



## **Helping Special Education Students Define Their Identity Through Literature**

Curriculum Unit 16.02.04  
by Jamie Garstka

### **Introduction**

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Know thyself. These two, small words hold tremendous power. The path to understanding who we are and how we relate to others is long and ever changing. Throughout my experience in the classroom, as both a teacher and a student, I have constantly questioned how my constructed social identity impacts my teaching and learning. As we grow and change through experience, we must always return to view our practice through a reflective lens. This has been an integral part of my own development as a special education teacher working with high school students.

In every classroom, there are a multitude of factors that impact the daily discourse of teaching and learning. Race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc. are all pieces involved in the construction of an individual's identity. Students of all ages grapple with the formation and later, navigation of their own identities and how they relate to others. Through self examination and exploration of "the other," students are better able to understand or know themselves. This self-actualization can create a classroom community where differences are celebrated and students can feel safe expressing and questioning their beliefs.

### **Aims of Curriculum**

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As in many classrooms, my student population is diverse. My curriculum will be designed for students in ninth grade who come from various cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. I have chosen to tailor my curriculum to a heterogeneous group of special education students because the student populations that sit in front of me each year are unique.

The goal of special education is to provide learning experiences, which allow the student to access the general education curriculum through specialized instruction. For this reason, special education students will be the focus of my work when designing my unit activities. Building student success and confidence in the general education classroom will be a primary focus in planning (i.e. readability, graphic organizers, etc.). The

diversity of my target audience will be used to enhance the curriculum and increase student awareness of identities that differ from what they are familiar with.

Special education programming is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual student. In New Haven, and more specifically at Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, we services students with a variety of disabilities. Some students have specific learning or intellectual disabilities in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Others have issues with attention and hyperactivity or social-emotional disturbances. Next year, my caseload will consist of students with individualized education plans or IEPs to address many of the aforementioned learning needs.

Given the diversity within my caseload, I will be designing a curriculum that can be implemented within the general education setting in a co-teaching model and in the resource room. This will give me the flexibility to support students within their English classroom to address reading, writing, and study skills goals, and also build classroom community and discussion in the small group resource room setting. To do this, I will be using *Flight*, a novel by Sherman Alexie, and selected short stories, excerpts, poems, and artwork. The aim of the curriculum will be to build an understanding and appreciation for those who are different from themselves and in turn, a better understanding of students' own social identities and how they fit into the world around them.

As the class begins to better understand themselves and how they fit into the school culture at Co-op, we will engage in activities and readings that highlight differences as strengths. Often times, special education students are labeled as 'other' and carry a stigma that can alienate them from their peers. It is my hope that the students can begin to dissect their own social identities and gain confidence and power over their own perception of what it means to be labeled "disabled." There is so much more to each individual to celebrate and explore.

It is my epistemological belief that knowledge is the result of all experiences and is not limited to that which is gained in the classroom. Teachers and students as well should understand the importance of students' ability to apply knowledge in a variety of ways and settings. While teachers are obligated to teach the required state content standards, teachers should teach students to develop skills such as how to compare and utilize primary and secondary sources to develop personal narratives and how to utilize graphic organizers to structure their writing, allowing them to gain first-hand experience with accountable talk in a variety of ways through either authentic or simulated activities. These skills and content will directly support the overarching goal of my curriculum as well as build their communication skills and confidence.

### **Overarching Goal**

Looking at my unit from a larger scale, I want to be sure that students with disabilities understand that they are not broken or "stupid." I want them to embrace their difference and find strength where others may see weakness. As my students begin to understand what identity is and how it is constructed, they will begin to recognize what makes them unique; I ultimately want each student to understand that although they may come from different backgrounds and learn differently than others, they are still unique and valuable members of our school community and greater society.

