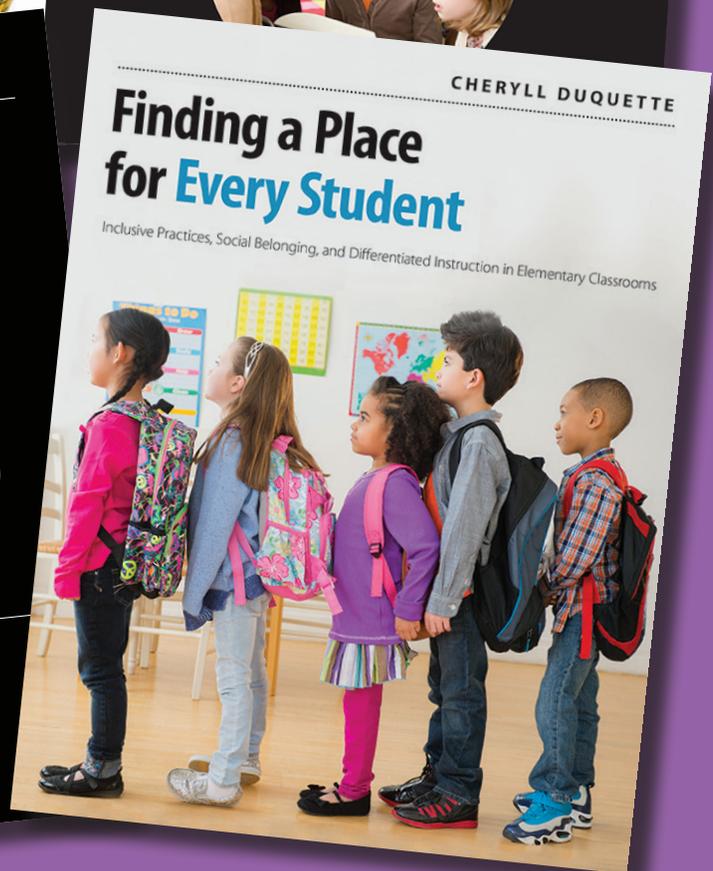
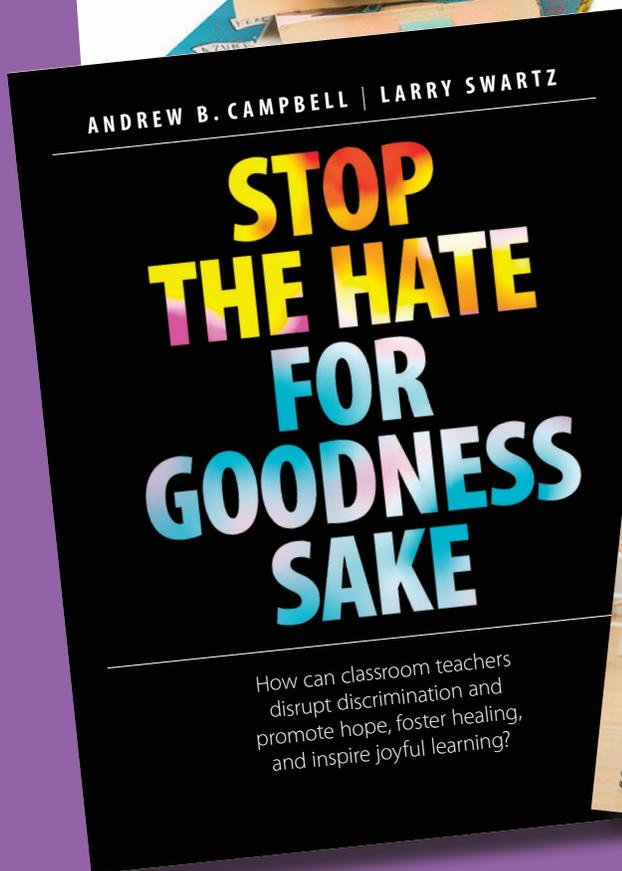
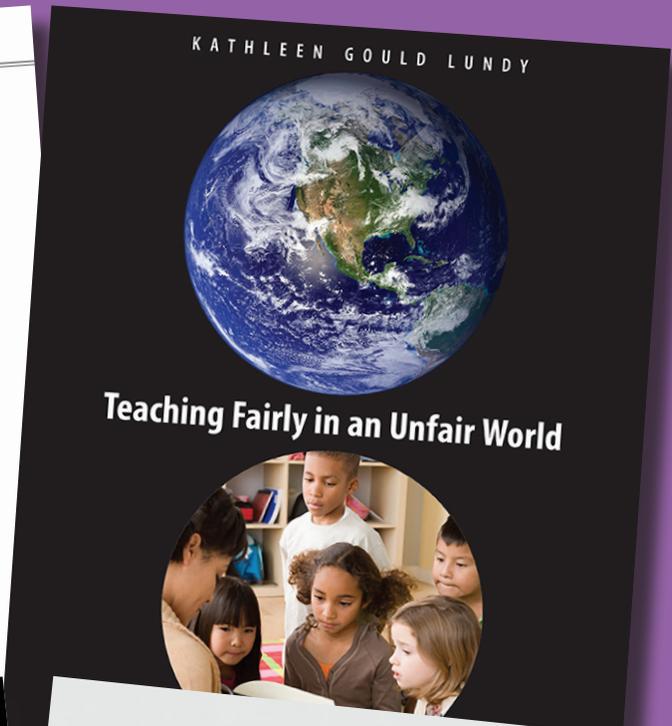
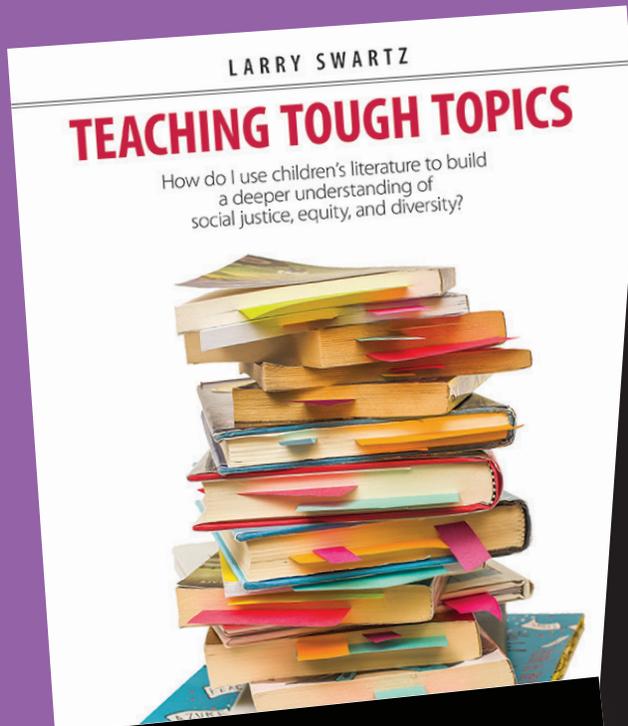


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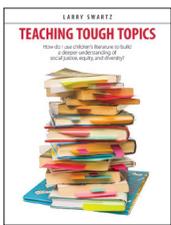
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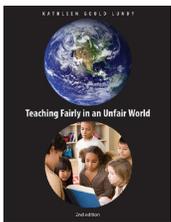
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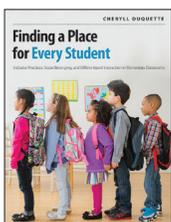
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This timely revision of a ground-breaking resource is an essential tool for exploring social justice issues with students in our evolving classrooms. Practical activities, useful resources, and classroom techniques for helping students make sense of the world around them, complemented by a glossary of over 50 strategies and reproducible pages.



Stop the Hate for Goodness Sake 35

Over 40 practical lessons that guide teachers to confront racism and discrimination, and that lead young people to consider ethical and moral behavior. A thoughtful examination of today’s world that will help teachers encourage reflection, foster inclusion, and inspire students to take action. This in-depth guide will show teachers how to start and manage important conversations that will lead to change.



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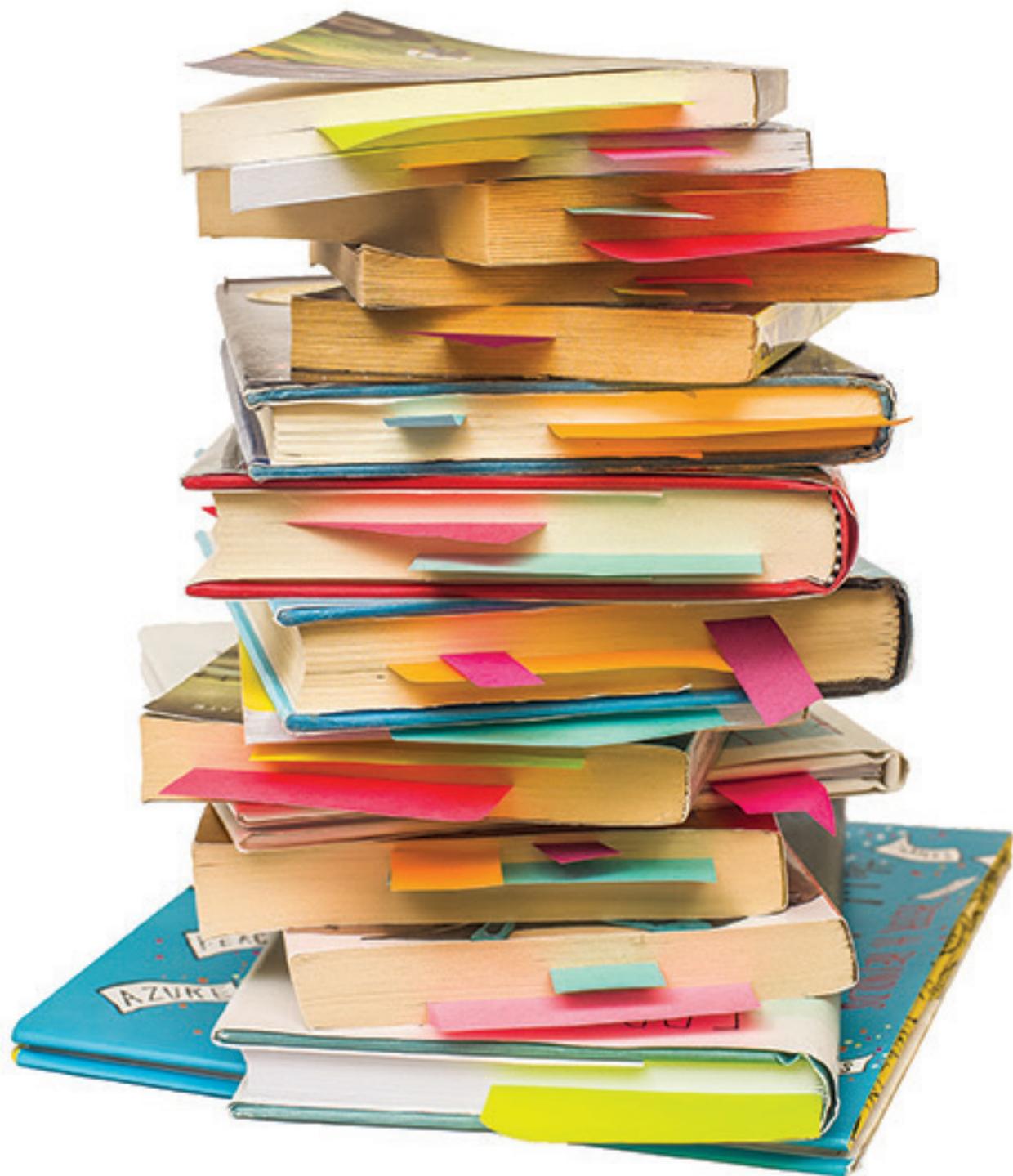
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LARRY SWARTZ

TEACHING TOUGH TOPICS

How do I use children's literature to build a deeper understanding of social justice, equity, and diversity?



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3 Indigenous Identities	<i>Stolen Words</i> <i>Hiawatha and the Peacemaker</i>	picture book legend; picture book	Four-Rectangle responses think-aloud
4 The Holocaust	<i>The Promise</i> <i>All About Anne</i>	picture book nonfiction	visuals interpretation questioning
5 Physical and Mental Challenges	CBC News <i>Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus</i>	news report novel	opinion writing questioning
6 Poverty	<i>Those Shoes</i> <i>How to Steal a Dog</i>	picture book novel	storytelling in-role interviews
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8 Gender Identity and Homophobia	stories on genderfluidity <i>Jake's Progress</i>	picture book dialogue script	sentence stems interpretation
9 Bullying	<i>Say Something or Dear Bully of Mine</i> <i>The Bully, the Bullied, the Bystander, the Brave</i>	picture book poetry	Character Journals choral dramatization
10 Ripples of Kindness	“The Little Hummingbird”	folktale	Readers theatre

Chapter 1

Race and Diverse Cultures

*We're best friends.
Even though we live in two different worlds.
Different, different but the SAME!*
— From *Same, Same but Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

*“Ayden, you look upset,” said Mom. “Did something happen?”
“Some people called me a word I never heard before,” said Ayden.
Mom was immediately concerned. “What did they call you?” she asked. “Come sit down.”
Ayden whispered in Mom’s ear.
Mom gasped . . .
“Mom, what does that word mean?”*
— From *My Skin: Brown* by @studentAsim, illus. Sari Richter

*I do not know if these hands will be
Rosa’s
or Ruby’s
gently gloved
and fiercely folded
calmly in a lap,
on a desk
around a book,
ready
to change the world . . .*
— From *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson

I began teaching in the 1970s and was eager to build a collection of great books to bring into the classroom. My first teaching job was in a rural setting, a homogeneously cultured class of Grade 7 students. I was taking continuing education Language Arts courses, I regularly visited The Children’s Bookstore in Toronto, and I talked with colleagues, including the school librarian, about books as I strove to gather good books that would engage my students and spur them on to choose and enjoy good books. In my early years of teaching, I wanted to introduce students to what I thought were great authors (Gary Paulsen, Robert Newton Peck, and Monica Hughes). Judy Blume’s notoriety was on the rise. S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* was the must-read for young adolescents. Many students were keen to enter Tolkien’s fantasy world or the horror books of V. C. Andrews.

How My Definition of Great Books Has Evolved

Thinking about it now, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor, a book about racism in America during the Great Depression, was likely the single title on my classroom bookshelf with an African American character. Perhaps I bought it because it won the 1977 Newbery Medal. Was I aware of the need to invite my all-White classroom to read a story about a character very different than them?

A Seminal Read-Aloud to the Class

When I was in my fourteenth year of teaching, the novel *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli was released, and I chose to read it aloud to my Grade 5 students. This Newbery Medal-winning novel tells the story of Jeffrey Lionel Magee who is forced to live with his strictly Catholic aunt and uncle when his parents are killed in a car crash. The orphaned boy runs away and lives in the streets of Two Mills, Pennsylvania, where he eventually becomes a local hero. Maniac is challenged with bullying and racism in his encounters with characters who live in the African American east end and the White west end of the town. For me, this story, where students root for the homeless hero, come to learn about prejudice, and feel compassion for those who are illiterate, is a deserted island keeper of the best of great books. My students (not one Black person in the class) voted this book their favorite of the year.

