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No Lye, Nappy or Straight, People Still Gon' Hate: Getting to the Root of the Issue; Colorblindness and Neutrality within Hairstyles and Hair Types

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Introduction

Imagine your child being asked to sit out of a performance because of their hairstyle. No student or parent should be subjected to policies that intentionally shows disregard to one's culture due to the style or texture of their hair. Unfortunately we live in a world where this was not an imagination but a grim reality. Pictured below is a photograph that was sent to my daughter, age 14 and it was the expectation that members have their hair styled similarly for a color guard performance. She was one of two persons of color on the team, so needless to say I was very much taken aback and had plenty of questions. Why is straight hair the standard of beauty? Why are no hairstyles being offered that showcase textures from all ethnicities? Why is there a colorblind approach being taken with regards to hair and styles and textures that are being chosen for performances? Who is making these decisions?

I needed and wanted answers, which inspired the reasoning for such a curriculum unit. It was mentioned in one of the seminars, during the intensive session, that transformation takes place when good things are happening in my classroom. People will begin to wonder what is going on in there. The best way to advocate for the students I serve is my voice, my platform, my experiences, my level of knowledge. I had to challenge myself on how I could unlearn colorblind ideologies. I had to push myself mentally through reading, researching, training, professional development, and teacher education. Jung-ah Choi contends, "According to the liberal discourse that has developed in the post-Jim Crow era, a good citizen is colorblind. Likewise, the prototype of a good teacher has been constructed around the ideal of colorblindness, and this ideal is manifest in comments such as, 'I do not have stereotypes or prejudices,' or 'Everyone deserves an equal chance.'[1]

Through this curriculum unit, I want to challenge my students and potentially other teachers who may use it in their own classrooms with their students. I am writing this curriculum unit to continue to learn, and to continue to grow as an educator. To promote and contribute to ways to eradicate systemic changes in the classroom

with my students through art, music, history, and their knowledge of hair types, textures, styles, political power(s). Though it may seem gradual, and may change completely due to the pandemic and if or when my school district will enforce in person learning environments, something needs to be done to help with the current climate of the world. This curriculum unit could be that change.

(Image of photo sent to my daughter and my attempt at re-creating the hairstyle)

"Very few problems can be solved by pretending that they do not exist." George Lipsitz asserts.[2] One problem that educators pretends does not exist is having a colorblind approach to education and with our students. Taking a stance of neutrality in the classroom, in our pedagogies, and in our ideologies is one problem that lends itself to many others. These problems unfortunately thrive in today's society and become showcased rather proudly on social media outlets and comment sections of various digital platforms. This problem of living in a world that perpetuates this ideology of being colorblind is synonymous to being antiracist. The problem of pretending we do not see color when we see our students, divorces itself from being able to truly see the wonderful kaleidoscope that exists in each unique student we are lucky enough to teach. The pride in their appearance, the style or texture of their hairstyles, the swag of their way of dressing, the snap in their dialect when code-switching in how they speak is what's being ignored when purposefully choosing to remain neutral, to say that you see no color when you see students. Lipsitz further contends, "The uncritical acceptance of colorblindness as the pervasively preferred response to racism perpetuates a long-standing history of failure by the legal and political systems to offer equal opportunity and equal protection of the law to all. It also demonstrates, however, a tremendous failure of the ways of knowing institutionalized in disciplinary research and teaching."[3] If colorblindness has failed the legal and political systems, one could surmise that it has surely had the same adverse effect within the educational system.

My students have witnessed their teachers' hair in many different styles, as they are very observant.

Hairstyles that have included natural hair, braids, extensions, wigs, or weaves. It is because of that, I can utilize my own hair as a springboard to exposing them to how hair traditions evolve or repeat themselves over time, how hair can be perceived as one's crowning glory. Neal A. Lester goes on to say, "The implications and consequences of the seemingly radical split between European standards of beauty and black people's hair become ways of building or crushing a black person's self-esteem, all based on the straightness or nappiness of an individual's hair."[4] I want my third grade students to engage in a brief history of hair because I want them to have an appreciation of differences in hairstyles and textures. Lester continues through reminiscing about his own mother's wigs and the choices she made by further stating, "What interests me even now as I reflect on these early years at home, the 1960s and 1970s, is that neither my mother nor any of her many wig wearing women friends owned afro or braided wigs, or wigs anywhere close to black hairstyles and textures. Their wigs were always straight, long, and flowing."[5]