Through leveled readings, modified assignments, and supplemental activities both in class and in small group, I want to give all of my students the tools necessary to participate in the general education curriculum and have their thoughts and opinions be heard by the larger classroom community. Too often, special education students lack confidence to engage in classroom discussion. I want them to feel valued and know that their contribution and voice are important. It is my hope that through the analysis of Zits, the main character in

*Flight*, and supplemental literature focused on identity, all of my students will begin to define their own identities.

Self-confidence and having a positive sense of self are critical for the development of functioning, unique, and contributing members of society. The stigma of special education can be damaging to high school-aged students and I want them to feel valued and important. The English I literature selection, *Flight*, will provide a platform to begin exploring each others' differences and ultimately find strengths in them. Tolerance and acceptance will be at the heart of my unit.

### **Enduring Understanding**

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) define an "enduring understanding" as information that answers the "so what?" question; it endures, "over time and across cultures because it has been proven so important and useful" (pg. 136). This is a crucial question that all educators must ask when developing curricula. "Why am I teaching this and what do I want my students to get out of this?"

Before learning experiences and assessment can be developed, a curriculum maker needs to be able to answer this question. As a special educator, I often have conversations with general education colleagues who are struggling to deliver content to some of my students. Sometimes it is just a matter of providing the appropriate accommodations to allow the student to access the material. Other times, the teacher needs to modify the assignments to address the enduring understanding of their unit. What is the one thing that this particular student cannot leave your class not having learned?

For this unit, I want to ensure that all of my students understand that we all have different experiences and characteristics that make us who we are and in turn, make us different from other people. Through the exploration of the different areas relevant to identity, students will begin to define themselves and understand others; empathy will be at the crux of this unit.

## **School and Classroom Background**

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Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School is located in New Haven, CT. It is an arts-focused magnet which admits students through a lottery system each spring. Currently, 650-700 students attend in grades 9-12. Within Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, more commonly known as Co-op, students are grouped based on their selected arts focus. The arts that the students can choose from include theater, chorus, band, creative writing, visual arts, and strings.

Each art is like a miniature family with our school. Our student artists partake in 90 minutes or more of art instruction each day. Throughout the year, students produce beautiful works of art which range from sculpture to theatrical performances to spoken word poetry slams; each artist's endeavors are showcased in many ways.

Although the arts are a huge part of our learning community at Co-op, the academic rigor and high expectations of our humanities curricula are also an integral part of each student's journey from freshman to senior year. Each year, the population of special education students has grown larger. When I began at Co-op in 2011, I worked with roughly 15-20 students. Since then, my caseload has increased in size and variety,

meaning I work with more students who have a wider array of disabilities. In the upcoming school year, my caseload will have approximately 25 students on it. I will be teaching two resource classes with between 8-12 students in each. It is important to note that not every special education student requires a resource class in their schedule to meet their specific learning needs.

In the resource room, we work to support the students in the achievement of the goals developed in their IEPs and also help them stay on track with academic assignments from their other classes. I will also be supporting my students within their English I classes, working closely with the general education teacher to ensure that all of the special education students can access the curriculum. English classrooms in New Haven can typically have up to 28 students in them. These two classroom settings, though vastly different in terms of size, structure, and assessment, will be the stage for the implementation of my curriculum.

### **Role of Student in the Curriculum**

All of my students have strengths and weaknesses. Some have difficulty decoding grade level texts but can make connections and inferences about a novel read aloud to them that some of their peers cannot. Others are proficient or advanced readers but struggle with anxiety and sharing ideas in a whole group setting. In this particular unit, I will be focusing on individual student strengths to access the general curriculum.

Students will be engaged in discussion both in small group and whole class. They will be asked to show understanding and mastery through multiple avenues. Due to the varied strengths and weaknesses of each student, I will be creating a bank of learning experiences for the resource room to help my students begin to think about what identity is and how they form their own. They will be required to complete the final performance task for their English I class and will be graded based on the goals and objectives in their IEPs. Students will be graded on their engagement with each learning experience and their participation in both small group and whole class discussions.