I would say that this novel became a seminal choice in my career of book collecting. I set myself a challenge to find books that would inform and stretch students of otherness. And the publishing industry helped me, as it came to recognize the need to put books on shelves that represented the varied cultures of readers.

The process may have begun slowly, but in the past few years, in particular, books with Black, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Jewish, and Muslim protagonists have been published. There are more and more titles that help students find themselves on the pages of literature and help open windows into the diverse lives of others.

Diverse Books and Authors Needed for Diverse Communities

For the past 20 years I have taught courses to teachers in the teacher education program and certainly in the past few years, the students in my class have become as diverse as any urban-centred community could find. As a middle-class, White male, I have become acutely aware of the need to find books that introduce diverse races and cultures. Choosing such books, I feel, shows respect for students who need and want to find themselves represented in books or to learn about others who are considered different from them because of their race and culture. Presenting picture books, novels, and nonfiction titles with characters of different skin colors, religions, and family customs informs beginning teachers, I hope, of the need to do so in the classroom, both in urban and rural settings.

Each year, I am approached by several teacher candidates who are genuinely interested in using books that deal with racism and anti-discrimination. They ask questions like these: “Do you have any books for Black History month?” “What do I say to a young girl in my class who wouldn’t play with another girl because

A Young Girl’s Book Campaign

In October 2018, Katy Scott of CNN reported a story about Marley Dias, a girl who, at the age of 11, had become tired of reading books about “white boys and their dogs.” As a Grade 6 student, Dias launched a campaign called #1000BlackGirl-Books to identify books featuring people of color as protagonists. Over time she has collected more than 11 000 books and donated them to predominantly Black and underserved communities.

she said her skin was too brown?” “How do I help the student who hears the slur ‘Go back to where you came from?’”

Serving students with literature that features characters who are different from themselves is a good place to start. Today there are many books written by diverse authors (Jason Reynolds, Walter Dean Myers, Cynthia Kadohata, Jacqueline Woodson, and Pablo Cartaya) who tackle typecasting as they present stories of racially diverse characters finding a place to belong. Many contemporary novels provide stories that help our students unpack the sensitive, messy topic of race and racism (*Wishtree* by Katherine Applegate, *Count Me In* by Varsha Bajaj, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas). This is a far cry from the lonely title about racism sitting on my shelf in 1976.

How to Talk About Race and Racism

Choosing to talk about race is an option for many teachers and parents. Conversations about racism can be tricky and the context will vary depending on who is talking and what their personal experiences with race and racism are. Parent Toolkit, an online resource, provides expert advice for parents (and teachers) in *How to Talk to Kids About Race and Racism*. A few key points are noted below:

- *Set the example.* We need to feel comfortable discussing race and racism among ourselves.
- *Help children navigate their curiosity.* Encourage students to ask questions about otherness as they meet it in life and in literature.
- *Make it relatable.* An activity that calls upon children to make a tangled web involving balls of string can teach them how creating racism is easy but untangling it is hard for people who want society to be fair.
- *Be open about addressing mistakes.* Encourage honest communication about a put-down, rather than just calling someone “racist.” “Tell me more” invites opportunities to share a point of view.
- *Be an advocate.* Don’t just say people are equal, but act in ways that reflect that thinking.

Our classrooms need to be places where every student feels safe. Teachers can help students recognize that they are both similar to and different than the person who sits alongside them. Introducing the concept of “racism” may be scary, especially if the student could be the target of racism; however, doing so is essential. We must empower children to understand what it means to be racist, to confront others who are behaving as racists, and to work towards challenging stereotypes and talking honestly about race and culture. All this will be done with the hope of someday overcoming racism in society.

In the feature that follows, Michelle Grace-Williams discusses why even young children can and should understand what racism is so that deficit racial messages will affect them less.

PERSPECTIVE

Challenging Racism: Developing Children’s Critical Racial Literacy*by Michelle Grace-Williams***Tricia:** *What do you want to eat, my little princess?***Sasha:** *I’m not a princess, mummy. I’m not white!*

The preceding dialogue between Tricia, a Black mother and an early childhood educator, and Sasha, her four-year-old daughter who had recently begun attending Pre-K, reveals that children often begin to internalize deficit perspectives about their racial identity at an early age. Sasha’s statement reveals that she is beginning to associate whiteness with societal standards of beauty. Since children are exposed to racial stereotypes at an early age, it must be interrupted in the classroom during these early years. Being color blind and silent about racism keeps the status quo intact to the detriment of racialized children and their families (Boutte 2015; Grace-Williams 2018; hooks 1994; Ladson-Billings 2009; Lyiscott 2017).

Children Can Handle Talk About Racism

My conversations with Tricia and my teacher candidates often reveal their struggle to identify ways of engaging children in conversations about racism and other forms of discrimination because they assume that children are too young to understand and handle these issues. However, several research studies reveal that children can engage in critical conversations about racism — something that is necessary for interrupting the reproduction of racism (Boutte and Muller 2018; Hagerman 2019). As Kaczmarczyk, Allee-Herndon, and Roberts (2019) argue, “Safe, effective conversations depend on teachers knowing that normalizing whiteness likely shuts down important explorations of past and present racial diversity, power, and oppression” (524).

Below are useful tips for beginning this journey:

Engaging in Anti-discriminatory Teaching: Tips

- Acknowledge and plan for ethnic-racial diversity in the classroom.
- Critically reflect on and address deficit teacher narratives, assumptions, and low expectations of racialized students.
- Engage students in critical racial literacy activities to raise their critical awareness.
- Select children’s literature that represents diverse racialized groups positively.
- Consider including the silenced perspectives of racialized students and their families in planning lessons and choosing textbooks and resources.
- Promote children’s voices and action against racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Collaborate with critical scholars, educators, parents, and community members to construct inclusive lessons.

“Not seeing one’s self, or representation of one’s culture, in literature can activate feelings of marginalization and cause students to question their place within society.”

— Susan M. Landt (2006, 294)

Michelle Grace-Williams is an instructor in anti-discriminatory education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Why Early Conversations About Racism Are Essential

Children are often observers and recipients of racism. Thus, delaying conversations about racism in the classroom is tantamount to delaying the support they need to understand this issue, cope with it, and address it. In this vein, though they do not fully understand the complexities involved, racialized children face challenges and internalization of deficit racial messages that will often impact their academic performance and psychological well-being. Thus, teachers must help to interrupt the cycle of oppression they face by engaging in anti-discriminatory teaching. When teachers embrace this liberating approach, racialized children like Sasha will begin to learn to see themselves positively.

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PERSPECTIVE

Multicultural Books and Critical Reading as Mirrors, Windows, and Doors

by Maria José Botelho

The metaphors of mirrors, windows, and doors have a long-standing relationship with multicultural children’s literature. Children’s books can serve as mirrors of readers’ cultural identities and experiences. They also can function as windows into other cultural circumstances. The readers’ imagination can transform the window into “a sliding glass door” as they step into worlds created by the words and/or images of the text (Bishop 1990). This transformation can deepen and expand the readers’ understanding of cultural communities. Consequently, literature can affirm and diversify readers’ lived experiences.

These metaphors demand that teachers reconsider *what to read*, that is, who is represented, under-represented, misrepresented, and invisible in the curriculum and on their classroom bookshelves. Multicultural children’s books about or by under-represented communities of color, such as Aboriginal, African American,

and Asian Canadian, offer counter-narratives to the ever-present White, middle-class, monolingual storylines. Several caveats can support teachers' use of multicultural children's literature.

Caveats About the Use of Multicultural Children's Literature

First, one book cannot represent a cultural experience because there is diversity within and among cultural groups. This caveat unsettles fictive unities within cultural groups. For example, all European Canadians are not represented in children's literature. The Portuguese Canadian experience is rarely rendered in children's books.

Second, race and ethnicity should be at the centre of any multicultural literature discussion. Whenever relevant, these power relations should be considered alongside class, gender, language, and sexuality.

Third, multicultural books are not immune to stereotypes and dominant worldviews. Children's books are cultural products, records of the worldviews and publishing practices of the time in which they were produced.

Last, although multicultural children's literature brings readers up close to the experiences of cultural groups, these circumstances are often represented as just personal and cultural. These multicultural texts should be analyzed alongside and beyond other texts. Narrations, monologues, dialogues, and plotlines should be examined within the power relations of race, class, gender, language, and sexuality.

The Necessity of Critical Engagement

These caveats demonstrate that teachers must attend to not just *what to read* but also *how to read*. The meaning in these texts is made through readers' critical engagement with them. Building on reader response practices that draw on readers' prior knowledge of cultural themes and text types creates spaces for critical engagement with multicultural books (Cai 2008). Recontextualizing the reader-text interaction within a broader context enlists the readers' lived and literary experiences as well as historical and socio-political factors as resources for text analysis.

Critical engagement with multicultural books demands that the metaphors of mirrors, windows, and doors be reframed within a broader context, too. Books as mirrors magnify how society is organized. As windows, they offer a panoramic view of how power is exercised among characters through their words and images. Children's literature as doors serves as entry points to examine how power relations can be reconstructed, informed by the readers' new understandings. These reclaimed metaphors of multicultural children's literature can guide the reading of culture and power relations and create a site for readers to become aware of how texts position them (hail them who to be and not be) and reposition themselves as researchers and makers of language, literature, and culture.

Critical engagement with multicultural literature becomes mirrors, windows, and doors into readers' lives and how cultures work and is constructed socio-politically and historically.

The multi-layered critical multicultural analytical practices (Botelho 2015; Botelho and Rudman 2009) offer tools to examine how books represent cultures and power relations:

From "Multiplication Is for White People"

"If the curriculum we use to teach our children does not connect in positive ways to the culture young people bring to school, it is doomed to failure."

— Lisa Delpit (2013, 23)

Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature by Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman (2009) provides critical analysis and philosophical insights for teaching literature, constructing curriculum, and taking up issues of diversity and social justice.

An online resource to support teachers' critical multicultural teaching of multicultural and international children's literature can be found at <https://doors2world.umass.edu>.

Maria José Botelho teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

- How do the book's design elements (e.g., book cover, jacket, front matter, spreads, typography, medium) shape how the story is told or the information represented?
- How do the book's literary elements (e.g., point of view, social processes among the characters, story ending, genre(s)) shape how the story is told or the information represented?
- In what ways do socio-political and historical contexts offer insights for reading these texts critically and multiculturally?

The production and teaching of multicultural children's literature generate silences and render some cultural experiences invisible. All cultures deserve to be represented in children's literature because it is through these representations that cultural members negotiate their identities (Hall 1996). While multicultural children's literature can stretch readers' cultural imaginations, its integration in curriculum alone will not consider misrepresentations, under-representations, and invisibilities. It is through critical engagement with these texts that readers develop complex understandings of culture and socio-political and historical imaginations.

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The Language and Vocabulary of Race and Diverse Cultures

1. As a way for students to carefully consider their assumptions, prompt them to search for definitions of these three words: *race*, *racism*, and *racist*. Alternatively, provide them with the following explanations to confirm or challenge their assumptions about what these words mean.
 - A **race** is one of the major groups into which human beings can be defined according to their physical characteristics. The term *race* refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in biological traits deemed by society to be socially significant; in other words, people treat other people differently because of them. The most widely used human racial types are based on visual traits (skin color, facial features, type of hair).
 - **Racism** is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.
 - A **racist** is a person who shows or feels discrimination or prejudice against other people of other races, or who believes that a particular race is superior to another.
2. Meanings of the words *race* and *ethnicity* are sometimes confused. Draw students' attention to the words and what they each mean.

Sample Sentence: When he kept deliberately using rude words to describe his neighbors, he showed himself to be a bigot.

- **Race** refers to a person's physical characteristics, such as bone structure and skin, hair, and eye color.
 - **Ethnicity** refers to cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry, and language.
3. Invite middle-year or older students to provide explanations for the following words without referring to a dictionary: *prejudice*, *bias*, *segregation*, *discrimination*, *bigot*, and *intolerance*. Challenge students to write a sentence for each of these words that helps to explain the word's meaning or provides an example.

Opening Up the Topic of Race and Diverse Cultures

Students open up the topic of race and diverse cultures in two ways. In Part A, they read and think about hypothetical scenarios that are intended to prompt discussion about how they would respond to various situations. A variety of scenarios focus on the challenges of dealing with incidents of racism past, present, and future. In Part B, they look at the topic from the perspective of books they read and are exposed to.

Part A: What Would You Do? Considering Racist Scenarios

To prepare students for exploring the scenarios activity, be sure to remind them of the definition of *racist*. Provide students with copies of the “Thinking About Racism: What If . . .” line master on page 32 and have them read the statements independently. Tell students to choose one of the situations and write a response to what they would do in that situation. Students can then meet in groups to compare answers and discuss how best to deal with one or more of these events.

Alternatively, the statements could be cut into strips. Individual strips can be distributed to each student. Some strips can be duplicated so that more than one student considers a given situation. Students can discuss the statements in either of the following ways:

- They can meet with others who have the same strip.
- They can meet in groups of five or six and discuss how to respond to each of these situations morally and ethically.

Extension

As a class, discuss how each of these situations deals with the topic of race and racism. What advice would students give to someone who is a participant in one of the situations?

Part B: What Do You Think? Considering Book Choices

The questionnaire “Thinking About My Fiction Choices” (see page 33) is intended to help students consider their reading preferences, book choices, and opinions on reading *about* diversity. Students can approach the line master in one of two ways. They can either complete it independently or work in pairs to interview one another.

Once they have addressed the questionnaire, students can work in groups of three or four to share and compare answers.

Model Lesson 1: Responding to a Picture Book Through Thinking Stems

This lesson works well with students of all levels.

Any of the picture book titles listed in Great Books for a Tough Topic (pages 36 and 38) are appropriate for this lesson. *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family* by Ibtihaj Muhammad, and *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged!* by Jody Nyasha Warner are especially recommended.

The Need for Diversity in Books

Classroom teacher Ernest Agbuya and his Grade 6 class conducted an inquiry about the diversity represented by the books the students read. Here are a few pertinent findings:

- What is the race of main characters? (74% Caucasian)
- What is the nationality of the authors? (69% American)
- What is the race of the authors? (85% Caucasian)
- Where are your books set? (56% in the United States or Europe)

Yet, in Agbuya's class, only 25 percent of the students were Caucasian. The rest hailed from East Indian, Asian, or Black cultures.

Featured Text: The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson

The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson is the story of a fence that separates the Black side of town from the White side of town. When Clover sees a White girl from “the other side” sitting on the fence, she grows more curious about why the fence is there and how its division can be conquered.

