



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2014 Volume III: Race and American Law, 1850-Present

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## **Separate, but Equal: Is There Still Segregation in Education?**

Curriculum Unit 14.03.10  
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"Five score years ago, a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But one hundred years later, the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is sadly still crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land." This quote from Dr. Martin Luther King's famous speech "I have a dream" was given over fifty years ago. The concerns of opportunity and equality for African Americans were of major concern during the Civil Rights Movement. Segregation and other systematic structures kept African Americans and other minorities from gaining the same opportunities and rights as their White counterparts. Now fifty years later, has the system been fixed? Are we on even playing fields? Is segregation still a major concern, and if not, should it be?

Augusta Lewis Troup School is a Title 1 kindergarten through eighth grade school with a predominately African American and Latino student population. Living in the inner city, my students are very aware of the issues in their neighborhoods. For example, there is gun violence, gangs, drugs, teen pregnancies and poverty. Unfortunately, my students have not been exposed to past issues and the history that surrounds them, and still affects them each and every day, such as racism, segregation, slavery, the Civil Rights Movement and the people who have tirelessly fought for equality. My students' understanding of the world around them is skewed by false history within the lack of social studies curriculum that is available, for example Christopher Columbus circumnavigating the world and 'discovering' the Americas, as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century media outlets, such as reality TV, music videos and social media influencing them. Other people's ideas of the world and what is going on in this country is easily and readily accessible for my students, without their own background, knowledge and formulated opinions. I want my students to be able to understand their history, be able to formulate their own ideas and opinions and be able to back them up without being influenced by other people or media outlets. I want them to think for themselves with the knowledge they have acquired throughout this unit.

This unit will give my students a chance to take a look back into history and see the struggle for minorities to acquire education, the separation of races, the prejudice placed upon minorities and how we are still fighting those evils to this very day. It will allow my students to critically think about their own education and question

whether their access to a quality education is as equal to them, in urban districts, as their White and affluent counterparts, in suburban districts.

There are a few questions that this unit will allow my students to think about. The most important question is, 'What does segregation mean to you?' The term segregation may have different viewpoints depending on the generation and their experiences. My students are not required to have curriculum that covers segregation or Civil Rights and so their background on this topic is very limited. From my experiences and learning, I see segregation solely as a racist term. Allowing students to see segregation in the past and compare it to what it looks like today and debate whether the term segregation is just racial or has more meaning to the term would be a very important part of this unit. I want my students to create their own understanding of segregation, what it looks like and what forms it comes in.

## Rationale

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In order for my students to understand the social and racial issues that plague them today, they have to understand what has happened in the past. Within this seminar I have been reading many court cases from the Plessy Era, to the Civil Rights Movement throughout present day. I have confirmed my own thinking and notions of ever-present prejudice and discrimination throughout this country and the discrepancies within the educational system and how it continuously affects our students and their communities.

In this unit, students will be studying court cases that have happened throughout history, specifically segregation in education. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) will be the primary court case they will analyze and discuss to deepen their understanding of history and how we have gotten where we are today. Understanding what segregation was, or still is, and the constant struggle for integration is a concept that I will encourage my students to constantly think about, research and take a stance on. Linda Brown has made statements as an adult, that even though her court case and other court cases like hers has made history, there is still much more work to be done, not much has changed. Students will be discussing what Linda Brown means by this and if they agree with her opinion.

Students will also be taking a look at events such as Ruby Bridges, a little girl in New Orleans during the 1960's integrating an all-White school because it was closer to her house than the Black school she was already attending, as well as Little Rock Nine, nine African American high school students integrating Little Rock High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. These famous historical events depict such accurate and heart wrenching images and accounts of the height of hostility surrounding segregation and the attempts to integrate throughout the country. I don't want my students to think that these students wanted to integrate schools because Black schools were not good enough or didn't have high quality education. Black schools were doing very well. They had overly qualified Black teachers who had high expectations of their students and whose students were very proud of their education and went on to do many great things for their communities. There were many African Americans who did not want to integrate. They wanted to keep their community how it was and continue to expand and advance their communities. This is another question students can discuss: Why did African Americans want to integrate? If their schools were doing well, what was the purpose of wanting to integrate into White schools? What would our communities look like today if we never integrated? Students will be able to think about these questions and have in-depth discussions with their classmates regarding these issues as well as analyze how these decisions, movements and events

impact their lives and their education to this very day.