### **Role of Teacher in the Curriculum**

One of the luxuries of being a special education teacher is that I have the flexibility to tailor my curriculum to meet the needs of my students. I see many opportunities to building a curriculum around the construction of social identity through literature because it lends itself to the implementation of socio-emotional and transition IEP goals and helps provide a pathway that builds confidence, critical thinking skills, and global awareness. Incorporating reading and reflective writing activities into the unit will also address key academic benchmarks. My overarching goals of the unit would target students' self awareness and the development of their own social identity and how it impacts their relationships and actions. My enduring understanding is focused on understanding the concept of empathy and connection through differences.

Aside from making the obvious connections to the curriculum within the resource room and the individual goals on the students IEPs, the ninth grade English I scope and sequence connect many of the topics and ideas expressed previously. Through the use of memoir texts and narrative writing instruction, the ninth graders explore the other and share their own stories to help better understand themselves and their new classmates. This first unit in the English curriculum provides many opportunities for special education students to explore their own identities.

## Theories of Teaching and Learning

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As a teacher in an urban school, it is imperative that I understand my own social identity and how it relates to the students that I am teaching. As a special education teacher, I also need to think critically about the way my students learn best. It is a common misconception that students with special needs cannot achieve at the same level as their peers. For some students, this may be true to some extent, but for most of the students I work with, showing mastery of content is an attainable goal for all of them.

As a special education teacher in an urban school district, creating culturally relevant curriculum and being a critical and reflective practitioner are key components to my success in the classroom. I began reading more about the culturally relevant pedagogy after our seminar discussion of critical race theory and the concept of white fragility. Students with disabilities are often marginalized, and adopting a culturally relevant approach to teaching and learning embraces each student's difference and forces students to question society's status quo.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Ladson-Billing's (1995) work builds on the ideas of critical race theory and the development of a culturally relevant pedagogy is explored. Working under the assumption that the purpose of schools is to reproduce inequality in the greater society, the author focuses on teaching and culture to better understand why certain groups of students, in particular African Americans, are not succeeding in schools. Through her work with successful teachers in urban schools, Ladson-Billings discovered that the common thread among these culturally relevant teachers was "that (the) teachers themselves recognize social inequities and their causes" (p. 477). This recognition and focus on reaching these students led these teachers to understand their students better and in turn, teach them more effectively.

Understanding the students that sit before you is one of the biggest challenges when teaching. Once this is done, teachers can begin to understand what culturally relevant teaching is. Ladson-Billings states, "culturally relevant pedagogy must provide ways for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically" (p. 476). This can be done through encouraging academic success and cultural competence as well as teaching students to identify, understand, and think critically about injustices within their society.

Through research and observation, Ladson-Billing is able to better define what diverse student populations need from their teachers. At one point in the article, she poses the question, "Isn't what you describe just 'good teaching'?" (p. 484) This question was particularly important to me. In order to teach diverse students, teachers must know their students. The word 'know' has a very broad definition but I believe that many of the struggles with classroom management, curriculum, and special education all stem from teachers and administration not truly understanding their students' culture, ethnicity, language, and disabilities.

This is a very loaded statement but my own experience teaching in an under-performing, urban school located in an area stricken with poverty has opened my eyes to the importance of understanding your students and the greater society that they are a part of. In eight years of teaching, I have worked closely with seven different teachers across three grade levels in a special education inclusion setting. There were some bad teachers, some good teachers, and some excellent teachers. The teachers that struggled lacked a connection with their students and their families. Their students' culture was not relevant to their teaching. I see this as an obstacle for many teachers, both first year and veteran.

I think that teachers stumble into urban education with the notion that school will be similar to their experiences growing up. This is usually not the case. A culturally relevant pedagogy forces the teacher to look outside of what is comfortable and really get to 'know' their students' culture, language, families, traditions, differences, and histories. If this is not done then the achievement gap will widen and marginalized students will continue to fail; school as a tool for reproduction as opposed to change will continue to be the norm.

