

Buddy Benches

Make recess friendlier

School Segregation

History repeats itself

Maria Hinojosa

Hear from the voice of *Latino USA*

TEACHING TOLERANCE

ISSUE 52 | SPRING 2016  TOLERANCE.ORG

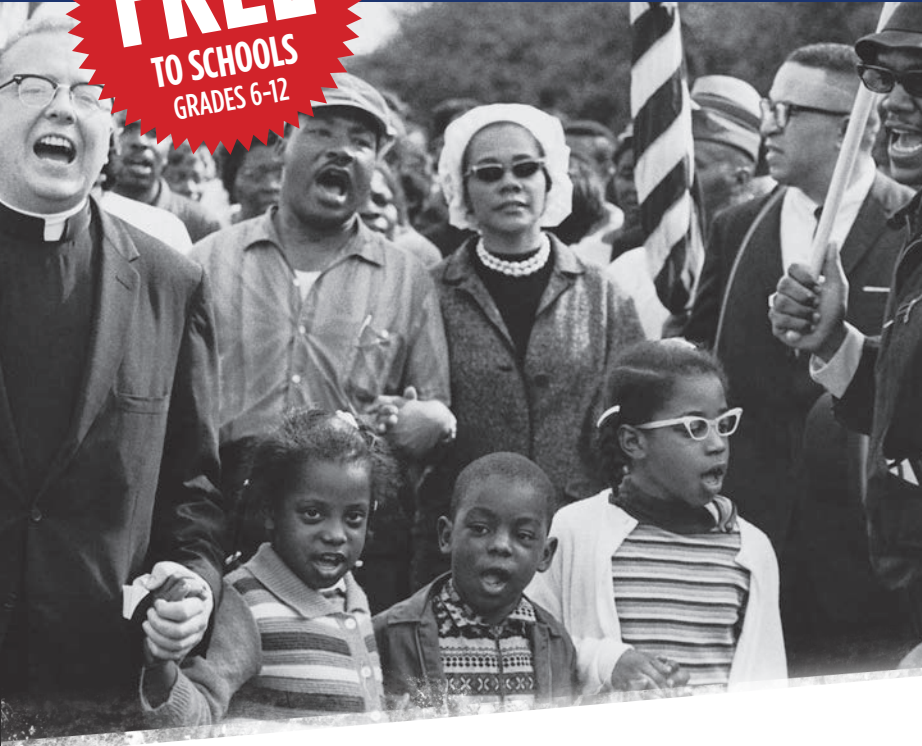
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FREE
TO SCHOOLS
GRADES 6-12

A NEW FILM KIT AND TEACHER'S GUIDE



SELMA THE BRIDGE TO THE BARRIERS

Discover the Role Educators and Students Played in Securing the Right to Vote



FROM TEACHING TOLERANCE

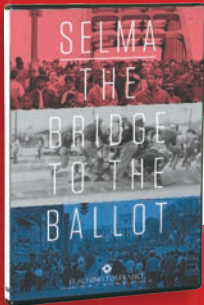


LOT

On March 7, 1965, 600 civil rights activists gathered in Selma, Alabama, and attempted a journey to the state capitol, marching for dignity and equality.

- 18 days • 54 miles • 1 police attack
- 1,900 National Guard troops • 2,000 U.S. Army soldiers

and countless stories later ...
... they arrived in Montgomery — and changed history.

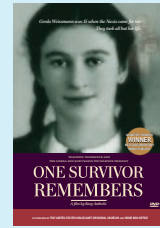


The Selma-to-Montgomery legacy includes the sacrifices of young people whose history is seldom told. Share their stories with your students.

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The film kit and teacher's guide will be available this winter. Observe the 50th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery marches with your students! Recommended for grades six and up.

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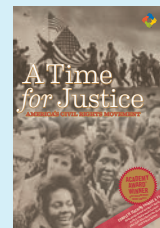
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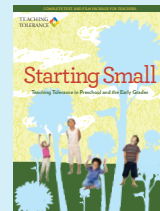


MIGHTY TIMES

THE CHILDREN'S MARCH

The heroic story of the young people in Birmingham, Ala., who brought segregation to its knees.

Grades 6-12



STARTING SMALL

A tool for early-grades educators creating classrooms in which peace, equity and justice are guiding themes.

Professional Development



BULLIED

A Student, a School and a Case that Made History

One student's ordeal at the hands of anti-gay bullies culminates in a message of hope.

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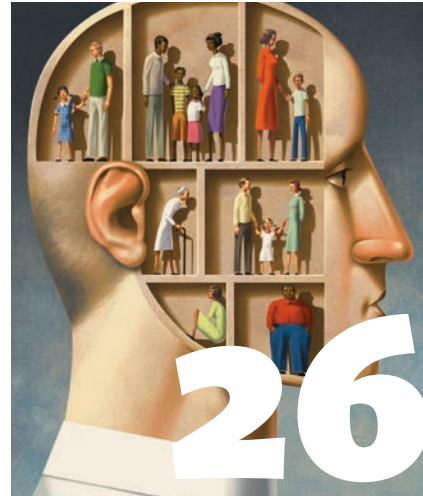
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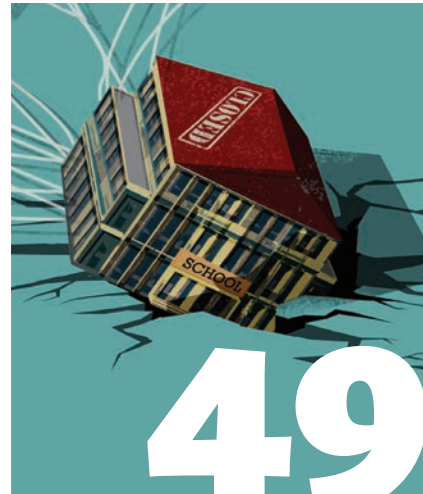
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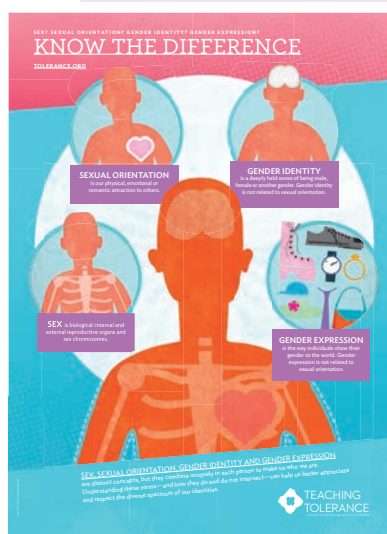
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on the cover

Let's talk tech! Support all students' development with "smart tech use."

ILLUSTRATION BY **PETER HORJUS**



◀ **LOOK INSIDE!**
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 Gender identity?
 Gender expression?
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tolerance.org/maria-interview



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✓ Revamp your history lessons with **Civil Rights Done Right: A Tool for Teaching the Movement**.
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✓ Teach about mass incarceration with **The New Jim Crow** webinars and teacher's guide.
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Perspectives

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

— FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

“I say I am stronger than fear.”

— MALALA YOUSAFZAI



I AM ANGRY. I am angry about seeing my country succumb to fear on a scale I never thought possible. ¶ I have lived through other fearful times. I remember crouching in “duck-and-cover” drills during the Cold War and worrying, as an 8-year-old, about nuclear annihilation. I came into adulthood during the malaise of the mid-1970s, waiting in long lines to gas up the car, struggling to cope with double-digit

can’t hold this office, and another calls for closing mosques and banning Muslims from entering the United States.

It’s hard to be a teacher in such an environment. Countering Islamophobia could make you a target, get your school closed or cost you your job. And yet, teaching children to recognize stereotypes, to read and understand current events and to sort through complicated questions is at the heart of what teachers are called to do.

I’ve turned to the Pyramid of Hate, a graphic created by the Anti-Defamation League, to help explain why we must take fear-based anti-Muslim bias so seriously. It illustrates that unchallenged bias—which we’ve come to accept as normal when we’d rather close schools than let kids learn about Islam—leads to more damaging and dangerous acts like bias-motivated violence and genocide.

When it comes to Muslim Americans, what level of abuse have we come to accept? *The New York Times* reported in December that, in the hours after the San Bernardino shooting, the “top Google search in California with the word ‘Muslims’ in it was ‘kill Muslims.’” The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University reports that “anti-Muslim hate crimes tripled in the wake of the Paris and San Bernardino attacks.”

In other words, we’ve almost reached the top of the pyramid. Doesn’t that make you angry too?

—Maureen Costello

inflation, and wondering whether the progress and optimism of the late ’60s had reached the end of the line. I was in New York City on 9/11 and had a single purpose that day: getting out of Manhattan and back to my family, even if I had to walk the 20 miles between my office and my home.

And still, I have never seen the kind of fear that grips the United States today. It has a name: Islamophobia.

Every day brings a new story about Muslim individuals or Islam at large being demonized. Today, I read about district leaders who closed all the schools in Augusta County, Virginia, because a world geography teacher assigned her students to copy a passage in ornate Arabic calligraphy. Unfortunately for the teacher, the passage was the *Shahada*—the Islamic profession of faith—and the magical thinkers in the community believed it was part of a plot to convert their children.

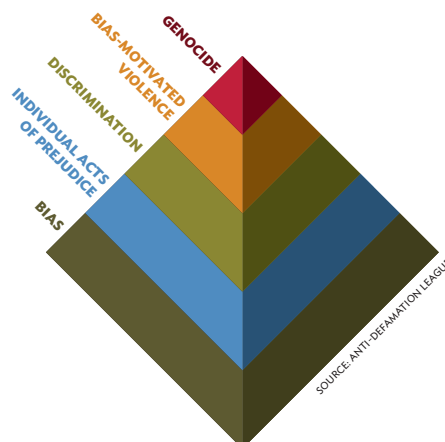
Parents in other states, spurred on by anti-Muslim organizations, have taken up the banner. Besieging local school boards, these parents point to “pro-Islamic and anti-Judeo-Christian”

textbooks that cover the five pillars and the height of Islamic civilization claiming it’s all part of an active plot to indoctrinate public school children.

I began teaching high school courses in world history and geography over 35 years ago. The textbooks I used explained the five pillars, showed Islamic art and design and highlighted the scientific and cultural achievements of what used to be called the Golden Age of Islam.

Here’s the reality: The textbooks haven’t changed—we have.

We are now a nation where Muslim women are fearful of going to supermarkets wearing the hijab, where one candidate for president says a Muslim



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tolerance.org/youth-united



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FIRST BELL

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ILLUSTRATION BY DONGYUN LEE

Reader Reactions

“Extreme Prejudice” addressed why and how to teach about religious radicalism. This story generated significant dialogue—and some criticism.

Now that’s a good idea. What is extreme? What, then, is an extremist? Do extremists arise from religions, or are there other kinds of extremists? Nice!!!

—SUBMITTED BY DEBBIE DEWALL
VIA FACEBOOK

[T]he article ... is lacking in a few respects. First, as an alternative to her directions that educators should clarify that extremists are a minority within the religion, Ms. Fasciano offers an example that “not all Muslims are terrorists.” This statement leaves as one possible interpretation that almost all Muslims are terrorists. ... Moreover, while the 2013 Pew Research Center survey of Muslims located in other countries cited by Ms. Fasciano indicates that majorities in 11 Muslim countries think that “suicide bombings or other acts of violence that target civilians are never justified,” a better teaching moment for educators/readers would be to inform them of the 2011 Gallup poll which revealed that American Muslims, as compared to all other religious groups surveyed, are the least likely to accept the killing of civilians.

—SUBMITTED BY PATRICIA A. HANSON
VIA EMAIL

Our recent film, PD guide and magazine issues inspired an unprecedented amount of dialogue with readers.

“YOU’RE AN ALLY.”

I have relied on Teaching Tolerance for about 15 years. I love the magazine, videos and educational material. You probably don’t hear this often enough, but without you as an ally, schools would look very different!

ANONYMOUS
VIA SURVEY

RUBY DEE INSPIRES

#greatestgift in this month’s @Tolerance_org magazine. #inquiry is an essential part of education!

JEN MOREANO
(@JENMOREANO)
VIA TWITTER

SLURS IN SELMA

I understand the use of

racial slurs, but do not tend to allow them in materials in my classroom, as they cause discomfort to many students. We do debrief about the word, its origins, the hatred behind it, but we do not use it. It would be nice in the viewer’s guide [for *Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot*] if the times when

it occurs [in the film] were noted to make it easier for muting (or better yet, a version of the film with the word muted out).

ANONYMOUS
VIA SURVEY

PRAISE FOR TT CURRICULUM

I'm crazy about [Perspectives for a Diverse America], and I've been sharing it with all of my teachers. I'm planning a short Lunch 'n' Learn to demonstrate its usefulness and purposefulness. Thank you.

JOSEPH THOMPSON
VIA SURVEY

SUPPORTING DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING STUDENTS

[On "Clear Connection"] I wish I'd had this as a child. I struggled through all 12 years and somehow managed to still be a B-average student although I never heard most of the instruction. It took a lot of extra effort though. I was shy and embarrassed as well, and afraid to speak up to ask the teacher to repeat or help. ... It definitely made me feel isolated, insecure and anxious for my entire childhood. It is good to hear

(pun) that things are changing. I taught myself to read lips, faces, emotions and body language to fill in the blanks. I wish I had been taught sign language and coping skills though, that would've been helpful. ["Clear Connection"] makes me feel good that children won't have to go through what I went through!

SUSIE GRACE WAGGONER
VIA FACEBOOK

DISAPPOINTED READER

I'm really disappointed that Teaching Tolerance would include an article like ["Dressing in Solidarity"] about cultural appropriation. Human identities are fluid and to label someone's action as appropriation assumes you know who they are. Is an African American who is labeled by their peers as "acting white" appropriating white culture? No, we'd say that individual is stepping past the limits placed on them by peers stuck in a limiting mindset. Appropriation has intent. Seeking an identity that is aligned with your personal experience of yourself is not appropriation. Teaching Tolerance should be acknowledging



Tim Charleston @MrCsays



If you aren't following @Tolerance_org, you are not giving yourself or your students the full picture. #perspective #GlobalEdchat #sschat



ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL FISHER

that we cannot judge other people unless we are open to hearing their voices and their truth.

ELIZABETH SACHA
VIA FACEBOOK

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

[On Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics With Students] We are trying to have these conversations in our schools and parent meetings, in our work through PTA and our area council. Recently, a few

parents shared that race is very difficult for them to talk about because they don't want to seem oblivious to privilege or say the wrong things, or offend. Other parents have shared that they have felt that their concerns were met with denial. It can be difficult to talk about race in the classroom or other settings. But is discomfort keeping people from needed conversations or "in-the-moment" teaching?

LYNN ALEXANDER
VIA FACEBOOK

EDITOR'S NOTE

Flip to page 19 to read "Begin Within," an excerpt from Let's Talk!

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Have an opinion about something you see in Teaching Tolerance magazine or on our website? Email us at editor@tolerance.org with the subject line "Letter to the Editor." Or mail a letter to 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.



Carolyn Cook Rittenhouse

[On "Rewriting History—for the Better"] Calling all educators! It's time to "get away from this kind of one-dimensional, Eurocentric version of the history" and re-write it so that it's accurate and truthful for all kids.

VIA FACEBOOK

Ask Teaching Tolerance



Q Recently I have seen references to the term “hidden curriculum”? What is a hidden curriculum?

Broadly, the phrase hidden curriculum refers to the lessons that students learn in schools that aren't part of the formal lessons or objectives. These can be intentional (such as embedding social emotional learning into daily lessons) or unintentional (such as replicating or reinforcing existing social structures—often inequitable ones).

An example of an intentional hidden curriculum is selecting an activity that requires students to practice listening skills—even if listening is never mentioned in the directions.

An example of an unintentional hidden curriculum is a school culture that fusses over the football team but never acknowledges classroom success—sending the message that physical prowess is more important than academics.

Now that you know the definition, ask yourself, “What hidden curriculum am I teaching?” Once you become aware of the values and judgments that underly your behaviors and choices, you can cultivate a hidden curriculum that promotes inclusivity and elevates all students.

If I see a school resource officer (SRO) doing something out of line to a student, what is the best course of action?

If the activity is taking place in a public school or on public school grounds, you are acting as both a citizen and a school employee. It may not be possible to interrupt the activity, but you are in a position to raise the propriety—or legality—of the SRO's actions with your administration.

Ideally, you would record the incident. This type of documentation could help the student and—depending on the

outcome of the incident—potentially help the police work more effectively in the school. (Be sure to assess for safety before you whip out your camera phone!)

It is currently legal to film on-duty police in all 50 states as long as the filming is not conducted in secret. A police officer or SRO may tell you to stop filming or try to detain you. Knowing your rights in that situation is important for you and your students. Involve them in researching laws about what police can and cannot ask bystanders to do. This type of authentic learning can show students that educators have questions and concerns about school safety too.

If you aren't able to film the incident—either due to logistical or safety reasons—your account as an outside observer is still important. Bring your documentation to school and police officials. If the student was arrested, consider providing your testimony to the student's attorney. And, most importantly, get informed and involved about disciplinary policymaking in your school and district.

For more information on how to support responsive school discipline, see the new Teaching Tolerance guide, *Code of Conduct*. (tolerance.org/code-of-conduct)

ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

Need the kind of advice and expertise only Teaching Tolerance can provide? Email us at editor@tolerance.org with “Ask TT” in the subject line.

The Danger of a Single Story

In my eighth-grade Global Thinking course, the first homework assignment of the year is for students to watch Chimamanda Adichie's TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story." Adichie weaves together her personal story of growing up in Nigeria and moving to the

United States for college with a provocative discussion on the nature of stories and storytelling. She calls attention to "the danger of a single story." In short, defining an experience based on a single account gives us incomplete, potentially damaging understandings of other people.

Adichie's words of caution are an important reminder of the very sacred and noble responsibility we have as teachers to tell stories well and to teach our students how to read and understand others' stories.



And readers replied...

I use this to teach, too. ... Students really respond to her, and this talk makes it easier to open the doors to difficult conversation—the questions I use for my students: [W]hat is a time that someone had a single story about you[?]. A time that you had a single story about someone else[?]. I love this TED Talk!

Thanks for sharing this. This is exactly why I spoke up for German citizens regarding WWII. Only one point of view is a very dangerous thing. People think if you offer another dimension to the story, you are somehow trying to explain away evil. Nope. Not it at all.

GET THE FULL DISCUSSION HERE:

tolerance.org/blog/danger-single-story



HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BLOG LATELY?

Check out some of the most talked-about blog posts. Go to tolerance.org and search for these headlines:



Lift-Ups Instead of Put-Downs



Reconsider Columbus Day



Teaching After the Napa Valley Wine Train Incident



Updated: "10 Myths About Immigration"



FREE STUFF!

These Web resources offer diversity-rich information and materials for educators.

KIDS COUNT Data Center, an Annie E. Casey Foundation project, offers statistics and publications on child and family well-being in the United States. The data can be searched by location and by topic.

datacenter.kidscount.org

Look Different, an MTV campaign, exposes hidden racial, gender and anti-LGBT biases and offers resources that prompt meaningful conversations among young people about these biases.

lookdifferent.org

Patient No More, an exhibit at the Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability at San Francisco State University, documents the Section 504 Sit-in, an almost month-long protest in 1977 that helped spur the national disability rights movement.

t-t.site/patientnomore

Visualizing Emancipation, a collaboration of the Universities of Georgia and Richmond, is an interactive map featuring locations and dates of events significant to the gradual collapse of slavery. The site includes lessons plans too!

dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation



José Luis Vilson teaches math at IS 52 in New York City.

Solving Problems Beyond Math Class

*“F*** your homework!”*

“I’m sorry. What?”

*“F*** your homework!”*

This unwarranted disruption from my student at the end of math class might have made me rethink my whole career path. The other students were equally stunned because outbursts like that never happened, and—for eight months—none of my students had felt the need to disrespect our class. We worked through dialogue and, even when there were rough patches, we diffused the negativity with understanding.