When I have heard students putting one another down, by name calling, the only comeback I have is, "Friends do not put one another down." This curriculum unit will enhance my own understanding so that I will have meaningful ways in which I can dissuade name calling as it relates to hair. I can bestow knowledge to my students as racial power, and as discussed in seminar, my students and I can collaborate and explore the vast realm of hair and nurture our student(s)-teacher relationship. Yasmin Jiwani articulates, "In the game of strategy and tactics, tactical interruptions, agitations, and ruptures are essential in the long war for social change and equity. They are essential in shifting the ground to enable the telling of new stories and engendering different ways of seeing the world."[6] My students can learn how to create and tell new stories that embraces their differences in hair styles and hair textures, normalizes the beauty of all things hair and not glorify or admonish what is perceived as the standard of beauty in terms of hair.

I want my students to learn how and why people may have chosen to straighten their hair or wear their hair in its natural kinkier state. Why some choose haircuts or dreadlocks, why some choose braids or extensions. I want to create a welcoming of dialogue, understanding and acceptance of their own hair choices and the hair choices of others. Many of them come to school with straight hair, and many of the teachers they encounter daily have straight hair as well. Brenda Ortiz-Loyala states, "Three main positions have emerged regarding the implications of hair straightening practices. The first position asserts that it 'represents an imitation of the dominant white group's appearance and often indicates internalized racism, self-hatred, and/or low self-esteem.'"[7]

Some of the research that I have done speaks to the history of when people began to straighten their hair and why some people felt the need to do so. I want my students to know that history plays a huge part in the culture of self-identity and the decisions they make. Madison Horne explains, "For centuries black communities around the world have created hairstyles that are uniquely their own. These hairstyles span all the way back to the ancient world and continue to weave their way through the social, political and cultural conversations surrounding black identity today."[8] Through the lens of this article, which as accessed through a website, students can explore how different hairstyles came about. It briefly and visually delves into how box braids, dreadlocks, and afro shape-ups were found in drawings and hieroglyphs from Ancient Egypt. The beauty that regaled Queen Nefertiti's towering hairstyles and how she was an icon of feminists globally. It can be discussed how wigs symbolized rank, royalty, and wealth for both males and females alike. How Egyptian law used powerful influences that banned slaves and servants from wearing wigs.

Dreadlocks are more often than not, associated with 20th century Rastafarian and Jamaican culture, but Horne clarifies this misconception by stating, "…according to Dr. Bert Ashe's book, *Twisted: My Dreadlock*

Chronicles, one of the earliest known recordings of the style has been found in the Hindu Vedic scriptures. In its Indian origins, the 'jaTaa', which means 'wearing twisted locks of hair, 'was a hairstyle worn by many of the figures written about 2,500 years ago."[9]

Ultimately, I want my students to hold true to their convictions in whatever or however they choose to wear their hair. Moreover, I want my students to have an appreciation and tolerance of those who have chosen a different route for their own hair journey.

The unit, seems almost overwhelming at times, because of the topic. I do not want my students or their parents to be offended by any of the material I put before them to learn, nor do I want to be perceived as the spokesperson for Black people and for all things that have to do with Black hairstyles, opinions, or culture. I think the students will truly appreciate the children's books that I have found thus far, to accompany the unit. The illustrations and stories are true reflections of the makeup of my students, and they absolutely love when they see themselves as book characters or authors. As Dan frequently reminded us fellows in seminar, I do not want to water down this unit by simply providing books with more characters who resemble the make-up of my classroom. I want myself and my third grade students to approach hairstyles with an open mind and to not shy away from them.

One of the guest speakers, Kenneth Smith, a high school music teacher said that some ways music could be productive in teaching were:

a. Music could provide a temporary experience of how the world can be, rather than what it is.
b. Music can be a space where we are free to imagine, where we are free to dream.