Ladson-Billing uses the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy "to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society" (p. 483). Through reflection, action research, and collaboration, teachers will be better able to bridge the gap between their culture and that of their students. Students come into school with many different experiences and prior knowledge. It is our job as educators to use this to reach each and every student that we teach; the child's entire life world must be taken into account.

Reading about culturally relevant pedagogy helped me better understand my own practice and in turn better understand the ideas that helped form it. I am not an expert in the area of curriculum theory but I am a teacher. Ultimately, my students will benefit from awareness and critical perspective about the many curricular decisions.

### **Reflective Practitioner**

When I hear the word reflect, the image of a mirror comes to mind. It is through our own reflection that we truly see ourselves. A mirror doesn't lie or distort reality. Reflective teaching is no different. Zeichner (1996) describes reflective teaching as an act that engages the teacher's head and heart, fears and passions, and is fair and honest (pg. 10). Teachers need to view their own practice through an honest lens and constantly reflect upon what takes place inside and outside the classroom.

In the course of a school day, teachers are confronted with countless situations that involve making split second decisions. Each of these decisions, big or small, will have some impact. A reflective teacher needs to step back and examine his or her own practice constantly. Schon (1983) states that reflection needs to occur before, during, and after class. He calls this "reflection-on-action" and "reflection-in-action." Teachers need to examine the gap between where the lesson intended to go and where the lesson ended up. This not only informs next steps but it also can be used to improve instruction in the future.

Every teacher has crafted a lesson that seems flawless. Every misconception and question have been anticipated and it seems as though every student will achieve the lesson's objective. Unfortunately, it doesn't go as smoothly as originally planned. Part of being a reflective practitioner involves looking in the mirror and being honest. There are three attitudes that Dewey highlights when referring to the reflective practitioner: open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness (Zeichner, pg. 10). In order to truly be a reflective teacher, one must strive to embody all of these qualities.

Each of these attitudes comes from the idea that teachers need to look at their profession from a critical perspective. Hinchey (2004) urges teachers to be honest about their assumptions, race, gender, culture, and routines when reflecting about their teaching. The critical perspective requires teachers to give students a valid voice, to treat them with respect, and to teach a curriculum that is relevant to them (p. 128). Through critical reflection, a teacher must look at who, how, why, and what they are teaching.

## Identity Formation

Crocetti et al. (2007) conducted research on the development and definition of identity in high school-aged students. Building on the work of previous studies, they focused on a three-faceted model of identity in which:

...commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment are considered to be pivotal identity processes. Specifically, commitment refers to the choice made in areas relevant to identity...In depth exploration represents the extent to which adolescents actively deal with current commitments, reflect on their choices, and look for new information and talk with others about these commitments. Reconsideration of commitments refers to the comparison between current commitments and other possible alternatives. (pg. 985)

Although methods and data analysis within this study are not necessarily applicable to the general practitioner within the classroom, the ideas around the process in which identity is formed in adolescents is relevant to the overarching goal and enduring understanding of the unit as a whole.

Giving students the opportunity to commit, explore, and then recommit to different facets of their identity will be a useful tool for teachers to frame their learning experiences around. It is important to understand that teenagers are beginning to form an understanding of who they are; it is not a concrete arrival at knowing how they fit into the world around them but rather a process that is fluid and changing.

## Narrative Overview of *Flight* in English I

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The novel *Flight* by Sherman Alexie is a text used in the New Haven Public Schools 9<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Through attention to the main character, Zits, students are able not only to explore his self-identity but also to analyze the choices the author makes to develop and reconsider the main character's commitment to his original identity.

The story centers on a young Native American boy who is called Zits. He lives in foster care and has a very negative opinion of himself. He sees himself as ugly and doesn't seem to care about anything. He frequently turns to violence to avoid conflict and express his frustration. He eventually gets arrested and befriends a charismatic boy named Justice while in detention. He is convinced that violence will fix the wrongs of the world and agrees to help Justice rob a bank. During the heist, Zits pulls the trigger and the reader is immediately transported to another time and place.