In the opinion of the court of *Brown v. Board of Education*, given by Chief Justice Warren, a very interesting question was posed: "Does segregation of children in the public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?" I would like for my students to explore this question. It will be tweaked pertaining to their definition of what segregation is today, whether it is financial, though resources or even through different curriculums that different school districts offer. This question posed in the opinion of the court is still very valid today. Chief Justice Warren believes that yes, it does deprive minority children of equal educational opportunities. This statement can be compared to a case that has happened here in Connecticut recently that deals with a similar matter. *Sheff v. O'Neill* (1989) has occurred within the past twenty-five years in Hartford, Connecticut. Elizabeth Sheff filed a law suit against the then governor of the State of Connecticut, William O'Neill. Her complaint was that Connecticut's education system, separating urban and suburban districts, led to racially segregated schools and that violated their constitutional rights to an equal education. By 2003, the state came up with a plan to desegregate schools by incorporating magnet schools, open choice programs and interdistrict cooperative grants. Students will be taking a look at the racial makeup of the State of Connecticut, the racial make up their school districts and schools as well as how this court case has changed the makeup of the racial disparity throughout several school districts. As students read about both cases they will be referring back to Chief Justice Warren's question to either agree or disagree and back up their responses with valid evidence from both cases.

The students will have to compare and contrast *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Sheff v. O'Neill* and argue their stance in a formal debate on whether they believe what the plaintiffs in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case faced was the same as what the plaintiffs in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case faced. In 1954 Linda Brown's parents, along with other parents and advocates, sued the Board of Education claiming that segregating schools based on their race was against their constitutional right. Almost forty years later, Elizabeth Sheff, as well as other parents and advocates, sued the then Connecticut Governor William O'Neill claiming that separate schooling of urban and suburban districts created racially segregated schools, which violated their constitutional rights. I want students to think about whether segregation is still alive and well within our education system and how it affects them and society. I also want my students to think about their definition of segregation and think about whether a fair and equal education fits into their definition that they have created and agreed upon and how. The cases during the Plessy Era and Civil Rights Movement were based on equal rights, including education, and desegregation. *Sheff v. O'Neill* was based on equal education. Is the lack of having a fair and equal education the same as segregation?

## Essential Questions

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- Do all students in the State of Connecticut have access to equal education?
- Is there still segregation in schools? If so, in what way?
- Is equal education, or the lack thereof, a part of our definition of segregation?
- Is integration and segregation a major concern of ours today? If it is or if it isn't, should it be?

- How have past events and decisions made in our country affect us as individuals and as a community today?

## Content Objectives and Overview

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By the end of this unit, my students will be able to:

- Identify and define what segregation is and what it looks like to them.
- Analyze graphs, charts and various data pertaining to court cases that deal with race, class and school districts.
- Participate in a debate with one another on the topic question of, "Is what the plaintiffs in the Brown v. Board of Education case faced the same as what the plaintiffs on the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case faced?"
- Write an argument letter to the Connecticut State Department of Education, as a culminating activity, stating their argument of whether they believe segregation is still evident in Connecticut schools or not.

They will be using:

- Gallery walks of images showcasing segregation.
- Books and articles to give a brief overview of the events that has occurred throughout history.
- In-depth class discussions about these images.
- Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast past and present status of equal opportunity. Video clips of historic events such as, Little Rock Nine and Ruby Bridges will allow students to grasp the concept of the Civil Rights Movement and what it entailed.
- Graphs and charts that show the racial make-up of urban in suburban schools in Connecticut today.
- Student discourse to exchange ideas and thoughts as a whole class and within cooperative groups.

### Teaching Strategies

This is a cross curricular unit. Using the Reading and Writing Workshop models as well as the Common Core State Standards as my focus, will guide how I implement this unit.

Common Core standards of close reading and analyzing non-fiction and informational texts as well as being able to argue their position by using evidence from the text will be the core skill of this unit. Students will need to be able to use supporting evidence to explain their own inferences and point of view (Claim 1, Target 4).

They will also need to cite evidence to support their conclusions drawn from the cases studied (Claim 1, Target 8). This unit will also be cross curricular. In math, students will be able to construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others (4.MP.3) by using and interpreting charts, graphs and tables of school districts and their differences around Connecticut.