The same things could be said about students' hairstyles if it were viewed as a form of art or if students knew some background history of hairstyles, be it their own, or of book characters. I try my very best to put emotion, real raw emotion, into most of my lessons. I see this curriculum unit shedding light on what some might deem a taboo subject and great conversations coming from it. As also discussed in Dan's seminar, the authenticity of the audience plays an important role to students, to the nation. The hairstyles of the students will lend itself perfectly to the authentic encouragement of them to participate in expanding their own knowledge of the subject(s). It has been in my experience, that no matter what I map out or plan, it is the responses from my students that takes a lesson to the next level. We also discussed in seminar that it is definitely okay to not have everything figured out, Nataliya Braginsky mentioned that it is also okay to for lessons to be emergent and happen organically. My students are very much an extension of myself, they can read my body language and facial expressions very well. The history that is in some of the articles and websites used for this curriculum unit, will for sure evoke some emotions from all who participate in the learning of it. I plan on teaching my students the history of certain hairstyles, the terms used to describe the textures of hair, and the appreciation of their own hairstyle and the appreciation of the hairstyles of others.

I have never considered myself to be "woke" but after reading the book from Dan HoSang's seminar and the articles suggested and researched on my own, I found myself being metaphorically, and rather urgently roused from my ignorant slumber. I owe it to myself and my students to bring this newfound awareness into my classroom. I have been tasked with the challenge of changing the future of America by teaching the youth of today.

According to urban dictionary, on urbandictionary.com, the definition reads as follows:

1. **Woke** (/ˈwoʊk/) as a political term of African-American origin refers to a perceived awareness of issues

concerning social justice and racial justice. It is derived from the African-American Vernacular English expression "stay **woke**", whose grammatical aspect refers to a continuing awareness of these issues.

While there is not a remedy as to what works best, what I can do in my classroom is educate myself and my students in an attempt to clear the muddy waters of hair in terms of textures, advertisements for beauty standards, hairstyling practices, a brief history, and some biases. There can also be some clarity as to emphatically knowing that there is definitely a grapple of power that people of color do not have and are sometimes forced into the standard of representation that mimics Caucasian counterparts. It is my hope that this unit will allow third grade students to understand that hair is in some ways, more than just hair. Hair can be viewed and taught in such a way that it dismisses the notion completely of being colorblind about it and instead of taking a stance of neutrality about hair, we can happily marry children's literature, art, and music. There can be a disruption of teaching reading in a normal traditional manner. I can with intention, present ideas and strategies to students in such a way that it still focuses on hair as the main idea, but uses art, music, and history to drive that point.

To clear any foreseeable misunderstandings or misconceptions, I will not pretend to be an expert in this field and will shed some light on what exactly this means. Let's start with defining the problems, with stating what the mere definitions of the words colorblind and neutrality mean.

1. **Colorblind** (adjective) /**kuhl**-er-blahynd/-showing or characterized by freedom from racial bias; not influenced by skin color.
2. **Neutrality** (noun) /noo-**tral**-i-tee/-the state of being neutral
3. **Neutral** (adjective) /**noo**-tr*uhl*/-not taking part or giving assistance in a dispute or war between others.

While I started out with only scratching the surface of the idea of hair, or where I wanted this unit to go, the more seminar sessions held with Dan and fellows during the two week intensive session, the more in depth I wanted to go. "Until the birth of my daughter, Jasmine, some ten years ago, I had never given head hair much thought." Lester Remarks.[10] I too shared that same sentiment and realized that I have been doing my students a huge disservice by not taking the time to expose them to a topic that is so culturally relevant to them. I had unknowingly taken a stance of colorblindness to one of the very things that showcases individuality, creativity, and art in every single one of my students, even me! Our hair! Their hair and mine was certainly something that we most often felt proud of, but I had witnessed students have self-doubts or sadness with their own. Unbeknownst to me, I had missed a most valuable teachable moment with my students, because I did not know that hairstyles and hair textures were so politically charged and held with such esteem and power. Nicquel Terry Ellis Charisse Jones wrote, "Black people young, old and in between have been rejected from jobs, schools and other public places because of the texture and style of their hair."[11] Students may not be aware that the choices they make about their hairstyles and hair textures, someone could have them experience an unjust moment, because of opposing views.

Content

Dan showcased so eloquently throughout the two week intensive session how to beautifully connect interdisciplinary studies briefly at the beginning of each zoom conference call. Each day started promptly as scheduled, but a different way each day. There were art paintings, music, short music videos, short video

clips, and/or artists that began each seminar. Following that model lends itself to also the notion of changing the way I think about teaching reading, interrupting the predictability of education in my classroom.