Yet, on this Friday, for this student who had re-entered my class in recent weeks, she saw an opportunity to rebel and jumped right in—and

then immediately scurried out without returning that day.

For every 85 students who respect the way we do things in my classroom, there are always the other five students who seemingly have no interest in being there. Their gazes are blank and, when attentive, these five students would rather chatter with their friends than get into any task I might offer, no matter how interactive and student-centered. They skip—not walk—into class when they’re late, then sit there until I prompt them to take out their notebooks.

Am I satisfied with the idea that I’m keeping 85 students from becoming part of the five? No. My goal is always to teach all 90 students. I’m

probably my own worst critic, wondering if I have built enough strong relationships with every single student to help them overcome their personal and academic struggles.

Math isn’t just a set of numbers for me, but an approach to solving problems or creating *better* problems than the ones we’ve been left. The idea that students can find success in math, the great gatekeeper for middle and high school students, gives me life. Even with my rather stoic facial expressions, I hope to project an enthusiasm about teaching students math that becomes infectious. When I see students arguing about the math and making sense of it without my interference, I’m downright



SHARE YOUR STORY

What motivates you to get up each morning and serve students in our nation’s schools?

We want to hear from you. Send your 600-word submission for the “Why I Teach” column to editor@tolerance.org.

ebullient. When they struggle with a concept, but my questions lead them toward their own sense of what's going on, I'm equally joyous. That's why I teach.

I don't see myself as a political agent in the sense of delivering an explicit message about my own politics, but my actions hopefully reveal elements of social justice, empathy and humanity—elements that can lead students to becoming problem solvers.

I teach because the students who let me impart lessons to them don't just get the ideas of linear relationships and exponents but of passion and hard work. For those who can persevere, more often than not, they develop an unparalleled confidence in themselves and very often leave my classroom college bound and appreciative.

For the students who struggle with my lessons, I'm quick to take responsibility for their life paths. Therein lies the struggle for those of us fully vested in our classrooms. We know how difficult life may be for the students most disaffected by our school system, and we lose sleep over the idea that even our best efforts can't dismantle the effects of poverty and trauma.

As for the student who left that day, she eventually gathered herself through the end of the year, earning a good grade in my class, graduating from eighth grade and, yes, actually doing the homework assignment I gave her. I care about her growth, but she is no longer in my care. As a freshman in high school, she will now have to make choices with teachers who may or may not be as patient with her outbursts, teachers who, I hope, won't take it personally when she does "turn up."

My faith is in all students. If the person who pushes them to success is me, then I've done a great job. If the person isn't me, then of course I'm happy anyway. My job is to be a conduit to their path.

BLOG 9.2.15 // ABILITY, TEACHING



Autism and the Midas of Metaphor

After our writing sessions together, Desmond and I always take a few minutes to talk about the movies. He asks me for a couple suggestions (*The Lost Boys*, *Real Genius*) and gives me a few of his own (*The Lego Movie*, *Shawshank Redemption*). But on this day, for the first time ever, Desmond had an anti-suggestion:

"Whatever you do, Chris, you have to promise me you'll never see *The Notebook*."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it's too emotional," he replied. "It's so emotional it hurts. I'm protecting you."

While somewhat amusing, Desmond's concern was also very touching, and more than that, it was illuminating. As a young man on the autism spectrum, Desmond is used to people assuming he lacks emotion and empathy, that he can't imagine how another's experience might feel.



And readers replied...

My son who is on the spectrum just wrote the most heart-rending recollection of when his cat passed. One paragraph had me in tears.

Maybe they have too much empathy that they have frozen shut from the harshness of the world. If everybody else thinks they are sooo empathetic, how come they have trouble understanding this?

GET THE FULL DISCUSSION HERE:

tolerance.org/blog/autism-and-midas-metaphor

When Empathy Is Paramount

Meet Kelly Wickham Hurst, the guidance dean at Lincoln Magnet School, a tech-focused middle school in Springfield, Illinois. In her daily work, Hurst says, empathy and a willingness to reflect on deeper issues affecting students are keys to connecting with them.

What prompted your career transition from teaching to administration?

To be perfectly honest, it was because I was seeing our black and brown children not taken care of at the administrative level in a way that I thought was equitable. I think I spent too many years being angry about it before I recognized it for what it was—and that was systemic racism. ... I've worked in five different schools in this district, as well as a private school outside of our district. [Black and brown students] were given discipline instead of maybe some mental health care, getting a social worker involved, and I thought the only way for me to make a difference ... was to be in the position where I would have to be in charge of that.

You're one of two educators of color at Lincoln Magnet School. What is that experience like for you?

I feel like an island floating out in this huge ocean, and I feel like I'm constantly waving the white flag. There are many times when I go home extremely frustrated because of the way the system works. I recognize and acknowledge that I'm a part of the system, but I'm trying to work from my position in making some change. I do it in a lot of different ways.



Not all educators stand at the front of a class. In each issue, we interview an outstanding educator who works outside the classroom.

Kelly Wickham Hurst puts empathy into action on a daily basis at Lincoln Magnet School.

For instance, we have a student of the month, and what I first noticed was, even though we're only 45 percent white, the number of students ... nominated for student of the month was overwhelmingly white. And I thought that was problematic. [Some teachers] had to get to know me and understand what I was saying, where I was coming from. And then, I started talking to them about, "I've noticed that you pick students and they all happen to be white, middle-class kids, and I think that's fine, but can we talk about why we have student of the

month and why we honor students and why it's important to look for diverse [students]?"

You're the head of your school's problem-solving team, which is for the students who are falling through the cracks. How do you support these students?

I run some attendance and some failure lists on a pretty regular basis. ... I will cross-reference [these] with: Does this student already have an IEP? Do they have a 504 plan in place? And, if I'm noticing something happening on



I recognize and acknowledge that I'm a part of the system, but I'm trying to work from my position in making some change.

the social front, is that something that we need to address?

I spend a lot of time going back to their elementary [school] and contacting the problem-solving leader or the social worker in that building and finding out what they did that worked with a kid. For many of them, it's something as simple as they just need an adult in the building who cares about them. For others, I meet with some kids on a weekly basis about their grades to find out: "What is it that's stopping you from getting better grades?" "Are you not understanding the material?" "Is this a matter of going home and having to take care of younger siblings?" "Does your parent work third shift ...?" "In that case, you're staying after school with me." Part of the problem solving is taking away every single obstacle [to] getting a kid to be successful.

You say that empathy is paramount in your work. Why?

Because I deal with human beings;

because this is a people job. And, I think that a lot of times we look at issues at school and just think that we can't do any more. ... I think that if you don't pay attention to what outside factors are involved, then I think we're missing a big, huge piece because all the research tells us that these outside factors are extremely important. I make it a mission of mine to get to know these kids and their families and

what struggles their families have, and while I can't fix them, I can at least communicate that to the teachers who are dealing with the kids in the classroom on a regular basis. ...

I don't think everybody has to have the same struggles that I had to get here. I was homeless as a teenager. I was pregnant as a teenager. ... A lot of empathy that I bring into my job comes from the way I wish people would have treated me because I was completely cast aside. ... My guidance counselor and my teachers treated me as [if] I lost brain cells when I got pregnant and put me in these lower classes and lowered their expectations for me, and that's not acceptable. It wasn't then and it's not for me now to do that with these students.

DOWN THE HALL

Know an excellent administrator, librarian or counselor we should interview? Tell us all about them at editor@tolerance.org.

Lessons Learned

Our classroom resources are grade-specific and align to the four domains of the Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. Find them at tolerance.org/activities.

Who Do They Think We Are?—Identity

(Middle and High School)

After watching an episode of *America by the Numbers*, students discuss why advertisers are increasingly interested in Latino consumers.

Every Family Is the Same. Every Family Is Different.—Diversity

(Elementary School)

Students reflect on how families are unique and how their own families may be similar or different from classmates' families.

The Freedom Riders—Justice

(Middle and High School)

This video-based activity introduces students to the Freedom Riders and how they confronted deeply entrenched segregation.

Anti-Racism Activity:

The Sneetches—Action

(Elementary School)

Students participate in a guided reading of Dr. Seuss' *The Sneetches* and learn about the emotional impact of discrimination.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the U.S., 80 percent of Latino students and 74 percent of black students attend majority nonwhite schools, and 43 percent of Latinos and 38 percent of blacks attend intensely segregated schools (those with >10 percent white students).

—The Civil Rights Project

Among science and engineering graduates, men are employed in a STEM occupation at twice the rate of women.

—United States Census Bureau,
Disparities in STEM Employment by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin



Responding to Trauma in Your Classroom

Bad Behavior or Reacting to Trauma?

Think of a student who challenges you. Have you observed any of these behaviors in that student?

- Excessive anger
- Unusual startle reactions
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue
- Physical or verbal aggression
- Regular tardiness or absence from class
- Perfectionistic, controlling or anxious behavior
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Low self-confidence
- Irritability
- Clinginess
- Trouble making friends
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Hoarding
- Risky behaviors (including drug or alcohol abuse or sexual acting out)
- Panic attacks
- Extreme self-reliance
- Running away
- Defiance
- Alienation from peers

If you've observed even some of these behaviors (or other troubling symptoms), you may have a student who is directly or indirectly

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 60 percent of children [have been] exposed to at least one type of violence within the past year.

—National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention,
Childhood Trauma and Its Effect On Healthy Development



experiencing trauma. Trauma can be defined as the reaction to a shocking or painful event or series of negative events. Some traumas require immediate intervention and court-mandated reporting; others go by unmarked. Regardless of whether or not you are aware of the details, there are things you can do to mitigate the effects of trauma for individual students and for all students in your classroom.

Source: Mental Health Connection of Tarrant County

What Causes Trauma?

Trauma affects the ways individuals feel, think and behave. It influences self-perception as well as beliefs about other people and the world.

Though this list is not exhaustive, traumatic experiences can include:

- Medical crises
- Accidents or injuries (like a house fire or car collision that threatens the student’s safety)
- Bullying or harassment
- Family separation (due to incarceration, deployment, divorce, foster placement or death)
- Natural disaster
- Abuse (emotional, physical or sexual)
- Neglect
- Observation of domestic, community or school violence
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Terrorism and war
- Instability due to being unhoused
- Poverty
- Overt discrimination or constant microaggressions
- Refugee or undocumented status

More students may suffer trauma—or suffer more trauma—than you can see or know. Trauma is difficult to assess and identify; it’s also specific to the individual. An event that may traumatize one person may not traumatize another person. Moreover, the same event may lead to different trauma symptoms in different people.

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Responding to Trauma

Proactively applying trauma-informed classroom strategies benefits all students. Students respond positively when educators get to know their individual circumstances, affirm their identities and cultivate empathy in the classroom. Here are some ideas to consider incorporating in your teaching practice:



Establish social and emotional safety in your classroom.

Social and emotional safety is the cornerstone of positive classroom outcomes. Research shows that students need to feel both physically and emotionally safe to learn. Students experiencing trauma, including bias, bullying and social isolation, are more likely to feel unsafe.

STRATEGIES • Classroom contracts • Explicit anti-bullying or community-building curricula • Timely interventions in conflicts and hurtful exchanges • Teaching and modeling of empathy and active listening skills



Create a behavior-management plan that focuses on positive reinforcement.

Discipline and behavior management are central to classroom culture and often present unique challenges for students responding to traumatic events or experiences. Foster compassion for and among your students. Focus on praising students for appropriate classroom behavior, not on punishment.

STRATEGIES • Implement student-generated agreements and contracts • Adopt “zero indifference” (NOT zero-tolerance) policies • Seek out training in restorative justice techniques • Explore stress-management strategies to diffuse tense situations and help students process feelings in the moment • Give students opportunities to demonstrate their strengths



Increase your self-awareness and trauma competency.

Increase your knowledge about trauma and how it may manifest for your students. Remember, students respond to trauma in different ways, and their responses may be influenced by cultural traditions, religious beliefs or familial relationships. Connect with students and their families to identify resources and services that can inform how best to support students who experience trauma.

STRATEGIES • Seek professional development on working with specific identity groups • Share support resources with other educators • Connect with community organizations • Engage in ongoing self-assessment and reflection on your trauma responsiveness

Additional Resources

Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education
[A Teaching Tolerance publication](#)

“Helping Students Navigate a Violent World”
[A Teaching Tolerance blog](#)

“Teaching Between Worlds”
[A Teaching Tolerance blog](#)

“Shelter From the Storm”
[A Teaching Tolerance magazine feature—Issue 49](#)

“Teaching Through Trauma: How poverty affects kids’ brains”
[Southern California Public Radio](#)

“Racism’s Psychological Toll”
[The New York Times](#)

“Child and Adolescent Refugee Trauma”
[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

The Effects of Complex Trauma on Youth
[Judicial Council of California Administrative Office of the Courts](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly half of children and adolescents were assaulted at least once in the past year.

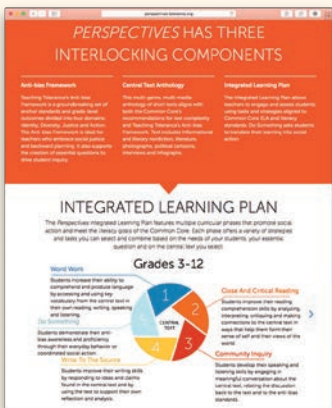
—National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention,
Childhood Trauma and Its Effect On Healthy Development

TEACH FOR JUSTICE. PLAN WITH PERSPECTIVES.

It's online, and it's free. Try it today. perspectives.tolerance.org

I need a tool to help me teach ...

- ✓ diversity
- ✓ literacy
- ✓ identity
- ✓ action
- ✓ social justice
- ✓ college and career readiness
- ✓ equity



Don't just take our word for it! Here's what our users are saying...

“Love the ease of lesson planning, the alignment with Common Core, the inclusion of thought-provoking essential questions and the social emotional learning component.”

You spoke. We listened.

Introducing *Perspectives for a Diverse America*, the first literacy-based curriculum that allows you to backward plan for social justice *and* college and career readiness. *Perspectives* is:



Simple

Create, save and share learning plans in one easy-to-use platform.



Practical

Access Common Core-aligned content that also meets the needs of diverse classrooms.



Powerful


Engage social justice topics, and empower your students to make change.



PERSPECTIVES for a DIVERSE AMERICA

A K-12 LITERACY-BASED
ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

perspectives.tolerance.org



**Prepare yourself to
discuss race, racism
and other difficult
topics with students.**

ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE STECKER

Begin Within



EXCERPT

This feature is an adapted excerpt from the new Teaching Tolerance handbook *Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics With Students*, released in fall of 2015. Download the full publication at tolerance.org/lets-talk.

**Commit to
that you do
answers, and
the opport
with your s**

EDUCATORS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE in helping students navigate current events and talk openly about the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of social inequality and discrimination. Learning how to communicate about topics like police violence, economic inequality, mass incarceration and white privilege requires practice, and facilitating these conversations demands skill—regardless of who we are, our intentions or how long we've been teaching.

Use these strategies to build confidence and prepare yourself to normalize conversations about race and racism. You can also use them to prepare yourself to discuss other types of discrimination, such as gender bias, ableism, and religious or anti-LGBT persecution.

Assess Your Comfort Level

Many educators avoid talking about race and racism. It can be uncomfortable, controversial and may call for skills few of us possess. Often, this avoidance comes down to fears of misspeaking, sounding racist or militant, exacerbating differences or hurting feelings.

Part of getting students ready to talk about race and racism is to first deal with our own feelings and experiences. Before starting a classroom discussion, do a simple self-assessment.

Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel.

- ➔ I would rather not talk about race/racism.
- ➔ I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- ➔ I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism.

➔ I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.

➔ I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.

➔ I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.

Then use a sentence-stem activity to self-reflect.

➔ The hard part of talking about race/racism is ...

➔ The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is ...

➔ My own experiences of race taught me ...

➔ My students' experiences of race are different from mine because ...

After reflecting on your own comfort level and experience, think about ways to grow confident.

➔ Do you worry about your ability to answer students' questions about race and racism? If so, commit to accepting that you don't have all the answers, and embrace the opportunity to learn with your students.

➔ Do you feel ill-prepared to talk about race and racism? If so, commit to learning more about the issues by studying history, following current events and brushing up on anti-racism work.

➔ Do you reroute classroom discussions when you sense resistance or anger in the room? If so, commit to riding out the discussion next time.

➔ Do you feel isolated in your experience of race and racism? If so, commit to identifying a colleague with whom you can co-teach, plan or debrief.

Find Comfort in Discomfort

Teaching about structural inequality such as racism requires courage and confidence—from you and from your students. It's normal to feel discomfort or anger as you reflect on your own experiences with racial inequality. But the more you engage in and moderate difficult conversations, the more confident you'll become. The conversations may not necessarily get easier, but your ability to press toward more meaningful dialogue will expand. Stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Being uncomfortable should not mean being unsafe. With your students, establish classroom norms that include a list of specific words and phrases that students commit to not using. The list might include calling people's opinions "stupid" or "lame,"

accepting don't have all the and embrace unity to learn students.

using the n-word or the r-word, or saying, “That’s so gay!”

Students can create and sign a contract of norms and behaviors that define the classroom community as a socially and emotionally safe place. The contract might include such statements as “Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment” or “Put-downs of any kind are never OK” or “Speak directly to each other, not the teacher.” If students want to tell stories about their own racial identities and experiences, consider establishing a structure that allows each person to share uninterrupted, without response from other students. (See our resource on Serial Testimony for more information: tolerance.org/meaningful-discussions.)

Established norms or a contract can help students support a healthy classroom environment and reduce the likelihood that you will have to intervene.

Be Vulnerable

Avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being perceived as clueless, racist or militant. As you prepare to engage

students in the conversation, consider this question: What will this discussion potentially expose about me?

Use the graphic organizer *Difficult Conversations: A Self-Assessment* (t-t.site/letstalkassessment) to list three vulnerabilities that you worry could limit your effectiveness. Next, identify three strengths that you believe will help you lead open and honest dialogues. Finally, list specific needs that, if met, would improve your ability to guide difficult conversations.

Address Strong Emotions

Students’ reactions to talking about race and racism will vary. They may react passively, show sorrow, express anger or respond unpredictably. Some students may become visibly upset; others may push back against discussing these topics in class. Many of these reactions stem from feelings such as pain, anger, confusion, guilt, shame and the urge to blame others.

Seeing members of the class respond emotionally may elicit reactions from you or other students. Guilt and shame can lead to crying that may immobilize conversation. Anger might lead to interruptions, loud talking, sarcasm or explicit confrontations—all of which can impede important dialogue. Your role is to remain calm and assess the situation. If the tension in the room appears to be prompting dialogue and learning, continue to monitor, but let the conversation play out. If the tension boils over in confrontation that jeopardizes student safety (emotional

or otherwise), take steps to diffuse the situation.

Refer back to *Difficult Conversations: A Self-Assessment*. How can the strengths you listed calm students and diffuse tension, yet avoid shutting down the conversation? Spend some time thinking ahead about how you will react to strong emotions.

Use the strategies in *Responding to Strong Emotions* (t-t.site/strongemotions) to develop a plan. You know your students; consider the emotional responses likely to emerge. Add others you think might emerge, and list potential response strategies.

Planning ahead and establishing a safe space within your classroom should diminish students’ discomfort. It’s important to note, however, that for some students—particularly members of marginalized, nondominant or targeted identity groups—you may not be able to provide complete safety. It’s also true that overemphasizing identity safety runs the risk of minimizing the diverse realities of our students’ lived experiences both in and outside school. In addition to providing safety for your students, build their resilience and strength so they will be more willing to take the risks involved with feeling uncomfortable.

Take Care of Yourself

Facilitating difficult conversations can be emotionally draining or even painful. Make time to recharge in positive ways. Find colleagues or friends who can listen while you debrief conversations about race and racism. Take advantage of professional learning communities where you can discuss the dynamics in your classroom. Keep a professional journal and use writing to process and reflect. ♦

Check out a list of related PD suggestions and classroom activities at t-t.site/difficulttopics.