## Classroom Activities

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### Lesson One

#### *Gallery Walk of the Plessy Era & Civil Rights Movement*

Objective: Students will be able to define the term 'segregation' in order to identify what it "looks like" by taking a gallery walk with pictures from the Plessy Era, writing their thoughts and having a class discussion.

Materials: Four to five enlarged pictures that portray segregation during the Plessy Era and Civil Rights Movement, post-its, pens and pencils, chart paper, markers

Procedure:

- Hang the enlarged pictures around the classroom with the post-it notes and pencils next to each picture.
- Gather the class to the rug and have a class discussion pertaining to what they already know about segregation.
- Tell students that they will be talking a gallery walk around the class but they must be completely silent.
- They will use post-it notes to record their thoughts, questions and opinions and post them next to the picture they are observing.
- As they continuously rotate from picture to picture, tell students that they are able to respond to other students' comments or questions.
- Once all students have responded to each picture, gather the students to the rug again, and record some of their thoughts and opinions on chart paper with the heading 'Segregation'.
- Allow time for students to turn and talk to one another about their reactions.
- Have students define what segregation is and "looks likes" to them, based on their gallery walk, reactions and discussions.
- Record that definition on the chart paper and hang in your classroom.

## Lesson Two

### *Segregation Experiment*

Objective: Students will be able to add on to the term 'segregation' in order to identify what it "feels like" by being separated from one another for various reasons in a quick classroom experiment.

Materials: Anchor charts, markers

Procedure:

- As students enter your classroom, tell them to sit in different areas of your class based on their shoe color (Don't let them know what you are doing at first).
- Separate them by black shoes (back of the classroom), white shoes (front of the classroom) and colored shoes (off to the side of the classroom).
- Tell the class that the students in the front section are able to have extra recess for that day; the students in the back of the classroom have to stay in for recess; and the students who are off to the side, some can have extra recess and some have to stay in for recess (based on how much white they have in their sneakers; more white gets to go to recess and have extra recess and less white have stay in for recess).
- Let the students think about this for a minute without you saying anything or explaining your reasoning, they may talk to each other, complain and figure out what is going on.
- After a few minutes, when the students ask why tell them you were conducting an experiment on segregation and review the definition you came up with as a class the day before.
- Have students stay in the groups you separated them into and write how they felt during this experiment on an anchor chart. (Each group should have different feelings and emotions written on their anchor chart depending on which group they were separated into.)
- Have students share out to the class how each group felt about their situation.
- Have students add on to the anchor chart from the previous day about the term 'segregation' in order for them to complete their definition of segregation as a class and what it means to them.

## Lesson Three

### *Story Writing to Linda Brown*

Objective: Students will be able to identify issues during the Civil Rights Movement in order to contribute to the book *You Are Not Alone Linda Brown* by writing a short story about a fictitious character during that time.

Materials: Book ( *You Are Not Alone Linda Brown* ), story map graphic organizer, lined paper, pencils/pens

Procedure:

- Read a story out of the book.
- Explain to students that these are personal accounts of people that have their own stories to tell about this era and what they went through. Explain to them that Linda Brown and other historical figure that we have been studying are not the only people that went through suffering during this time.
- Have students brainstorm about the issues, on a story map, they have read about and how people have struggled.
- Allow students to create a name for their character, a place where they have grown up and an issue that they had to face as a young person during the Civil Rights Movement.
- Have students then create a short story, similar to the ones they have read in the book, *You Are Not Alone Linda Brown*.

Once students finalize their stories, have a publishing party. Invite administration, their parents and other grade levels to see what they have been learning about in history and to show off their writing skills!

## Lesson Four

### *Data Analysis*

Objective: Students will be able to analyze graphs and charts pertaining to the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case in order to create their own opinion of the question "Are schools still segregated?" by working in cooperative groups and sharing their findings.

Materials: Map of the racial composition of Metropolitan Hartford (Map 1), a brief chronology of *Sheff v. O'Neill* , chart of the school districts in Metropolitan Hartford by race throughout the years (Chart 1), pictures of an urban setting, picture of a suburban setting, chart paper, Writer's Notebook, markers highlighters, pencils

Procedure: (This lesson may take a few days)

Day 1 (Explanation of the terms *minorities*, *urban* and *suburban* )

- Hang the pictures of the urban setting and the suburban setting on the board and gather students to the carpet.
- Ask students to turn n' talk about what they notice about the two settings.
- Bring the class back to a whole discussion after a few minutes.
- Record their answers on chart paper in a Venn diagram.