The English I curriculum focuses on Zits' journey through time and place. Many of the discussions involve symbolism, character analysis, and theme. Nightly homework will be assigned to ensure that the students are keeping up with reading and I plan mini activities with the general education teacher to get the students to think more deeply about what they are reading and to begin pulling evidence from the text to support some of their inferences. The unit culminates with a final literary analysis.

## Assessment

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The final task of this unit will culminate with each student conducting a literary analysis of the main character, Zits. This literary analysis will be assigned within the general education class. Although it will not explicitly ask the students to think about identity, in exploring Sherman Alexie's creative choices, the students will be forced to make connections between how Zits' out of body experiences ultimately lead him to reclaiming his name.

While reading *Flight* the students will focus on the choices Sherman Alexie has made, including imagery, symbolism, character development, and structure. Throughout the unit, the students have learned that authors make specific choices in order to give the reader deeper meaning to their characters in an interesting way. Working to understand and analyze these choices gives readers a better sense of the emotions/struggles of the characters of the text. This unit is aligned with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade Common Core Standards and the New Haven Public School English I Curriculum. The focus standards to be implemented in the resource room will only include the speaking and listening standards (Appendix A).

## Literary Analysis Assignment

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The students will write a paper in which they explore what Sherman Alexie's choices reveal about the main character in *Flight*.

### Requirements

- Make a claim about character
- Analyze at least 1 symbol to support your claim.
- Fully support your claim with at least 3-5 pieces of evidence from the text.
- Write at least 2-3 typed pages.
- Type final draft in MLA format.

### Writing Process

- Write a claim (thesis statement).
- Have claim approved by teacher.
- Gather evidence that supports your claim.
- Complete an outline or web to organize and plan paper.
- Draft paper.
- Edit/revise final draft of paper using teacher feedback.
- Type a final draft in MLA format

The students will also engage with final discussion questions. Authors make numerous choices while creating and publishing a story. Individual words, details, character actions, and symbols are just a handful of choices a writer makes, much like an artist selects color, angle, motion, or lyrics for a specific purpose. The students will be asked to think about the choices Sherman Alexie made while writing *Flight* and why he made them. The



following questions will be used to guide them.

- What choice did the author make?
- Why is this choice meaningful?
- What does it reveal about character?

The students will refer to their reading notes and the text as they complete the chart (Appendix B). It is not required that the students answer every guiding question, but they must be sure to write notes and thoughts on character, theme, and or any other ideas.

## Learning Experiences

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To support the special education students throughout this unit, I have created a learning activity bank to be implemented within the resource room setting. These activities will not only help the students better understand and comprehend the text but it will also give them the confidence to share out in whole class discussion. Some of the experiences are directly tied to events in the novel and specific teacher driven discussions while others will be used to enrich and develop the students own understanding of their identities and the feelings of others.

### Resource Classroom Differentiated Activities

#### Learning Experience: *Flight* Discussion with Note Taking Strategy Instruction

The students will discuss teacher selected questions and quotes from the novel *Flight* . The students will be paired based on ability and each student will be responsible for a discussion guide (Appendix C).

#### Essential Questions

Why are names important?  
What makes a person who they are? Can people really change?  
Why is it important to take notes during discussions?

#### Teacher/Student Roles

The teacher will present quotes and questions both verbally and visually.  
Students will engage in discussion focusing active listening skills and accountable talk.

#### Assessments

Successful completion of discussion guide. Did the student actively listen to peers

### Connection to Curricular Aim:

This learning experience begins to explore what makes a person unique through the discussion of names. This was a very powerful activity completed during our first seminar meeting; it allows participants in the discussion to share a piece of themselves and in turn, learn something about the other students sitting in the classroom. It connects to the overarching goal of finding strength within our differences and ultimately building each student's self-confidence.