Thinking stems, or prompts, allow students to reflect on their reading and then respond to a text first in writing and then through discussion. They offer a convenient strategy for honoring individual, personal response to a text where answers can be open-ended. Each prompt can connect to a comprehension strategy. When introducing thinking stems, you can use either of these two methods:

1. Assign students three different prompts to complete.
2. Offer students a list of various prompts and have them choose at least three they want to respond to.

Here is a list of thinking stems to consider:

I know	I feel	I am reminded of
I predict	I hope	I want to know more about
I like	I imagine	I am puzzled by
I don't like	I remember	I wonder

Once students have each completed their thinking stems, have them share and compare their responses with a partner — it does not matter if students have responded to different thinking stems. Next, students can form groups of three or four and reflect on and discuss the text, drawing on other thinking stems they have not yet written about. The whole class can then discuss the text, sharing, listening to, and responding to different views. Consider giving students the opportunity to write a response to a text after a discussion where different opinions have been offered.

After listening to the story being read aloud, Marianna Di Iorio's Grade 5 class responded to the picture book by recording thoughts on what they felt, what they were reminded of, and what they wondered about.

I FEEL . . .

- embarrassed that this actually happened.
- angry that nobody thought the fence was wrong.
- sorry for the two girls because they can't climb each other's fence.
- frustrated because everyone should be able to be with who they want to be with.
- confused because I don't know why a person would build a fence to keep a black girl and white girl from playing together.
- happy because two girls with different skin colors became friends and could now sit on the fence.
- mad — racism makes me mad.
- upset that there was a fence to separate black and white people.

I REMEMBER . . .

- the story of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.
- when Martin Luther King Jr. tried to stop racism.
- the book the teacher read to us about Ruby Bridges who stood up for black people and went to a white school.
- Viola Desmond at the movie theatre and she refused to move from her seat.

Thinking About Racism: What If . . . ?

The incidents outlined below are intended to prompt discussion on how you would respond to various situations. They focus on the challenges of dealing with incidents of racism past, present, and future. You will have a chance to respond to one or more of these scenarios and discuss with others how to deal with the event morally and ethically.

- What if . . . you witnessed someone spray-painting a piece of racist graffiti in your neighborhood?
- What if . . . someone called you a bad name when you were walking down the hall of your school?
- What if . . . you saw someone on a bus turn or walk away from someone of a different skin color?
- What if . . . you or a friend who is a minority receive anonymous emails that make racist comments? The messages were ignored at first, but over a month, they get worse.
- What if . . . you heard someone telling a racist joke?
- What if . . . you saw someone in tears due to being called a racist name?
- What if . . . you saw someone in your school write an offensive message on someone's locker?
- What if . . . someone made fun of you because of the lunch you brought to school?
- What if . . . someone made fun of a friend of yours because of the clothing your friend was wearing?
- What if . . . you heard someone make fun of someone's accent?
- What if . . . you learned that someone new to the school was being excluded from membership on a team because of their race?
- What if . . . you were assigned to be in a group where everyone else's culture was the same, but different than yours?
- What if . . . you saw someone in a neighborhood store being bullied because of their race?
- What if . . . you were told that a friend of yours wasn't invited to a party because of their skin color?
- What if . . . the assigned novel(s) in your class had no character of a culture or race with whom you could identify?
- What if . . . you hear some students from your school saying rude things about a good friend? You know that your friend's mother has advised her to ignore such incidents.
- What if . . . you overheard a group of young children make fun of someone while they were playing?



Thinking About My Fiction Choices

Complete each of the following statements to help you think about your reading preferences. Challenge yourself to circle only one response to each stem. Once you have done so, meet with two or three classmates to share and compare answers.

1. I would rather read fiction
 - a) that has characters who are like me.
 - b) that has characters who are different from me.
 - c) that has characters both like me and different from me.
2. I would rather read fiction
 - a) that has characters of the same gender as me.
 - b) that has characters of a different gender than me.
 - c) that has characters that are equally the same and different than me.
3. I would rather read
 - a) more fiction than nonfiction.
 - b) more nonfiction than fiction.
 - c) fiction and nonfiction equally.
4. I would rather read about tough topics through
 - a) fiction titles (including picture books).
 - b) nonfiction titles.
 - c) the Internet.
5. I would prefer to read a book about a tough topic
 - a) that a friend recommended.
 - b) that a teacher or librarian recommended.
 - c) that I chose on my own.

Please respond to the following:

I can learn a lot about people who are different from me by reading fiction.

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

Books can help me change my views on social justice, diversity, and equity issues.

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

A fictional character much like me is _____ in _____

Good books matter when _____

I recommend this great book to learn about diverse cultures: _____

Here's why: _____



For the thinking stems activity, students could also respond to a poem, a media report, a news article, or a nonfiction selection.

I WONDER . . .

- if this is fiction or nonfiction.
- what would happen if someone tore the fence down.
- what the black mother would say when she saw the two girls sitting on the fence.
- if the parents of these two girls ever accepted that their children were friends.
- why are people segregated just because of their skin color.
- whether the girls can continue to be friends in the future.
- who taught the mother to be racist.
- what the two girls would say to each other when they talk for the first time — what questions would they ask?
- what I would have done if I wanted to go to the other side.

Model Lesson 2: Unpacking a Monologue Script

Featured Text: Skin by Dennis Foon

This lesson works well with students in Grades 4 to 9.

A monologue is a short speech that a character gives to an audience. The character might use the monologue as a vehicle to express personal feelings and thoughts on a subject or event or tell a story or anecdote. Most commonly, a monologue is recited by one person. As written, the script on page 37 is the prologue to the play *Skin* by Dennis Foon and could be read by one person, a pair, small groups, or the whole class. *Skin* presents stories from characters of diverse races. This excerpt honors the ties that bind us.

Interpretation of a Minimal Script

Whole Class. Students sit in a circle and read the opening scene aloud as a whole class. Next, each student, in a clockwise direction, reads aloud one of the lines. Then, the activity is repeated, with students reading the lines in a counterclockwise direction. In this way, students have the chance to read two lines aloud.

Students can explore this minimal script by

- reading it aloud as quickly as possible
- pausing between the reading of each line
- reading the script from whisper to loud volume
- reading the script as a round
- adding gesture as the line is read
- presenting the script in gesture or mime only
- rearranging the order in which the lines are read

Small Groups. To further practise interpretation techniques, students work in groups of four or five. Each group experiments with ways of dividing the lines (some lines as solo, some in pairs, some by the whole group). Once lines are divided, students rehearse the script by exploring and practising emphasis, pitch, and pace. They should also consider what gestures and movements to add. How will they begin and end the reading of the piece?

Paired Groups. Groups share their rehearsed interpretations of the script. Each group is matched with another to present their work and be an audience for the other group. Students can note similarities and differences in the presentations.

Improvisation of What Came Before

Discussing the Script. The class discusses the monologue script in order to better understand the message that the playwright was hoping to convey. The following questions can be used to guide the discussion:

- What does this script invite you to think about?
- What connections can you make to this script?
- What message do you think the playwright was trying to convey in those lines for a play titled *Skin*?
- Why would Dennis Foon use short lines and repeat some of these lines?
- If you were watching the play *Skin* in the theatre, how might you expect the opening scene to look?
- What event might have prompted someone to speak these lines? In other words, what do you think happened that might have triggered this monologue?

Improvising a Backstory. In small groups, students prepare a short improvisation to explain why someone might say this monologue aloud to serve as a prologue to a play called *Skin*. In the context of the theme of *Skin*, the improvisation would likely focus on an incident that depicts racism, prejudice, rejection, teasing, or bullying.

To prepare for the improvisation, students can discuss these questions: Who might be saying these words? How is the person feeling? Who would have listened to the person? What happened to this person?

Remind students that the lines in the script need not appear in the improvisation. The improvised scene is meant to reveal what happens *before* the scripted monologue is given.

Invite groups to present their scenes to share perceptions about the character.

Extension Activities

- *Hot Seating:* A student assumes the role of a character connected with *Skin* and is interviewed by classmates who want to discover more about the character.
- *One Way to Write a Monologue:* Prompt students to become a character from their improvised scene. Tell them to imagine that this character keeps a diary or journal for recording thoughts and feelings. Students write a diary entry as if they were the character. Once they have done so, they can read the entry aloud. Because the piece was written in the first person, entries can serve as monologues for students to rehearse and present.
- *Continuing the Script:* Students work independently or with a partner to continue the script by adding 10 to 12 lines that would give more information about the character. Line lengths can vary.
- *Exploring the Script:* If the text is available, students work with other scenes that appear in the script *Skin*. Each scene depicts an aspect of racism or prejudice.

Ideas presented here appear in an August 12, 2019, article by Kim Snider for EdCan Network. The full article, "The 3 R's of Diversifying Your Classroom Booklist," can be found at <http://www.edcan.ca/articles/diversifying-your-classroom-booklist>.

How to Choose Books to Diversify Your Bookshelves

After teaching a Gender Studies course, high school teacher Kim Snider couldn't help but notice that the writers populating the shelves for her English classes presented a very narrow demographic: they were mostly Western, White, male, and long dead. This was a whack on the side of her head: What message was she sending to her students about her book choices and those of her school? Which voices were not being represented? What might happen if she took an intentional quest to seek out texts that better represented the students in her community? Snider challenged herself and other teachers to diversify their teaching libraries, no matter what age range they taught.

As a result of her explorations, she offers the following three Rs to consider:

Representation: Make curriculum and book choices that reflect students' identities and experiences.

Relevancy: From the vast array of literature available to use in Language Arts and English classes, give most consideration to books that are relevant. These books speak to the world in which we live today or illuminate areas of life to which students may not have access.

Research: Make an effort to seek out and read books by female authors, LGBTQ artists, Indigenous writers, and authors of color. Spending time in local bookstores, investigating award-winning titles, and using the Internet will help teachers connect to useful websites, blogs, reviews, and booklists.

Here is a list of useful online resources:

- Edutopia's 22 Diverse Choices (all grade levels)
- American Indians in Children's Literature blog, which deconstructs and evaluates representations of Indigenous peoples in children's books
- Pinterest Diversity in Children's Book collection
- A Mighty Girl: Books for smart, confident, and courageous girls
- larryswartz.ca / Dr. Larry Recommends

Great Books for a Tough Topic

Emergence of a Great Book

The Snowy Day, awarded the 1963 Caldecott Medal, was named one of the 100 most important books of the 20th century by the New York Public Library. In his Caldecott speech, Ezra Jack Keats said, "I can honestly say that Peter [the book's hero, a little Black boy] came into being because we wanted him." Up until *The Snowy Day*, African American children did not see others like themselves in children's books. More than 50 years later, the book industry has exploded with books that shine a light on race, culture, and identity.

Great in the sense it is used here and throughout this resource denotes a book that will have a significant impact on students: an impact that will endure long after they have heard, read, or responded to the text. Young readers react differently to the books they are exposed to. To affirm that "this is a great book!" means that the child, the context, the occasion, and the culture all work together.

Picture Books

Barnes, Derrick (illus. Gordon C. James). *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*
 De la Peña, Matt (illus. Christian Robinson). *Last Stop on Market Street*
 Diggs, Taye (illus. Shane W. Evans). *Chocolate Me!*
 Franklin, Ashley (illus. Ebony Glenn). *Not Quite Snow White*
 Gonzales, Mark (illus. Mehrdokht Amini). *Yo Soy Muslim: A Father's Letter to His Daughter*

Skin by Dennis Foon: An Excerpt

I am five foot six inches tall.

I weigh 250 pounds.

I have two arms.

Two legs

Two feet

Two ears

Two eyes

One nose

One mouth

Ten fingers

Ten toes.

I can taste.

I can smell.

I can see.

I can hear.

I can touch.

My blood is red.

My blood is red.

My blood is red.

My blood is red.

I breathe.

I think.

I feel.

I feel.

I feel.

I feel.



**From *It's Okay to Be Different*
by Todd Parr**

"It's okay to be different. You are special and important just because of who you are."

Giovanni, Nikki (illus. Bryan Collier). *Rosa*
Hall, Michael. *Red: A Crayon's Story*
hooks, bell (illus. Chris Raschka). *Skin Again*
Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*
Khan, Hena (illus. Aaliya Jaleel). *Under My Hijab*
Kostecki-Shaw, Jenny Sue. *Same, Same but Different*
Lester, Julius (illus. Karen Barbour). *Let's Talk About Race*
Martinez-Neal, Juana. *Alma and How She Got Her Name*
Mobin-Uddin, Asma (illus. Barbara Kiwak). *My Name Is Bilal*
Muhammad, Ibtihaj, with S. K. Ali (illus. Hatem Aly). *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family*
Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to Be Different*
Polacco, Patricia. *Mr. Lincoln's Way* (Also: *January's Sparrow; Pink and Say*)
Stehlik, Tania Duprey (illus. Vanja Nuleta Jovanovic). *Violet*
@studentAsim (illus. Sari Richter). *My Skin: Brown*
Tonatiuh, Duncan. *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*
Warner, Jody Nyasha (illus. Richard Rudnicki). *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged!*
Weatherford, Carole Boston (illus. Kadir Nelson). *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*
Winter, Jeanette. *Malala: A Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal: A Brave Boy from Pakistan*
Woodson, Jacqueline (illus. E. B. Lewis). *The Other Side*
Yee, Paul (illus. Shaoli Wang). *Shu-Li and Tamara* (Sequel: *Shu-Li and Diego*)

Novels

Applegate, Katherine. *Wishtree*
Bajaj, Varsha. *Count Me In*
Cartaya, Pablo. *Each Tiny Spark*
———. *Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish*
Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy* (Also: *Elijah of Buxton, The Mighty Miss Malone, The Journey of Little Charlie*)
Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner* (trilogy)
———. *My Name Is Parvana*
Flake, Sharon G. *The Skin I'm In*
Gino, Alex. *You Don't Know Everything, Jilly P!*
Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*
Johnson, Varian. *The Parker Inheritance*
Kadohata, Cynthia. *A Place to Belong*
———. *Kira-Kira*
Kogawa, Joy. *Naomi's Road*
Lin, Grace. *The Year of the Dog*
Medina, Meg. *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*
Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*
Muñoz Ryan, Pam. *Esperanza Rising*
Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*
Pignat, Caroline. *The Gospel Truth*
Reynolds, Jason. *As Brave as You*
———. *Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks*
———. Track series (*Ghost, Patina, Sunny, Lu*)
Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*
Rosenberg, Madelyn, and Wendy Wan-Long Shang. *This Is Just a Test*

Roy, Jennifer, with Ali Fadhil. *Playing Atari with Saddam Hussein: Based on a True Story*
 Saeed, Aisha. *Amal Unbound*
 Spinelli, Jerry. *Maniac Magee*
 Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
 Weeks, Sarah, and Gita Varadarajan. *Save Me a Seat*
 Woodson, Jacqueline. *Harbor Me*
 Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*

Young Adult

"A recent survey from BookNet Canada confirmed that people actually want to buy books that reflected cultures other than their own — whether they are already considered well represented in books or not."