SHIFTING OUT OF NEUTRAL

History educators must abandon the pretense of neutrality—or risk inhibiting students' moral development.



BY JONATHAN GOLD

ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH BLUNT

I ASK A LOT OF open-ended questions in my history classes, the kinds of questions to which there are no *right* answers, only *good* answers (logical, well-supported and so on). A few years ago I started asking myself such a question:

“Am I damaging my students?”

Here’s the context. In the past I hesitated to share my own opinions about the questions we addressed in class (despite the fact that my seventh- and eighth-grade students were keenly interested in knowing where I stood). My hesitation came from a desire to maintain some level of objectivity and my understanding that this is what was expected of me as a teacher. But my attempt to strike a neutral pose began to feel like a major ethical and philosophical quandary: Was it ever possible to disentangle my own biased assumptions from my teaching? Is neutrality possible or even desirable?

Students look to their teachers to be the authority on the course material. And even though we may be aware that we are making choices about what content we include and exclude and whose perspectives we endorse and whose we disregard, most of us still like to pretend we are maintaining some level of objectivity. I came to the conclusion that objectivity is practically impossible. What’s more, it can hinder our students’ moral development. And cultivating morality is uniquely essential to the project of teaching history. Studying the past offers a venue for

reflecting on the human condition and developing a sense of right and wrong. We study who we *were* so that we can figure out who we *want to be*.

“That’s Your Opinion”

Justin P. McBrayer, an assistant professor of philosophy at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, posted a thought-provoking op-ed on *The New York Times*’ “Opinionator” blog in which he argued that today’s students “view moral claims as mere opinions that are not true or are true only relative to a culture.” In other words, he believes that today’s students have an overdeveloped sense of relativism. In his view, young people are taught to distinguish between fact and opinion and thus accept as “fact” only that which can be objectively proven. All opinions or perspectives are, then, considered equal. I see similar struggles in my own students who want to tolerate all views while dismissing none.

This analysis has great relevance to me as a history teacher; I often struggle with how to balance moral relativism and absolutism in our class activities—both among my students and with regard to my own contributions. A student once gave me a note on the last day of school that read, much to my alarm, “Thank you for a great course. I learned that if you look at perspectives that are different, then you will see that everyone is right for different reasons.” I was dismayed because, of course, everyone is decidedly *not* right

for different reasons. Some people are quite wrong about a lot of things, and many of those people feature heavily in the U.S. and global history classes I teach. After receiving this note, I knew I needed to think more carefully about how I was framing issues of neutrality and relativism in my classes.

Don't Stop at "Multiple Perspectives" Teachers often diversify and complicate their students' thinking by talking about studying history from "multiple

WHAT'S WORSE FOR STUDENTS: THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY OR THE PRETENSE OF OBJECTIVITY?

perspectives." This approach can be an effective way to broaden students' thinking and include voices from outside of the dominant narrative. (It is such an important concept that Teaching Tolerance offers a curriculum called *Perspectives for a Diverse America*.)

I have come to see, however, that the inclusion of "multiple perspectives" without sufficient attention to power, intent and privilege makes it challenging for history teachers to honor their moral imperative. History is not just a collection of different perspectives or stories; it is a collection of arguments historians have had about how best to tell these stories. I often differentiate between "history" and "what happened

in the past" to get at this important distinction. If we only talk about "multiple perspectives" and locate the various stories of the past on a "continuum of perspective"—without assigning any normative judgments to them—we forestall attempts at determining historical responsibility and causation. We remove the moral judgment implicit in the scholarly study of history.

Talking about perspectives without talking about power can imply an equivalency of viewpoints that brings with it a very real danger of erasing historical injustice. Do we consider the perspective of the slave owner and the enslaved person to be equally valid? There is room to examine both and good historical justification for doing so, but just using "perspective" feels too neutral and too blasé about the role power and injustice played in shaping events in the past and the history that emerged out of them.

Instead of multiple perspectives, I suggest the term "narrative," which we can define as "perspective + power." Using a narrative means interrogating the story and the storyteller, shifting perspective but also opening us up to questions of authority, power and control, sometimes referred to as critical literacy. Narrative offers us a way to frame history as multiple stories about the past that exist in tension with one another while also allowing us to talk about right and wrong. Without it, we risk producing relativists who tolerate all views and critique and interrogate none.

Acknowledge Your Power as the Teacher

As the designer of my students' experience, I wield tremendous power to control the narrative and flow of information. I choose the texts, I ask the questions and, ultimately, I assess my students' knowledge and learning. My neutrality is already called into question by virtue of the materials we use.

There is an urgent need for teachers to be aware of our own assumptions and biases, but I think it's impossible to separate them completely from our teaching. If part of the lesson is that perspective and power influence the telling of history's stories (i.e., there's no such thing as objectivity), how can we cast ourselves as neutral authorities? What's worse for students: the acknowledgment of subjectivity or the pretense of objectivity?

Know and Teach About Your Biases

During a unit on the Industrial Revolution, one student asked why we kept reading sources about women's experiences. A student warmed my heart by saying, "Jon's a feminist and he wants us to think about women's roles in the past." I didn't shy away from that label; rather, I embraced it and was glad my students had noticed.

I acknowledge the fact that I want students to think how I do, as an expert in historical thinking. I also want them to learn how to build reasoned and well-articulated arguments. (Of course, I consider my own views to fall into that category!) So, I think it's okay to recognize and teach from one's own bias and preconceptions provided that a) there is room for dissension and debate and b) students are assessed on the clarity of their thinking,

soundness of their arguments and judiciousness of their evidence—and not their parroting of my ideas.

One of my favorite lessons is to compare different textbooks' versions of the same event. This approach means studying historiography, in which—in the words of Michael Conway, writing for *The Atlantic*—“the barrier between historian and student is dropped, exposing a conflict-ridden landscape.” Since I am effectively the historiographic designer of my history curriculum, my own bias can become a part of the lesson. The key is to own and acknowledge my bias as I assess and evaluate effective historical thinking.

Recognize Your “Red Lines”

As students improve their discussion and argumentation skills, they will inevitably challenge each other. At other times, students will introduce ideas and ways of thinking that do not mesh with our subjective interpretations of the issue. Preparing for these moments means knowing what types of comments we as teachers will let slide and what we will flag as unacceptable. This means thoroughly assessing our own “red lines,” those areas that we will not permit students to enter. For example, I might encourage a debate about whether women's lives were improved during the Industrial Revolution or whether it opened new opportunities for exploitation and marginalization, since both of these arguments could be consistent with a feminist perspective, but I wouldn't allow students to assert that women should have remained outside the paid workforce. When my class compares the antebellum development of the



North and South, I always intervene if a student concludes that the South “needed” slaves to work plantations; instead, we connect racist ideology to the motive to maximize profits.

Empower Students and Encourage Them to Use Their Power

While I encourage my colleagues to own their subjectivity (to an extent), I'm still not advocating for proselytizing. My teaching needs to focus on rigorous historical thinking—and not convincing students to adopt my ideas. In other words, my goal is for my students to learn to think *how* I think but not necessarily *what* I think. Inevitably, they may reach conclusions similar to my own, but the process of developing historical thinking skills is more important than whether or not they agree with me.

I try to remain in the center of a spectrum with evangelizing on one end and bending over backwards to accommodate all points of view on the other. It is my hope that—through this approach—I can increasingly rely

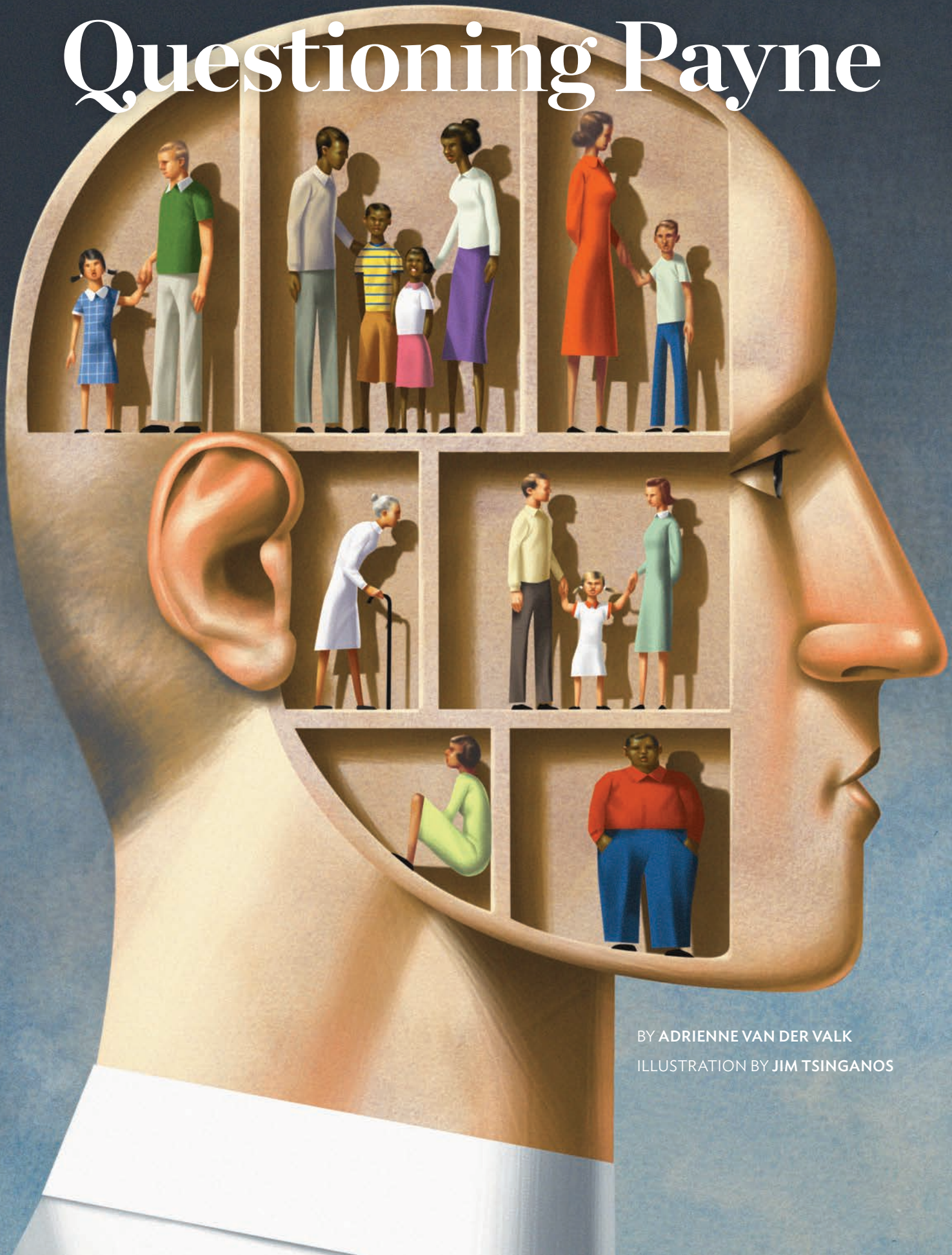
on students to handle the dissension, interrogation and rigorous analysis necessary for good historical work and effective moral development. If the students are monitoring one another, calling each other out and pushing on each other's assumptions, then my role is more referee than sage. And in that role, I can help maintain a culture of safety (to the extent that safety is possible) and empowerment.

Howard Zinn cautions that, in studying history, “it is impossible to be neutral ... neutrality means accepting the way things are now.” My ambition is for students in my class to want to make change and to develop strong moral views—which means we teachers can't pretend that we don't have them. By owning our morality and demanding rigor in our classrooms, we can knowingly, mindfully and progressively develop students' abilities to articulate and assess the human experience. ♦

Gold teaches history in Providence, Rhode Island. He also blogs for Teaching Tolerance.



Questioning Payne



BY ADRIENNE VAN DER VALK

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM TSINGANOS

Dr. Ruby Payne’s name is synonymous with professional development on poverty. But is that a good thing?

WHEN FOSTERING EQUITY in schools is part of your mission (as it is for Teaching Tolerance), you pay close attention to conversations about poverty. It’s a pressing topic for educators: One-fifth of children under 18 in the United States live below the federal poverty line, while more than half of public school students are designated low-income. Across the country, teachers are desperate for strategies to address the academic achievement gaps between low-income children and their higher-income peers.

Writer and educator Ruby Payne has been offering strategies for teaching students in poverty for almost 20 years. Since 1996, when she founded her business, aha! Process, to train educators on “the critical role schools can play in helping children and teens exit poverty,” Payne and her affiliates have, according to her website, “trained hundreds of thousands of professionals.” Her self-published book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, has sold more than 1.5 million copies. Chances are, if you’re a K-12 educator who has received professional development on working with students in poverty, the training was associated with Ruby Payne.

TT has long been aware of Payne’s work. A number of our staffers took aha! Process trainings during their teaching careers, and when a revised edition of *Framework* came out in 2013, we passed it around the office. But for the last 10 years, another conversation about Payne has been building among researchers, classroom teachers and education advocates. They question the theories that underpin *Framework* and raise concerns about the methods espoused by aha! Process. Some of her most vocal critics are Paul C. Gorski of George Mason University (an ally in TT’s equity work), Randy Bomer of the University of Texas at Austin and Paul Thomas of Furman University.

After reading some of the academic papers critiquing aha! Process, we decided to look more closely at how Payne’s most commonly encountered professional development materials align with our own work. We focused on her introductory offering, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, and we spoke with several educators who have participated in aha! Process workshops. We also talked with Payne about the questions critics have raised about her work focused on K-12 schools.

TT’s Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

Many of the practices TT promotes are based on instructional theory that is broadly referred to as culturally responsive pedagogy. This means we understand that children learn most effectively when educators know and support their unique strengths and validate the multiple aspects of their identities. The resulting practices arise from years of research on effective teaching and learning. Some of the foundational practices include:

- ➔ Holding all students to high expectations
- ➔ Finding and focusing on students’ cultural assets rather than their perceived deficits
- ➔ Providing curricular “mirrors” so students can see themselves in classroom materials
- ➔ Getting to know students’ families and communities and acknowledging the multiple facets of their identities
- ➔ Allowing space for students to share narratives about their lives and hear or read narratives about the lives of others
- ➔ Encouraging educators to continually examine their own power, privilege and bias—and to include discussions of power, privilege and bias in their teaching.

Basically, understanding the specific cultures and circumstances that shape students’ experiences allows educators to make connections and help students if they are struggling. And, because poverty affects so many young people, understanding the causes, effects and multipliers of poverty is critical to culturally responsive pedagogy.

The Criticisms

In our conversations with scholars, educators and other stakeholders, five main criticisms of Payne’s K-12 materials emerged:

- ❶ They focus on individual interventions and ignore the systems that cause, worsen and perpetuate poverty.
- ❷ They overgeneralize about people living in poverty and rely upon stereotypes.
- ❸ They focus on perceived weaknesses (or deficits) of children and families living in poverty.
- ❹ They are theoretically ungrounded and offer little evidence that they work.
- ❺ aha! Process workshops—and their price tags—capitalize on the needs of children in poverty.

We focused our inquiry on the critiques most closely tied to culturally responsive pedagogy—stereotypes and deficit thinking—and on the lack of evidence base, a critical concern when identifying best practices.

Operating on Stereotypes

Payne’s framework relies heavily on decoding a set of “Hidden Rules Among Classes.” The rules are organized as a table broken into three columns—poverty, middle class and wealth. Each column lists attitudes, actions and beliefs by category: family structure, food, time, money, personality and education, among several others. Education, for example, is “valued and revered as

abstract” by the poor, considered “crucial for climbing [the] success ladder” by the middle class, and “necessary ... for making and maintaining connections” by the wealthy.

Payne describes her approach as cognitive, meaning that it focuses on how the experience of scarcity (or plenty, or excess) affects thinking. The Hidden Rules, she says, capture the patterns created by these experiences (such as perceiving education as abstract because you interact with few highly educated people) and serve as a jumping-off point for interventions that disrupt or redirect unproductive patterns (help students see education as concretely useful, for example).

But Laura Jackson, a district office administrator who calls herself a “reformed Payne participant,” takes issue with the assumption that the cognitive effects of living in poverty can be generalized.

“The strategies that were learned within that particular workshop ... didn’t lead to scaffolding students as individuals,” Jackson says. “It created that idea that ... everybody living in poverty reacted, responded and did things the same way.”

Kate Shuster, an independent consultant who specializes in program evaluation and works closely with TT, points out that the Hidden Rules are also “rife with common stereotypes about the poor” (e.g., that they are disorganized, their homes are noisy and unkempt, they come to school with lower vocabularies). She worries that the list of beliefs and behaviors homogenizes a diverse class of people and reinforces common biases that many Americans, including teachers, *already hold* about people living in poverty.

“We are wired to accept ideas that confirm our existing beliefs and reject those that don’t,” Shuster says. “It’s essentially stereotype confirmation.”

From Payne’s perspective, offering educators the rules benefits their

abilities to connect with children. “The brain is good at sorting patterns,” Payne explained in our interview. “You can have informed or uninformed patterns. What numerous teachers have basically told me is that the more information you have, the more understanding of the reality of that survival environment, the less judgmental you are.”

But school social worker Kayci Rush, who has taken aha! Process workshops and worked with many teachers who have been trained by Payne, observes something very different.

“Teachers seem to find relief that the responsibility for student failure is the ‘culture of poverty’ and not teacher instruction,” Rush says. “New teachers will use the *Framework* concept language—i.e., speak of the need to be concrete because ‘poor kids struggle with abstract concepts’; they ‘don’t understand the rules and codes’; they ‘have no formal language’ and ‘use slang and informal speech patterns.’ ... It goes on and on. All of this becomes a rationalization for incredible racial bias and reinforcing of white normative values and expectations.”

Payne chooses not to delve deeply into how class intersects with race, gender or other identities, explaining that *Framework* was never intended to address those topics. But her singular focus on poverty elevates class above everything, fundamentally undermining the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and ignoring the harm that can arise from seeing only one aspect of a child’s identity.

“Would you assume an African-American girl, a white boy with a disability and a Somali immigrant child all need the same supports,” asks TT director Maureen Costello, “even if all three were living in poverty?”

Payne’s emphasis on individual behaviors, skills and relationships spotlights personal responsibility over other causes of poverty. For educators who haven’t studied income inequality

or the impact of race on opportunity, the likely takeaway is an oversimplified vision of who their students in poverty are, why their families are poor and what they need to succeed—a takeaway that, from TT’s perspective, undermines justice and equity in schools.

Deficit Thinking

Another criticism levelled against Payne is that she emphasizes skills and experiences students in poverty allegedly lack, such as language proficiency, cognitive and behavioral skills, and respect for authority. It’s not only that the rules of poverty Payne identifies are *different* from those of the middle or upper classes, critics argue; it’s also that the rules of poverty are *not as good*.

Paul Thomas of Furman University finds fault with Payne’s work in large part because, as he wrote in a 2009 article titled “Shifting from Deficit to Generative Practices,” she stresses student deficits relative to “unspoken norm[s] of what people should have and be.”

“It puts all the focus on the learner,” Thomas told TT. “It creates a model where the individual child is flawed and has to be fixed.”

Payne denies that her work relies on deficits. “Deficit doesn’t have to do with learning,” she says. “People go to school because there’s something they don’t know how to do, and that’s why you go to school to learn it. If you grew up in a farming community, you probably may not know how to swim. That doesn’t mean you [have a] deficit; it just simply means that’s not in your environment. You know other things.”

But almost every chapter of *Framework* unpacks a different life arena (e.g., family life, role models) in which students are not getting what they need to function in the middle class—an undeniable focus on what’s missing or dysfunctional as opposed to what’s there and working. Rush and other educators we spoke with point to Payne’s emphasis

on chaotic families as especially damaging, particularly since connecting with families is critical to cultural responsiveness and student success.

“If an educator is already predisposed to not want to make contact with families or parents, it gives them permission to continue not doing that,” Rush says. “Parents are cast as part of the problem.”

