



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

2005 Volume II: The Challenge of Intersecting Identities in American Society: Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Nation

Defining Cultural Identity: Thinking Outside the Box

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.02.09

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The purpose of this first grade curriculum unit is to enable young students to identify themselves and others with regard to many complex factors, including race, ethnicity, physical appearance and ability, gender, and family structure. The students will understand themselves better, become better prepared to accept people who are different from them, and learn to refrain from making assumptions about people by way of external examination. The secondary goal is to create a tone of harmony among classmates and multicultural appreciation.

I will provide opportunities for children to observe people with families and identities different from their own, as well as positive role models from within their racial groups, by utilizing engaging multicultural literature. Though many cultures will be studied within this unit, the most emphasis will be on African American people, with some emphasis on Latino, White, and Biracial people, in order to reflect the racial backgrounds of my students. In addition to teaching about people from other places and ethnicities, I will encourage open communication in class and assign individual and group projects, in order to allow the students to discover similarities and differences among themselves, such as family structures, traditions, and hobbies. By discussing many types of identities and comparing themselves characters in books and to one another, they will learn new ways of identifying themselves and develop a sense of self-pride.

This year-long curriculum unit consists of four ten-week mini-units: one for each marking period. It is to be implemented at least two to three times a week, for approximately 30-60 minutes per lesson. Due to great emphasis placed on reading and writing in first grade, I have integrated the social studies themes with the required literacy activities. Each section of the unit corresponds to one of four social studies themes. The four themes are: Family and Me, Community and Traditions, African American History, and Celebrating Diversity. Although the unit is designed for first grade students, the content could easily be adapted for students from second through fifth grade by supplementing the reading with longer, more challenging texts.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grade 1.)

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