#### Learning Experience: *American Born Chinese* and Stereotypes

The students will complete a character study after reading excerpts from *American Born Chinese* . They will begin by looking at pictures of Chin Kee and Jin, two characters in this graphic novel. They will begin to make observations about each character based on their physical appearance

#### Essential Questions

#### Teacher/Student Roles

#### Assessments

<p>What is a stereotype and why do we create them?          How can stereotypes be harmful?          What assumptions do people make when they look at you?          Are stereotypes always true?</p>	<p>The teacher and student volunteers will read through excerpts from <i>American Born Chinese</i> that depict stereotypes of Asians. These selections will vary based on the amount of time allocated in resource for the activity. After reading, the class will engage in discussion and in pairs, will view a picture of Jin. They will make observations about what Jin feels people see when they look at him, the Chinese stereotype Chin Kee, and what Jin really cares about and what makes him who he is. The student will then draw a picture of themselves and complete the same analysis of themselves.</p>	<p>After the initial reading of the story, the students will create their own drawings. The drawing will be a self portrait detailing what they believe people see when they look at them. On the outer portions of the drawing, they will write/ draw words, poems, lyrics, symbols, etc that depict their true selves; what is not seen by the naked eye.</p>
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**Connection to Curricular Aim:**

This learning experience is designed with two intentions. First, the students will begin to understand what a stereotype is and why they often have negative connotations. Throughout the activity, students will begin to question their own prejudice and misunderstandings about others gender, culture, religion, etc. The second intention is to build empathy for others. Through the character of Jin and then again with their our drawing, they will begin to understand that there is much more to a person than just superficial things. I want them to begin to understand that each person has their own unique identity that has value and importance.

**Learning Experience: What’s in a Name? A Look at the Poetry of Dwayne Betts**

Using two poems, “Micah Michael Zamir Betts,” and “Miles Thelonious Betts”, the student will begin to examine the importance of a name. In the novel, *Flight*, the main character is referred to by his nickname, Zits. He says, ““Call me Zits. Everybody calls me Zits. That’s not my real name, of course. My real name isn’t important” (pg. 1) It is not until the very end of the story that the narrator reveals his real name, Michael.

<b>Essential Questions</b>	<b>Teacher/Student Roles</b>	<b>Assessments</b>
<p>How does your own personal story shape who you are?            Why is it important for Zits to reclaim his real name?            What does naming someone or something mean? Why do we, as a larger society, name our children?            Why is it important to let others look at or read your art?</p>	<p>The class will analyze two poems by Dwayne Betts. The teacher will build prior knowledge about the poet through a multimedia approach. Through turn and talks and whole class discussion, the class will annotate the poems, focusing on the importance of a name. The students will write their own poems, using the poems by Mr. Betts as an exemplar.</p>	<p>The students will write a poem about their names, For students who struggle to get started writing, I will differentiate with a sample acrostic poem. Students will share their poems either to the whole class or to a table partner.</p>

**Connection to Curricular Aim:**

There are many different categories with which we can define ourselves; we can use gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, and many other lenses to view identity. One piece of our identity that is not as easily defined is our own personal experience. Individual experience is unique to every person and it plays a pivotal role in the development of ones identity. Through the discussion of these poems and student self-reflection, we will begin to build connection to each other.

### Learning Experience: Who are you? Chalk Talk

Given the maturity level of high school 9<sup>th</sup> graders and the sensitive nature of the issues involving identity, this activity is meant to be done in small group instruction with now more than three student and direct teacher scaffolding. Using the “chalk talk” strategy, student will begin to map their own identities using words that are commonly used to identify someone. The words will be general and more specific. The purpose of this lesson is to build awareness and empathy between students about being different. It is also an activity that forces students to begin to engage with three-faceted identity development cited in Crocetti et al. (2007).

#### Essential Questions

How do we define our own identity?  
Who decides how we are categorized? Is it society, our families, ourselves?  
Does your identity change over time? Can others influence your self-identity?