In the introduction to *Framework*, Payne tells readers, “We can neither excuse people nor scold them for not knowing,” signaling to educators that they are in the superior position to either cast or withhold judgment. *Framework* never takes the next step of transcending—or even examining—those judgments by encouraging teachers to question their biases and seek out the unique resilience and resourcefulness of students and their families.

Lack of Evidence Base

In the first few editions of *Framework*, Payne cited a single source to support her claims: observations she made while married to a man who grew up in generational poverty. These observations, she explained, informed the Hidden Rules she developed. Considering the pressure schools are under to implement evidence-based interventions, the absence of a substantial theoretical or empirical framework troubled many educators and scholars.

The 2013 edition of *Framework* does include a substantial reference section and cites research studies that support her assertions about, for example, the number of students living in single-parent households and the ways in which people in poverty discipline their children. However, the revisions do not indicate a research-to-practice model; instead, she selectively cites research to prop up individual assertions or sections of the book. The heart of *Framework* itself remains based on her early personal observations.

The latest edition also includes a footnoted reference to a positive evaluation of Payne’s work conducted by the little-known Center for Study of Economic Diversity. The Center is not an independent third-party investigator but—as its tax records reveal—a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established by Payne herself and since disbanded. The aha! Process website also offers “Data Speaks” reports on schools that implement Payne’s comprehensive school model. Most show improvements, but offer no evidence of valid comparison groups or effects sizes.

Neither the Center for Study of Economic Diversity evaluation nor the “Data Speaks” research holds up to scrutiny. Teaching Tolerance retained Dr. Joseph Taylor, an independent program evaluation specialist, to review these materials. His findings? “All studies provide weak evidence of effectiveness and none meet What Works Clearinghouse standards” (the gold standard for intervention research). To read his review in its entirety, visit tolerance.org/payneresearch.

Payne has said that the popularity of her book and workshops is a measure of their quality, a claim that also holds no empirical value. As we’ve noted, educators are hungry for information and support about poverty, and *Framework* offers a familiar, accessible story couched in language that legitimizes pre-existing beliefs. It’s also the only major option on the market.

Fundamentally at Odds

If the aha! Process program transformed teaching and learning in ways that empowered students and demonstrably improved their academic outcomes, we probably wouldn’t question it so closely. But 20 years and “hundreds of thousands” of teachers later, that hasn’t happened.

Payne has been on the defensive for years now. *Framework* includes an appendix responding to critics, and

her rebuttal boils down to two basic statements: ❶ Social justice is not her area of focus or expertise, and ❷ the complexity of poverty does not allow *Framework* to address all of its components in depth. Humans, she argues, naturally apply rules and patterns, and she has harnessed that tendency to help educators understand why children in poverty struggle to succeed in a world of middle class norms and how they can help. What is so bad about that?

And not all of her individual recommendations are bad. In fact, some of Payne’s suggestions do align with curricular design and practice recommendations TT has made over the years, specifically her emphasis on nurturing adult relationships, relational learning and student-driven inquiry. But these recommendations are not unique to children in poverty, nor are they unique to Payne. When presented in a larger context that reinforces biased assumptions about students, the value of Payne’s recommendations diminishes radically, leaving her framework fundamentally incongruent with TT’s beliefs about teaching and learning.

Thomas points out that focusing exclusively on poverty—or any aspect of identity in isolation—distracts from the skills that teachers need to truly connect with all students, foster equity in schools and engage in culturally responsive practice.

“A teacher’s job is to teach a specific set of students,” he says. “As long as we keep acting like there’s this monolithic way to address any group of students, we’re not spending time helping a teacher teach the group of kids he or she has at the moment. I think schools that know they have challenging populations would do better to have sustained study groups [on] ‘How do we better serve our students?’ Not ‘How do we teach children in poverty?’ ‘How do we better serve *our* students?’” ♦

van der Valk is the managing editor for Teaching Tolerance.



"Own Your Voice"

Interview conducted by Adrienne van der Valk

IF YOU'VE EVER tuned into National Public Radio's *Latino USA*, you've undoubtedly heard Maria Hinojosa's warm, engaging voice reporting on lived experiences in Latino communities. Over her three-decade career as an anchor, journalist, producer, professor and founder of the Futuro Media Group, Hinojosa has lent her famous voice to countless everyday people who would not otherwise be heard. She spoke with Teaching Tolerance about breaking barriers as a Latina, telling untold stories and empowering the next generation.

In your recent TEDx Talk, you mention being very interested in the media as a child but not considering journalism as a career because you didn't see your identity reflected in the media. How did you ultimately decide to go into broadcast journalism?

I [did] college radio at Columbia University. That was my first entrée, but I guess because it was college radio—it was kind of free form, it was live—I didn't really think of myself as a journalist.

After doing my college radio show for a couple of years, I ended up meeting several Mexican women journalists. ... They were covering the big story of the day, which was Central America. ... [T]hen I had a visual. I saw these Mexican women, modern women, being independent, being fearless, covering these breaking stories in war zones. That was the thing that made me realize we do exist as an entity—just not in the United States.

The truth is that, even once I was ready to graduate, I had not practiced as a journalist yet. ... It was a career

counselor at my college who basically said, "You must apply to NPR for an internship, you have to." I was like, "No, I'll never get it." So that's funny how there are people who might be incredibly different from you—and maybe not even in the same field—who ultimately encourage you. That's how my story basically happened.


Once I got to NPR, I understood that I had this opportunity so I needed to use it. ... The thing that actually kept me going was this tremendous sense of responsibility because I was the first Latina hired at NPR who wasn't, like, the cleaning staff. That was a big encouragement, me telling myself, "There's nobody who understands this community the way you do, you've got to stay there, you've got to raise your hand!" ... I think that made me very authentic. I was always in touch at the grassroots level. "What's going on?" "What are people saying?" "What are they thinking?" That allowed me to come into the newsroom and propose

story ideas that were based on real life. That is how I encouraged myself not to give up even though I felt like a fish out of water a lot of the time.

You often focus your journalistic lens on untold stories. What untold stories do you think students and educators in public schools should seek out and be exposed to?

It's weird because you're asking me what do I think educators need to know, and there is almost a response that says, for the educators across the country, "Look at your student body. Look at them for the stories that need to be told."

I'm going to give you an example. One in four Latinos knows someone who has been detained or deported. One in three Latinos worries that someone they know could be detained or deported. If you just start from that jumping-off point—I'm thinking about the number of kids who come into school who are dealing with a family separation. Where their father was picked up at six o'clock in the morning and is gone and is in the detention center and now is being processed for deportation. This student who is actually living through this doesn't have the capacity to come in and say to the class, to the teacher, "Let me tell you what I'm living through." In fact, in that inability to share that story,



we're not sharing American history as it's happening right now. ...

One of the things that I do with my students is I really make them talk and own their personal narrative. "What's going on in your home?" "Why is that happening?" "How did it happen that you ended up here?" So that they learn to talk with agency about who they are. I'm always telling [my first-generation students], "You are American. This is an American experience. You are living and creating American history. You are the new pilgrims, the new pioneers. You are powerful actors in American history and you need to move in the world like that." That's what I tell them, because we want anyone who's living in our country—whether or not they have citizenship, I don't really care—we want them feeling empowered in a democracy. That's ultimately what we want and that's what I try to teach. Own your voice; own your agency; own your power.

What principles guide you in your journalistic work that you think would be useful to educators?

One of the guiding principles that I have is that, when anybody is speaking to me as a journalist, I really approach it from a place of humility, respect and gratitude. ... I think that we can communicate that to our students, and show

them respect for the life that they are leading, the challenges that they have.

There was a great lesson that I learned from my best friend who just passed away—may she rest in peace—a great journalist Cecilia Vaisman. ... She also got her master's in education. She was telling me, as I was becoming a college professor, "If you want your students to really open up to you, you have to really open up to them. That means showing your own vulnerabilities. That means if you're going to ask them to put something on the table about ... [their] experience, about what

happened last week, then you have to be able—as a teacher—to tell them what happened to you."


I know it's risky, but it's actually delivered for me tenfold. I think it's hard from K to 12, but there are ways in which teachers can do that, and that humanizes them and allows the students to feel like they, too, can be vulnerable and share.

What inspired you to produce the PBS series *America by the Numbers*? What do you hope to accomplish with the show?

[B]ecause I am a Mexican-born woman,

I am an immigrant, I've been an American citizen since I was 30, there's always this sense I have some kind of agenda. ... [T]hat ended up leading me to a show that is based on data that is irrefutable. Then it's not about my political agenda; it's simply about the data. That's where the whole notion of *America by the Numbers* came from. ...

I love to take the hard data but then to create the human complexity of the stories behind that data. Make our characters or participants human, complex, multi-layered. It's not black



"I was always in touch at the grassroots level. 'What's going on?' 'What are people saying?' 'What are they thinking?' That allowed me to come into the newsroom and propose story ideas that were based on real life."

and white, actually; there's a lot of gray there. It's often times in the gray when we find the similarities that we all share. It's about great storytelling at a moment in history that our country is just changing in amazing ways.

What kind of feedback did you get from viewers?

My favorite fact from our numbers is that people stayed throughout the entire episode. You do minute-by-minute ratings, and you can see where people turn away. They didn't. The majority of our shows they stayed watching the entire episode.

There were people in the business that were like, "How did you do that?" I think it's because of the faces that we were putting on the air. I think it's because of the way we were approaching these stories. I think it was the beauty that we tried to capture and the way our shows were shot.

A friend of mine who is now teaching high school journalism in a public school in Los Angeles, she was saying that sometimes she'll show kids videos in class, and she was showing *America by the Numbers*. At first the kids were like, "Oh God, another television show. Lights out. Just get it over with." Then, as the minutes went into our show, more students started putting down their phones, putting down their pens and actually watching. She said, "I think it's because of the faces you were putting there. The students saw themselves; they saw people who look like them in every way shape or form." That, to me, is the best love you can get, when you know that high school students are actually watching.

Can you tell me about a teacher who made a difference for you?

Mrs. Turner was my first African-American teacher, and she made me feel heard. She saw me. She made me feel visible. There was something in the way she approached me, her kind of gentleness that made me believe I was equal

to everyone else when, in fact, I was a minority in that classroom. I was the only one in that classroom that was coming from a Spanish-speaking household. So I did feel like the other and an outsider. ...

She was my second-grade teacher, but I go back to her as pivotal in my life. ... [I]t really began from just one teacher taking the time to make me feel like she heard and saw me and treated my parents with great respect too. She was very sweet and gentle with my parents, both of whom spoke with very thick accents. So that's what I try to do with my own students, right? I try to do that thing where I'm looking straight at them, talking to them, touching them, hugging them, listening to them intently. That's my way of paying it forward from what I learned from Mrs. Turner. ♦

van der Valk is the managing editor for Teaching Tolerance.

America by the Numbers

"Behind every number, there's a story." This PBS documentary series reveals how dramatic changes in U.S. demographics are playing out in communities across the country. Each half-hour episode focuses on statistics related to population, health, education and consumer trends and explores how these data influence the shifting realities of "mainstream America." Watch full episodes (americabythenumbers.org/episodes) and access accompanying lessons from Teaching Tolerance (tolerance.org/lesson/america-numbers).

GRADES 6-12



TOOLKIT

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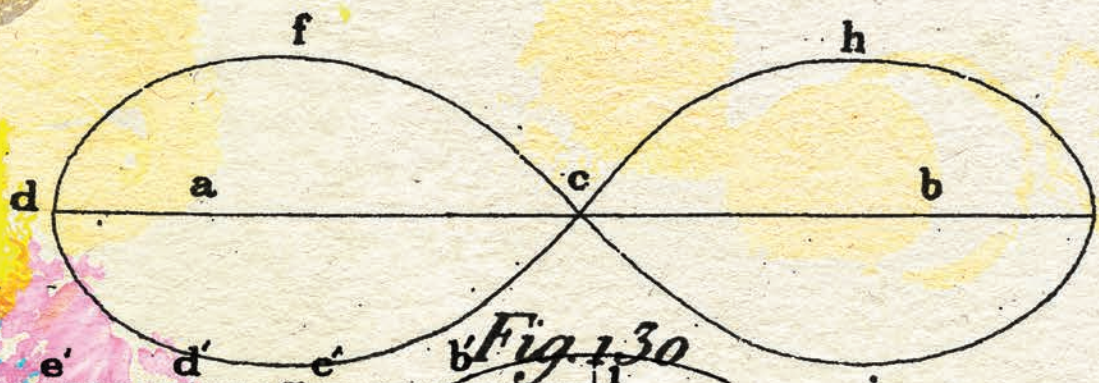
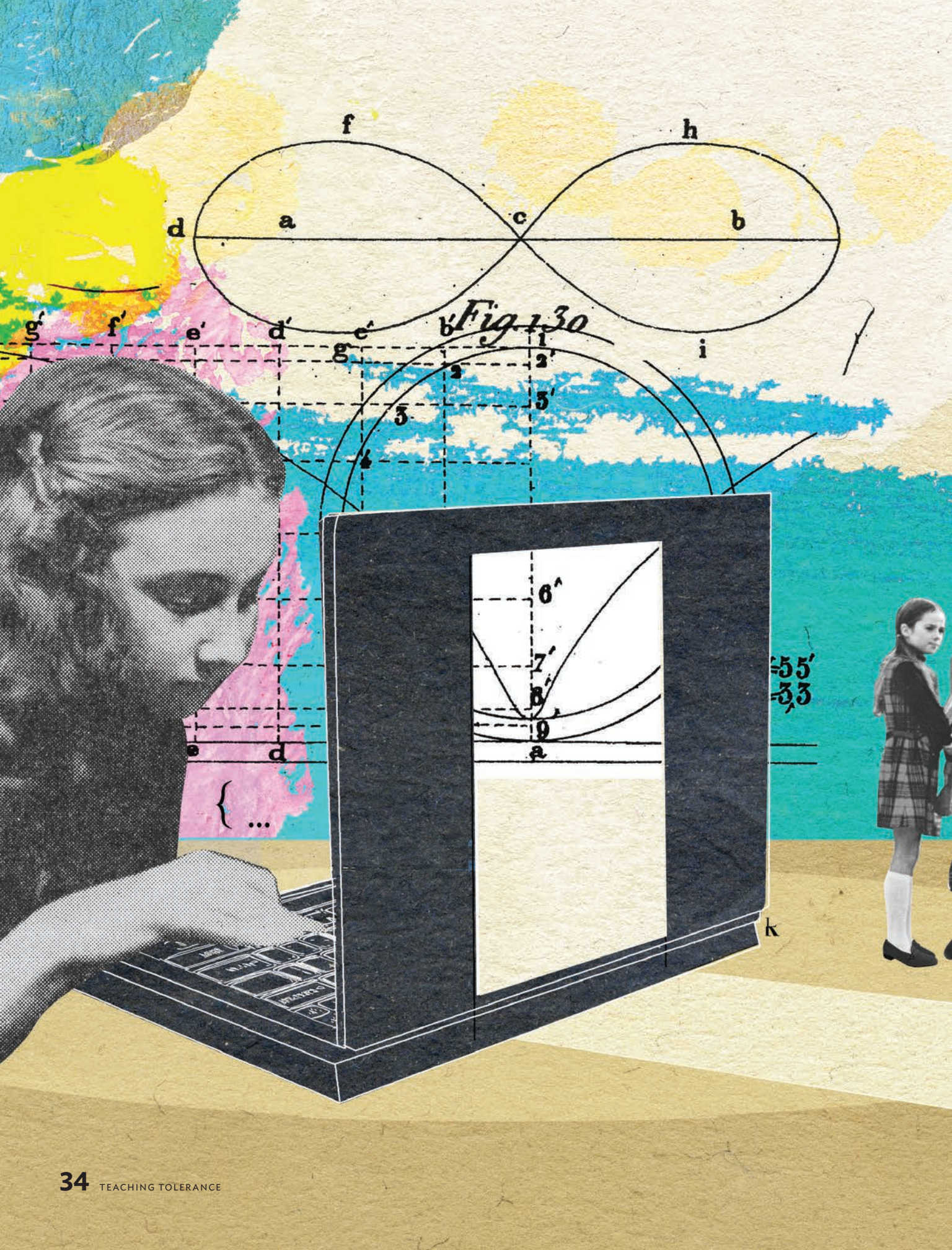
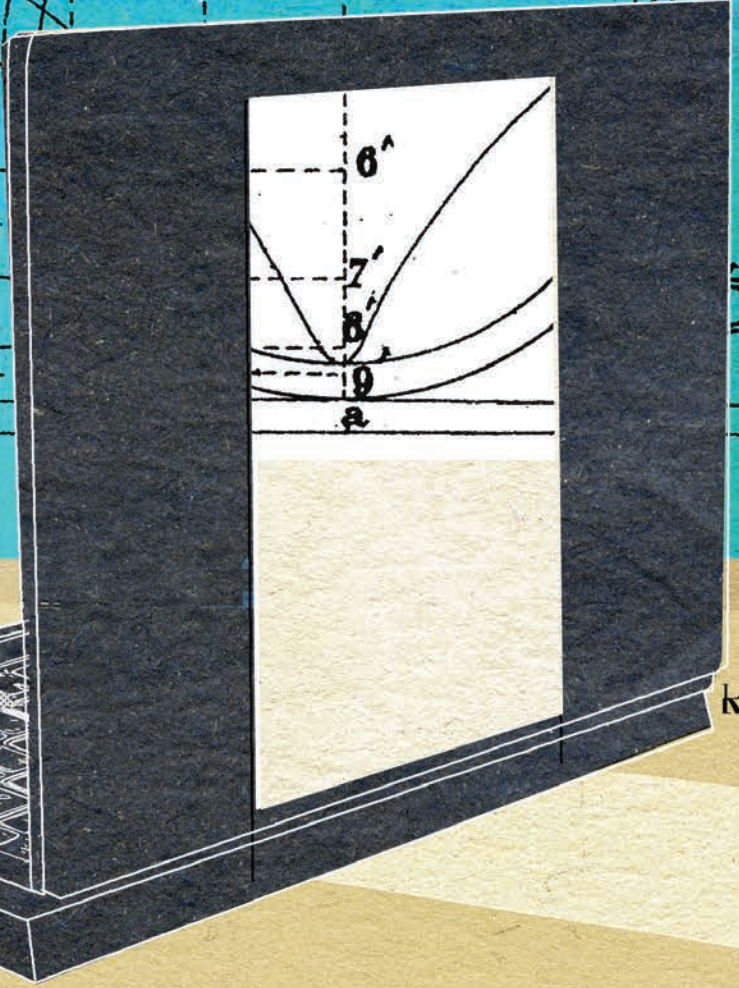


Fig 130



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Cracking the Code

Young women need more than one pathway into computer science.

BY ALICE PETTWAY ILLUSTRATION BY KATY LEMAY

IN SEPTEMBER 2015, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that within 10 years every child in the city would be able to study computer science in a public school. The decree came as no surprise. Nationwide, educators are coming to the consensus that computer science literacy is beneficial—even necessary—for students to succeed in a digitized world. Writes Alison Derbenwick Miller on the technology blog TechCrunch: “With the shift to data-based decision-making for everything from traditional business marketing to local government and health care, a basic understanding of how computers work and process information, as well as a basic literacy in computer programming and data analysis, are rapidly becoming workplace essentials.”

Unfortunately, these essentials are harder to come by for some students than for others. Low-income communities are more likely to be technology deserts, disproportionately leaving behind students of color and English language learners. And, despite the growing number of computer science programs in public schools (including traditional classes and coding “boot camps”), another group of students is conspicuously absent: girls.

The disconnect between girls and computer science doesn't improve after high school. In the last two decades, the percentage of U.S. computer science bachelor's degrees awarded to women has fallen from 28 to just 18. According to the National Science Foundation, only 25 percent of computer and math scientists are women.

It's clear that some combination of factors is discouraging girls from pursuing computer science opportunities, and equity-minded educators are trying to figure out what these factors are—and how the K-12 education system can help overcome them.



Coding: The Magic Bullet?