The students will for sure need to know the academic language that is so robust in the unit. Teachers and students will also need to know that unfortunately the education system in the US isn't ideal and doesn't always contribute to equality. Teachers should pay specific attention to the definition of what having a colorblind racial ideology suggests, "…although CBRI has historically been marketed as a positive—skin color should not matter; therefore, ignoring it will eradicate racial problems—it actually leads to a misrepresentation of reality in ways that allow and even encourage discrimination against students of color in K-12 education, and it contributes to a shared, communal ignorance that permits those in power to ignore the realities of racism." (Shari A. Castro-Atwater)[12] She goes on to say how that in today's racially charged world, the masks of colorblindness erases important features of the daily struggles that students of color experience.

Starting with virtual art gallery field trips or gallery walks inside of the actual classroom, I will more than likely have the dates on the backs of the photographs for the hairstyles being used, out of the view of the students, and have them write down when in history do they think the hairstyle came about. We could discuss, at the beginning, simple things such as what we like or dislike about the hairstyle, perhaps where would one be going with this particular hairstyle, and could they see themselves wearing that particular hairstyle. After the gallery walk, I will along with the students, put the hairstyles in chronological order. As we put the hairstyles in chronological order, starting with the first hairstyle, we would as a class discuss the time period of that hairstyle.

It is then that the history lesson would be given. Rumeana Jahangir outlines, "Black hair has been an integral feature of black history-from African tribal styles to dreadlocks and the afro."[13] If time permits, I would do a read aloud of one of the many children's books I found to accompany the curriculum unit. With a partner, I would have students look at the illustrations in the book and try to determine the time in history that it could be from.

At the end of this unit, I want students to know some, not all, of the history surrounding hairstyles and be able to discuss its importance. They should have a better understanding and appreciation of different hairstyles as it relates to the cultural makeup of our classroom. I also want students to be mindful of those cultures that do not make up our classroom or school, and know how to research their own information regarding that culture and not simply assuming that they will always be in a setting where most of the people look like them.

I think students will engage in the material by wanting to know more. If I task them the work to find a hairstyle (from any culture, from a book, newspaper, magazine, or online) and bring it to class so we could research the time in history it came from, they would be very eager to do. The same thing with the books. If I put the students into groups of 3-4 and gave each group a book, they would love to research the history of the hairstyles in that book. Jahangir said, "During the 19th Century, slavery was abolished in much of the world, including the United States in 1865. However, many black people felt pressure to fit in with mainstream white society and adjusted their hair accordingly."[14] Students will for sure begin to self-reflect on why they or their parents choose to adorn their crowns of hair, with the current hairstyle they are wearing. Has the texture of their hair changed since birth or remained the same? Why has it or has it not changed or remained the same since birth? Was it considered too nappy? Too unmanageable? Were they considered tender headed? According to urban dictionary, on urbandictionary.com, the definition reads as follows:

Tender headed-having a sensitive scalp that is easily irritated during hair-styling procedures. Chiefly used

among African-Americans, the term has existed for at least a century.

example: She was so *tender-headed*, her mom used to give her ibuprofen before she did her hair.

Did they, their parents or their teachers, buy into colorblindness and stances of neutrality and convinced them to second guess their decision to have natural hair? Were they somehow convinced to conform to another view of their hairstyle or texture? Is it because they simply wanted that particular hairstyle, perhaps they too wanted to fit in with mainstream society, or is it simply because whether your hair is nappy or straight, people still gon' hate?

Michael Paulino describes a scene, "A black man walks into my barber shop on Manhattan's Lower East Side and removes his hat, revealing hair that is thick and tightly coiled. There's usually a hum of hair clippers buzzing through the loud *bachata* music in the shop, but the moment the man walks through the heavy glass door, a silence seems to befall the place.