Day 2 (Jigsaw Activity)

- Split students into four groups.
- Give the students different sections of the Brief Chronology of *Sheff v. O'Neill* .
- Have students Close Read their sections in their groups.
- Tell students that they are responsible for education their peers about their section when they are done.
- After each group is finished Close Reading, have each group share out what they have read and what are the important ideas we need to take away from each section.
- As each group is sharing out, on chart paper, record the important events of the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case as a time line.
- Hang the timeline up in the classroom.
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Day 3 (Analyzing the maps of Hartford)

- Review with the class the timeline of events from the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case that was presented the day before.
- Break students into two groups.
- Group one will receive Map 1 and group two will receive Chart 1.
- Ask each group to record what they notice about the map or chart they are analyzing.
- Have students report out to the entire class what their findings were and what those finding mean to them.
- Record their finding on the board.
- Have students find commonalities among what was recorded on the board and write their opinion in their Writer's Notebook of whether they believe segregation is still a factor in Connecticut schools today.

Lesson Five



*Debate: Is what the plaintiffs in Brown v. Board of Education faced the same as what the plaintiffs in Sheff v. O'Neill faced?*

Objective: Students will be able to participate in a debate in order to argue and address the question: "Is what the plaintiffs in Brown v. Board of Education faced the same as what the plaintiffs in Sheff v. O'Neill faced?" by using a formal debate format using facts, reasons and examples.

Materials: Prepared notes from videos clips, readings, graphs and charts and activities done in the classroom; timer, index cards, markers

Procedure:

- Split class into two teams. (Team A: Believes that the plaintiffs in the Sheff v. O'Neil case did not face the same as the plaintiffs in the Brown v. Board of Education case; Team B: Believes that the plaintiffs in the Sheff v. O'Neil case did face the same as the plaintiffs in the Brown v. Board of Education case.)
- Give each student two index cards.
- Have students write on one card 'Comment' and 'Question' on the other card. (Students only have one time to make a comment that adds to their team's argument and one time to ask the other team a question pertaining to their argument. When they are ready to use one of their options, they must hold the card up and then hand the card in once they are finished with either the comment or question.)
- Each student will get a maximum of three minutes to make a comment and one minute and a half to ask a question.
- Allow students time to review notes and talk with one another, from their team, and plan the argument points they will use when presenting their comments.
- Toss a coin to see what team will go first.
- Facilitate the time of comments and questions, collect cards once each student has used them and add up points for teams that have the most compelling arguments.
- Allow the students to debate one another without your input.
- Once everyone has stated a comment and/or question pertaining to their stance add up their points and see who won the debate.

## Lesson Six

### *Venn Diagrams*

Objective: Students will be able to create Venn Diagrams in order to compare and contrast the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case by using chart paper and working in cooperative groups.

Materials: chart paper, markers, notes on both cases

Procedure:

- Split class up into four different groups.
- Give each group a piece of chart paper and markers.
- Tell students that their job is to work together to find major differences and similarities within the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case.
- Students are able to use the notes that they have collected during the data and research phase of this unit.
- Students need to record their evidence and finding in the Venn diagram.
- Once student are done in their groups, have students discuss whether they believe what the plaintiffs in the *Brown v. Board of Education* faces is the same as what the plaintiffs in the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case faced.
- When all the groups are done completing their Venn Diagrams and discussion, have student share in front of the class and record similarities and differences of the thinking of each group.

## Lesson Seven

### *Argumentative Letter*

Objective: Students will be able to write an argumentative letter to the Connecticut State Department of Education in order to argue their stance of whether or not they believe that all children in the State of Connecticut has access to a fair and equal education by using the information that have acquired during the data analysis phase of this unit and class discussions.

Materials: prepared notes from the debate (including notes taken throughout this unit from different stories and activities), lined paper, pencils (or computers)

Procedure:

- Review letter writing and formatting with your class.
- Tell students that they will be taking their arguments that they used in the debate to write a letter to the Connecticut State Department of Education to express their concerns or applause.
- Make sure that students have their argument statement, evidence (including facts and examples), and a closing statement with either a question or a compliment to the Connecticut State Department of Education.