In recent years, coding has become a buzzword in discussions about closing the gender gap in computer science. Organizations such as Code.org, Girls Who Code, CodeHS and Codecademy offer courses and camps ideal for the girl who's already poring over lines of code—or wishing she could. Given the prevalence of the word, Code.org's chief academic officer, Pat Yongpradit, says it isn't unreasonable that many people jump to the conclusion that equitable computer science education is all about the code.

But that isn't the case, at least for Code.org, he says. "They think that we're trying to create more ... professional coders, programmers who work for Google and Microsoft ... and that's just false." Yongpradit says he and his fellow educators at Code.org hope instead to create a "citizenry" that is able to apply computer science literacy to a broad range of professional pursuits.

Adriane Bradberry, communications director at the National Center for Women & Information Technology, believes that this holistic approach is the most effective for engaging young women. She says there is nothing wrong with coding—especially for girls who already know they are interested in a programming career—but she emphasizes the danger of focusing too strongly on only one aspect of computer science education. "Solving this problem of underrepresentation

doesn't come from looking at one particular part [of computer science diversity issues] at one particular time," she says. "It's an ongoing process that should always be in the back of everyone's mind. That's how we'll start to increase the meaningful participation of women."

Another reason not to focus exclusively on coding is that women aren't underrepresented only in programming jobs; their numbers are low across the entire field. This, in part, says Bradberry, is because girls might not have had opportunities to realize how their interests align with different computer science careers. The most effective way to provide these opportunities is to expose girls to computer science early. Since most K-12 computer science classes, workshops and after-school programs are electives, recruiting is paramount.

A Holistic Approach

Often, it's small things that undermine efforts to engage girls with computer science. The good news is that these pitfalls can be avoided with purposeful planning. "We're all biased; we're all human," says Bradberry. "It's often unconscious, however, [and] once you start to understand how to recognize when you're being biased, you can definitely take actions to mitigate those factors."

Some problems are easy to watch out for, says Bradberry. Recruitment and classroom materials that use



Women who Choose Computer Science

In 2014, Google released a report on the factors that motivate girls to pursue computer science. The study found that encouragement, career perceptions, self-perception and academic exposure account for 95 percent of a girl's decision to pursue this career path.

t-t.site/womenwhochoose

inadvertently gender-biased language or imagery that is perceived as stereotypically masculine can discourage girls from joining in. Using gender-biased language—for example, defaulting to male pronouns or referring to students as guys—may seem like an obvious problem, but it happens. The faces featured in textbooks and on classroom walls should be gender-inclusive. Educators should also be mindful of using superlative language or highly

How to Choose a Computer Science Partner Organization

Every school has different resources and challenges, and there isn't a one-size-fits-all computer science solution. These questions can help you get started finding the right program for your school.

Does the organization specifically focus on equity? If so, how successful has it been? Just because an organization pays lip service to diversity doesn't mean it's truly committed. (For more information, see "Smart Tech Use for Equity" on page 38.)

Does the organization offer professional development that includes guidance on creating inclusive learning environments? Does curricular content include diverse role models? If the organization doesn't have an outreach plan to recruit girls and other underrepresented students at your school, consider another option.

What technology will the organization use in the classroom? Expensive hardware isn't always necessary when teaching computer science literacy; keeping tech simple can potentially make the program more accessible to more kids. Also, according to Tim Bell of CS Unplugged, too much tech can sometimes keep kids from thinking as deeply about computer science concepts.

technical jargon that might be intimidating to students who don't have much experience with computer science yet.

But being more gender-inclusive is not just about auditing materials or changing language usage, says Bradberry. Computer science instructors need to think about each girl as an individual and, if she's reluctant, help her see how computer science can help her meet her goals or explore her interests. "A girl [who's] interested in wanting to build an app may differ from a girl or woman who's wanting to improve hardware for ... people who are blind, for example," Bradberry says.

Yongpradit agrees: Code.org's curricula include videos that show diverse people in diverse careers—even a sand castle maker—using skills developed through computer science education.

Building confidence is another key component of narrowing the gender gap, says Maurya Couvares, co-founder of equity-oriented coding organization ScriptEd. Her organization's research has shown that female students report feeling less confident in computer science classes than their male counterparts. Yongpradit has noticed the same thing.

This lack of confidence can cause female students to withdraw from class discussions and activities or, worse, to drop out of computer science classes altogether. While certainly not the only method, one of the most effective ways to raise girls' confidence levels is simple and easy to implement: positive feedback.

In ScriptEd's training program, volunteers are trained to pay special attention to when and how they call on girls and to provide positive verbal feedback. "Little reminders that 'You're really good at this' and 'You can do this' are tremendously helpful when you're working with young women to build their confidence," says Couvares. ScriptEd's approach is working: Eighty-four percent of ScriptEd students report feeling more confident after a year in the program.

From Classroom to Career

Some young women who become computer science literate will move into a variety of nontechnical careers armed with an understanding of how they can use devices and data to further their professional goals. Some will pursue careers in the computer science arena. These young women will need additional support as they break into education and professional worlds that are still overwhelmingly male.

To that end, some organizations (including ScriptEd) focus their efforts on opening pathways from K-12 education to professional opportunities, such as internships. ScriptEd places students in programming internships with American Express, Getty Images and About.com, among other companies, giving them opportunities to network and learn in real-world settings.

Samantha Malave, a graduate of ScriptEd's programming class, is now an intern with one of the organization's internship partner companies. She has little patience for those who would exclude her from computer science because she's a woman.

"Social constructs to me are prohibiting to one's passion," she says. "No matter how society feels or thinks, one should strive to always be vocal about things they love."

Despite her obvious dedication, Malave says there's no way she would have landed her internship without ScriptEd's help. She says that, without the organization, she would have "packed my bags and just taken my knowledge elsewhere."

That's exactly what many young women are currently doing—but educators have a chance to change that. With purposeful recruiting and retainment, schools can open new avenues for girls to achieve their goals in a computer science world that needs their talents. ♦

Pettway teaches creative writing in Bogotá, Colombia.

Computer Science for ALL Girls

It isn't just gender that can affect a student's odds of being included in computer science education. Young women of color and students with disabilities face additional challenges. These targeted resources from the National Center for Women & Information Technology can help educators create a learning environment that is welcoming to *all* girls.

Equal Access: Inclusive Strategies for Teaching Students With Disabilities

Practical tips for making sure your computer science classes are inclusive of students with diverse abilities

t-t.site/equalteaching

Culturally Responsive Computing (Promising Practices)

A step-by-step guide to making your computer science curriculum culturally responsive

ncwit.org/compugirls

Latinas & Tecnología de la Información (Latinas & Information Technology)

A Spanish-language website chock-full of resources for young Latina women

ncwit.org/

latinas-information-technology

TECHNOchicas A national initiative to raise awareness among young Latinas and their families about opportunities and careers in technology

technochicas.org



TOOLKIT

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A small group of San Diego educators is exploring this question:
Which uses of technology in schools help create equity, and
which don't? Their answers may surprise you.



SMART TECH USE FOR EQUITY

BY MICA POLLOCK ILLUSTRATION BY PETER HORJUS

WE'RE AT A JUNCTURE in education where big dollars are being spent to make sure kids have access to computers, tablets and the Internet at school. Such infrastructure opens the portal to a world of information, and new tools that support viewing, documenting and playing with information in school appear almost daily. We're told such tools engage our students and, thus, support their learning.

But which uses of technology in schools support young people's development better than, say, using a pencil? And which are, in fact, worse than a pencil?

As a step toward answering this question, an educator-led initiative called *Smart Tech Use for Equity* is engaging a diverse group of K-12 teachers who teach San Diego's low-income students of color. The goal? Identify uses of technology in schools that promote learning, development and success for *all* students versus uses that don't.

As a beginning exercise, the San Diego group reported on technology use they had seen or tried in a classroom that potentially did more harm than good. The teachers offered these examples.

☞ Putting kids on skill-practice games for crowd control or simply to engage kids in *something*.

☞ Using expensive Promethean boards as if they were cheap whiteboards, wasting limited district dollars.

☞ "Sticking all kids on an app where they are just having fun but not rigorously learning."

☞ Asking students to take hours to "make fun videos" for school projects without weighing the implications for student learning.

Teachers need to be equity designers, exploring the potential and limitations of technology for enabling student thinking, learning, voice and achievement.

☞ Replacing a hands-on lab activity with an online lab activity in science to avoid the mess and materials without evaluating the pros and cons.

☞ "Looking at an online textbook that is really just still a textbook—it just happens to be online."

☞ Buying technology resources for everyone and running workshops on how to operate them without investigating how the technologies might be helpful.

☞ Keeping devices locked in computer labs or warehouses so no one steals them.

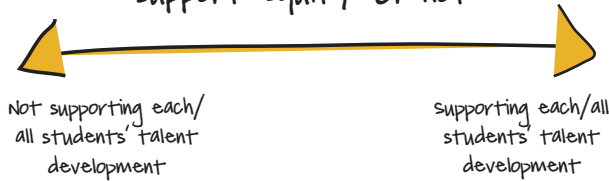
Put simply, it was the experience of these teachers that *more* technology use isn't inherently good. Closing the hardware and Internet divide is critical, but if some students get to create, think and communicate with technologies while others do more passive or low-level learning tasks, opportunity gaps persist. It was with this understanding that the group set out to ask harder questions about the pros and cons of technology use.

Smart Tech Use for Equity

The *Smart Tech Use for Equity* participants are K-12 teachers of science, math, special education and English (including English as another language). In 2014-15, 10 founding teachers each explored one tech use with their students, documented the effects and shared their learning with other teachers. The same process is underway for 2015-16. (You can watch videos about their work here: t-t.site/smarttechequity.)

The projects asks teachers to be *equity designers*, exploring the potential and limitations of technology for enabling student thinking, learning, voice and achievement. Each teacher is encouraged to think critically about the equity implications of technology use in classrooms.

Does this tech use help support equity? Or not?



While equity in school-based tech use is often framed as “all students having devices and access to the Internet,” the *Smart Tech Use for Equity* project requires a loftier definition, guided by this question: Does this use of technology help support the full human talent development of every student, and all groups of students? Or not?

This question asks teachers to test whether tech use supports English language learners; students from all racial and ethnic groups; students of all genders; students from all economic backgrounds; children with diverse abilities; and, of course, every individual.

In the initial launch meeting, the group responded to the question, “If you walked into a classroom and saw smart tech use for equity in action, what would it look like?” The answer was not “everyone on devices.” Instead, the teachers had visions of diverse groups of students vigorously discussing literature, science or math. With these aspirational visions in mind, the teachers developed this template for testing, documenting and sharing the “smartness” of their own tech use with equity in mind.

- 1 What’s your equity vision for students in your classroom?
- 2 What tech use did you experiment with to see if it could help achieve that vision?
- 3 What did you do with your students to test that use of technology, and how did it go? (Show the pros and cons for students.)
- 4 What’s your conclusion about how “smart” that tech use was for achieving your equity vision?

This template essentially encouraged the participating teachers to do—and document—action research. As one participant put it, “As educators [who] care, we probably do this sort of testing all the time. This is formalizing it a little bit and ensuring that we share it.”

Early Realizations

In starting to assess tech use for equity, participants—who were under pressure to use glitzy apps—quickly realized something counterintuitive: Often, it’s the simplest uses of technology that get students to talk, write and create. As one participant tweeted, “Spent the day w/Ts developing research action plans to design technology for equity. I LOVE IT, it’s no longer just about apps #createequity.”

For example, middle school science teachers Alicia Johal and Melissa Foster each had the equity vision of supporting their English language learners. Both teachers have students who are shy about communicating their scientific thinking in English—but the Next Generation Science Standards require them to talk about science. Could technology help?

Each teacher chose a simple technological tool. Johal chose the Explain Everything Interactive Whiteboard app to see if it might help students verbally articulate their understanding

of science before writing lab reports. She invited students to talk through their understanding with her one-on-one via a video voiceover (talking over images) in English and then transcribe their words into written English. Foster chose iMovie to help students verbalize their understanding before taking tests. She had students explain their thinking—in English and Spanish—on video voiceover during test preparation.

Both educators were “blown away” by how well students understood concepts they hadn’t been able to describe previously in classroom dialogue, traditional lab notebooks or on tests. In both classrooms, technology helped the students start to share their voices.

English teacher Serena Pariser had a different vision: She wanted her middle school students to have deeper dialogues about literature. She tested two different tools to support small-group conversations: TodaysMeet and Padlet. Using TodaysMeet, she allowed her students to type their contributions to a small-group conversation about a novel instead of talking face-to-face. Using Padlet, she allowed the whole class to brainstorm and type their responses simultaneously while projecting their ideas onto a screen. After the Padlet brainstorm, Pariser prompted in-person small group conversations during which students could reference the class discussion on individual iPads.

Pariser found that TodaysMeet didn’t add much to the literature dialogue. In fact, it got in the way: Students had better small-group conversations in person. Padlet, however, allowed for a rapid online brainstorm where every voice in the class was heard, captured and left visible. This deepened in-person follow-up dialogue by allowing students to tap all of their peers’ ideas at once.

Teacher Jeri Aring had yet another vision: She wanted to support her third-grade students’ abilities to explain a

Smart Tech Use for Equity was made possible through the support of Educator Innovator (powered by the National Writing Project) and Teaching Tolerance. It was spearheaded by the San Diego Area Writing Project and the University of California, San Diego’s Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment and Teaching Excellence. The concept of teachers as equity designers and the number line for assessing equity pros and cons come from Mica Pollock’s forthcoming book tentatively titled *Schooltalk: Communicating for Equity in Schools* (The New Press).



math concept verbally or in writing—a key expectation of the Common Core State Standards. She videotaped students explaining math problems to each other using the basic video feature on her iPad and showed the videos to them to clarify the elements of a rigorous math explanation. Students then taped *themselves* explaining math problems to each other. Aring was thrilled to see all of her students, including those who had struggled to explain math previously, explaining fractions and proportions in detail and correctly.

What Counts as Smart Tech Use for Equity?

Teachers' visions for "smarter tech use" evolved over the course of the project. Their initial ideas were broad, including statements like, "only as needed," "personalized classrooms" and "meaningful exploration." After some classroom experimentation, a more specific list of smart technology use criteria emerged—via Padlet—during a group brainstorm.

- ☞ Students are able to think about their own thinking and the thinking of their peers.

- ☞ Students engage in deeper thought and comprehension after a blend of verbal, in-person communication and typing/writing that uses technology as portal for students to talk.

- ☞ Sometimes technology comes before verbal and sometimes verbal comes before technology.

- ☞ Students are "heard."

- ☞ Students go beyond the classroom walls both to get input for learning and to demonstrate/share learning and thinking.

- ☞ Teachers learn from students, students learn from students, and students learn from teachers and other adults.

- ☞ All students are able to share their learning.

- ☞ Tech use supports students in talking through their thinking for an audience.

- ☞ Tech use supports what students are learning rather than usage being the end goal itself.

The consensus definition of "smart tech use for equity" was the educational use of technology that considers the following questions:

- ☞ Does the technology allow all learners to share/communicate their thinking and inquire deeply into a concept?

- ☞ Does the technology empower all learners to recognize their knowledge and contributions to the learning environment and to society?

It also means deciding *against* the technology use if the answer to either question is no.

Takeaways

Teachers have big dreams for their classrooms that go far beyond more tech use. In particular, the teachers participating in the *Smart Tech Use for Equity* project have visions for equity in classrooms that include "students getting opportunity despite a label,"

"making sure that all students leave classrooms with the skills they need to succeed," "students leaving 12th grade as confident collaborators and creative thinkers," and "helping students be curious, contribute to community and get excited." Technology is simply a potential vehicle for these loftier goals.

A key to making these visions a reality is documenting whether tech use actually supports students' learning, participation and deep comprehension. *Is* putting kids on iPads in preschool better than playing with oatmeal or water? *Is* seeing the solar system on a screen better than mapping out its dimensions using toilet paper? And *when* does the use of technology open up learning for young people who most need support from their schools?

We need more teachers exploring and assessing smart tech use for equity. In an era when many stakeholders call for more technology while others resist, teachers acting as equity designers can define what it means to support *all* young people through tech use. As one teacher put it, "I want to see tech as a tool—not the end, but a bridge." ♦

Pollock is a professor of education studies and director of the Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment & Teaching Excellence at the University of California, San Diego. In addition to the educators named here, colleagues leading the project include Kim Douillard and Michael Salamanca.





The Ripple Effect

Teenage writers in New York City are changing how educators and youth workers do their jobs—and how young readers see the world.

BY MAYA LINDBERG PHOTOGRAPHY BY LOWELL HANDLER

“My name is Nhi, a foreign name. My appearance contrasted strikingly with the other girls who wore make-up, blow-dried their hair, and wore stylish clothes. I had a boyish look, favoring plain T-shirts and faded, colored jeans. ... Worse, I had a thick foreign accent.”

THESE ARE THE OPENING LINES of 19-year-old Nhi Tong’s personal essay, “Change for the Better,” published in the teen-written magazine *YCteen*. In it, Tong reflects on moving from Hanoi City, Vietnam, to New York City and her nerve-racking first weeks at Forest Hills High School in Queens. Things changed for the better, she explains, when she stepped out of her comfort zone: making friends, joining a school club, and sharing her real name after going by “Michelle” for over a year.

Stories like Tong’s are at the heart of *YCteen*—published by the nonprofit organization Youth Communication and distributed throughout New York City high schools. The magazine’s guiding objective is to amplify the voices and experiences of local teenagers, particularly those who are at risk or marginalized. Youth Communication has put this goal into action since its founding in 1980. “The hypothesis was that, when you see that your personal struggles are shared by others, it’s no longer a personal issue. It’s a social issue,” says Youth Communication founder, publisher and executive director Keith Hefner. “It can spark agency and activism rather than depression and despair.”

YCteen’s sister magazine, *Represent*, is written by and for youth in foster care. The stories featured in both publications also become the foundation for topic-specific story anthologies that address such issues as family, juvenile justice, race and ethnicity, identity, emotional and physical abuse, stigma and others. Youth Communication also offers “Leader Guides,” full curricula including story-based lesson plans and professional development to help any adult who works with young people incorporate the material into their practice.

The project has wide-reaching impact. Last year, *YCteen* won a Golden

Lamp, the most prestigious educational publishing award given by the Association of American Publishers. “What a unique, important and completely compelling publication,” one judge commented. “More than other educational magazines I’ve seen, this one oozes REALNESS.”

The Stories Behind the Stories

Youth Communication recruits writers from the most distressed schools and neighborhoods in New York City. The writers come from diverse backgrounds; their writing skills vary. What unites their work is a desire to write and to make a difference for themselves and their peers.

“We’re not looking for poets or fiction writers or aspiring journalists,” says Holly St. Lifer, editor of *YCteen*. “We’re really looking for young people who are interested in memoir, who are interested in writing personal stories about their lives.”

St. Lifer and her fellow editors work one-on-one with the writers accepted into Youth Communication’s spring, summer and fall writing programs. “Everyday, she [St. Lifer] would come to my computer and we’d get a chance to dig deeper into what I want to write and how she thinks that I should approach it,” Tong reflects on her summer workshop experience. “[B]ut at the same time, she’s giving me advice in real life and supporting me in a very emotional way.”

Writers are encouraged—not once, but over and over again—to reflect on the choices they made to overcome struggles. The editorial staff ask them questions, such as “How will your story help

not just yourself but the reader?” and “How will it help them make thoughtful choices?” Each story goes through some 10 rounds of drafts.

“It was really great. ... [T]hey would encourage me to freely write and write anything I want and to get things out of my mind,” says *YCteen* writer Melvin Pichardo. “And then it would be the process of, of course, condensing and taking stuff out, putting more air in. They were just really accepting of my ideas and what I stood for, which is good.”

“We value them,” St. Lifer says. “Now, some kids get this from other places, but many of our writers don’t. They don’t get that validation, they don’t get that respect, they don’t get the feeling that ... adults are interested and care about them.”