'Este muchacho tiene pelo malo,' one of the barbers says to the others, shaking his head. But in English, the barber doesn't tell the man his hair is bad *(malo).* Instead, he says, 'Your hair ... it's ... ehm ... nappy, yes?' The translation of English words into other languages often unveils some interesting layers of meaning. The translation the barber chose for nappy was *malo;* the two terms were synonymously used to describe the hair texture of millions of people of African descent."[15] Some questions began to simmer in my head: Where does the term *nappy* come from and why does it have such negative connotations? Is it possible to reclaim a word that has been used as a slur for so long? Have educators and students taken a colorblind approach to the meaning of the word nappy? Do we not see nappy or do we pretend to not see nappy because it is thought of as something negative? Dwanna L. McKay says, "Colorblindness is the idea that racism no longer impacts social mobility because it is illegal to deny housing, education, and employment based on raced."[16] The negative associations that have long since endured for people who have what is considered nappy hair need to be reevaluated. Hair that is course, unruly, hard to comb or manage is deemed problematic to those who try to rationalize their own dominances and superiorities. Students should not have the views taken on by mainstream society, and have their hair scrutinized or viewed as subhuman. Paulino further showcases how, "In 1998, white New York City schoolteacher Ruth Sherman received tremendous backlash after assigning *Nappy Hair*, a book by Carolivia Herron focused on cultivating positive feelings about nappy hair in young children."[17] After reading and researching I have found that although my intentions may be pure, there are some who will cause a stir because they have been hurt by the word nappy, a word that triggers pain for them. I have to hope that beyond that hurt and pain, students and teachers alike can embrace and proudly reclaim the word nappy.

Take the scene from the major motion picture, Malcolm X, 1992, where actor Denzel Washington portrays the black activist, is attempting to straighten his hair.[18] Also the scene from the movie What's Love Got to do With It, 1993, where actor Angela Bassett portrays the singer Tina Turner. It's in the salon scene that her hair is burned out and she instead has to wear a wig for their upcoming performance. It could also be worth mentioning, the movie B.A.P.S. (Black American Princesses) where Halle Berry and Natalie Desselle encounter strange looks of skepticism when they show up to Hollywood (Los Angeles) with tall, structured hair.[1920] There are many film adaptations that show salons and barbershops as social functions of black culture in America. While for some, that is just another comical moment in a movie, but for some it is a reality that according to Ben Arogundade says, "Many blacks argue that imitating European standards of beauty and grooming was

necessary for blacks to be accepted by white culture, especially by potential white masters and employers. For generations hairstyles have reflected the history of American race relations and the way blacks wore their hair reflected the dominant white culture. African American hair was straightened, combed, or parted to mimic Western coiffures. In response to the propaganda in black communities to accept the European standards of beauty, the black hair care market expanded."[21] Why do students conform to what is white? Is it some deep rooted issue that haunts their psyche and causes this or is it because they have not been shown the beauty of kinky, curly, natural, nappy hair? The standard of haircare and what is deemed socially acceptable or even professional is so poorly done. Students deserve to learn about neutrality as it relates to their own hair and their own ideologies and beliefs. There should be no rules, per se, to hair because in the cultures of some, hair is traditionally known as ones crowning glory. Imagine the students whose hairstyle or hair texture is not being seen from someone they spend so much of their youth with, their teacher. When taking a stance of neutrality, or purposefully choosing to not see color, imagine how invisible that student feels. Teachers pride themselves on being accepting of all students, no matter what, yet there are students who are unintentionally being disregarded because of the lack of awareness. These are hard conversations that educators will need to have with themselves first, to challenge their own ideologies, their own privileges.

Students will, with the help of me research the history of those hairstyles and textures and complete timelines that shows up to five years of their own hair journeys. I want to have students compare pictures of themselves from five years ago and look at the differences in their hairstyles and textures today. As discussed in seminar, the sharing of these familial photographs with the class will help to foster intimacy and build relationships with students and their peers, and students with their teachers. This could be done whether school is being attended virtually or in person.