— Deborah Dundas, "Who Do We See in Kids' Books?" *Toronto Star*, October 25, 2019

Ellis, Deborah, and Eric Walters. *Bifocal*
 Khorram, Adib. *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*
 Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*
 Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars* (Sequel: *Okay for Now*)
 Thomas, Angie. *The Hate U Give*
 Warga, Jasmine. *Other Words for Home*

Other

Hudson, Wade, and Cheryl Willis Hudson, eds. *We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices* (essays, letters, poems and stories)
 Moyer, Naomi M. *Black Women Who Dared*
 Sanders, Rob (illus. Jared Andrew Schorr). *Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights*
 Spillsbury, Louise A. (illus. Hanane Kai). *Racism and Intolerance* (nonfiction)
 Stephens, R. David, ed. *Henry Chow and Other Stories* (short stories)

KATHLEEN GOULD LUNDY



Teaching Fairly in an Unfair World



2nd edition

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What We Mean When We Talk about Fairness

June was suddenly upon us. I was wrapping up a drama project with a Grade 8 class in an inner-city school in Toronto. I had begun the project in March and had spent a fair amount of time with this class, made up of thirty-six students from seventeen different countries around the world. I thought that I knew most of the students well. The teacher and I shared our delight in the accomplishments of the students as they worked through various drama techniques that helped them grow into articulate, passionate actors who had important stories to tell about bullying and what to do about it.

We had persevered in tackling some common issues and problems that young adolescents confront in school. There had been misunderstandings and difficult negotiations, but we had done some good work together. Although pressed for time, we had squeezed a number of workshops into a very busy curriculum and now we were on our last lap together. Everyone was excited about the performance that was going to take place that afternoon in front of the rest of the middle school students in the school cafeteria.

I arrived at the school just before the bell rang. There was the usual commotion that signals the beginning of a school day during the hot days of June. Lots of laughter and physical energy filled the hallways. I saw the homeroom teacher standing outside her classroom talking to Michael, a student who was popular with everyone in the class. A boy named Fahim approached Michael just as the teacher was interrupted by a colleague.

Fahim and Michael were good friends and spent most of their time together. The teacher had turned away momentarily and before Fahim could speak, Michael commented on Fahim's new haircut. He said, "Look at you, man. You look like a terrorist." Fahim appeared confused. Michael continued, "You look like a terrorist; your haircut—it makes you look like a terrorist..." Fahim looked devastated, said nothing, and quickly disappeared into the classroom. The teacher finished speaking to her colleague and turned back to Michael. She had not observed what had just taken place between the two boys.

I entered the classroom. Time was tight—I only had a few hours before the final performance. As the students started to rearrange the desks to make room for the work we were about to do, I spoke to the teacher about the interaction between the two boys in the hallway. I could see Fahim out of the corner of my eye. He was standing by himself, not participating in any way. Usually, he was

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engaged and helpful in class. I wondered aloud whether we should resolve the issue between Fahim and Michael privately because I felt that we could not continue until Michael's comment had been dealt with. The teacher regarded me with a certain degree of impatience. She had had the students released from their morning classes and we had so little time to get things ready. Couldn't this wait?

I could see her point. Wasn't this just a minor incident? Why take time out of a very busy morning to wrestle with it? Couldn't we let it go—just this once?

I relented. After all, I was a guest in the school and I, too, was feeling the pressure of the impending performance. So we began to rehearse, but Fahim—who played a key role in the collective drama—participated listlessly. I could tell that he was suffering. He had been enormously hurt by his friend and he was at a loss in terms of how to handle it.

After the rehearsal, the teacher—who had recognized as soon as the rehearsal began that the tension between Michael and Fahim had to be diffused—suggested that we meet with both boys. We bought lunch for the two students in the cafeteria and then met in a room near the office. We were about to present a play about bullying and its impact on victims and onlookers. The irony of that fact was not lost on any of us. The teacher, who had worked in the school for a long time, patiently asked the boys to explain to her what had transpired between them.

It became clear that Michael had no idea how hurtful his comment had been. He began by insisting that the haircut *did* make Fahim look like the headshots of terrorists that he had seen on TV. He did not know what the “big deal” was.

In response, Fahim, who is of Pakistani heritage, told us about how his father was regularly called “Osama bin there done that” at work and about how his sister had had her headscarf pulled off her head while attending high school. He said that more and more people were making unacceptable connections between his Islamic heritage and global terrorism and that he and his family were sick of being victimized. He was completely mortified that Michael, whom he considered one of his best friends, could hurt his feelings in such a way.

Clearly, Michael had not realized how devastated Fahim was and how insulting his words had been to his friend. We spent some time talking about preconceptions that had been planted in Michael's mind due to media influences. He was unaware of how he had been swayed by certain biased images on television. Now, however, he was willing to challenge some myths promoted by the media. The teacher reminded Michael of all the work that he and his classmates had done together in Media Literacy to deconstruct images of racism. She and Michael shared the same Jamaican-Canadian heritage. Michael was fully aware of how hurtful racism is. In fact, he told some of his own stories about his brother being discriminated against at work.

For my part, I, a white woman, was fully aware that I was bearing witness to something that people of color deal with in a white-dominated society all the time. There were a lot of tears and a quiet sadness enveloped us. We were four people struggling to come to terms with how difficult it is to live in the world.

I can't remember all the things that we talked about in that hour as the teacher generously shared food and provided lots of tissues, while being strong and direct and fair. But I do remember this. At the end of the conversation, Michael looked at all of us and said: “In order to stop hurting people, you need to know SO much about SO many things. It's kind of overwhelming...” The teacher and I looked into the eyes of the two boys and thought about all the hard work and exploration of issues that we had done together as a class through drama. Even though

we were scheduled to perform as a team that afternoon, there was still so much more we needed to know about one another and the world in which we live if we were going to get things right.

This is one of the stories about my experiences working in schools that made me want to write this book. I agree with Michael. This kind of work *is* overwhelming and it will never be “done.” There is so much to learn about so many things. There are no easy solutions and, sometimes, no clear answers at all to some of the questions that we grapple with when teaching about fairness. I have struggled to write about ways to teach about fairness and ways to teach fairly, but I realize that I myself still have so much to learn and can only keep trying to do things in the best way possible.

More and more of us work in culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse classrooms. Some of us teach in economically disadvantaged school settings. No matter where we teach, we know how important it is to build relationships with our students and gain their respect. But we have to do more than what we have been doing. We need to make the time in a crowded curriculum to talk with our students about who they are, where they are from, what they want to accomplish, and how they want to live in the world. We need to have the courage to set up inclusive classrooms in which students feel safe to talk about controversial issues and to explore “difficult knowledge.”

We need to engage in our own personal, critical reflections upon our life stories so that we recognize certain things about ourselves: our fears, our privilege, and our assumptions. We need to remember how important it is to help our students construct knowledge about the world together as they participate in challenging, open-ended, imaginative, intellectual, and artistic pursuits from various perspectives. Furthermore, in a global economy in which so much pressure is placed on the individual—through tests and other competitive factors—we need to help our students learn to become critically aware of what is fair not only for themselves but for others. Most important of all, we need to summon the courage to cancel the dress rehearsals when real life takes over and when hurtful encounters disrupt the community that we call the classroom. I want us to give ourselves permission and time to mend broken hearts through thoughtful, empathetic discussions so that important teaching and learning can proceed.

What Is Fairness?

Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child “applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say; whatever type of family they come from. It doesn’t matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.”

As a society we value fairness. Fairness is connected to how we maintain our dignity in the face of human difficulty and dilemmas. In order to work towards fairness, we have to acknowledge that not all of us start off from the same place. Stereotypes, beliefs, and ideas about difference feed individual acts of bigotry and institutional discrimination. Our biases predict our behavior in terms of how we treat people. All of us have biases. Recognizing and unlearning unconscious bias is a project that all educators must engage in if schools are to be places where fairness exists.

What We Mean When We Talk about Fairness 9

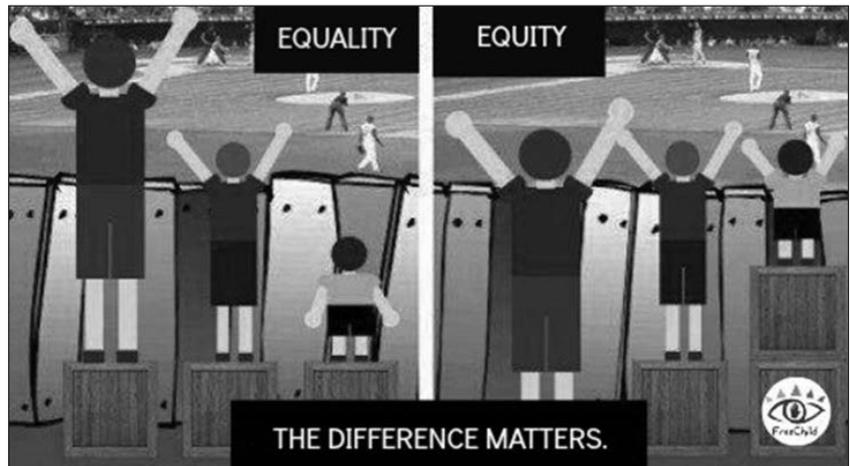
We also have to work against prejudice and stereotyping. Stereotyping may be based on misconceptions and false generalizations about race, age, ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographical, or national groups; social, marital, or family status; disability, gender, or sexual orientation. Prejudice towards a certain group, or individuals within it, casts that group and its members in an inferior light with no legitimate basis in fact. It can be a consequence and a cause of discrimination. Teachers need to understand all this. Fairness in education is only possible if we are aware of how bias, stereotyping, systemic racism, and prejudice affect opportunity and access for our students and their families.

Michelle Obama, in her book *Becoming*, writes about a visit that she made to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson school in England—a girls’ school full of the daughters of immigrant families. Obama spoke to this group about how her experience of growing up and going to school on the south side of Chicago shaped her view of the world. After the speech was over, she wrote:

You had only to look around at the faces in the room to know that despite their strengths, these girls would need to work hard to be seen. There were girls in Hijab, girls for whom English was a second language, girls whose skin made up every shade of brown. I knew they’d have to push back against the stereotypes that would get put on them, all the ways they’d be defined before they’d had a chance to define themselves. They’d need to fight the invisibility that comes with being poor, female and of colour. They’d have to work to find their voices and not be diminished to keep themselves from getting beaten down. They would have to work just to learn.

In order for all of our students to be “seen” we must develop our capacities to critique institutional inequity and to speak freely with evidence and insight to bring about the change that is needed in schools. We need to teach fairly in an unfair world, which means that we need to teach in ways that are consistent with how our students live their lives. The work that we do in schools needs to take into account the different contexts that each student faces. Many of us have learned to differentiate between equality and equity. As Julian Falconer wrote as chair of the School Community Safety Advisory Panel of the Toronto District School Board: “In the education context equity refers to an inclusive atmosphere of learning where all students are treated fairly. Equity includes recognition that students have different needs, experiences and social identities and that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to addressing students’ needs, experiences, and social identities does not create an environment where all students are afforded the opportunity to succeed.”

This concept of fairness is not always accepted. I have encountered resistance and offense from many people in my workshops who truly believe that everyone needs to be treated equally. It doesn’t work that way for me. Students need different kinds of supports and resources to achieve their goals. Many people can become uncomfortable with this idea and conversations can become heated and difficult. Nonetheless, we need to insist that we look at power and social justice in the classroom, in the schools, and in our district boards of education. We need to act on the choices that we make in teaching with confidence linked to “political clarity and ethical integrity” (Freire, 1998).



What Do Teachers Who Teach Fairly Do?

What are the characteristics and behaviors of teachers who teach fairly? First of all, they work towards making schools socially just places. Teachers who value and nurture a respectful classroom environment based on principles of fairness interact with their students in the following ways:

- They communicate ideas and instructions clearly.
- They guide and limit behavior to keep students safe.
- They expect all of their students to be successful.
- They encourage their students to be the best they can be on that particular day.
- They mentor their students in order to show them how to live in the world.
- They help students to question the construction and understanding of difference.
- They are open to new ideas and ways of approaching teaching and learning.
- They validate the experiences of all their students, by finding source material in the curriculum that acts as a mirror for the students' own identities.
- They engage students in critical thinking by means of which they come to question and understand their relationships to their community, their society, and the world.
- They ensure that their students' needs, interests, and aspirations are met not only through curriculum, resources, pedagogy, and educational programs, but also through time spent together in the classroom.
- They help students examine their lives to understand their own personal histories.
- They listen and watch for those students who remain silent.
- They celebrate their students' successes.
- They know that learning takes time, so they rehearse and practice new skills.
- They "protect their students into understanding."
- They view learning about teaching as never-ending.

What We Mean When We Talk about Fairness 11

- They encourage questions with multiple answers and provoke and encourage a proliferation of opinions. Then they find ways of bringing these ideas into relationship with one another.
- They value where their students are from, both in terms of their communities and the broader social context and they remain mindful of that context so that teaching works and learning matters.

Distinguishing Fairness from Unfairness for Ourselves and for Others

We need to teach our students well—to provide them with the thinking tools they need to wrestle with ideas and numbers so they can become critically aware of how the world works on many levels. But we also need to teach them how to live in the world as ethical citizens. We need to help our students learn to discern what is fair not just for themselves but also for others, and to develop self-awareness of how their actions can either benefit or damage themselves or others. This stance requires them to distinguish what is fair from what is unfair, to be able to hold many different ideas in their heads at once, and to make choices that benefit others as well as themselves.

Educating Students to Be Good Citizens

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.

Aristotle

The work that I do with students in the classroom allows them to become actively engaged with ideas, themes, relationships, characters, historical and contemporary incidents, images, and texts from the inside out. Through interactive activities, I encourage students to cooperate with one another, express their emotions, seek alternative solutions to problems, engage in conflict resolution, and participate fully in the making of individual and collective meaning. By means of these activities, I hope that students will develop respect for themselves and for others as they experience first-hand what life must be like for people who are different from themselves. As I teach material that requires students to talk to one another and collaborate with each other, I monitor the ways in which students develop a more positive self-image and an understanding of others. As the material we are exploring introduces new perspectives, I watch to see if my students are becoming more comfortable in acknowledging, accepting, understanding, and celebrating human differences. In the end, I hope that they will acquire a sense of social responsibility as well as a sense of justice for themselves as well as for others.

Goethe tells us that “character develops in quiet places.” To develop one’s character, one requires, among other things, time to experiment with new ideas and experience life in many different ways; to participate in thoughtful dialogue with an empathetic mentor who does not judge but guides and asks significant questions; to interact with others who don’t necessarily hold the same view of the world; and to encounter literature, media, art, ideas, facts, and opinions that trigger new understandings. The classroom is a central place where students develop and grow as human beings. Their character is shaped by what happens at home, in the community, and at school. Teachers exert an enormous influence on their students’ character development by how and what they teach.