Inspiration From the Middle

Youth Communication’s editorial model focuses on developing stories that allow readers to see themselves in the narra-



Youth Communication staff members collaborate in the office where *YCteen* and *Represent* magazines are produced.

tive and encourages them to take steps toward personal change. “Stories all have a beginning, middle and an end. We shrink the beginning to show just enough of the teens’ struggle to be credible for the reader,” Hefner says. “We help writers expand the middle because the middle is where they describe the strategies they used to manage the struggle. We also shrink the end, because where the writer ends up is not as important as how they got there.”



“For the first time in my life, I’m listening to my own voice.”

You can find “Change for the Better” and “Tough Guise” on YCteen’s website (ycteenmag.org) and in Teaching Tolerance’s anti-bias curriculum, Perspectives for a Diverse America (perspectives.tolerance.org).

Pichardo’s story “Tough Guise” is a model example. Originally published without his byline, Pichardo writes in the opening paragraph, “My entire life, he [Pichardo’s father] embodied the idea that men are close-minded, emotionless, and are always winners. Only alcohol allowed them to feel sadness or some emotion that wasn’t aggressive.”

As the story unfolds, Pichardo describes how he attended an acting program and played the character Darnell from a scene in August Wilson’s *Jitney*. In the scene, Darnell—a brash character with a checkered past—admits his vulnerability and love for his girlfriend. Pichardo writes, “Playing Darnell and looking at my father, I came to the conclusion I didn’t want to bottle things up inside me. ... Now, instead of being afraid to understand and accept my own happiness, fears and wants—for the first time in my life, I’m listening to my own voice.”

Since graduating from high school and adding his byline to “Tough Guise” last year, Pichardo has shared the story with his former teachers and read it aloud at a *YCteen* workshop. “It was kind of freeing because I’d never really spoke about this story or shared something that I felt was so personal,” Pichardo says.

Social Emotional and Literacy Tools

The stories published in *YCteen* and



Represent help educators and other youth workers bring authentic teen voices to life in traditional schools, alternative schools and out-of-school settings such as juvenile justice facilities and probation and foster care agencies.

“Out of all the resources I have, [*YCteen*] is definitely my number one go-to place,” says Eunice Sheppard-Taylor, a substance abuse prevention and intervention specialist at Clara Barton High School for Health Professions in Brooklyn. Sheppard-Taylor educates and counsels students about substance abuse; she also runs Clara Barton’s suspension center. She often shares *YCteen* stories with students who receive in-school suspensions, anticipating that they’ll hit home. “They see themselves in the stories, which is fabulous, no matter what the story is,” Sheppard-Taylor says.

The stories generate a ripple effect of social emotional learning when used, for example, in group read-alouds and restorative circle discussions. But adult learning is also important to the Youth Communication model. “If I were to sit in a circle and say, ‘Let’s unpack some of our biases on X issue,’ that can be a hard place for a lot of adults to enter,” Education Director Elizabeth Johnson explains. “When we read a story by a young person who’s grappled with obstacles or injustices and [hear] their story about it, then the adults can begin by empathizing.” This empathy-building process, driven by teen voices, is crucial for equity work and professional development.

Social studies teacher and life-skills class facilitator Gary Kuchmeister says the stories in *YCteen* have allowed him to take his work at Forest Hills High School to the next level. “[In] the program that I facilitate [called Council for Unity], the premise is the acronym F.U.S.E.—family, unity, self-esteem and empowerment. All that resonates all through all the pages of *YCteen*,” he says.

Kuchmeister invited Tong, a 2014 Forest Hills graduate, to speak to his Council for Unity students about writing for *YCteen*. It was a full-circle moment; just a few years prior she was a new student, learning English and stepping out of her comfort zone. “The kids in [Council for Unity] have experienced some trauma, maybe, or have some difficulties believing that they are very great people,” Tong says. “I really appreciate that I get a chance to come back and talk to them.”

And for Kuchmeister’s students, many of whom already see themselves mirrored in *YCteen* stories, Tong’s visit reiterated that teen voices matter. A lot. ♦

Lindberg is a writer and associate editor for Teaching Tolerance.





Segregation Forever?

For researchers studying school integration, changing the future requires looking at the past. Learn more from the co-authors of the study “How the Legacy of Slavery and Racial Composition Shape Public School Enrollment in the American South.”

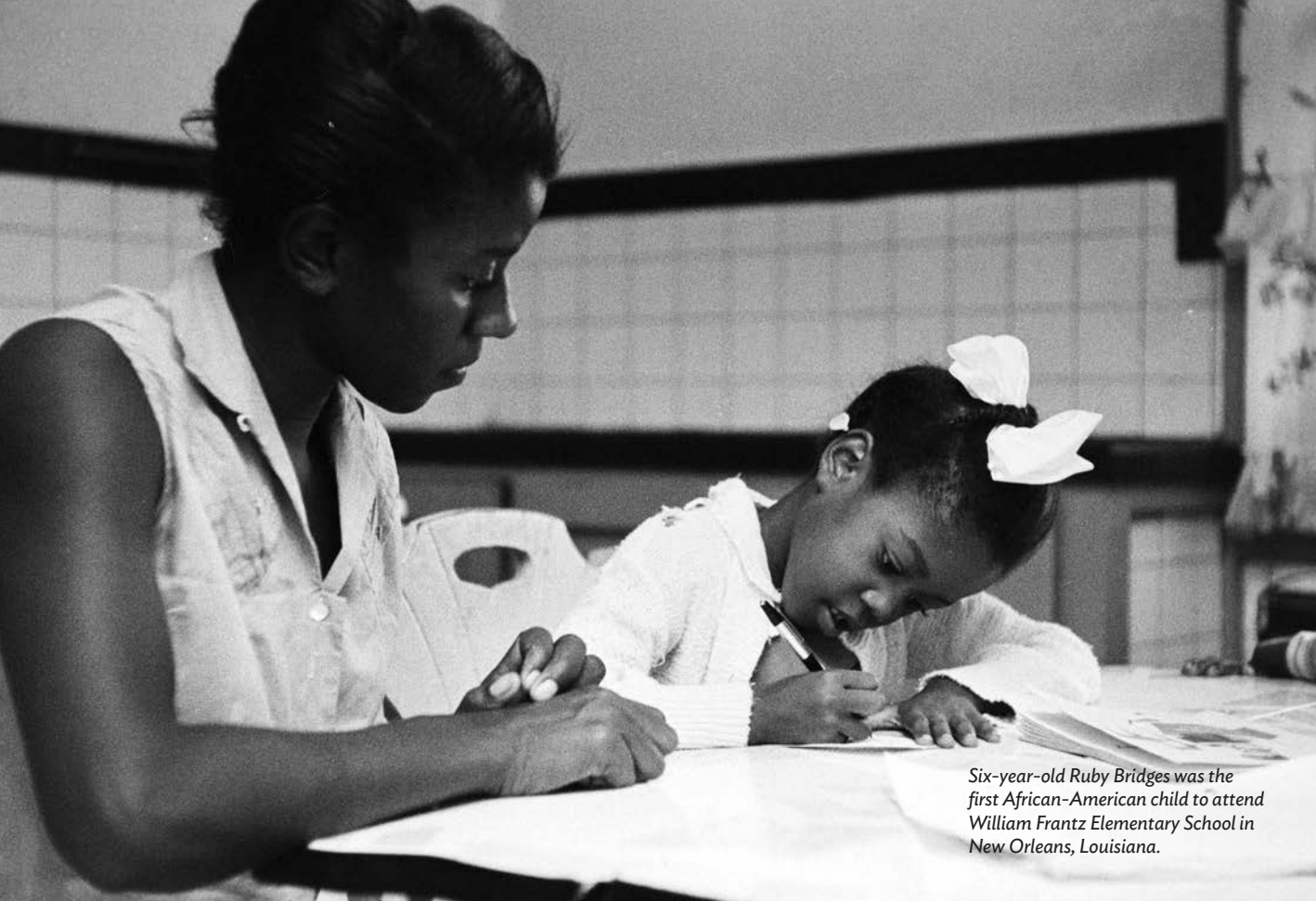
BY ROBERT L. REECE AND HEATHER O’CONNELL

ON NOVEMBER 14, 1960, Ruby Bridges walked into the first-grade classroom at William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, the first black child to ever attend the school. She had no understanding of the history that led to that moment and no idea that she was making history; she was just a kid going to an all-white school for the first time.

But her attendance was more than what it seemed. It was the culmination of a decade of local, state and national legal battles. She was living a moment that had been shaped by nearly a century of post-emancipation struggles in the South.

The history of slavery—which ended in the United States over 150 years ago—is still shaping contemporary patterns of

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Six-year-old Ruby Bridges was the first African-American child to attend William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana.

school segregation through its influence on our social institutions and our reliance on historical precedent and local tradition. The history itself happened long ago, but its legacy is a contemporary phenomenon because our social realities today are informed by what happened yesterday—including our less flattering moments. So, although people today are not individually responsible for slavery, we are very much responsible for how we respond to that history.

As academic researchers, we use this understanding to guide the questions we ask and attempt to answer. It is what led us to investigate whether counties with stronger attachments to slavery have a higher level of school segregation today. (It is important to consider racial segregation broadly, but this particular study focused on segregation between white and African-American children.) We found out the answer is yes, but not for the reasons you might think. Our research shows that, in places that were

historically more dependent on the labor of enslaved people, more white families disinvest from public school systems in favor of private schools. Moreover, this relationship is not a result of economic differences, school quality or even the sheer availability of private schools: White families in these locations are simply more likely to use private schools than in other parts of the country.

New Orleans: A Case Study

In the years following Ruby Bridges' historic day at William Frantz Elementary and the subsequent desegregation of New Orleans schools, the state rapidly increased per-pupil spending for black students. With funding closer to equal than it had ever been, the racial gaps in school resources decreased, and black educational attainment across Louisiana rose.

This piece of Louisiana's history illustrates the potential benefits of school desegregation, namely that black

students obtain access to higher quality educational resources and, subsequently, succeed at higher rates. But Louisiana schools also reflect contemporary challenges related to school segregation. Despite gains from the 1960s through the 1980s, racial segregation is on the rise now that many school desegregation mandates have been lifted, and black students are once again—according to sociologist Dennis J. Condrón and colleagues—at an increasing disadvantage.

The once racially integrated William Frantz Elementary is now Akili Academy of New Orleans, an elementary school that focuses on early college preparation. Despite its state-of-the-art veneer, there is one startling feature of this school's trajectory. Far from its history as, first, an all-white school, then a desegregated school where white and black children learned side-by-side, it is now 98 percent black, reflecting the same resegregation trends seen in countless other schools across the region and country.

The Realities of Desegregation

Based on enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics, if black and white students were evenly distributed across public schools nationally, each student would attend a school that was about 50 percent white and 15 percent black. But researchers observe a startlingly different reality. According to a report published by the Civil Rights Project, in 2011 the average black student attended a school that was 48.8 percent black and 27.6 percent white. On the flip side, the average white student attended a school that was 72.5

percent white and 15 percent black. But researchers observe a startlingly different reality. According to a report published by the Civil Rights Project, in 2011 the average black student attended a school that was 48.8 percent black and 27.6 percent white. On the flip side, the average white student attended a school that was 72.5

core academic courses. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights found, for example, that about 25 percent of schools with “the highest percentage of black and Latino students” do not offer Algebra II, and about a third of these schools do not offer chemistry. Absent these courses, the ability of students to attend college—let alone succeed—is stunted.

Desegregation vs. Integration

These unfortunate statistics raise challenging questions. What is the difference between desegregation, which might be a superficial change in

sanctioned a dual public school system where white students would attend one set of public schools and black students would attend an inferior set of schools. During the Jim Crow era, the United States was under *de jure* segregation, meaning that the law supported the separation of black and white students. But after *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and subsequent rulings demanded the immediate desegregation of schools, the legal formality of the dual school system collapsed. This means that more recent forms of school segregation are supported by alternative mechanisms that are more difficult to regulate through law: *de facto* segregation, or segregation that happens as a matter of fact.

What’s one mechanism that has supported *de facto* segregation? Private schools. As black students began to enter white public schools across the South, a vast network of private schools appeared, seemingly overnight, to offer outlets for white families seeking to escape the results of school desegregation. This private school system created a new type of dual school system, with most black students attending public schools and most white students attending private schools. Schools were technically desegregated, but far from integrated—and far from equal.

How Did We Get Here Again?

The type of school segregation we study is founded on the physical separation of black and white students. Research suggests that one of the most relevant variables contributing to school segregation is white families transferring their children from majority-black public schools. Charles Clotfelter, a professor of public policy studies at Duke University, demonstrates the importance of “white flight” through analyses linking schools’ racial compositions to the departure of white students. His work suggests that the



percent white and only 8.3 percent black.

The separation of black students from majority-white schools (and the resources that accompany them) has real consequences for the lives of black students. In more racially mixed school districts, black students perform better in math and reading than their counterparts in school districts where black students are more isolated. Moreover, some majority-black districts lack the resources necessary to offer a complete schedule of

student demographics, versus sincere and internally motivated integration? Did the South ever achieve true integration through federal orders, and can this approach be more productive in the future? Asking these questions will position us as researchers and educators to reduce the negative consequences associated with segregation, but these efforts must be informed by history.

After Reconstruction, Southern states and municipalities legally



TOOLKIT

Put this story into action! VISIT » tolerance.org/segregation-forever



Our social realities today are informed by what happened yesterday—including our less flattering moments.

tipping point for withdrawing white students from desegregated public schools is a black student population of about 50-55 percent. But why?

The work of Kimberly Goyette, a professor of sociology at Temple University, and her colleagues suggests one explanation relates to perceptions of school quality. They found that white people tend to perceive an inverse relationship between the quality of a school and the number of black students who attend it. Although concern about school quality is often given as the reason for leaving a school or moving to a new district, this explanation may be coded language masking a racialized motive. In a study of school choices made by parents, Amanda Bancroft, a graduate student at Rice University, finds that “high-status parents” (parents of high

socio-economic class located in affluent neighborhoods) often relied on informal suggestions about what constitutes a “good” school and did not draw on the publicly available school accountability data that helps quantify school quality.

Other research recently collected in *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*, edited by Goyette and Annette Lareau, further examines how passively or anecdotally acquired knowledge about school quality shapes families’ actions, including residential decisions, which can also serve to maintain school segregation. Residential segregation and the factors driving residential decisions are important for understanding school segregation. But school segregation can happen without residential separation, particularly in the South where there are fewer available districts to which

white families can move to avoid majority-black schools. Instead, families may seek to use private schools, which may explain why, according to Clotfelter, the proportion of white students using private schools in the South since the 1960s has risen while their usage has declined in other regions.

The results of “How the Legacy of Slavery and Racial Composition Shape Public School Enrollment in the American South” show that the old idioms are wrong. The past is not the past. It continues to live with us and shape social reality. The racial history of counties found in the Deep South—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas—are unique and have shaped a system of *de facto* school segregation that cannot be explained by any other characteristics of these counties. This research highlights the importance of history in shaping contemporary school segregation and suggests that how white people respond to race today is connected to ideas that persisted under slavery. Educational stakeholders must also use knowledge of the past to shape perceptions of the present and use those mutually enforcing understandings to positively influence the future. ♦

Reece is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Duke University and an editor at Scalawag magazine. O’Connell is a postdoctoral fellow with the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, and a recent graduate of the sociology Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Looking to the Past

Part of what is so pernicious about history is that people forget to talk about it. Our research provides the mental tools for thinking about how history is connected to contemporary education, but we also hope to motivate educators to incorporate history into the classroom in fresh, innovative ways. Here are a couple of ideas to get you and your students talking.

➡ James Loewen has written a helpful and accessible book that captures the ways in which history is both complex and socially constructed: *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*.

➡ Field trips that allow students to interact with their own local history can be particularly enlightening. (See “Hit the Road” in *Teaching Tolerance* Issue 46 and “Doing History in Buncombe County” in Issue 49 for ideas about how to leverage local history.)

➡ Ask students to evaluate their textbooks, school/classroom environment and celebration calendar to see which historical figures are reflected and which identities they represent. Then have them inventory whose history is present in their school experiences and whose is overlooked.



CLOSED FOR BUSINESS

More U.S. cities and districts are shuttering neighborhood schools in an effort to reform urban education. But is the alternative truly an upgrade?

BY SEAN MCCOLLUM ILLUSTRATION BY EVA VÁZQUEZ



IN JANUARY 2010, the architects of Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s Academic Transformation Plan dropped the bomb on the students and staff of East High School. The school, along with 17 others, was slated for closure as part of the sweeping reform initiative. The rationales: poor academic performance, declining enrollment and the district’s \$53 million budget shortfall.

Raymond Cooke—the last senior class president the 110-year-old school would ever have—took the news hard. “It was a very emotional time for us; heartbreaking and depressing,” he says. “It was like being put out of your home.”

Cooke, his classmates and other community members attended district meetings about the proposed closure, but he got the impression that the meetings were little more than public displays of sympathy put on by officials. “We didn’t have a voice,” he says. “The blame [for closing East High] was put on us.”

The fate of Cooke’s alma mater is playing out again and again in

low-income neighborhoods across the country. Closing “underperforming” public schools—rather than restructuring or funneling resources toward them—is one piece of the puzzle. In a growing number of communities, promoting publicly funded but privately managed charter schools to replace them is another piece. But researchers are now questioning this one-two approach to urban school reform. A grassroots movement of students, families, educators and community members is organizing locally and nationally to defend their rights as decision makers for schools that have long provided identity and stability for their neighborhoods.

More Than a School

Cooke remembers his school as more than a daytime place of learning. It was a community hub, polling place and a site for health and art fairs. It had a newly renovated gym, a culinary arts facility and a beautiful atrium.

“I was one of those strange kids who

wanted to come back someday and walk into my old classrooms,” Cooke says. “I wanted to be a role model for the students who came after me.” Part of his deep disappointment with the closure of East High was losing the chance to give back to a place that had been a community cornerstone.

“When a neighborhood loses its schools, it also loses an institution that builds relationships among local residents and binds generations, while it serves local children,” writes Elaine Simon in *The Notebook*, a watchdog newspaper serving Philadelphia Public Schools. Simon, co-director of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, has researched Philadelphia’s school-reform efforts for three decades. “Losing schools makes it all the more likely that these neighborhoods will deteriorate further.”

Closure in Context

School closures are part of the reform agenda in dozens of major U.S. cities. The vast majority of closures have taken

place in black and brown neighborhoods, communities with limited economic and political clout and high rates of poverty. Most targeted schools are struggling with overwhelming needs that extend far beyond the classroom.

Advocates of school closures point to test scores and academic achievement gaps as evidence of failure. Policymakers often blame school employees—specifically the teachers—for low test scores. This posture is at least as cynical as it is “decontextualized,” says social psychologist Anne Galletta, a professor at Cleveland State University and member of a research collective looking at the consequences of school closures in the city. One example of the missing context is that teachers in these under-resourced schools are often coping with high percentages of English language learners and students with special needs. As education activist Jitu Brown, national director of Journey for Justice Alliance, stated in a speech he made during the battle to save Dyett High School in Chicago: “We’re tired of our children and our communities being demonized and being blamed for being underserved.”

Galletta agrees. “We’ve got to go beyond high-stakes standardized test scores as the sole measure of improvement,” she says. “We’ve got to look at the lives of youth, their families and the neighborhoods in which they live.”

False Promises

Troubling to Galletta, Brown and other critics of school closures is the willingness of policymakers to ignore local voices in favor of promising reform narratives that often prove false.

One of the reasons most frequently given for closing schools is that closures save money, but evidence to the contrary is mounting. In 2013, officials in Chicago Public Schools admitted to overstating their savings from school closures by at least \$122 million. In Washington, D.C., school closings cost the district \$40 million—four

times as much as had been estimated. In many cities, securing and maintaining unsold school properties are adding to budgetary woes.

Another justification for school closures is the need to improve student performance, but this outcome isn’t guaranteed either. There is no clear evidence to indicate that schools receiving students displaced by closures have better academic track records than the schools that close. A study, conducted by Matthew F. Larsen at the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, indicates that most students from closed schools experience “negative shock,” resulting in lower attendance, lower GPAs, and lower chances of graduating.