I want the students to think of the leaders of our school and what their hairstyles and textures look like. I want to expose students to discrimination with regards to hairstyles and textures and present perhaps maybe one or two court cases involving such instances. As discussed in seminar, the baseline or standard for art seemed to be all about Western European art. I want students to pose questions as to what they think the baseline or standard for hairstyles and textures is and why they believe that to be so. What evidence or proof do they have to support their theory? Does the evidentiary proof give credence to being colorblind or having a neutral stance is racist or showcases people of color in a negative manner? I want students to begin to think critically and question more than just what is being presented to them at a surface level, but to delve deeper into their questioning in order to form a framework that is not simply accepting of what is being placed before them. According to Kathleen Cleaver, "By the late 1960s and 1970s, the natural hair movement was permeating the black population. The afro was not just seen on members of the Black Panther Party, but on college students, other activists, and in film. Blaxploitation films, like *Cleopatra Jones* and *Foxy Brown*, were also featuring female characters with their hair in its natural state."[22] Challenging students to become lifelong critical thinkers, to unlearn colorblind ideologies through the knowledge gained from being taught and exposed to this curriculum unit is what should be gained.

Rationale

Castro-Atwater says, "The school community in which teachers are employed can have an impact on their philosophy of how and when to discuss issues of race." [23] If the culture and climate of the entire school could potentially be changed, and for the better, it's worth noting that research has found a significant relationship between positive views of school climate and level of increased racial awareness.[24]

Why hair? Why race neutrality and colorblindness? Why expose students to such a topic that is sure to cause some controversy? My answer is short, why not? Lipsitz said it best, "Yet in the very locality where this toxic stew is being concocted, teachers, students, parents, and community members rooted in the Black Resistance Tradition of New Orleans have conjured up an alternative social vision and developed an oppositional social praxis by forming the learning community they call Students at the Center (SAC)."[25] This could be the start to that, but at the most basic of levels, at the elementary level. Students could with this unit, grapple with the challenges that are associated with the topic and discussions pertained to hair, but also foster a sense of connecting the unit to their own lives to write and research and collaboratively engage in a movement that has the potential to spark social justice for not only them, but students around the world. For too long students have been led to believe through literature, art, and music that only straight hair is beautiful. Until fairly recently, the natural hair movement has gained momentum and is spreading like a beautifully, nappy, wildfire. The 70s put the afro on the rise when members of black activist groups who wore them, became susceptible to arrests and interrogation. With certain hairstyles becoming more mainstream, because more than one ethnicity is wearing it, it starts to lose meaning. History has a way of repeating itself, so I owe it to my students to teach them these multifaceted, sometimes unspoken truths or lies, origins and histories of hairstyles and hair textures. Cleaver goes on to say, "Braids and cornrows — the new "natural" styles — were not welcome in many workplaces. (In 1981, Renee Rogers lost her job at American Airlines for wearing cornrows. In 1987, Cheryl Tatum lost her job at the Hyatt hotel for wearing braids.)"[26] The early mid 80s is when the natural hair movement started to dissipate, primarily because the afro became a target when it was worn by activists.

I want my students to grow up and become citizens who do not choose to take stances of neutrality or colorblindness with those they come into contact with. I want my students to not grow up and think that it is okay to require a type of hairstyle that embodies only their views of beauty standards. Teachers across the world are very much in charge of helping to shape and mold future leaders of this world, so it is up to me, to expose my students to as much culture, art, music, and literature as I possibly can. Not just any, but those that are worthy of enhancing their repertoire of knowledge. Yes, these are hard times that we are living in. Yes, there is a divide amongst humans with regards to race, equity, privilege; or lack thereof. It is because of those things, students deserve to be taught things that will not feed into the mentality of favoring one hair type over others. A very beginner, basic of understanding hair for people of all backgrounds. To showcase that while hair is complex and full of culture and identity, there is a very unique experience or transformation of knowledge being passed on to students that embodies not an appreciation of it, but a respect for hair. To introduce to them the unspoken rules that sometimes are associated with hair:

1. Do not ask if it is real.
2. Do not ask if you can touch it.
3. Do not ask if they will change it.

The complexities that surround hair and the relationship to its owner is that, to discuss someone's hair journey, they need to be trusted persons in order to give in great detail their triumphs or failures in it. At the end of the day, whether theirs or others' hair has no lye, is nappy, is straight, people still might hate, but it's really no one's business but their own.