Elliot Eisner, the late professor emeritus of Art and Education at Stanford University, taught us that children are born with brains and it is up to us as teachers

to shape their brains into minds. We want our students to be mindful of others' opinions and feelings. As they interact with one another and discuss difficult concepts, we need to help them learn to hold many different thoughts in their minds—to live with ambiguity and not be afraid of it—until they reach a decision, solve a problem, or learn to live with the many facets of a difficult issue.

“Character” is a word that is charged with many meanings in educational circles. Many school districts are attempting to implement a curriculum that teaches students about the growth mindset as well as devoting time to values such as Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Integrity, Empathy, Fairness, Initiative, Perseverance, Courage, and Optimism. Some are speaking about encouraging “grit” and resilience. I know from years of teaching experience how difficult it is for some students to remain optimistic when things are falling apart at home; how hard it is for them to be empathetic towards others when they do not feel good about themselves; and how challenging it is to be responsible and caring when developmentally they are still very immature. I am interested in educating students to be good people—good to others and good to themselves. I am aware of the challenges that exist in every classroom, but I believe that there are many ways to accomplish this goal:

If there is light in the soul, there
will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
there will be harmony in the
house.
If there is harmony in the house,
there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
there will be peace in the world.

Chinese proverb

1. We need to create a school culture in which all people—teachers, parents, students, and others—model the qualities of respect, responsibility, and caring.
2. As noted before, we teachers need to be aware of our own privilege and power, really listen to what our students are telling us about who they are and how they learn best, and use appropriate teaching techniques.
3. The work that we do with students has to matter. Curriculum content should be culturally relevant to our students' lives. It needs to be responsive to who they are and where they have come from.
4. The way in which we teach should be imaginative and open-ended. It should allow the students to go “inside the experience” so that they have the opportunity to unpack the material in critical, respectful, and imaginative ways. As teachers, we need to find ways to engage our students actively with complex and layered material, and teach them imaginative and artful ways to represent their new understandings.
5. We must help students become resilient and confident so that they can be successful. I have never thought of school as a place to get students ready for life ahead. School *is* life. School is not a rehearsal and students need to be nurtured and cared for and challenged and taught in order to prepare them for the lives they are living in the *present*.

ANDREW B. CAMPBELL | LARRY SWARTZ

STOP THE HATE FOR GOODNESS SAKE

How can classroom teachers
disrupt discrimination and
promote hope, foster healing,
and inspire joyful learning?

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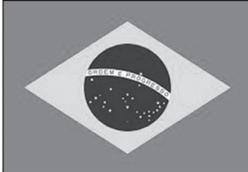
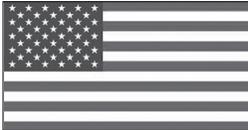
Defining Hate

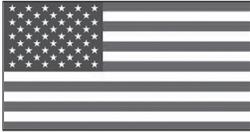
Actions Define Hate

It is easy to click on social media and see news about a bombing, a hate crime, or anti-Black racism. Students live in a society bombarded by 24-hour news cycles, memes, a continual high online presence of social media, and increased awareness of the issue of hate. There is a debate as to whether hate-motivated incidents are increasing, or whether there is simply more documentation and capturing of hate.

Our students are developing into global adults and global citizens living in a multicultural society. To contextualize the hate they might encounter, here are a few of many examples of hate around the globe:

Country	Year	Description of Hate
Nigeria 	2022	A mosque in Delta State is stormed by armed men and eleven worshippers are shot. The Muslim Rights Concern call security against the perpetrators, and the act is found to be a Muslim hate crime. (Adesina, 2022)
Australia 	1980s to Present	In 2022, an investigation commences surrounding the four decades of unresolved deaths caused by gay hate crimes unknown to the police. (Mcguirk, 2022)

<p>European Union</p> 	<p>2022</p>	<p>Internet hate-speech crimes are committed in eleven European Union countries, most of which involve racism and xenophobia. They include intentions to commit offences against marginalized populations, hate speech, and direct calls to violence. (Europol, 2022)</p>
<p>Brazil</p> 	<p>2020</p>	<p>Members of the Brazilian 2SLGBTQIA+ community are found to be disproportionately harassed and attacked because of their identity. As a result of hate crimes, more than 150 transgender people are killed in Brazil in 2020, representing the highest violence levels against transgender people in the world. (Francisco & Muggah, 2020)</p>
<p>United States</p> 	<p>2022</p>	<p>A white shooter kills 10 Black shoppers and workers at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, and pleads guilty to hate-motivated terrorism and murder in court. When the judge refers to each victim by name and asks if they were killed because of their race, the offender replies “yes” each time. (Craig, 2022)</p>
<p>United States</p> 	<p>2016</p>	<p>49 people are shot at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in one of the deadliest mass shootings in the US. The gunman pledges allegiance to ISIS, making it the worst US terror attack since 9/11. (Ellis et al., 2016)</p>
<p>United States</p> 	<p>2022</p>	<p>18 people are injured and 5 people killed by a gunman at a gay nightclub in Colorado. Two firearms are found at the scene after the shooting, resulting in charges of first-degree murder motivated by hate.</p>
<p>Canada</p> 	<p>2022</p>	<p>Four Indigenous women in Winnipeg are honored by the community at a candlelight vigil after reports that they were murdered by a serial killer. (Rosen, 2022)</p>

<p>Canada</p> 	2021	Four Muslim family members are killed after a premeditated hate-motivated vehicle attack that leaves behind a nine-year-old boy as the family's sole survivor. (BBC, 2021)
<p>United States</p> 	2018	Eleven people are killed after being shot in a Pittsburgh synagogue in a crime motivated by antisemitic hate. (Andone et al., 2018)
<p>Jamaica</p> 	2013	A 16-year-old transgender teenager is killed after being stabbed, beaten, and shot by a mob of people for dressing publicly in drag. (The Associated Press, 2013)

Words to Define Hate

Clearly, there is a fundamental need for a reduction in hate. However, at the time of writing, the Government of Canada has yet to establish a clear and cohesive national definition for the term *hate crime*, making it challenging to collect accurate statistics on the subject and perpetuating the issue of inconsistent governmental and legal action against hate. The restrictive definitions used by law enforcement agencies have been found to cause disproportionate harm towards marginalized populations and to increase incidents of hate.

Simply put, a hate crime must include hate and crime. A hate crime is typically one involving violence that is motivated by prejudice on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, sexuality, gender, or gender identity.

Presenting students with an explanation of a hate crime is important so that they know and understand how hate can lead to criminal offences. With hate crimes, the word *hate* does not mean a general dislike or anger. In this context, *hate* means bias against people or groups of people with specific characteristics (defined by law) and according to federal law. Hate can be considered a crime when there is evidence of assault, murder, arson, or vandalism, or even threats to commit such crimes. Conspiring or asking another person to commit a crime, even if the crime is never carried out, can be considered a hate crime. Hate crimes, of course, affect families, communities, and, at times, entire nations.

A significant point that also needs to be made is that, even though there are thousands of hate crimes committed each year in every country, the majority of these are not reported to law enforcement. Reporting hate crimes is critical, not only to support and assist victims, but also to send a clear message that the community will not tolerate these crimes. Without reports of hate crimes, law enforcement agencies might not fully understand the scope of the problem in a community, thereby limiting the resources that could be put forth to prevent and address attacks based on bias and hate.

Pause and Reflect

1. How is hate different from hate crime?
2. Why might a hate crime go unreported?
3. Why would someone be so prejudiced, so offended or upset, that they would be moved to harm someone else?
4. Are hate crimes always violent?
5. What are some stories of hate crimes in your community? In the news?

Lesson: Finding a Definition of Hate

This lesson outlines a series of learning events that has students think about the meaning of the word *hate*, and that invites students to work independently, as well as to collaborate with a partner, in small groups, and as a whole class, to write a dictionary definition of the word *hate*.

1. Introduce the lesson to students:

A new dictionary is about to be published, but the word *hate* has yet to be defined. As expert dictionary editors, you have been called upon for input.

2. To begin, students work independently. Each student is given a file card on which to write a personal definition of the word *hate* as a noun and/or as a verb.
3. In pairs, students exchange definitions. Ask students to consider this question: *What word or phrases from your partner's definition do you think you might like to borrow to include in a definition of hate?* These suggestions can be recorded on a chart.
4. Pairs work together to synthesize definitions. Students are encouraged to include words from each partner's definition, as well as to add new words or phrases.
5. Partners are matched up with other pairs to share definitions. Groups of four collaborate to create a new definition. Challenge the students by insisting that the new definition be written in an exact number of words (e.g., 25 words). Once group definitions are completed, one member of each group shares the definition with the whole class.
6. The next phase is a shared writing activity. Students offer suggestions to create a class definition of the word *hate*. Record suggestions as offered, and revise and edit as the composing process unfolds.
7. After sharing dictionary definitions, have students consider which words from their personal definition are similar to or different from the definition found in a published or online dictionary.

A group of students in Grades 4–8 were invited to define the word hate.

Out of 100 students who were asked to define hate, 75% used the word *dislike* in their definitions. Some used the words *really dislike*, *strong dislike*, *extreme dislike*, or *deep dislike*.

William W., Grade 7, defines hate by writing a letter to an imaginary alien creature

Hate is...

- ... a feeling or something you can get mad at. *A.S., Grade 6*
- ... a word normally used with anger and negativity, jealousy and power. *L.S., Grade 6*
- ... when you have big negative feelings against someone or something. *S.S., Grade 5*
- ... hurting people in a rude way. *A.C., Grade 7*
- ... a strong dislike that can sometimes lead to violence or be a crime. *F.R., Grade 8*
- ... something that commonly results in pain and emotional hurt. *K.B., Grade 7*
- ... the act of disliking something to the point of wanting to see the destruction or suffering of it. *B.P., Grade 8*
- ... misunderstanding someone who is different from you. *T.S., Grade 7*
- ... a harsh word for something you don't like. *W.H., Grade 4*
- ... when you dislike someone so much that you don't even want to be close to them. *J.G., Grade 8*
- ... discriminating against certain people with different backgrounds than yours. *N.I., Grade 6*
- ... when you absolutely despise something or someone and you think that life would be better without that thing or person. *K.Y., Grade 8*
- ... something you feel when you don't love yourself. *M.H., Grade 7*

Dear Creature From Outer Space,

If you come to EARTH here is something you should know about our planet...HATE.

Hate? Sadly, we have it a lot here on Earth

Hate sounds like screaming police sirens, signaling yet another crime fueled by hate.

Hate feels like a headache, no matter how much water you drink, it is always there. Now matter how hard you fight against hate, there will always be haters.

Hate smells like smoke, thick and suffocating, trapping you like hate does and making you feel weak.

Hate travels like a fire. It can spread just as quickly.

Hate tastes like lemon, sour, and acidic replicating how it feels to experience hatred.

Do you think you know what hate is now?

From,

William

Extensions

- Drawing Hate: Inform students that a new dictionary will be strictly visual, so all definitions must be represented without words. Invite students to create an image or design to represent what the word *hate* means.
- Synonyms for *Hate*: There are many words to consider when we feel hate. By exploring this list of synonyms, students might better consider the degree of

The word *abhor* is from the Latin word *abhorere*, “to shrink back in horror.” It can be considered the strongest way in English to express hatred.

hate that someone might feel for something or someone. Consider: Which words are students most familiar with? Not familiar with? Which words express an especially strong feeling of hate?

animosity	contempt	dislike	distaste	hostility	rancor
antagonism	disfavor	displeasure	enmity	loathing	repulsion
aversion	disgust	dissatisfaction	hatred	malice	

These options have students explore the list presented in The ABCs of Hate on page 22.

Lesson: The ABCs of Hate

To understand the many facets of hate, it is important that students gain key vocabulary to discuss, understand, and clarify terms connected to hate. Students can draw upon their practice with language and word power when reading, writing, and talking about stopping the hate.

The list of words on page 22 can be presented to students to activate prior knowledge and experience, and to have them carefully consider their assumptions. Reviewing this list independently and meeting with others to discuss the meaning of key vocabulary can prompt students to search for definitions of these words and/or to examine the glossary that appears on page 128.

Independent Reading and Inquiry

Students can work independently to review the list of words on The ABCs of Hate, page 22.

1. Have students review the list and put a dot beside (or circle) ten items they are familiar with.
2. Have students put a question mark beside 3–5 items they would like explanations for.
3. Students can use the internet or the dictionary to find definitions of vocabulary connected to hate.
4. Students can meet with a partner or in small groups to discuss their answers.

Meeting in Pairs or Small Groups

Students work with one or two classmates to review the list of words on page 22.

1. Have students share their assumptions or explanations for vocabulary they are familiar with.
2. Have students find definitions for any items that they are unfamiliar with.
3. Students can create a glossary of at least 12 items from this list. Remind students that a glossary is an alphabetical list of words with brief explanations, found in or relating to a specific subject or text.

Extensions

- Encourage students to add to the list words that might be important to understand when reading and writing about, or discussing, hate.
- The class can make an illustrated alphabet book entitled The ABCs of Hate. Each student can choose one word from the list and create an illustration that would help to visually explain the meaning of that word.
- Make copies of the glossary on page 128 available to students for reference as they continue their work on hate and discrimination.

Lesson: Is Hate the Opposite of Love?

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.”
 — Elie Wiesel

Most of us have colors we like to wear, games we like to play, authors we like to read, foods we like to eat, places we like to visit, etc. Sometimes these things are so special to us that we might say that we *love* them, especially when we think about family, friends, and, yes, pets.

Someone may say that they love to watch horror movies, while someone else hates them. Someone may love to eat broccoli, others wouldn’t put it in on their plate. Some may love going to gym class, others might dread it. Our preferences and tastes differ from those around us, and these differences are part of who we are. We needn’t judge a person because they don’t like the same things we do. However, when those differences are matters of race, religion, sexuality, or world-views, and we don’t respect or tolerate those differences, that can lead to hate incidents. And to be compassionate, caring citizens, we need to stop the hate.

1. Have students consider things that they are passionate about and favor (like) and things that upset them (hate), and complete these sentence stems:

I like...
 I really like...
 I love...
 I hate...

2. Students can share their responses with others in small groups and discuss:
 - Which items were similar?
 - Which items were surprises? Is hate the opposite of love?
 - What does the quotation by author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel at the top of this page mean to you?

<i>I love...</i>	
Nachos with lots of melted cheese	My Mom – she’s the BEST!
Reading comics	Eating Ramen
Drawing monsters	The color Aqua
Making cupcakes	Pokemon
Papaya	Figure skating
School (on Fridays)	Camping
My cat, Misty	My grandma’s voice
My puppy, Rocket	Laughing
Reading quietly in my room	Projects
K-Pop and BTS	Snowboarding
Mint chocolate chip ice cream	Blabbing on the phone
All the books by Rick Riordan	The smell of apple pie baking
Auggie Pullman (Wonder)	The Dollar Store
Freshly steamed shrimp	Word puzzles
dumplings	Winning Monopoly
Soccer	Getting an A+
Sleep, because it doesn’t need work and no one can bother you	My girlfriend

• <i>I hate...</i>	
• Covid-19	Calories
• When people hate other people	Rude people
• Getting bullied by half the kids in my class	Having to wear a mask
• Myself	Stereotyping
• My brother's attitude	Sweating on a hot hot day
• War	Carrots (they take too long to chew)
• My body	Okra
• Criticism	Tests
• Spiders and bugs	Climate change
• Overpopulation and vegetables	When people touch me without permission
• Homophobic people	The media and its false bias views of certain countries
• When my marker leaks through my paper	Sunday evenings
• Homework	Offensive jokes
• Getting injured	Hate

There are more than 100 songs with the word *hate* in the title: "Hate That I Love You" (Rihanna); "I Hate Myself for Losing You" (Kelly Clarkson); "I Hate Boys" (Christian Aguilera); etc.

