard for how they communicate, attend meetings, and so on. We have biases that are often expressed in stereotyped opinions when we discuss how students coming from Christian elementary schools are struggling because they were not given the appropriate level of support (i.e. an IEP) before they transferred to our school district. This also happens when we are "warned" about a parent coming into the school frequently if their child has had a consequence for their actions. We often see this as aggressive behavior when it, rightly so, is often a sign of a parent caring and advocating for their child's education, social development, and personal rights. Having and expressing these biases in verbal and nonverbal ways prevent us as teachers from having a positive, collaborative relationship with our students' families.

While we may have our frustrations with the inequitable opportunities in education, we need to make a change and address our biases that impact our role as an educator and as a part of a larger community. Some of these biases are connected to the following myths about diverse parents experiencing poverty that Compton-Lilly²⁴ addresses: parents are satisfied with depending on welfare, caught in a cycle of poverty, often are children themselves, have no books or other forms of print in their houses, have no

²³ Adam Foley, Seminar Discussion Notes, 10/21/2019

²⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

interest in continuing their own learning, don't care about education, don't know how to or don't put in effort to help their children with reading, can't and/or don't read, grew up without exposure to books, and lack resources to help children with reading. These myths relate to the TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie²⁵ in which the speaker points out that we can't make an assumption or generalization about a group of people based on one person's experience or our own perceptions and implicit biases.

Acknowledging the difficulties families have of trying to bring up their children with an awareness of the "realities of racism" and what they may face in school, in the "real world," and as children vs. adults, we need to provide families with support and assurance. Assurance that we have an anti-discriminatory/anti-racist environment where all differences are celebrated and nourished through positive language, literature, history, and representation throughout the school including our curricula. Families need to feel comfortable entrusting their children to us to teach them how to be global citizens, addressing issues within the classroom and outside of the classroom. As teachers, we need to respectfully collaborate with families in this mission.²⁶ According to Compton-Lilly, "Critical literacy entails a set of beliefs about social justice and ways of reading the world that entail valuing the knowledge that students bring while helping them use literacy to act for change in their communities."²⁷ Educators can provide opportunities as a school community to look inward at what families bring to communities, education, and diversity as well as outward at what problems exist in our communities and society at large, and what can we do to address these problems.

Teaching Strategies

Choice

Although students need structure, they also benefit from being given appropriate choices such as in what book they read, how they show their thinking, and how they respond to external stimuli.²⁸ Throughout the unit, students will be given the choice to respond to questions and key points texts with sticky notes, an interactive notebook, and discussion.

²⁵ Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. "The Danger of a Single Story," TED, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story, accessed October 7, 2019

²⁶ Compton-Lilly, Catherine, and Todd K. Lilly. *Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power: Classroom Strategies to Change the World*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 58.

²⁸ Mike Anderson, "Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn: Chapter 1. The Key Benefits of Choice," ASCD.org, <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/116015/chapters/The-Key-Benefits-of-Choice.aspx>, accessed December 10, 2019

Collaborative Work

Students will answer comprehension questions by discussing the text with a partner and with the entire group of students. Students will benefit from collaboration and peer-to-peer discussion in conceptual learning and identifying as well as analyzing examples of inclusion vs. segregation. Collaborative work will be conducted with a Think-Pair-Share²⁹ and elementary level Socratic Seminars,³⁰ and students will be able to use graphic organizers such as the versatile Frayer Model.³¹

Grouping Students

Students can be grouped based on ability, interest, opinion about a particular topic, and many other criteria. This can help students get a variety of perceptions and ideas from their peers and not get into a routine of choosing the same partner every time. Students who are stronger in certain skills such as reading fluency could be paired with students who struggle with fluency, giving the latter students a peer model to learn from.

Activities

Using Diverse Texts to Stimulate Discussion

These activities and texts may take a minimum of 12 weeks to implement in the classroom. When teaching students who have IEPs, teachers may need longer depending on the durations of small group instruction compared to whole group instruction. These activities were developed for small group instruction that focuses on reading comprehension strategies. I want to incorporate a variety of texts including a novel, autobiographical articles, and informational texts with different structures and lengths such as the Black History Flashcards.³² My students who struggle with attending to tasks find shorter texts to be more engaging especially when there are text features like photos with captions, bullet-points of details, and side-bars. Storyworks Magazine and other

²⁹ “Think-Pair-Share,” The Teacher Toolkit, <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/think-pair-share>, accessed December 7, 2019

³⁰ “Socratic Seminars – ReadWriteThink,” Readwritethink.org, <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/socratic-seminars-30600.html>, accessed December 6, 2019

³¹ “Frayer Model,” The Teacher Toolkit, <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/frayer-model>, accessed December 15, 2019

³² Ibid.

Scholastic³³ resources are helpful for building their interest in topics and facilitating student ownership of their learning and reading.

Identifying Communities

Students will be given three sticky notes to write and/or draw what comes to mind when asked to define their communities. Students will place their sticky notes on a central place (i.e. whiteboard) and discuss their ideas and definitions of community. After choosing one community, students will collaborate with each other to describe the roles that are important within their community.