Demographics

Hearne Elementary School is located in Hearne, Texas, a town with a 2020 population of roughly 4,624 residents. The interesting statistical data for the make-up of the town in comparison to the make-up of the elementary school campus is this:

Hearne, Texas Racial Groups/Ethnicities	Hearne Elementary Racial Groups/Ethnicities
White: 60.06%	White: 9%
Black or African American: 38.33%	Black or African American: 48%
Hispanic: 38.33%	Hispanic: 42%
Two or More Races: 0.36%	Two or More Races: 1%
Native American: 0.00%	Native American: 0.00%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.00%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.00%

The elementary school, Pre-K through 6th Grade, had 465 students as of the 2018-2019 school year. This campus of Hearne Elementary offers 99% of its student population, free and reduced lunch. Of the 465 students, 98.7% are considered to be economically disadvantaged, and 63.6% of those students are also considered at risk of dropping out of school.

21.1% (compared to 19.7% statewide) of the students were enrolled in bilingual and English Learning (EL) programs. With regards to special programs at the campus, gifted and talented students accounts for 1.7% of the campus (7.9% statewide) while special education (SPED) accounts for 16.6% (9.6 statewide).

The students who attend school here do not showcase much diversity, however, the same cannot be said about their idiosyncratic hairstyles and textures. Hairstyles that come in the form of their own real hair or weaves or extensions added. These hairstyles boast an array of dread locks, exotic braids with detailed patterns, beads, or hair jewelry. Some have fancy ponytails with big, bright hair bows, ribbons, or barrettes adorning those ponytails. Students sport haircuts such as bald fades with intricate patterns or designs etched in them, natural hairstyles that showcase afro puffs or afros. Caitlyn L. Ryan and Adrienne D. Dixon agree that rethinking pedagogy to re-center race can lead teachers to thinking about their own assumptions and how forming new understandings about teaching and learning can be made possible when research models and paradigms are intertwined. They say specifically, "A common approach in multicultural teacher education is to 'expose' preservice teachers to perspectives different from their own. The hope is that by reading literature by and/or about 'other' groups, listening to speakers who are 'other,' visiting 'other' neighborhoods and communities, or playing simulation games that help preservice teachers feel what it's like to be 'other,' they will finish their teacher education programs more informed and willing to embrace difference (Montecinos, 2004)."[27] This curriculum unit will be taught to approximately 60 third grade students in the 2020-2021 school

year. It is yet to be determined if learning will take place completely in person or completely online. As was mentioned in the seminar, I can make do with whatever obstacles or challenges the pandemic presents as that had been proven with how the Yale National Initiative took place this year completely and entirely remotely and virtually with email correspondence and zoom video conference calls.

The Unit

This curriculum unit is slated to take approximately 12 weeks to cover from start to finish. Due to the uncertainties of the how the district will be returning, I am leaving some room for flexibility. Due to the activities, virtual field trips, and research that will go into the unit it is important that I give enough time to explore all these areas with fidelity and not just simply rush through them for the sake of completing the unit.

Many children's picture books have been set to accompany this unit to lend expertise in other areas of cross curricula domains of learning. There are books of exploration for students that deal with but are not limited to hair, music, art, and history. At the end of the unit, students will have been through a multitude of subjects and media that until this curriculum unit, they may have never been exposed to.

This unit will teach students how to shift their own way of thinking or viewing their world, their self, and their peers from a colorblind standpoint and instead embrace beauty in all forms. To not dismiss the obvious or be harsh in their judgment about their own hairstyles or the hairstyles of others. Students will complete compare and contrast activities where they look through a metaphorical lens when viewing art, listening to music, reading books, or noticing in themselves or others the many intricacies that some purposefully take a stance of neutrality on and instead purposefully choose to do the opposite. I want to shift their ideologies now, with the hopes of creating nonracist citizens in the future.

Strategies

Lessons would begin by hearing songs from YouTube clips, quotes, memes, gifs, art pieces, or Instagram posts. Because my district has chosen to attend school virtually and students will join me for class through zoom links, it will be easier to show clips and songs, as I can simply share my screen with them.