Extension

After students have prepared lists of things they like and things they hate, they can transform their writing into a list poem:

1. List 10-15 items in an order you choose: e.g., alphabetically; by syllable counts; from least-favorite to strongest item.
2. Some alternatives for writing list poems:
 - Two poems presented alongside each other.
 - Alternate lines *I love...* and *I hate...* to complete a list poem; for example:

I love the smell of fresh-baked bread;
I hate the smell of a gym bag.

Lesson: Opening Up About Hate: An Assumption Guide

The strategy of using an assumption guide is designed both to activate a student's background knowledge surrounding an issue and to stimulate interest and build curiosity about a topic. A list of statements about a topic is presented for students to consider and then discuss with others. The statements are intended to arouse opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about the topic.

Based on their experiences and assumptions, students might accept some statements as true. When they are asked to identify their reactions by circling their reactions (Agree, Disagree, Unsure), students are prompted to consider their own beliefs and feelings.

In this instance, the use of an assumption guide will allow students to reflect on and articulate beliefs about hate. Thinking About Hate: An Assumption Guide on page 23 can be reproduced and given to students. To begin, students independently read and respond to each of the statements; by doing so, they are confirming or challenging their opinions and beliefs. A follow-up discussion in pairs or small groups encourages students to share their views, ideas, and perhaps life stories. After listening to different opinions, some students might refine their

understandings. As the discussion unfolds, students can respond to the opinions of others, raise questions, and share evidence that serves to validate their views.

Lesson: Why Do People Hate?

There is no easy answer to the questions *Why do people hate?* and *Why do some people hate other people?*

If someone is generally a positive person and willing to forgive others, the concept of hating others (whether we know them or not) might not be part of who they are. But sometimes fiery emotions fuel hatred and we may think things that are judgmental and hurtful to others. Something might have happened in someone’s life that prompts them to think—and say—negative things about others. Sometimes cruel actions are taken against others. Someone might have low self-esteem or be insecure, and take out their insecurities on others, especially members of a minority. Sometimes prejudice comes from the beliefs we have been taught or from what society presents. Considering a list of reasons why some people might hate other people can help students to think about the *why*’s of hate.

1. Instruct students to work independently to answer this question in writing:
Why do some people hate others?
2. Students meet with one or two classmates to compare reasons.
3. As a group, students compile a list of ten reasons why they think some people hate others. Once completed, have students put an asterisk (*) beside the three top reasons in answer to the question.

This list demonstrates how students from Grades 5–8 responded to the question: *Why do people hate?*

- “If someone is not kind to you because you are different than them.”
- “When someone makes fun of them.”
- “When someone gives them a headache.”
- “Because something happened to them in their past.”
- “They like hating other people. It gives them power.”
- “They think everything someone says is questionable.”
- “Because they’ve been hated by someone else.”
- “Ignorant people can hate someone for their beliefs, race, sexuality, opinions.”
- “Info in the media about groups of people.”
- “They don’t understand what it means to be tolerant.”
- “They have anger that they want to get rid of.”
- “They were taught that way by their families.”
- “They think they are superior to others race, religion, gender, size, height, etc.”
- “They are afraid.”
- “Society.”
- “A traumatic experience happened to them.”
- “I think it’s because some people think that they have more power than others.”
- “They have a stereotypical mindset: ‘All _____ people are _____ because_____.’”

In the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, August Pullman's teacher Mr. Browne presents the class with words of wisdom to enlighten and comfort. The book *365 Days of Wonder* is a collection of Mr. Browne's precepts, a quote for every day of the year about courage, love, friendship, and kindness.

Consider Reasons for Hate

The Reasons for Hate handout on page 24 invites students to think about reasons for hateful behavior. Students respond to this list by prioritizing reasons they think best answer the question *Why do some people hate others?* Students can meet in groups of four or five to compare answers and provide reasons for their choices.

Lesson: Responding to Quotations

Inspirational or profound quotations can be taken as precepts to navigate and celebrate our society. They remind us that each of us has the potential to change the world, every day of the year. If we present students with inspirational quotations, we encourage them to share their personal connections to the words of others and consider what personal philosophy frames their outlook on life. Interpreting and responding to quotations provides students with opportunities to

- infer meaning behind the inspirational quotations and share their understandings with others
 - consider precepts that best represent their outlook on life
 - respond in a variety of modes, including writing, visual arts, drama, and media
1. Provide students with the list of quotations by philosophers, celebrities, and significant world figures on page 25.
 2. Quickwrite: After independently reading the list, students choose one of the quotations and write a short response by considering the following:
 - What does this quotation mean to you?
 - Why did you choose this particular quotation?
 - What life experiences/connections does this quotation lead you to think about?
 - How is this statement inspirational for thinking about confronting hate?
 3. Students meet in groups of five or six to share their chosen quotations and their responses. Groups prioritize the items, listing the most significant to the least significant in terms of the message about hate. Survey the class to determine which of the precepts was the most popular. Which quotations were not selected?

Extensions

- Gallery Walk: Display a number of quotations on walls around the classroom. Instruct students to visit each of the pieces for a moment or two to spark first impressions. If quotations are displayed on chart paper, students can record their responses and/or questions. Alternatively, sticky notes can be used for students to record and display their impressions. Following the gallery walk, the whole class can share their opinions in reaction to various quotations.
- Quotations Aloud: Students in pairs are assigned a quotation to work with. Invite students to find a way to bring this quotation to life using one or more of the following drama techniques: exploring choral dramatization, creating a still image, or using movement. Once students have rehearsed their work, they can dramatically present their quotation to others. The presentation can then be assembled into a class collective to be shared with an audience.
- Creating Posters: Students choose a quotation and create a poster or banner to display in the classroom or elsewhere in the school.
- Researching Additional Quotations: A number of quotations can be found on the internet for students to investigate and share with others.

The ABCs of Hate

These terms are related to the topic of hate. Which words and names are you familiar with? What language might you want to learn more about?

A	Activism	Agency	Assimilate
B	Bias	Bigot	
C	Cisgender	Colonize	
D	Democracy	Discrimination	Deficit Thinking
E	Equality	Equity	Ethnicity
F	Freedom		
G	Gender Identity	Genocide	
H	Harassment	Healing	Homophobia
I	Inclusion	Intersectionality	
J	Joy	Justice	
K	Kindness		
L	LGBTQ2S+		
M	Marginalized	Microaggression	
N	Nazism		
O	Oppression		
P	Prejudice	Privilege	
Q	Queer		
R	Race	Racism	Racist
S	Slur	Stereotype	Swastika
T	Transphobia		
U	Upstander		
V	Vandalism	Victim	
W	White Supremacy	Woke	
X	Xenophobia		
Y	Youth Activism		
Z	Zealot		

Thinking About Hate: An Assumption Guide

Part A: Read each statement and reflect upon it. Circle whether you agree with (A), disagree with (D), or feel unsure about (U) each statement.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Hate is something that people are taught. | A | D | U |
| 2. Love is the opposite of hate. | A | D | U |
| 3. I used the word <i>hate</i> at least once this past week. | A | D | U |
| 4. It's always wrong to hate. | A | D | U |
| 5. Cyberbullying is a hate crime. | A | D | U |
| 6. Discrimination is a hate crime. | A | D | U |
| 7. Someone who hates others mostly thinks badly about themselves. | A | D | U |
| 8. You can teach someone not to hate others. | A | D | U |
| 9. I have at least one personal story about hate that I could share. | A | D | U |
| 10. Some social media sites promote hate. | A | D | U |
| 11. Education can conquer hate. | A | D | U |
| 12. "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me." | A | D | U |

Part B: Complete the following stems:

If hate were an animal, what animal would it be? Why?

When I hear the word *hate*, I think about...

If someone asked me to explain the word *hate*, I would say....

Reasons for Hate

1. Working alone, read the following list. Choose the three or four reasons you think are the most accurate. Put an asterisk (*) beside each item you choose.
2. Group Discussion: Work in groups of four to six to compare and assess your answers.
 - Which reason was the most common?
 - Which of the 10 items haven't been identified with an asterisk? Why do you think that is?
 - Can you think of additional reasons that are not on this list?

People hate because...

- _____ 1. They are afraid of things that they don't know.
- _____ 2. They are influenced by friends' opinions, sometimes going along with cruel things because they want to be accepted by others.
- _____ 3. They absorb negative attitudes from family members.
- _____ 4. They enjoy having power over others.
- _____ 5. They are jealous or envious of others.
- _____ 7. They hold on to what they think is "normal."
- _____ 8. They are unwilling to tolerate those who are different from themselves.
- _____ 9. They have had a bad experience(s) in their life that gave them opinions about others.
- _____ 10. They are insecure and don't like themselves.

3. Answer the following:

How might the ideas on the list be applicable to people who are racist? Homophobic?

What might you say to someone who is being hateful to others?

Quotations About Hate

Hate has caused a lot of the problems of this world, but it has not solved one yet.

— Maya Angelou

I have decided to stick to love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Once you witness an injustice, you are no longer an observer, but a participant.

— June Callwood

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.

— Elie Weisel

Animals don't hate and we're supposed to be better than them.

— Elvis Presley

It's always wrong to hate, but it's never wrong to love.

— Lady Gaga

In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.

— Anne Frank

Honestly, I don't have time to hate people who hate me, cause I'm too busy loving people who love me.

— Anonymous

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

— Nelson Mandela

Don't hate what you don't understand.

— John Lennon

You cannot hate other people without hating yourself.

— Oprah Winfrey

Haters will say what they want but their hate will never stop you from chasing your dream.

— Justin Bieber

There is so much negativity in the world and what you only need to hear is all the love.

— Miley Cyrus

We have a choice in life—we can choose how we are going to behave. We can determine whether we reflect the good around us or lose ourselves in the darkness.

— Wab Kinew

Hate the sin, love the sinner.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Love is wise, hatred is foolish.

— Bertrand Russell

Smile more than you cry, give more than you take, and love more than you hate.

— Drake

It's time to "terminate" hatred.

— Arnold Schwarzenegger

CHERYLL DUQUETTE

Finding a Place for Every Student

Inclusive Practices, Social Belonging, and Differentiated Instruction in Elementary Classrooms



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Developing Student Belonging

Sammy

It was November and Sammy, a Grade 5 student, had given up. He did not want to go to school because everything he did was wrong. He felt that he couldn't do the work and that he was being picked on by his teacher, his peers, and the principal. This fall alone, he had been suspended three times for fighting in the playground and seemed to have a detention just about every second day. It was pointless, thought Sammy, and he wondered why he should bother trying. There didn't seem to be any way to make the situation better.

Every school has at least one Sammy, and it doesn't have to be that way. Sammy had clearly lost faith in his ability to "do" school and his relationships with the teacher and his peers were deteriorating. He felt he didn't have a place in his classroom. In this chapter, we will be examining how teachers can ensure that all students feel they belong. Teachers should develop a relationship with each student and get to know their interests and abilities. Many teachers believe that this relationship is the foundation for success for each student. Teachers should ensure that their students experience academic success, which is highly motivating and can make students feel that they can do the work and academically belong in the class. It is also important for teachers to establish a class climate of acceptance and empathy. Students need to feel that they are in an emotionally safe environment and feel supported by peers. One of the ways to achieve this goal is to demonstrate patience and concern and model acceptance for all students in your class.

The last way to support a sense of belonging is to work towards developing pro-social behaviors among all the students. Even though you may be working towards creating an inclusive environment in your classroom, some students may exhibit behaviors that cause peers to become uncomfortable around them. All students need to develop key social skills to increase positive and respectful interpersonal relationships.

Student belonging at school is not a given. It takes a teacher who is willing to work towards developing positive and trusting relationships with their students, supporting academic success, and encouraging peer acceptance to ensure that every student feels as though they have a place in the classroom.

A Sense of Belonging

Belonging is one of Maslow's (1970) basic human needs. It involves the feelings of being connected to others and of being accepted, respected, included, and supported by others. The student-teacher relationship is the foundation of a student's sense of belonging. As a teacher, you should establish a relationship based on trust and respect and through your words and actions ensure that each

We remember how teachers made us feel and not the content they taught.

student is accepted by peers and every student experiences academic success. Research has shown that a sense of belonging is related to motivation and academic achievement. Many students have trouble working and learning unless they feel the teacher likes them and is genuinely trying to help them succeed. Moreover, students need to be able to expect that their peers will not bully or harass them; rather they will collaborate with them in group work and accept them on the playground.

When you feel someone is in your corner and is supporting you to be successful academically and socially, you feel motivated to try to do the work and to behave so that others will not be wary of you. School belonging is also linked to reduced absenteeism, decreased misbehavior (e.g., fighting, bullying, vandalism, disruption), increased happiness, self-esteem, and better transitions (e.g., from elementary to secondary school).

The teacher's role in nurturing a sense of belonging among students is to develop a relationship with each of them. At the same time, the teacher should create a classroom environment where students experience success in work completion, demonstrate positive behaviors, and are accepted by peers. Essentially, for students like Sammy, the teacher plays a pivotal role in nurturing the sense of belonging, and in this chapter, we will discuss some of the strategies that may be used.

Developing a Relationship with Students

Your relationship with your students begins during the first minute of the first day of school or the first day of the new term or semester. You demonstrate your eagerness to get started with a smile and a simple greeting, such as “Hi” or “Welcome to our class.” With such an opening you’re saying, “There’s a place for you in this classroom, and I’m going to help you feel like you belong.” Some students may be more nervous about starting the new year with a new teacher, and they may need a few minutes with you to calm their fears. Learn the students’ names as quickly as possible. During the first few days, I use name cards that can be propped up on the students’ desks. The students write their name on a piece of paper or recipe card that has been folded in half, and sometimes students decorate them as well. You will know some of the students’ names, but others will be new to you. Regardless, memorize them as quickly as possible. When you can use the student’s name, it sends a message that you actually know who they are. Some teachers in the intermediate panel wonder if they will ever learn all the students’ names, particularly when they are seeing 120 a day. Yes, it takes time, but it is well worth it.