Transferring to a charter school doesn’t cause a magic turnabout in academic performance either. *The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts*, a large-scale study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by Mathematica, compared students who were accepted into charter middle schools with an equivalent sample of students who applied to the same schools but were not selected and, instead, enrolled in their district middle schools. The study found little or no significant academic benefit related to charter school attendance.

Defending and Helping

The aggressiveness of urban school reform plans has caught many communities and school districts off guard in the past, but a growing number of families, students, educators and community leaders are taking up the cause of school closure and organizing for alternative outcomes.

Nationally, advocacy groups are shining more light on how sweeping reforms such as school closures are specifically targeting under-resourced communities and contributing to the resegregation of U.S. schools in the process. The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, the Journey for Justice

The Rise of EMOs

Not all charter schools are governed by the same bylaws and standards. Increasingly, public charter schools are being run by educational management organizations (EMOs), which may be nonprofit or for-profit. Charter schools get most of their money from public coffers, like traditional public schools. However, charter schools run by EMOs do not face the same rules for financial transparency as non-EMO charter schools.

The largest EMOs are well-funded and politically connected business ventures that are backed by such groups as the Walton Family Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Broad Foundation. Venture capitalists and hedge-fund managers are also investing in what they see as the future of public education—privately run schools funded with public money. The advocacy and lobbying arms of some EMOs have donated tens of millions of dollars in campaign funds to gain the support of candidates in both major parties.

Today, more than 6,000 public charter schools are operating in 42 states and the District of Columbia, educating an estimated 2.5 million students. Most are small, locally controlled charters that operate with great integrity. But the percentage of charters operating under EMOs is growing.

Is your charter school or school district considering contracting with an EMO? If so, read *Public Accountability for Charter Schools* by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. It outlines seven standards and recommendations for greater transparency and accountability. The report is available online at t-t.site/publicaccountability.

200

DETROIT

has closed over 200 schools since 2000.



140

NEW YORK CITY

has closed over 140 schools since 2002.



50

CHICAGO

closed 50 schools in 2013 alone.



Alliance and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign are three organizations advocating for greater equity in education and offering information and support to local activists.

The struggle to fight school closures is occurring on two main fronts. The first involves preventive efforts to block district takeovers by city and state officials and re-establish local control. The second involves activism at local levels once school closures have been set in motion. In 2013, 9-year-old Asean Johnson's spirited defense of his Chicago grade school went viral online. "You should be supporting these schools not closing them," Asean said. "You should not be closing these schools without walking into them and seeing what is happening in these schools! Education is our right, that is why we have to fight!" Asean's speech was credited with helping get his school removed from the closures list. In 2015, hunger strikers on Chicago's South Side were unable to prevent the closure of Dyett High School (although the school is slated to eventually reopen as an open-enrollment school with the same name). However, the strikers brought national attention to the issue of school closures and their disproportionate impact on communities of color.

After the Doors Close

Once a neighborhood school is closed, it is easy for a community to feel defeated, as Cooke can attest. But local educators and families can still do a great deal to ease the transition for displaced students as they prepare to attend new, unfamiliar schools.

As Galletta notes, some students transitioning from closed schools experience a fresh start, but many more experience grief and loss that affect their personal lives and academic performance. Efforts to help these uprooted students transition must be focused largely on the receiving schools, which—in too many instances—do not receive adequate support as they prepare for the influx. Leaders throughout the receiving school and the community at large may have to be proactive and persistent to ensure that displaced students are welcomed, safe and supported in their new environment so their minds can adjust and return to learning.

Ideally, receiving schools will host orientation sessions before the first day of school to respond to the questions and concerns of new students and their families and help the students prepare for the pending change. School officials should also attend to transportation requirements and have

plans in place to avoid long or unsafe routes and untenable transportation costs for families of displaced students, Galletta says. Emotional, psychological and academic supports should be in place too. These recommendations are more than just "best practices." Without them, students may literally disappear from the public education system. After the 2013 closure of 24 public schools in Philadelphia, some 600 students remained unaccounted for after the transition.

Be Prepared

According to East High's last senior class president, two key things must happen *before* a closure to protect neighborhood schools: Stakeholders must build community awareness and organize at the grassroots level to make the case that preserving and improving the existing school is best for students.

"You have to be as involved as possible in the policymaking," Cooke says. "You have to be aware and ask a lot of questions, because those planning to close it will not be transparent about [their motives]. This is your community. You have to be prepared." ♦

McCollum is a freelance writer who specializes in education and social justice topics.





EMPATHY FOR THE 'A'

TEACHING EMPATHY NOT ONLY BENEFITS CLASSROOM CULTURE—IT CAN RAISE TEST SCORES.

BY RUTH WILSON ILLUSTRATION BY SHAW NIELSEN

TEACHING IS MUCH MORE than helping students learn and remember facts. One way to think about the ABCs of education is to equate A with academics, B with behaviors and C with caring—one of the most important dispositions educators hope to instill in students.

However, the trend in many schools is to emphasize academics and skills to the point of neglecting attitudes and relationships. While some educators lament this trend, others argue that it's not the school's job to teach caring and that there is too much other material to fit into the curriculum. But recent

research indicates that academics and empathy need not be viewed as mutually exclusive choices. Bridget Cooper, director of the Centre for Pedagogy at the University of Sunderland, U.K., indicates that modeling and fostering empathy in the classroom can actually improve academic achievement.



"GO BEYOND LEA

their students. What's not so commonly understood is that empathy can reduce the harmful effects of stress. With this in mind, it's not hard to understand how explicitly teaching empathy in the classroom can boost academic achievement and capacity for learning. Richard Weissbourd, co-director of the Making Caring Common Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, notes how—conversely—the absence of caring and empathy can get in the way of achievement. "It's hard to learn in an uncaring environment," he says in an interview for *On the Commons* magazine. "Isolation and bullying get in the way of learning."

Empathy in Hidden and Visible Curricula

Caring, Noddings says, should be part of the curriculum *and* taught through adult-student interactions at school. She argues for the necessity of authentic caring relationships in the classroom; if kids experience empathy, they are more likely to demonstrate it. For the teacher, "this means listening, not just talking," she says. "It means affirming and recognizing students as valued people."

Another of Noddings' suggestions for fostering empathy in the classroom is to "back off of objectives" and focus on broader education goals, including "the development of more human attributes—intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and moral." "Start by revising priorities," she says. "The goal of education is to create competent, caring citizens. Go beyond learning objectives. Go higher and deeper."

Noddings also recommends shifting away from telling children what is right or wrong and, instead, teaching them how to care. For high school students, Noddings recommends lessons on such

Cooper conducted a detailed study on empathy in teacher-student relationships. She found that caring interactions were positively related to students' personal, social, moral and academic development.

"[Empathy] did clearly have effects on the quality of classroom relationships and achievement," she says of her study. "Teachers modeled their values to children through their treatment of them as individuals, and children grew as a result and emulated the teachers' empathy. For some children it was transformative in terms of their motivation, self-esteem and achievement in learning." (A summary of this research can be found in Cooper's book *Empathy in Education* and in her article "In

search of profound empathy in learning relationships: understanding the mathematics of moral learning environments," published in the *Journal of Moral Education*.)

Another researcher who has studied the relationship between empathy and academic achievement is Stanford Professor Emerita Nel Noddings, who has focused her entire career on caring in education. Noddings acknowledges there's no guarantee empathy will lead to academic success but says, "Common sense tells us that care and trust would reduce failure rates. ... Kids do better in a culture of caring."

Most educators are aware that stress can interfere with learning; they experience it in themselves and see it in

LEARNING OBJECTIVES. GO HIGHER AND DEEPER.

critical issues as poverty, war, race, class, gender and consumerism. Such lessons, Noddings says, can foster caring for others—not just those in one’s immediate circle, but strangers across the globe and even across the natural world. This type of interdisciplinary curriculum can help teachers “make connections between [different] subjects and between subjects and real-life issues,” a recommendation embraced by the designers of the International Baccalaureate curriculum.

Building Empathy Through Play

Weissbourd suggests fostering empathy via a game called “Yes, No, Maybe.” Start with a simple question, such as “Is blue your favorite color?” Have students whose favorite color is blue stand on one side of the room, while students with a different favorite color stand on another side of the room. Continue by asking increasingly more complex questions, including questions about feelings (e.g., “Have you ever felt left out or excluded from

something others were doing but you weren’t invited?” “Are you sometimes afraid to share your ideas in class?”). For each of these questions, students who aren’t ready to commit to saying “yes” or “no” can stay in their seats to form a “maybe” group. Weissbourd reports that one student, after participating in this activity, commented on how “Yes, No, Maybe” helped him connect with other kids he didn’t usually connect with.

For younger children, Joyce Davis, a veteran early childhood educator, recommends using puppets to foster empathy. “Puppets are effective because children feel safe with puppets,” she says. “They can talk to puppets.” Davis often uses puppets to model desired behaviors, including relating to other people and handling strong emotions, such as anger, sadness and disappointment. For example, Davis’ puppet might say, “I’m feeling angry, really angry. I feel like hitting somebody, but that’s not the right thing to do. I’ll just tell them I’m angry and I don’t like what they’re doing.” Davis finds that young children listen closely to puppets and are influenced by what the puppets “say” and “do.” Through these friendly alter egos, she notes, “Children can learn how to deal with conflict and how to stand up against bullying. They can also learn to care for each other.”

In an era where student achievement is paramount, the link between helping students care for each other and helping them achieve academic success is critically important to educators who have always prioritized teaching the C—caring. Teaching empathy is more than a means to a desirable set of test scores. As Weissbourd says, “It’s the right thing to do.” ♦

Wilson is an educational consultant and writer in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She also blogs for Teaching Tolerance.

The Jigsaw Classroom

The Jigsaw Classroom is a cooperative learning technique used in many schools to promote empathy and caring. Psychologist Elliot Aronson, who—in collaboration with his students—developed this technique and conducted research on its effectiveness, says jigsaw groups have been used successfully to reduce intergroup conflict and to promote academic learning.

“Conflict in a classroom is often fueled by a competitive environment, and competition gets in the way of learning,” Aronson notes. The Jigsaw Classroom is designed to foster cooperation and diminish competition among students.

The first step in using the Jigsaw Classroom technique is to divide students into five- or six-person “jigsaw groups,” with each group being as diverse as possible in terms of visible and invisible identities: gender, race, language, ability, religious belief, sexual orientation, family make-up, etc. The day’s lesson is then divided into five or six segments, and each student in the jigsaw group is assigned to learn a different segment of the lesson. Then, each student joins the students from other the jigsaw groups who were assigned to the same segment of the lesson; these individuals become the “expert group.” The experts help each other prepare for a presentation to their respective jigsaw groups. After the jigsaw groups reconvene and all the presentations are made, each jigsaw group will have learned the complete lesson.

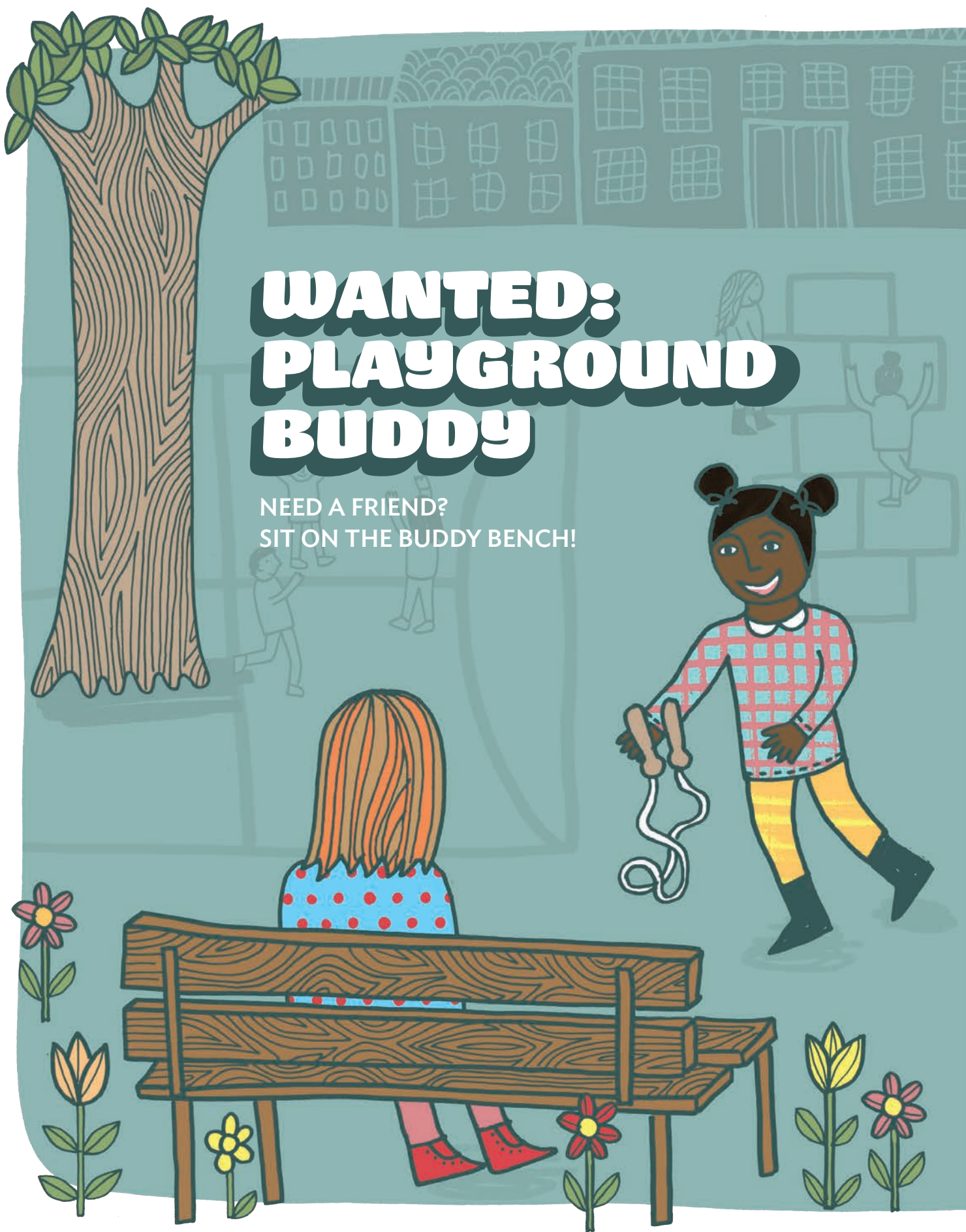
The Jigsaw Classroom is different from some other forms of cooperative learning because each student has a unique piece of information to share. As Aronson explains, “No one in the group succeeds unless they all succeed.” Success is determined by cooperation.


Aronson encourages teachers of all disciplines to use jigsaw groups in their classrooms. “It’s very easy, foolproof, and students prefer this approach,” he says. In addition to increased academic performance, Aronson notes that the benefits include “students paying more attention to each other and appreciating each other. If each student’s part is essential, then each student is essential.”

More information about the benefits of the Jigsaw Classroom and easy-to-follow directions can be found at jigsaw.org.

WANTED: PLAYGROUND BUDDY

NEED A FRIEND?
SIT ON THE BUDDY BENCH!





AT VERNFIELD ELEMENTARY, a school in the exurbs of Philadelphia, a first-grader named Brooke Sturm found herself alone at recess. So she sat on a bench next to the playground.

Two other first-graders, Kendal Hoover and Roisin McNamara, noticed her about a minute later. They ran across the play yard and invited Brooke to play tag.

“I just saw her, and she was my friend, and I wanted to play with her,” explained Kendal, age 6. She and Roisin knew what to do because Brooke was sitting on one of Vernfield’s two Buddy Benches, a playground installation where kids sit when they feel lonely, signaling other kids to ask them to play.

At least 1,000 elementary schools on six continents have installed Buddy Benches on their playgrounds. The popularity of Buddy Benches in the United States is credited to then-first-grader Christian Bucks, whose family was planning to move to Germany for his father’s job. When Christian was looking at German schools online, he saw a similar bench on one of its playgrounds. He liked the idea and shared it with the principal of his school, Roundtown Elementary in York, Pennsylvania. Christian’s family ultimately stayed in York, so after Christian started second grade in 2013, he introduced the Buddy Bench to his school during an assembly.

“Let’s say their best friend is absent. They can sit there,” explains Christian, now in fourth grade. “Kids are getting to know more people, and friends are being made.”

After a local newspaper published an article about Roundtown’s Buddy Bench, the story spread to media outlets like *Today* and *The Huffington Post*. Since then, the idea has spread through social media and word of mouth. Kids and educators at some schools have contacted Christian and his mother, Alyson Bucks, for advice. She maintains a website, Christian’s Buddy Bench, with a map of the benches she’s learned about through tools like Google News.

At Vernfield Elementary School, a parent saw one of those news stories after Vernfield merged

with another school. Principal Jonathan Graf thought the benches would help students from the two schools connect.

“You don’t want any child in the school to feel disconnected from their school community,” Graf says.

The fifth-graders of the student body agreed and, in 2014, chose the benches as their class gift.

A Place for Every Child

When children feel excluded, “it’s painful, lonely and confusing,” says Ellen McCarty, who runs the Georgia operations of a nonprofit organization called Playworks. The group staffs low-income elementary schools with recess coaches who teach kids cooperative games, inviting all to participate and increasing their social emotional learning. The goals of Playworks and Buddy Benches are complementary: They aim to promote friendships and ensure every child has a place on the playground.

A Buddy Bench, by itself, can’t create a more positive place for kids. It must be part of a coordinated effort to create an inclusive school climate. Assessing the current status of a school’s culture is key to determining how to accomplish this goal, says consultant Nancy Mullin, director of Bullying Prevention Solutions.

“Schools that are trying to address bullying need to have a comprehensive plan,” she says. “The first step should be, ‘Let’s see what we’ve got going on here.’”

Educators should study incidents of bullying that have taken place and look for patterns, Mullin adds. Staff must consistently show they will always respond to and intervene with bullying.

Christian credits Roundtown’s counselor, Susan Landis, with helping make the school a welcoming place.

Landis says the school’s ability to be responsive is influenced by the Green Circle curriculum, which has three parts: caring, sharing and respect. Green Circle is referenced throughout the school year in lessons about how all people are different and how they may make friends differently too.



The curriculum is used district wide.

Harbour View School in suburban Los Angeles has a Buddy Bench on its main playground and Buddy Chairs in its kindergarten play area. The idea came from a second-grader at Harbour View who learned about Roundtown's bench. Principal Cindy Osterhout says the bench and chairs enhance the school's use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, which emphasizes how to act respectfully rather than telling kids what not to do.

Educators who have used Buddy Benches effectively introduce the benches and their purpose during assemblies at the beginning of the year and continue to talk about the benches all year in conjunction with other efforts

“Our school isn't just teaching us math and writing, but how to be nice.”

to promote a friendly school community. Each new student at Harbour View is paired with a fourth- or fifth-grader who helps the child collect stamps on a “passport.” Along with stops at the library and principal's office, the tour includes sitting with the partner on the Buddy Bench during recess.

The website for Christian's Buddy Bench suggests these rules.

- ➔ Before you sit on the Buddy Bench, think of something you would like to do. Ask someone else to play with you.
- ➔ The bench isn't for socializing. Only sit there if you can't find anyone to play with.
- ➔ While you're sitting on the bench, look around for a game you can join.
- ➔ If you see something you want to do or a friend you want to talk to, get off the bench!
- ➔ When you see someone on the bench, ask that person to play with you.
- ➔ If you're sitting on the bench, play with the first classmate who invites you.
- ➔ Keep playing with your new friends!

A Child-Friendly Approach

While some might think sitting on the bench would invite bullying of a lonely child, kids at schools that have them say that doesn't make sense.

“They just think it's sad to not have anyone to play with,” says Zoey Ricigliano, a second-grader at Yardville Elementary in Trenton, New Jersey. “Our school isn't just teaching us math and writing, but how to be nice.”

