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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume I: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

Taking Pride in Our Character

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by Stephanie Murphy

Social issues arise with bullying, peers, family members, and authority during the middle school years. I want my students to have a voice and demonstrate integrity when faced with adolescent social challenges. In this unit, my students will read a variety of literary works with prideful and courageous characters that my students will both relate to and learn from.

This curriculum is created for a middle school special day class for students with moderate learning needs. The underlying theme of developing a sense of pride and self-respect is applicable, however, to all grade levels and abilities. Students will take an in-depth look at three literary pieces: "Little Things Are Big" by Jesus Colon, *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* by Maya Angelou, and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. The characters portrayed in each piece experience and overcome what my students experience often—a lack of social competence. The readings of these works, combined with reflective classroom activities, will show my students that they can rise above the most challenging social situations.

(Developed for Special Day Class, Language Arts, and Social Skills, grades 5-8; recommended for Language Arts, Social Skills, Character Building, grades 5-9)

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