Show an Interest in the Students

Students like to have the teacher show an interest in them as a person; it demonstrates they care about them. You can do this by having short conversations with individual students or small groups before the class begins or during a break. For example, on Monday morning, you might ask if the students had a good weekend, which may be followed by the question: “What was the best part?” or “Did you play (name of video game, sport)?” or “Did you see the (name of team) game?” A few teachers introduce themselves to the class on the first day by telling the students about themselves, for example, how long they have been teaching (a particular grade or course), their family life (e.g., having a partner or a pet), and

the things they like to do in their free time. However, this type of information will often likely be revealed during informal conversations. Younger students can provide information about themselves in a sharing circle. Sometimes teachers use a puppet or a talking piece to permit students to open up about their favorite color, food, or activity. Some students will be eager to talk about themselves, while others may be shy and should be given the opportunity to decline to speak. The teacher can later follow up with these students on an individual basis.

Some teachers also schedule individual meetings with their students to discuss their interests and out-of-school activities, among other things. One teacher plays the Paper Toss Game with her older students during the first days of the term. On a piece of paper, the students write their goal for the course, one thing they like or dislike about the subject (e.g., English), and one fun fact about themselves. The activity is anonymous; students do not write their name on the paper. The students crumple their papers, and the teacher collects them. The teacher then tosses the papers into the air, gathers them, and reads them aloud. The students learn a bit about each other, and the teacher learns about general feelings towards the subject area, goals, and student interests. Knowing about student interests is important because it may be a vehicle for creating enthusiasm for learning the content. I have worked with students who will not put forth much effort unless the content is of interest to them. Having a topic to which you can relate and know something about is motivating. To arouse motivation, teachers can develop math problems that are based on student interests or explain scientific or historical concepts in terms of everyday occurrences and interests. For example, discussions of families in ancient societies may be linked to students' own families. Or you may decide to talk about leisure activities and sports in ancient civilizations and compare them to the ones we enjoy today. Writing assignments in which students discuss their interests and experiences may also provide them with an opportunity to describe things they find important. I have developed assignments where the students have a choice of topics, including ones not suggested, as long as they have been approved. While students may still grumble at the work, they will appreciate that you took the time to incorporate their individual and group interests. I know one French as a Second Language teacher who coaxed her students into learning vocabulary and grammar through their general love of hockey. She taught the curriculum through discussions on hockey and developed tasks centred on it. The same could be done for any sport or activity. I might add that this teacher was not a big fan of hockey but learned enough about it through reading, watching games, and talking to the students to create motivating assignments and have engaging discussions.

Conduct Check-ins with Students

Teachers gauge how students are feeling and their emotions by using check-ins. They can be as simple as asking students, "How are you?" or "How are things going?," especially for students who seem to be struggling or appear to be "down." For students in the primary grades the teacher can display three emojis showing happy, sad/angry, or neutral and students can high-five or touch the emoji that matches their feelings as they enter the classroom in the morning or after recess. Teachers can follow up with the students touching a sad emoji as quickly as possible and on a one-to-one basis. It is helpful to have a ten-minute cool-down period after recess where students can read silently or write in their journal, and during this time the teacher can speak quietly and individually to students who self-identified as feeling sad or angry. You can ask, "I noticed that you touched

the angry emoji. Would you like to tell me about it?” Many students will take advantage of the chance to discuss the problem or issue with you. If the student declines the opportunity to explain the reason for the negative emotion, then say, “Okay. But if you want to talk about it later, we can.” You respect the student’s decision and leave the door open for discussion. In Chapter 4, we will see that Alex’s teacher did this and incorporated social problem solving into the conversation.

Check-ins may also be done with each student on a monthly basis, or more frequently if time permits. Prior to the monthly meeting, older students could list their recent successes, needs, how they’re feeling about things, goals for next month, and anything else you or the students feel is appropriate. Try to find a quiet spot in the classroom and position the student’s back to the rest of the class while you are facing the class (so that you can monitor what is happening). Speak in a low voice to keep the conversation as private as possible. The students can lead the meeting and the teacher can make notes for their own use. Previous needs may be mentioned to ensure that they were or are being addressed adequately. Over time, the teacher may see patterns in the students’ responses. Some teachers conduct more frequent, informal check-ins during times when standardized testing is scheduled. They may ask the entire class, “How are you feeling? Nervous? ... Let’s talk about ways to manage the stress.” Check-ins send a strong message to students that you care about them and how they are feeling. You validate their feelings and can help them resolve some of their emotional difficulties. For students like Sammy, a teacher who spends time talking instead of scolding and helping instead of blaming could be a turning point for them.

Observe your students

It is not unusual for a student to communicate emotions or cry for help through behavior. Younger students may engage in aggressive behavior or have an outburst, likely because they do not understand their emotions, don’t know how to express them appropriately, or want assistance solving a conflict or problem with social interactions. You may notice that some older students suddenly change the way they dress, or start smoking cigarettes or abusing other substances, and skipping school. One person I know told me of doing all of the above simply so that a teacher would ask if everything was okay. She wanted to talk about the trauma at home but did not want to initiate the conversation with a teacher. Instead, she wanted the teacher to initiate the conversation by reaching out to her and showing they cared. Another student appeared to demonstrate total involvement in school activities. She was on many sports teams, served in student government, and participated in the school musical. Moreover, her marks were relatively high, which put her under the radar for all her teachers. She wished that an adult at school had asked why she was overly committed to extracurricular activities so that she could reveal that she wanted to minimize the time she spent at home. She too did not want to broach the subject with a teacher and hoped that one would notice her behavior. Sadly, in the cases of both these girls, teachers did not ask the question, “I noticed ... Is everything all right?” They did not take the opportunity to start a conversation between themselves and their students. Both girls were later diagnosed with anxiety and underwent therapy. However, teachers who noticed behaviors and addressed them when they developed might have helped these students receive the assistance they needed years earlier.

You can also observe the moods of your students. For younger children, observing their selection of emojis to identify moods can lead to the emergence

A resource on bringing mindfulness into the classroom is *Fostering Mindfulness* by Shelley Murphy (2020), published by Pembroke Publishers.

of patterns which might be discussed with the student or the parents. I know of a situation with a Grade 3 student who came to school dishevelled and hungry. He was irritable and angry and indicated his displeasure with the appropriate emoji. Not surprisingly, peers were cautious around him lest they trigger an outburst. The teacher took him aside one morning, and they spoke privately. She began with the I-statement and followed with an invitation to talk: “I noticed that ... Would you like to talk about it?” He revealed that his father had a new girlfriend and they permitted him to stay up very late at night playing video games. They slept late in the morning, and there was no time for breakfast. The boy revealed that getting to school was a scramble and he felt tired, disorganized, hungry, and not in the right mood for school when he arrived. While the teacher could do little about the home situation, she was able to provide a small, nutritious snack for the boy to eat when he arrived at school and scheduled the first ten minutes of the day for mindfulness activities, which helped all the students get into the right frame of mind. The teacher’s actions helped to open the lines of communication with the student and strategies were put into place to ease the child’s transition from home to school. The teacher’s caring actions also helped the student and teacher develop a bond of trust between them.

Other Strategies for Developing a Positive Student–Teacher Relationship

As we have seen, being open to talking with students is important in building a relationship. Unlike the two girls we saw earlier, some students are quite willing to talk to the teacher. However, they need an opportunity to do so. One way is to provide time for students to meet with you informally by scheduling regular extra help times (e.g., during lunch, before or after school). Teachers may also be able to see students during their prep periods. While some students may attend the sessions to ask questions about the content you’re teaching, others may begin with the questions about the work and progress to asking for help with a particular personal problem. I have experienced this situation more than once. In these cases, the teacher can direct the student to the appropriate resources or find out what is available.

In other cases when students reveal personal information to you, they do not want you to act. They just want you to listen. Being attentive, affirming, and focused on the student (and not other things) sends a message that you care about them. Keep this information private unless the student reveals information about which you must legally take action with a child protection agency.

Solid relationships are built on respect, and the teacher must earn it from their students. One way to do this is by watching your language. Avoid referring to the class as “guys.” Not all students are “guys.” Early in my teaching career, a student complained about my use of this term, and I took notice. Immediately, my go-to phrase for gaining their attention became “Grade 8.” This term was certainly more inclusive than “guys.” Another way to earn students’ respect is to challenge stereotypes. Make it clear that negative comments about students with exceptionalities or students from minority groups are not welcomed. When they do, address them immediately. Calmly state: “In *our* class, we speak kindly about everyone. Negative comments are hurtful, and there is no place for them here.” This response sends a clear message to everyone that this classroom is an emotionally safe place, which will increase the respect and trust students have in you and their sense of a connection to you.

Having a predictable classroom also contributes to creating an emotionally safe place for students. Predictability gives a sense of security and control to students who may be concerned about what is going to happen during the day. The weekly schedule should be posted on a wall, and some students may need a copy to be taped to their desk. Any changes to the schedule (e.g., an assembly) should be explained beforehand. Routines for lining up, submitting work, going to the washroom, and so on should be established during the first week of classes and followed consistently. Your own behavior should also be predictable. Students need to know that positive behaviors will be reinforced by you (e.g., an acknowledgment for a student helping another find a misplaced article of clothing) by simply saying thank you or placing a sticky note on the student's desk. They should also know that inappropriate behaviors will result in consequences (e.g., writing on a desk will result in having to wash it), and the consequences should also be administered consistently.

Academic Belonging

By developing a relationship with a student, the teacher supports their feeling of social belonging and acceptance. Teachers also want to ensure that the student feels as though they belong academically in the classroom. They can do this by helping the student experience success in work completion and learning. When a student is successful in a task, they feel as though they belong in the group by virtue of being able to do what is expected. By using the differentiated learning strategies described in Chapter 2, teachers can help students with and without special needs learn concepts and master skills, thereby supporting those feelings of belonging. Teachers can also use feedback, motivation, self-efficacy, growth mindset, and culturally responsive teaching to inform their practices and thereby improve academic outcomes and the sense of belonging for all students. These ideas will be discussed below.

Feedback

Feedback should take the form of a non-judgmental description of observed behavior, intended to improve performance. Specific feedback has been shown to be more effective in improving performance than praise, punishment, rewards, and grades. First, students need to know what the expectations for them are, then they need to try out the task. As they perform the task, the teacher should provide descriptive feedback by stating or writing what parts of the task are meeting expectations, what needs to be improved, and how to make improvements. For example, when instructing how to print a small “b”, the teacher may demonstrate the steps in forming the letter and say the steps at the same time. They can also state the criteria for a proper “b” (e.g., the circle has to touch the straight line). Students can practise drawing a “b” in the air and then on paper, again with the teacher demonstrating, stating the steps, and noting the hallmarks of a correctly formed “b”. The teacher can observe each student printing the letter “b” and state what parts of the “b” are correctly done, what parts need some improvement, and how to improve their “b”. To guide the students in their printing, the teacher can post an anchor chart for students on how to make a “b” on the board with arrows and numbers showing the process. Effective use of feedback is important in skill improvement, and it supports a student's feelings that they are able to do the work.

Timely feedback is also important. It should be given as soon after the behavior as possible, otherwise the student may forget what had happened. As well, students need time to practise the correct way to perform a skill. In the case of the printing lesson, the teacher may be providing informal feedback, but feedback may also be more formal. For example, a teacher could provide summative feedback after a major assignment has been submitted for marking. However, the teacher would do well to also provide feedback as formative assessment about halfway through the project so that students could see how their work aligns with the expectations in the rubric, what areas need improvement, and how to make the corrections.

Without feedback, there is no improvement.

Teachers often find that some students seem to need more supervision when doing their work than others. It is helpful for teachers to observe these students immediately after giving instruction and provide feedback so that the students learn how to perform the skill correctly the *first time*. It can be very frustrating to learn that your work is incorrect because you didn't follow or perform the steps correctly, something that timely feedback can address quickly and easily. When a student experiences failure, they become de-motivated and self-doubt about ever being able to do the task creeps in. They start to feel they don't belong academically in the class.

Motivation, Self-Efficacy, and Growth Mindset

When we are motivated to do something, we seem to be more focused and intent on achieving our goal. When not motivated, it is often the case that we postpone or procrastinate and do not put forth our best effort. There are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation occurs when a person does something because of a wish they have inside. Extrinsic motivation means that a person does something to obtain a desired result. For example, when a student is personally interested in a topic (intrinsic motivation), they will likely be more motivated to do the work related to learning about it. This is one of the reasons for providing choice on assignments or choice between working in groups or alone. Some students are only motivated to complete assignments and study to achieve a high mark (extrinsic motivation). As well, sometimes students will work hard to avoid negative consequences, such as a low mark and punishment from parents (again, extrinsic motivation). We will see this situation with Andrew in Chapter 5.

How can a teacher promote intrinsic motivation? When you take the time to find out students' interests, you can include them in the curriculum. For example, your students' interests may be incorporated into the examples you use to explain concepts or tasks that are to be completed by them. You can also connect topics to the "real world" and explain why learning about it is important. As well, if you provide choices of assignments, students can select the ones they are most interested in doing. Some students find working in groups anxiety-producing and distracting and would prefer the option of working alone on an assignment. You may also emphasize that marks are not an indicator of someone's worth or value. Moreover, although in some situations marks may be important, in others learning is the goal. For example, not every piece of work needs to be marked. Teachers can provide specific feedback on task performance that is intended to improve performance rather than assigning a grade. If the goal is to use specific elements in a piece of written expression (e.g., capital letters and periods, dialogue, description), the teacher can give feedback on the writing without

attaching a grade to it. In this way the feedback can fuel motivation to complete the task and support a sense of accomplishment.

Self-efficacy is a person's level of confidence in their abilities to perform certain tasks. It influences our motivation to try new tasks and persist with them when difficulties arise. One way to give a student more confidence is to express your belief in them. Say, "You have done ... in the past. I am sure you can do it this time." I have found that students who are struggling respond well to these types of statements. A second way to promote a student's self-confidence in their abilities is to include their interests in the program. I had a student with developmental disabilities who had experiences with nature and some knowledge about forests. He revealed that whenever discussions or lessons were related to forests and wildlife, he was motivated to listen, participate, and do the work. He was motivated because he knew something about the topic and felt he would be able to perform; he was feeling self-efficacious. My response was to ensure that references to nature were included at least once a day, thereby supporting his willingness to try to do the work. I also provided opportunities for him to share his knowledge with the other students, which helped to make him feel as though he belonged.