#### Teacher/Student Roles

The teacher will explain the protocol for the chalk talk. A sample list of words pertain to how we categorize each other will be on the table. The words presented will differ depending on your small groupings. For example, you may have a word bank that focused on gender, religion, and ethnicity with one group and another with words pertaining to sexuality, race, and socio-economic status. This will depend on the maturity level and openness of the students and the teacher’s own comfort level with facilitating discussion.

#### Assessments

This lesson will be assessed informally. The teacher will be looking for engagement and active listening skills. There will be an optional journaling activity after the activity for students to debrief and talk about things that they did not want to share with the small group.

### Connection to Curricular Aim

This learning experience forces the students to begin to think about how they define themselves. Through an open dialogue, students will begin to commit and explore their own self-identities and observe others engaging in the same work. This experience will build empathy and self-confidence among the students in the resource room and in turn, will make them feel more successful and valued in the general education classroom when they begin to discuss these challenging topics in *Flight*.

## Reflection

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Throughout the development of this unit, I have tried to balance serious and mature subject matter with activities and discussions that are developmentally appropriate for 9<sup>th</sup> grade special education students. As with many lesson plans, these will need to be reflected upon and modified depending on how the students access the content. I included multiple essential questions to proactively plan for groups of differing abilities. It is my hope that this unit will not only support them in the general education English I classroom but also help them build an understanding of who they are and how they relate to the people around them.

During my years of teaching in New Haven, I have noticed an increasing need for students to develop their socio-emotional and collaborative learning skills. The increase in the use of technology has created an unforeseen negative effect on the way students connect and interact with one another. It is my hope that this curriculum will help them develop their interpersonal skills and also reached my overarching goal for all of my students to understand what identity is and how it is constructed. I want them to begin to recognize what makes them unique and ultimately understand that although they may come from different backgrounds and learn differently than others, they are still unique and valuable members of our school community and greater society.

# Teacher and Student Resources

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## Bibliography for Teachers

Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., Luyckx, K., & Meeus, W. (2007). Identity formation in early and middle adolescents from various ethnic groups: from three dimensions to five statuses. *J Youth Journal* , 37, 983-996.

This article clearly outlines the three-faceted formation of identities in teenagers. In designing this unit on literature and identity, it was important to understand how students develop a sense of self and make meaning of their place in the larger society. Although this article was quite technical, it did have implications for classroom use.

Hinchey, P. (2004). *Becoming a critical educator: defining a classroom identity , designing a critical pedagogy* . New York, Peter Lang.

This book is a great resource for teachers who are looking to re-engage students and provide equal opportunities to students through reflective and critical practices. It clearly defines what it means to be a critical educator and energizes teachers to question practices that are not beneficial to students.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy . *American Education Research Journal* , 32(3), 465-491.

The theory of the culturally relevant pedagogy is explored. Working under the assumption that the purpose of schools is to reproduce inequality in the greater society, the author focuses on teaching and culture to better understand why certain groups of students, in particular African Americans, are not succeeding in schools.

Milner, H.R. & Tenore, F.B. (2010). Classroom management in diverse classrooms. *Urban Education* , 45, 560-603.

Through reflection and understanding culturally responsive classroom techniques, Milner & Tenore offer helpful suggestions and case studies to ready teachers enter urban school districts.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner* . New York: Basic Books.

This book is great introduction to the importance of reflection in the teaching profession. In order to effectively teach our students, we must learn to effectively reflect on our own practice. Through personal reflection, observations and professional development, teachers can improve their practice and effectively reach the students who sit before them.

Tyler, R. W. (2009). Basic Principles in Curriculum and Instruction. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The Curriculum Studies Reader: Third Edition* (3rd ed.).

This resource was used to glean differentiated instruction strategies and help me narrow down the scope of my unit. It is a very helpful resource for curricula designers.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice-Hall.