After that content is presented, they will go into breakout rooms and discuss what they liked or noticed, what was the author's purpose (how did it make them feel), and what did they notice. These casual conversations or "vir-chats" as I have named them, will assist students when making connections to texts. One of the Texas state standards says that students have to connect to texts three ways:

1. Text to self-connections (how does it relate to you specifically)
2. Text to world-connections (how does it relate to the world around you)
3. Text to text-connections (how does it relate to another story you know)

After connections have been made and vir-chats have been completed, students will listen to me read in real

time to them, or be given a link of me reading a story to them. The stories will begin with books that expose them to different styles and textures of hair. These first two books will serve as a springboard for introducing academic language, which is crucial to being taught either first, or in tandem to the start of the curriculum unit. Some of the academic vocabulary that must be taught consists but is not limited to these words:

1. Neutrality
2. Colorblindness
3. Antiracist
4. Texture

Consider this unit to be a living document, that more than likely will be updated as the world around us changes during this pandemic.

Once the story has been heard, students will again go into vir-chats to discuss how it relates to them, to form connections to the story.

This will segue into students collecting pictures of themselves, which showcases different hairstyles and hair textures. As students collect these photos, we will begin to form timelines which will aid in discussing the history of the hairstyles they have adorned, and the history of the hairstyles in the two books/stories that they have heard. The first two stories are *Cool Cuts* and *Happy Hair* by Mechal Renee Roe.

Each day of the unit will build on the next, while maintaining structure that students thrive on. It is my hope to have a pattern start to be recognized by students as they begin to form and make connections. When hearing a story, students will either research the art depicted in the illustrations, the history of the hairstyles and textures of those illustrations, the political power of the hairstyles and textures, or the musicians' hairstyles and textures. As virtual field trips are taken to art museums, more research will be done with regards to the hairstyles and textures of the artist themselves or of the images being depicted.

Students will be able to at the end of the unit, explain through their research why we have chosen this area of study, and how it relates specifically to them. Students will be able to understand the need for building and maintaining not only our classroom culture, but that of the school. It is my hope that students and teachers alike can learn and grow as positive agents of change for our world.

Mentor text

Musician study

Author/Illustrator study

Picture walks

Timelines

Book reports

Videography reports (recorded with their own personal devices) **the district will be a one-to-one district when school resumes

Art projects

Personal photo timelines

Appendix Implementing District Standards/Suggested Instructional Sequence

There will be several speaking, reading, and writing standards from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or TEKS. Because so much of this unit is based on the reception the students are to it and how quickly they divorce their own biases, colorblindness, and neutral stances on hairstyles, many of the standards will be based on their research and how well they speak to the topics of what they have been taught and how they plan to move forward progressively through life now knowing these things.

3.6 Comprehension. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts

3.6(B)* generate questions about text before, during, and after reading to deepen under- standing and gain information

3.6(E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society.

Students will see a piece of artwork, listen to a song, see a musician or composer, or read a book and BEFOREHAND, DURING, or AFTERWARDS will generate questions. This of course will have to be modeled for them with consistency until they can do so independently. Their questions will at first be tailored specifically to the hairstyles and/or textures of what is being presented to them. As they engage in more lessons and are exposed to more academic vocabulary, I will want their questions to dig deeper into the content of hair. For instance, questioning the purpose or historical significance of the hairstyle or texture in question or predicting stance of the author, poet, musician, book character, or illustrator in terms of racial neutrality or colorblindness.

3.10 Author's purpose.

3.10(C)* explain the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes. Students will be making predictions of why the author, artist, musician, or illustrator used print or graphic features with the end goal being to persuade, to inform, or to entertain its targeted audience. Research (embedded skills throughout Reading and Writing)

3.13 Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes.

3.13(A) generate questions on a topic for formal and informal inquiry

3.13(B) develop and follow a research plan with adult assistance

3.13(C) identify and gather relevant information from a variety of sources

3.13(D) identify primary and secondary sources

3.13(E) demonstrate understanding of information gathered

3.13(F) recognize the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarism when using source materials

3.13(G) create a works cited page

3.13(H) use an appropriate mode of delivery, whether written, oral, or multimodal, to present results.

Students will be conducting research, with my assistance, on the history or evolution of their own hairstyles and textures, my hairstyle and texture, or the hairstyles and textures of authors, illustrators, artists, musicians. Students will learn the importance of plagiarism, citing their sources, and will get to ultimately showcase two final pieces. One part of the research project will be traditional pencil and paper and one part of the research project will be their choice of multimedia or stand, speak, and deliver, or make a videography of their learning with their voice and visual aids.

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Because the unit is intended for children, please adhere to these strict times 0:00-0:36, 0:40-1:15, 1:20-1:42

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