Students point out other benefits of having a Buddy Bench. Kids might be alone at recess because they're in timeout for poor behavior, or they want some time to think. But a child on the bench clearly wants a friend.

In Pennsylvania, Graf speaks with students in terms of the Vernfield

Vision, a mission statement that includes the line, “I will take care of other people, myself and my school.” He says Buddy Benches are another way to care for people.

“I think we're doing a good job with them,” says fifth-grader Julia Vizza. “When I look over to them they're usually empty.” ♦

VanderMeulen is a freelance writer who specializes in education. She is currently working toward a master's degree in school counseling.



Tips for Bringing a Buddy Bench to Your School

- ➔ Gather students' ideas to make recess more inclusive.
- ➔ Ask students how they think their peers would react to seeing a classmate sitting on a Buddy Bench. Would they be willing to sit on the bench themselves if they felt lonely?
- ➔ Consult with teachers, staff and your school's parent-teacher organization about introducing the concept of the Buddy Bench.
- ➔ Involve students in a fundraiser to buy a bench for the school. Alternately, reach out to local builders or manufacturers who might be willing to donate a bench.
- ➔ Get student input about where to place the bench. Invite them to design and paint it.
- ➔ Work with your students to make rules for the Buddy Bench.
- ➔ Recruit older kids to introduce the Buddy Bench to your students and help monitor its use.
- ➔ Encourage families to talk about the Buddy Bench with their kids.

What We're Reading

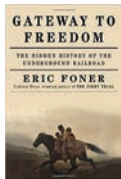
Teaching Tolerance loves to read! Check out a few of our favorite diverse books for diverse readers and educators.



During her first week of school, Jessica hopes that the items in her cardboard box will help her make new friends. What will work? Cupcakes? A puppy? In the end, Jessica discovers the one thing that makes her worthy of friendship ... herself! See what else is hidden inside *Jessica's Box*, written and illustrated by Peter Carnavas.
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

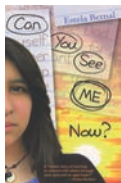
“A book about how true friendship cannot be bought.”

–Jarrah Botello



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad by Eric Foner



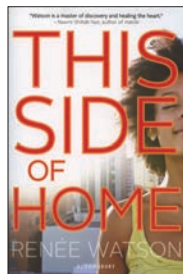
MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

Can You See Me Now? by Estela Bernal



ELEMENTARY

Olympic Hero: Lennox Kilgour's Story by Joanne Kilgour Dowdy, illustrated by Dillon Sedar



When Maya starts her senior year of high school, her plans for the future are all set: Maintain her “perfect” romantic relationship and attend Spelman College with her twin and their best friend. But plans change, just as Maya’s traditionally black neighborhood is changing—and Maya changes, too. See how in Renée Watson’s *This Side of Home*.
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

“This novel packs a punch for students in a decidedly not post-racial society.”

–Monita K. Bell



When a factory closing puts an urban neighborhood at risk of decay, the community bands together to bring the area back to life. In *Pig Park*, Claudia Guadalupe Martínez’ textured prose opens a window into the struggles, families, friendships, sights, sounds, smells and tastes of a community, told from the perspective of 15-year-old Masi Burciaga.

HIGH SCHOOL

“A vibrant novel of culture, community and social action.”

–Steffany Moyer



My Mantepiece: A Memoir of Survival and Social Justice documents the life and emotional journey of Carolyn Goodman, who lost her son Andrew at the hands of KKK members during Mississippi’s Freedom Summer in 1964. Interspersed with the poetry of her late husband, Bobby, the autobiography gives brief snapshots of Goodman’s journey as a wife, mother, activist and psychologist.

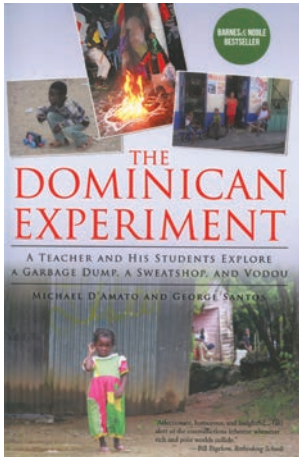
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“A story of hope and survival that will encourage readers to endure.”

–Jarrah Botello



“Simply beautiful.”
 –Maya Lindberg



“A moving story of one classroom forever changed.”
 –Rachel Buchan



“Challenges the gender binary, explores feminism and friendship, and encourages tolerance.”
 –Sara Wicht



“This is an important book for youth.”
 –June Cara Christian

Juneteenth for Mazie, written and illustrated by Floyd Cooper, tells the story of a young girl who learns about Juneteenth from her father. He tells Mazie how her great-great-great-grandfather Mose celebrated his freedom from slavery on June 19, 1865, and how her family and many others have remembered Juneteenth every year since.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In *None of the Above*, I. W. Gregorio gives voice to an identity group not often heard in YA lit: intersex teens. Readers explore the complexities of growing up, understanding gender identity and being a good friend as the main character, Krissy, deals with her androgen insensitivity syndrome diagnosis. This work will give new meaning to readers’ understandings of tolerance and difference.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

With *X: A Novel*, Ilyasah Shabazz and Kekla Magoon share the vivid journey of a young Malcolm Little and the pivotal events that

led him to change his last name and join the Nation of Islam. Scene after scene, Shabazz and Magoon’s brilliant use of imagery draws the reader into Little’s life and choices until his arrest at age 20. This is a powerful tale of redemption and learning from the past.

Identity, diversity, justice and action. *The Dominican Experiment*, by Michael D’Amato and George Santos, marries these core themes with real talk about the challenges of anti-bias education. When D’Amato and his students travel to the Dominican Republic, their classroom space is transformed into a window and mirror for universal injustices. Pushed beyond the perspective that tourism can provide, the students must rethink their understandings of poverty, race, gender, government and education.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What We're Watching

Dim the lights and get ready to learn with these TT-approved films!

Keep On Keepin' On documents the life and career of the jazz legend Clark Terry, whose passion for music was equaled only by his investment in the lives of his students. This film focuses on Terry's relationship with young Justin Kauflin—a blind piano genius who is struggling to find his own sound and a place in the jazz scene. **Keep On Keepin' On** is much more than a music documentary; it's a powerful case study for teachers and mentors. "To help young musicians make their dreams come true," Terry says in the film, "that became my supreme joy and greatest aspiration." (86 min.)

keeponkeepinon.com

HIGH SCHOOL AND
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How to Dance in Ohio chronicles the experiences of a group of adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum as they prepare to attend a spring formal dance. Working with clinical psychologist Dr. Emilio Amigo, the young people participate in three months of social skills group therapy leading up to the event. Amigo and his staff help the youth move out of their comfort zones and equip

them with skills to navigate social norms and new experiences. The stories of three young women in particular—16-year-old Marideth, 19-year-old Caroline and 22-year-old Jessica—add narrative depth to the film and illustrate how rites of passage are simultaneously deeply personal and collectively transformative experiences. (89 min.)

howtodanceinohio.com

HIGH SCHOOL AND
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Weaving together individual narratives of success and despair, the investigative documentary **Prison Kids: A Crime Against America's Children** tells a complicated story about the broken U.S. juvenile justice system. It's a system that takes many students from over-policed schools to under-resourced juvenile facilities—often for minor infractions—and leaves tens of thousands of children sleeping behind bars each night. As a professional development tool, **Prison Kids** can help educators learn about the racial and ability disparities in youth incarceration practices, understand the damaging effects of solitary

confinement, and join the movement to overhaul the system. (64 min.)

fusion.net/series/prison-kids

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Don't Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie) is a documentary film about Angy Rivera, an activist for undocumented youth. As a young child, Rivera moved to the United States from Colombia with her mother, also undocumented. Rivera describes the burden of silence she carried for 20 years, informed by her mother's instructions, "Don't tell anyone," and the constant fear that her mixed-status family would be torn apart. Rivera explains how she stepped out of the "shadows" at age 24. Not only did she publicly share her undocumented status, but she also revealed that she's a victim of sexual assault. **Don't Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)** spotlights topics that often remain in the shadows: the experiences and voices of undocumented immigrants, sexual abuse and youth activism. (71 min.)

nodigasfilm.com

HIGH SCHOOL AND
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Supermom Saves the Day

BY JOI MINER

THE BELL RANG for recess, and the children lined up to go outside. Mrs. Miller led them to the playground gates and they scattered, breaking off into groups. There were groups of girls preparing for Double Dutch, hopscotch and a tea party. The boys played dodge ball, ran races and played superhero. ¶ Sheila stood at the gate, trying to decide which game she wanted to play. She didn't like tea party or hopscotch and couldn't Double Dutch. She decided to join some of the boys. She walked over

to John, who lived next door to her. They played superhero together all the time.

"John, can I play superhero with you guys?" she asked.

"Superhero is for boys," John said. "Why don't you go play a girl's game?"

"But you and I play it all the time, John!" Sheila said in surprise. "Please, may I play?"

"No," John said. "Superhero is for boys."

Sadly, Sheila walked away and sat on the bench by herself.

That evening at dinner, instead of eating, Sheila pushed her peas around her plate with her fork.

"What's wrong, Sheila Bear?" her dad asked. "You love peas."

"Today at recess, I asked John if I could play. But he told me that superhero is for boys and that I should go play a girl's game," Sheila explained. "Daddy, can't girls be superheroes, too?"

"Of course they can," her father agreed. "Lots of superheroes are girls and women. Your mom is a superhero."

"Mommy, you're a superhero?" Sheila asked, excited.

"I sure am," Sheila's mom replied. "I save lives every day."

"Cool!" Sheila shouted. "I wish you could tell the boys at school that girls can be superheroes, too."

"Maybe I can," Sheila's mom said with a wink.

Sheila woke up the next day eager to get to school. She was going to tell John and all the other boys about her superhero mom. They would *have* to let her play with them then.

She sat through class, waiting for recess. When the class got to the playground, Sheila walked proudly to the

jungle gym, where the boys were playing.

"John, may I play superhero with y'all today?" she asked.

"Why don't you go play a girl's game?" John said, just like he had the day before.

"Superhero *is* a girl's game," Sheila said with a smile. "My mom is a real-life superhero. She saves lives every day!"

"Your mom isn't a superhero. She doesn't have a cape or a mask," John said.

"My mom has a costume. She's a police officer," Sheila replied, "and my dad cooks and plays dolls with me. So I don't think there are such things as boys' games and girls' games."

Seeing the children getting heated, Mrs. Miller walked over to the jungle gym.

"I have a surprise for everyone," she said, breaking up the argument. "Let's go inside."

The children frowned, sad about recess ending early but curious about the surprise. When they were all settled in their seats, Mrs. Miller stood in front of the class.

"Over the last couple of days, I have heard some quarrels about girls' games and boys' games. So today we have some guests to talk to you about it."

Mrs. Miller motioned toward the door. In walked Sheila's mom wearing her police uniform and a man wearing medical scrubs.

"Mrs. Johnson is a police officer and my husband, Mr. Miller, is a nurse," she explained. "They've agreed to come in and talk to you today about what they do."

John raised his hand and said, "Mrs. Johnson, being a police officer isn't safe. Girls should leave that kind of stuff for boys. We're stronger and tougher."

"Well, John," Mrs. Johnson said, "you're right that being a police officer is

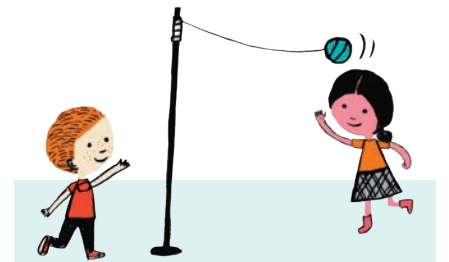
dangerous, but they train us to be safe. And that training can apply to anyone who is brave and committed to helping the community." She smiled at her daughter.

Another student, Ashley, raised her hand. "Mr. Miller, my dad said boys are supposed to be doctors, not nurses. Didn't you want to be a doctor?"

"I am happy to say, changes happened so that boys and girls, like you, can decide what *they* want to be," Mr. Miller explained. "I chose to be a nurse because I get to work closely with patients. Do you know that nurses actually save more lives than doctors do every day?"

More hands were raised with questions. After the Q&A session, Mrs. Miller made an announcement. "Now, we are going to go back outside, and you will each get to learn about becoming a nurse *and* a police officer. Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Miller will train you. And we'll need some volunteers to help us. Sheila, will you help?"

"Yes, ma'am," Sheila said, and as she walked to the front of the classroom, she smiled to herself. "I *knew* girls could be superheroes." ♦



Questions for Readers

RIGHT THERE (IN THE TEXT)

Why does John say Sheila can't play the game she wants to play?

THINK AND SEARCH (IN THE TEXT)

What kind of work does Sheila's mom do? What about Sheila's dad?

AUTHOR AND ME (IN MY HEAD)

Describe what Mrs. Miller does to resolve the conflict at recess. Describe a time your teacher helped you resolve a conflict.

ON MY OWN (IN MY HEAD)

John acts differently toward Sheila at school than he does in their neighborhood. Why do you think that is?

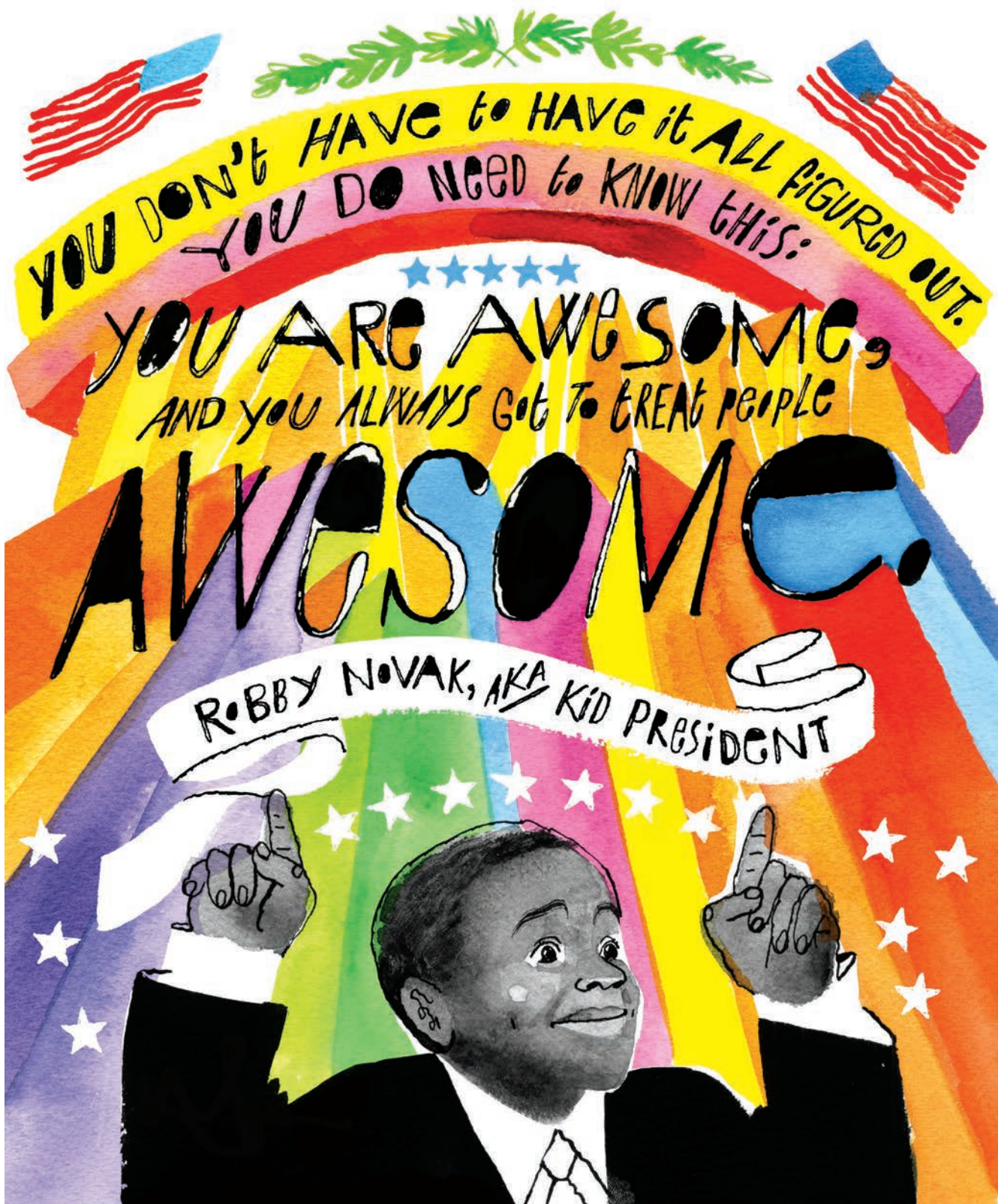


ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN TAMAKI



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER



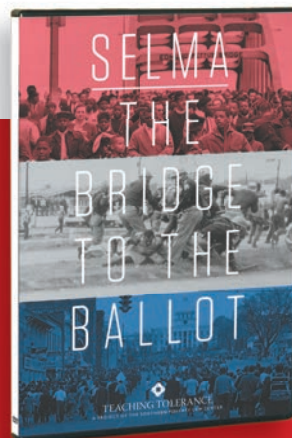
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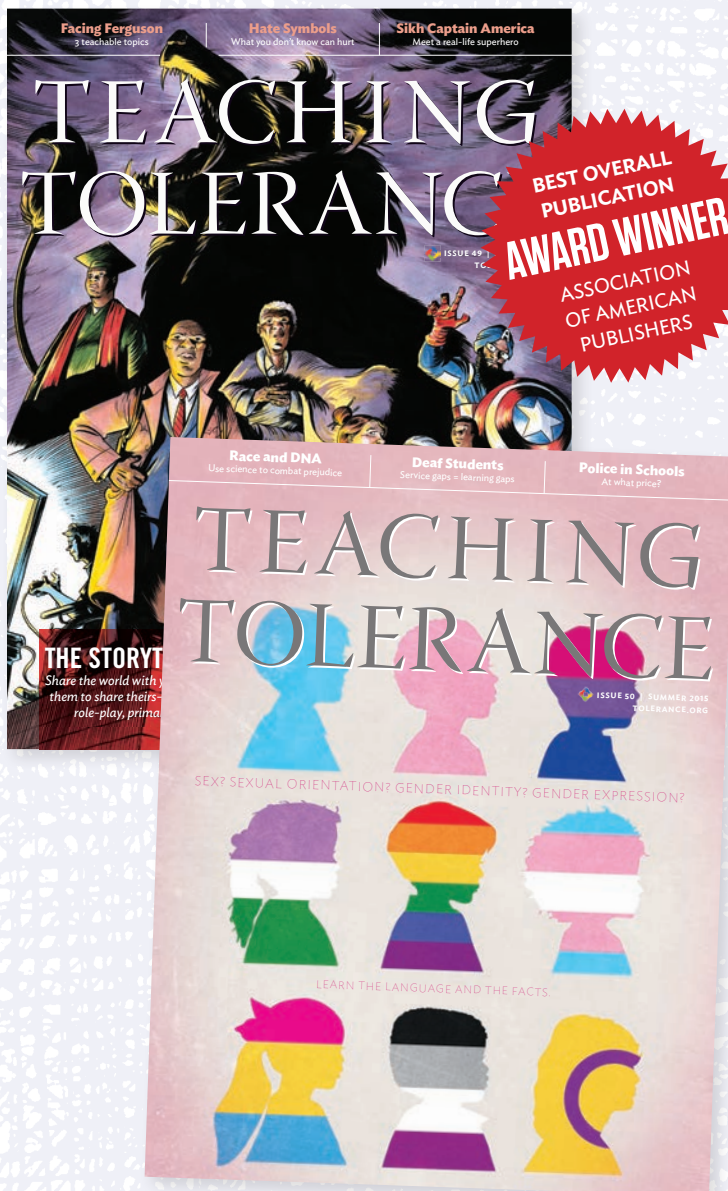


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