## Suggested Reading List (for students)

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Thomas, Joyce Carol. *Linda Brown, You Are Not Alone: The Brown v. Board of Education Decision*. Disney-Hyperion, 2003. A collection of stories written by award winning authors about their experiences during the Civil Rights Movement, letting Linda Brown and everyone else know that Linda Brown was not alone in the struggle and fight for equality.

Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*. Scholastic, Inc., 1999. The story of Ruby Bridges, who was a young girl growing up in New Orleans and whose father wanted her to go to the school that was closer to her house, which was an all-White school, instead of traveling across town to go the Black school. This story is told by her and what she remembers as she integrated an all White school.

## Suggested Video List

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No More: The Children of Birmingham 1963 and the Turning Point of the Civil Rights Movement.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCx6Ei\\_SzoQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCx6Ei_SzoQ). A ten minute video that gives quick history to students about the Civil Rights Movement and what African Americans had to endure during that time. This book is complete with original pictures and clips from that era.

*Ruby Bridges: A True Story* by Penelope Ann Miller. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TQfLVGc\\_4k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TQfLVGc_4k) . An hour and a half movie about Ruby Bridges and her story of integrating an all white school and the issues she, her family and her community faced as they went through this challenging time.

*Eyes on the Prize*. This is a television series that documents the Civil Rights Movement. There are fourteen different episodes that include interviews from different people that were a part of the movement and actual footage of events that occurred during that time.

*A Class Divided*. This is a very interesting documentary about an Iowa teacher's experiment of dividing her class by eye color in order to teach her class about racism.

## Bibliography (suggested teacher reading list)

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Bell, Derrick. *Serving Two Masters : Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation*. Yale Law Review, 1976. Professor Bell challenges view about school desegregation and the decision made in *Brown v. Board of Education* . He talks about how these decisions failed to improve the lives of black children and black communities; litigators were more interested in obtaining integrated schools than quality schools in black communities.

Klarman , Michael J. *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights* . Oxford University Press, 2004. Michael Klarman give his interpretation of Supreme Court rulings during the times between Jim Crow and the Civil Right Movement, including *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice* . Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2004. This is the history of the case *Brown v. Board of Education*

. This book gives details of the problems before the landmark case and how a group of Black lawyers were assembled and fought to change the law.

Loury, Glenn C. *Race, Incarceration, and American Values* . Boston Review, 2008. Glenn Loury argues that the rise in mass incarceration is not based on a rise in crimes. He believes that it is a collective decision to maintain racial hierarchy, voter disenfranchisement and ethnoracial control.

Pattillo Beals, Melba. *Warriors Don't Cry* . Simon Pulse, 1994. The story of the Little Rock Nine students, who integrated Little Rock High School in Little Rock, Arkansas told by Melba, one of the nine. This book gives an account of her experience during this time.

## Appendix (Implementing District Standards)

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Reading and Writing Workshops- Modeling for students the strategies you want them to use as they are reading and/or writing and then giving students time to implement those strategies independently or in cooperative groups. Using metacognition and think-a-louds during modeling is key in order to allow students to understand the way you are thinking and how to implement a particular strategy.

Discourse and working in cooperative groups- students need to be able to express their thoughts and opinions verbally with their peers. This gives students a chance to share ideas and debate one another in an informal manner. Students are also able to have a chance to observe how their peers think and why. They are able to learn from one another, challenge one another and formulate and verbalize their thoughts and opinions on a particular topic.

Common Core State Standard (Literacy): Claim 1, Target 4: Arguing a position using supporting evidence to explain their own inferences and point of view- students need to be able to formulate their own opinions on a particular topic and back up their opinions using evidence from the text or texts they have read.

Common Core State Standard (Literacy): Claim 1, Target 8: Cite evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text- students need to be able to pick out evidence from the texts that they read in order to justify their opinions and claims made about a particular topic.

Common Core State Standard (Mathematics): 4.MP.3: Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others- students need to be able to think for themselves and create their own opinions and arguments. They also need to be able to challenge other people's opinions and arguments by using data, such as charts and graphs, and other sources of information as their evidence.

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