Growth mindset is a person's belief about intelligence, which may be malleable or fixed. If you believe that intelligence is malleable, then you are likely to believe that hard work, persistence, and experience can improve it. On the other hand, if you believe that intelligence is fixed, then no amount of practice and feedback will improve it. With fixed mindsets, students choose not to work outside their comfort zone and do not take risks for fear of failure. Subsequently, they may not study for tests, simply hoping for the best. Unfortunately, hope is not an effective study strategy. Obviously, teachers want to support a student's belief that intelligence is malleable. You can do this by demonstrating that mistakes are an opportunity to learn. For example, you can describe a situation where you made a mistake, then changed it, and were successful. Or, when showing how to solve a math problem, you can intentionally make a mistake and demonstrate how to handle the feelings of failure and process of making corrections. Such demonstrations also teach students that mistakes are acceptable, that they can be corrected, and that students need to persist in task completion. Nowhere is this idea more important than in math. Too often, students are defeated by their mistakes and feel that they can never master the skills and complete the work. Some students also need to be encouraged to persist. Sometimes a frustrated student will state, "I give up!" Showing them how to try another way or using the words, "Keep trying," sends the message that you have faith in the student's abilities and that with continued effort they can succeed. Try to remind students that with hard work and persistence, they can be successful. You can also provide one-on-one assistance to the child or seat the student beside a competent peer who will either explain or demonstrate what to do. Feedback can also be used to help students see where mistakes were made and show students how to fix them. Success can be supported using feedback, motivation, self-efficacy, and growth mindset. It is crucial for a student's sense of academic belonging.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

With increased immigration, many schools boast about the number of languages their students speak at home and the different cultures represented in the school

population. A culturally responsive teacher is aware that there is no monolithic view of the world and that students' experiences, culture, race, and social class affect their perspectives. Culturally responsive teaching begins with the teacher honestly reflecting on their own practices and biases, prejudices, and stereotypical views. It occurs in an environment that includes content that is relevant to the students and their cultures, takes a constructivist approach, and encourages students to connect new material to their experiences. One example of how a teacher can build bridges between what students know through experience and new material may occur when teaching a unit on immigration in social studies, history, geography, or English. You can discuss the concepts of the push-pull theory of migration and the stages of immigration and apply them to the situation encountered both by early settlers and by more recent immigrants. You can also invite your students to share their experiences and ideas about these concepts. By drawing students into the conversation, you validate their experiences and send a message to their peers that these students are worthy of respect and belong in the class.

Some teachers may view students from minority and marginalized groups through a deficit lens. They harbor a belief that these students cannot learn and consequently have low expectations for them. Unfortunately, this type of thinking often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and is reflected in these teachers' instructional strategies. Canada's Indigenous students have felt the effect of deficit thinking for decades. To project an affirming view, teachers should include accurate representations of students' cultures in their lessons whenever possible. For example, read stories and novels about Indigenous people that are written by Indigenous authors, or talk about subjects that Indigenous students may relate to, such as pow wows or hunting and fishing, particularly if you live in a rural setting. When Indigenous students see themselves in the curriculum, they become motivated to participate and learn. While it may take time to find resources that represent the cultures of your students, it is worth the effort to affirm their belonging in the class. One thing that should be avoided is to put the student on the spot by assuming they know everything about their culture. They may not, and asking questions to which they may not know the answer and assuming they are classroom representatives of a particular culture may result in humiliation for the student.

One strategy that may be used to advance a sense of belonging through culturally responsive teaching is the use of activities that involve higher-order thinking rather than simple recall. For example, in addition to asking questions about a character's actions in a novel or story simply to ensure understanding, also ask what students would have done in a similar situation. A discussion in which the ideas are shared respectfully would reveal the different perspectives rooted in culture that students have on a character's situation. Allowing space for different opinions sends a message that they are valued and that difference is part of everyday life. Teachers can also put posters depicting different cultures in the classroom and have discussions about difficult topics, such as residential schools. It should be noted that any discussions of topics involving cultural groups must include accurate information and the perspectives of the cultural groups themselves. These discussions can be geared to any level to include students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

When beginning a new topic, teachers can ask the students what they know about it and ensure that the students from minority cultures share what they know. Model acceptance of their perspectives and include them in future lessons.

When teachers know about the interests of their students and how they spend their non-school time, they can use examples from this information in their lessons. Again, doing so affirms these students by validating their experiences, gives them voice and opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. When students feel they can contribute, they are motivated to try the task at hand and persist. These beliefs and actions contribute to academic success and help all students develop the sense that they belong academically in the class.

IEPs and Working with Parents

Your students with identified exceptionalities will likely have individual education plans (IEPs) that outline strengths, needs, and required accommodations. Accommodations may be as easy to implement as extra time to write tests and exams or the use of software to assist with written assignments. They may involve more time and effort, particularly with students who have intellectual differences, such as academic giftedness and intellectual disabilities. In these cases, modifications to the curriculum may be required.

You may not be aware if a student has an IEP, especially if the student has moved from a different school district. However, you can ask your resource teacher or administration which of your students has an IEP. Reading the IEP needs to be done as close to the first day of the term as possible. In jurisdictions such as Ontario, the IEP is a legal document and you are required to implement the accommodations that are listed in it. As well, the student needs these accommodations to be successful, and they should be available as soon as school starts. Speak privately to the students who have IEPs to ensure they know you are aware of the accommodations and will be implementing them.

Get in touch with the parents to assure them that you have read the IEP and will be working with their child on them. Ask how best to contact them: telephone call, text, email, or meetings (virtual or face-to-face). As well, before the first test or marked assignment, start off the year or semester with a “good news” call in which you explain to parents what has been covered in your class and how their child is doing. Always have something positive to say about the child to the parent and consider making additional calls to tell them how well their child did in a particular activity. These kinds of conversations open the door to direct communication with the parents. They are your partners, and they can provide you with valuable information about their child. Some will contact you before you call them. Others will be hesitant about answering calls from the school. However, beginning with positive messages can help instill trust in the teacher to support the development of their son or daughter. Chapter 13 provides more suggestions on working with parents.

Supporting Social Belonging among Peers

Belonging does not happen in a vacuum. It involves the people around the individual respecting and accepting them, with no neglect, rejection, or aggression towards them. Developing a relationship with the student and ensuring academic success are things over which the teacher has direct control. We have less control over how peers view some struggling students, such as Sammy. We can stress norms of behavior in the class that emphasize respect, kindness, and acceptance,

and we can monitor student activities closely to ensure that bullying does not occur. Whether physical or verbal, bullying generally only happens when teachers are not present, so it is important to supervise the playground, lunchroom/cafeteria, hallways, locker bays, and other areas where it might occur. Every student wants some form of peer support, which includes a sense of trust and closeness with friends and classmates. Unsupportive peers are a source of stress for students. Supportive peers contribute towards academic achievement and foster a sense of care and acceptance, something we all want. Moreover, having friends at school and feeling positive about those relationships make students feel as though they belong socially.

Every student wants to feel respected, and you can model respect by saying “Please” and “Thank you.” For example, instead of “Open up your books and get to work,” try “Please take out your books and ...” I actually had a student who stated matter-of-factly that they refused to do the work because the teacher did not say “Please.” I took note and ever since have prefaced all requests with “Please.” Doing so eliminates power struggles. Thanking students individually for complying with a request or helping someone else should be done quietly, so as not to draw attention to the student, unless, like Sammy, the child feels they cannot do anything right. Then “Thank you” sends a clear message of support and acceptance to the student and their peers. I found that modeling respect positively impacted the quality of peer relations.

Developing Appropriate Behaviors

An observation I have made is that most students are accepting of their peers. However, if a student has a meltdown or is violent, some peers may become cautious about working with them. There are things you can do to teach appropriate behaviors to the entire class to facilitate amicable relations and a sense of belonging among your students. One of the strategies is to teach social and emotional learning (SEL) either through using formal programs (e.g., PATHS) or informally. SEL competencies emphasize the development of skills that may protect students from peer rejection and support acceptance and belonging. Two skills that might be taught are emotional understanding and regulation. Teachers in the younger grades can explicitly instruct their students about various emotions through the use of emojis, pictures, and discussion. Then students practise identifying their feelings. Many teachers use colors to indicate zones of feelings. For example, blue might indicate feeling bored, unhappy, sick, sad, or tired. Green could signal feeling okay, calm, focused, or happy. Yellow could indicate intensifying emotions, and red could show that the student is angry or upset. Every student might have a set of four cards, one of each color. On the back of each card would be strategies. For example, on the back of the red card, strategies could include “I can talk to a teacher or a friend” or “Ask for a five-minute break to walk down the hall.” On the back of the yellow card, the strategy might be to do some deep breathing and think about things that make them feel happy. Students could be asked to display their cards on their desks, and the teacher would scan the room looking for students with yellow or red cards. They would discreetly ask the students to select a strategy, then monitor them as it is implemented. The teacher would check in with each student five minutes later to find out how they are feeling and use praise or acknowledgment to reinforce the behavior. This strategy helps to allow the student to cool down and avoid a meltdown or a situation where the student becomes aggressive, which can provoke fear and distrust among peers.

We communicate our feelings through our behaviors, and some behaviors may be the tip of an iceberg.

If you need to talk to a student about managing emotions or solving social problems with others, take them aside and quietly ask what the problem is. Listen attentively and summarize what the student said back to them to ensure that you understand them. Then empathize and ask the student to consider the incident from other students' perspectives. Next, direct the conversation towards strategies the student can use to resolve the problem now and in the future. As much as possible, have the student verbalize possible solutions. For example, "I understand that you feel angry because someone hid your hat. What are ways we can prevent this from happening again?" As strategies are generated, ask the student to consider what the consequence of using each one might be. Later, when the student implements one of the strategies, praise or acknowledge the behavior. Say, "I like the way you ..." This strategy helps to teach and reinforce emotional regulation and social problem-solving skills that the student has not yet mastered. Your presence, calm manner, and assistance with generating and selecting appropriate strategies will help to develop trust between you and the student.

As part of teaching about regulating emotions, teachers can also help students with conflict management. Some teachers find that when there has been a conflict during recess, taking ten minutes right after students return to the classroom to discuss the problem with individuals or engage in a class discussion helps to restore calm before engaging in the actual lesson. Students who are upset are not ready to participate in instruction. Other teachers have a "problem" jar where students insert a piece of paper describing a conflict, or they can simply place a sticky note on the teacher's desk with information about the conflict. The teacher may organize a class meeting or sharing circle in which students discuss the problem, try to see it from different perspectives, and generate possible solutions. These solutions could be added to the back of the colored cards representing emotions if you're using them, or they may be listed on a large sheet of paper and posted on a wall in the classroom for easy reference. These strategies may also be used to teach other behavioral skills.

Younger children need to be taught basic skills to support peer acceptance, such as turn taking, sharing toys, inviting peers to play, collaborating on joint play and clarifying the rules of the game, and responding positively to others. These skills, however, may need to be reviewed from time to time with older children. Group work is another opportunity to garner peer acceptance for a student. You select group members who may be easy-going, focused, and on task, and who share similar interests with the student. For example, the task may be to research a topic in which there is a common interest or develop a website related to it. As well, structuring the activity following the cooperative learning approach in which each member of the group has a separate task may be useful if the student works better alone but is willing to be part of a group project.

The basic social skills shown in the text box should be developed so that a student is accepted by peers. Some children will require explicit instruction and practice to develop them. As well, this list may be modified to include specific skills that an individual student needs to develop (e.g., following instructions, introducing themselves and greeting others, engaging in a conversation, getting the teacher's attention, giving and receiving compliments, and making a request).

Basic Classroom Social Skills

Working collaboratively with peers
 Disagreeing appropriately and receiving criticism
 Respect for others' points of view
 Conflict resolution and social problem-solving
 Regulating of emotions and behavior
 Treating everyone with respect and kindness

Help peers see struggling students through your eyes.

Teachers can also send a clear message to the class that students with less developed social skills are worthy of their positive attention by talking and laughing with them, discussing their interests, and publicly praising them. If there are clubs or extracurricular activities in the school that align with a socially struggling student's interests, then encourage their efforts to join in. Finding others with similar interests may support the development of a sense of connectedness to peers.

Sammy

Sammy clearly is feeling defeated and lacks a sense of attachment to his teacher and his peers. The teacher should change the script. Instead of escalating situations and punishing Sammy, they should be trying to develop a relationship with him. Given his record of three suspensions between September and November, doing so may not be easy. It takes courage for the teacher to change the way they have been working with Sammy. However, the teacher, the peers, and Sammy are going to be together until the end of June, so they should try to make the best of it. What can the teacher do?

The teacher's first priority should be to develop a positive relationship with Sammy. Keeping the lines of communication open and trying to talk to Sammy every day about things other than his schoolwork is a start. The teacher could also find out about his interests and try to talk to him about them. They might also use the colored card system to check his emotions throughout the day and encourage him to use the strategies on the back of the red and yellow cards. A signal for when Sammy feels he must go for a walk in the hallway to calm down should be established. Daily or weekly check-in meetings could be held to see how he's feeling and discuss what he thinks have been successes and where he requires help.

The teacher also needs to ensure that Sammy is experiencing academic success so that he feels he is capable. The teacher can weave his interests into lessons so that he feels he has some knowledge about the topic and is intrinsically motivated to try to do the work and learn. As well, the teacher can provide timely, descriptive feedback, especially when learning a new skill. It will help Sammy to learn how to perform the skill correctly and avoid feelings of failure and re-teaching the skill. Additionally, if Sammy needs something explained more than once, the teacher should be patient and display no annoyance. Once Sammy begins to experience success in his work, he will start to expect success and feel confident that he will be able to do the work (self-efficacy). He will likely be more motivated to persist when there is a problem if the teacher encourages him to keep trying and provides feedback on how to improve. When mistakes occur, the teacher can remind Sammy that it is okay to make them and that it is part of learning. Sammy should also be encouraged to engage in positive self-talk, such as "I can do this work" or

“Everyone is not out to get me.” The teacher can also emphasize hard work, persistence, and practice to help Sammy develop a positive growth mindset. As well, the teacher can include higher-order activities in the lessons, such as open-ended questions where there is no one correct answer. Everyone’s contributions should be validated. Moreover, the teacher should have high expectations for Sammy, find his strengths, and avoid seeing him as a student with deficits and little hope for success.

The teacher can ensure that the classroom environment is predictable and supportive, a place where everyone feels emotionally safe. Posting and following the schedule and consistent follow-through with consequences for positive and negative behavior are two strategies that a teacher could also use. As well, a norm of acceptance for everyone and kindness needs to be developed so that every student feels they have a place in the classroom.

Sammy seems to have difficulties with emotional self-regulation, conflict management, and social problem-solving. The teacher could teach the skills associated with these SEL competencies explicitly to the entire class, to avoid singling him out. Successes in SEL competencies could be discussed and appropriate behaviors reinforced during regular check-in meetings. With improved skills in social relations, Sammy may experience increased acceptance by peers. Sammy’s actions in the classroom and elsewhere in the school can be monitored so that he is neither the perpetrator nor the recipient of bullying. The teacher should model acceptance of Sammy to his classmates by acknowledging appropriate behavior in class. For example, the teacher could say in a positive tone of voice, “Sammy, thank you so much for helping to set up the website.”

These strategies will help Sammy develop a positive relationship with the teacher and peers, which will help him feel more connected to them. Once Sammy experiences success in his schoolwork, he will be more motivated and feel he belongs academically in the class. I have always found that when a student feels comfortable in their relationship with the teacher and is successful academically, misbehavior seems to take care of itself, and the student becomes more socially included by peers in the class. I have also found that despite the appearance of not caring, most students want to be successful and accepted by classmates, and it is up to the teacher to find ways to enable that. Ensuring that each student experiences a sense of belonging is central to success at school.

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