Jewell Parker Rhodes' novel Sugar³⁴ gives a fictional, yet thought-provoking account of a ten-year-old girl experiencing post-Emancipation plantation life near the Mississippi River. Her community is made up of elderly freed slaves who look after her since her mother died. Sugar begins to overcome barriers that were placed on her by oppressors when she befriends the plantation owner's son Billy. When Chinese workers begin helping the freed slaves harvest the sugarcane, Sugar opens her mind and heart to them by learning from the Chinese workers about their culture and experiences and sharing her own experiences with them. This novel will build students' vocabulary and ideas about community and raise questions about discrimination, justice, inclusion, and more.

Inclusion in a Diverse Community

A sorting activity will engage students in reading scenarios that are either an example of inclusion or an example of discrimination that would be relevant to a school community or neighborhood community. Students will collaborate with partners to sort the scenarios and discuss why and how these scenarios would impact the community.

After a group discussion, students will write to explain how inclusion can be an action and/or a mindset and why it is important to individuals and communities. The sorting activity and discussion will provide them with exposure to these questions and ideas before they independently write their responses.

Brief History of Segregation and Discrimination

³³ "Scholastic Storyworks Magazine: Unforgettable Stories in the Genres You Need to Teach," Scholastic, <https://storyworks.scholastic.com/>, accessed October 12, 2019

³⁴ Ibid.

Students will choose or be assigned roles and read the play *Ayanna the Brave*.³⁵ This Scholastic’s StoryWorks play by Spencer Kayden is supplemented with a video narrated by Ayanna Najuma about how she took a stand against segregation as a child in Oklahoma City. In addition to video discussion questions, the lesson also includes close reading and critical thinking questions, vocabulary, and research resources. Students will be engaged in activities and skills that integrate communication, critical thinking, and technology.

Justice in an Inclusive Community

This section will likely take a minimum of two weeks to implement. Students will view a panel discussion video concerning Katherine Johnson, Christine Darden, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson as well as the obstacles they overcame in NASA and in a segregated society. After viewing and discussing the video’s important details, students will read and discuss the Newsela adaption of “Hidden Figures” to Receive Congressional Gold Medals by Tamara Dietrich.³⁶ Students will be asked to respond to the article by explaining whether they think the Congressional Gold Medal is a way of seeking justice. Is it too late or is it better late than never?

Students will have varying opinions and perceptions of justice within communities. Their perspectives need to be heard, and they should have the opportunity to discuss what we as a society can do actively to respond to our history and the barriers in today’s society. Another great resource to utilize through this discussion and activity would be the Black History Flashcards Volume 1, Volume 2: Women, and Volume 3: S.T.E.A.M.³⁷ These flashcards provide students with an overview of accomplishments for women like Dorothy Vaughan and men like Martin Luther King, Jr. These can be used for discussion about people standing up for justice within and across communities.

Conclusion

Throughout this unit, students will build an understanding of the impact history has on our society and current events as well as how we can use what we learn from our past to build a better, inclusive community. This unit can be adapted for different grade levels and skill levels as needed. Although the content and activities are originally designed for

³⁵ Kayden, Spencer. 2019. “Ayanna the Brave: Reading Fluency: Scholastic Storyworks Magazine.” Scholastic, <https://storyworks.scholastic.com/issues/2018-19/020119/Ayanna-the-Brave.html>, accessed October 12, 2019

³⁶ Dietrich, Tamara. 2019. “‘Hidden Figures’ to Receive Congressional Gold Medals,” Newsela, <https://newsela.com/read/hidden-figures-medals/id/2000001959/>, accessed December 5, 2019

³⁷ Ibid.

small group reading, they could be used in whole group reading or social studies. My purpose in creating this unit is to provide educators and students with the resources needed for building an inclusive community within and outside of school and developing skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and advocacy for social justice.

Appendix

Implementing District Standards

This curriculum unit will address the following Common Core standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text, and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. This unit also connects to the Delaware History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history [Content]. Finally, the unit addresses the Civics Anchor Standard Three: Students will understand the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of United States citizens [Citizenship]. Students will be engaged in texts that discuss segregation, discrimination, inclusion, justice, Black leaders in U.S. history, and relevant topics that they can connect to their own histories and communities. Within the fourth grade ELA curriculum, our teachers often utilize texts of various genres that include topics relevant to community and social justice. This unit will expand upon these reading lessons and implement more texts about and written by people of color.

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The Enduring Understandings for this unit are formed from District and Common Core standards and integrate character education and higher order thinking. After this unit, students will be able to identify the relationship between segregation and discrimination and how racism harms a community. Additionally, students will be able to describe ways that community members can be proponents of inclusion and acceptance.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Essential Questions to guide this unit include: (1) *What makes a community?* (2) *How does inclusion impact me and my community?* (3) *What is segregation? What is discrimination? How do they impact history and relate to my community?* (4) *What are some examples of ways I see inclusion and social justice in my life and community? What can I do to better my community?*

Students will identify their own communities such as their neighborhood, school, homeroom class, etc. and describe examples of inclusion within their communities. Students will also define segregation and discrimination, discuss how discrimination and segregation began, and describe why both are harmful to communities. Students will describe the connection between justice and inclusion within communities such as our school and beyond.

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Notes