This book's outlines the importance of backwards planning and provides educators with a comprehensive look at understanding by design curriculum planning. The authors focus on depth not breadth and use enduring understandings and overarching goals to frame each unit.

Zeichner, K. and Liston, D. (1996). *Reflective teaching* . Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

This book is a great companion to Schon's *The Reflective Practitioner*. It outlines the need for teachers to be collaborative and flexible in the classroom with the aim of creating democratic classrooms through social justice and reflective practices.

## Reading List for Students

Alexie, S. (2007). *Flight*. New York: Grove/Atlantic Inc.

Betts, D. (2015). *Bastards of the reagan era*. New York: Four Way Books

Yang, G. L. (2006). *American born Chinese*. New York: Square Fish

## Appendix A

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### Implementing District Standards

This unit is designed to pair with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I curriculum which address standards in reading, writing, and speaking and listening. A majority of the work in the resource room will focus on the speaking and listening portion. I have listed these below:

SL 9-10 10.1 a-c:

- 5.62 The student will participate in a verbal exchange related to a grade level topic or text with peers and/or adults.
- 5.63 The student will demonstrate appropriate turn taking, including, maintaining eye contact, taking turns and actively listening and engaging in an appropriate verbal exchange.

Through the discussion of identity, the students will be engaged in discourse which will force students listen to one another and engage in conversation about grade level topics. The reading and writing components of the English curriculum will be addressed in the general education classroom.

## Appendix B

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<b>Guiding Question</b>	<b>Your Thoughts</b>	<b>Evidence from Flight</b>
Why did Sherman Alexie choose to make Zits travel in time, in addition to changing bodies? Which body (or bodies) changed Zits the most? Why? What things/concepts did each body symbolize? What did Zits learn about these things/concepts?		
<b>Guiding Question</b>	<b>Your Thoughts</b>	<b>Evidence from Flight</b>
How do the personal stories Zits hears in each body help him?		

Why did Sherman Alexie include so much violence? How does each act of violence change Zits?

Why did Sherman Alexie write about so many plane crashes? What do the plane crashes symbolize?

How are Mary and Robert different from the other foster families Zits has been with? How will these differences affect his growth?

### Guiding Question

**Your  
Thoughts**

**Evidence  
from Flight**

What common experiences do all humans share?

How do people cope with betrayal?

What are the consequences of seeking revenge?

What does it mean to be a family?

### Discovery Draft - Developing a claim

**Prompt:** What part of Flight did you find most interesting? What might you like to write about in your paper? Consider writing about how Zits sees himself or what has made him the way he is. Use your answers to the final discussion questions to help you decide what you would like to write about.

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### Literary Analysis Final Paper - Claims

#### Paper

- A paper is a written argument that makes and proves a point about a text.
- Other names for a paper are: essay, argument, academic paper, academic essay.

#### Claim

- A claim is a sentence (or two) that states the main point you will prove in your paper.
- Your main point should be your own individual opinion about some part of the text.
- Other names for a claim are main point, thesis statement, argument.

#### Example Claim

- Laurie Halse Anderson uses Melinda’s artwork to symbolize her emotional growth throughout the novel Speak.

Notice that this claim includes **my own opinion** about Melinda’s emotional growth **AND a part of the text** (Melinda’s symbolic artwork).

**Use the space below to draft your claim for the Flight paper.**

Use the space below to revise/finalize your claim IF NECESSARY.

### Gathering Evidence

Claim:

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Quotation	Pg #	Analysis/Explanation
		How does this quotation prove your claim?

### Appendix C

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Question	My Thoughts	Classmate's Thoughts
Why does Sherman Alexie include Officer Dave's story? "I think I might be unlovable" (173). "It hurts to have hope" (178).		

Question	My Thoughts	Classmate's Thoughts
Page 180. Why does Zits cry? What is the most important thing he has learned? Why is it important that Zits asks to be called by his real name at the end of the novel? What are themes of the book?		

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