

IDENTITY & ACTIVISM: HELPING EDUCATORS UNDERSTAND  
INTERSECTIONALITY & CULTIVATE INTERSECTIONAL ACCEPTANCE THROUGH  
YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

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**Title**

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State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The issue I address is intersectionality in K-12 education. To address this issue, the purpose of this paper is to identify intersectionality, explore ways to help educators understand and accept intersectionality, and then bring the new knowledge into their classrooms. This will be done by the creation of a continuing education course using Young-Adult and Middle-Grade literature and appropriate supplemental materials on identity, activism, and intersectionality. The primary goals are to eliminate a color-blind approach to teaching and to showcase rich diverse texts that educators can learn from and bring into their classrooms.

## **DEDICATION**

I couldn't have made it through graduate school without my parents' support. I will always be grateful for their unending belief in me. Matt, I'm so thankful for you being my rock these last two years. There aren't sufficient words to encompass how much you've helped me through this process. Luke, I'm excited that we finally got to do something together as siblings and graduating with our masters seems like a pretty cool thing to share. I'd also like to thank my committee for being such an inspiring group of women. Dr. Bertolini, Dr. Hassel, and Dr. Quintus, your advice has been invaluable and your energy for education is contagious. Lastly, I'd like to thank Thunder Coffee for keeping me caffeinated throughout this process.

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## **PART 1: PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The goal of this project is to create resources for educators already working in schools, be it teachers, support staff, or administrators, to learn about intersectionality and how they can continue their journey of understanding as well as to support their students. These resources will take form in a continuing education class offered through NDSU. Teachers are required to take a certain number of credits to keep up their licenses. For example, in North Dakota, a teacher has to take 6 credits every 5 years (“Renewing a License”). EDUC 2000 courses through NDSU are often what educators look at when deciding what credits to take for their personal and professional development for upkeep. Currently, there are no courses offered surrounding DEI or Intersectionality as it relates to young adult literature (YAL) or middle-grade literature (MG). The class title will reflect the learning being done throughout the course, Identity & Activism in Young Adult and Middle-Grade Literature. While I am focusing on intersectionality within the course itself, the term identity easily gets the course goals across with familiar language.

I strongly believe that literature can teach us a multitude of lessons in an approachable way that encourages readers to expand their thinking. In their book, *Forged by Reading: The Power of a Literate Life*, Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst drew inspiration from Rudine Sims Bishop. They state that voracious readers of children’s literature tend to be idealistic in their thinking, so they can often be the ones to find books or a particular story that will change a child’s life, but that realistically, literature has limits. It won’t rid the world of its problems, but it can help us understand each other better (Beers & Probst 21). As we read and reflect, books give us the “opportunity to change ourselves” and as readers, we ultimately control what we take from the text (13). The reading is what shapes us, not the words on the page. Anyone can read books on anti-racism or being an ally, but if they just put them on the shelf when they are done, nothing

will prosper or change (14-15). This can be seen in the way that social movements and protest movements have become incorporated into classroom curriculum, such as #BlackLivesMatter. Taking what is happening in the world and adding it into the classroom helps synthesize the words on the page with what is going on around us, thus helping preservice teachers and students develop racial literacy. In addition, teachers, both veteran and aspiring teachers, must be prepared to talk about sensitive issues in the classroom and move past their own biases (Price-Dennis 4-5). Part of that work then means that teachers must read diverse books. NCTE's Position Statement on "Preparing Teachers with Knowledge of Children's and Young Adult Literature" calls for more work with preservice teachers to deeply understand children's literature. Their research shows that teachers who are readers are better at engaging their students in reading. This education in children's literature can also help educators curate their classroom libraries (Buehler et al.). By providing a list of books that educators read, the goal isn't to influence the thinking of the course participants, but to provide them the tools to think through the themes and develop the knowledge they can act on as teachers.

In preparation for finding the most-informed choices for this course I looked for books that were widely accessible. Teachers are tasked with purchasing many classroom supplies with their own money and having the added requirement of purchasing texts for this class seemed like an unnecessary burden or deterrent. I checked in the FPS library as well as the Fargo Public Library, looked at various apps (Hoopla, Libby, and Sora) for e-book and audiobook versions, at local bookstores, and checked large consumer sites to see if they were available online for purchase used or new. As an avid audiobook listener, I wanted that to be an option for those interested.



A potential advantage to purchasing the books as then they could be incorporated into classroom libraries. Teachers are often asked to use personal funds to provide robust books for students in their classrooms, though the ability and inability to fund classroom libraries is an example of racist and classist systems in action (Beers & Probst 158). NCTE's Statement on Classroom Libraries calls for classrooms to have diverse libraries. There are many benefits to students having direct access to books in their classrooms, such as helping provide students choice in reading and encouraging recreational reading. Part of their statement in order to increase literary resources, teachers may enlist help from stakeholders-administration, parents, community leaders- to assist in financially supporting a classroom library ("Statement on Classroom Libraries").

For the project, it is important to find recent texts that provide a variety of perspectives. I looked for books by diverse authors and featured diverse characters. While I won't be using the term #OwnVoices based on #WeNeedDiverseBooks June 6, 2021 press release (Lavoie), I do want to include authors who are writing about an experience they are closely familiar with, be it their own identity and/or culture or their children's. I looked for a handful of books that specifically featured intersectional characters and that was a main part of the plot or their character development.

Despite diverse student populations, teachers in the United States are majority white. This makes it pertinent for educators to be aware of their white privilege and white fragility. White privilege is any advantage people have because of being white. This could come in large-scale forms such as housing, the job market, health care, or education or in small-scale forms such as always having a crayon or band aid in your skin tone or not being followed around in a store for fear of shoplifting. Poor or disadvantaged white folk may feel like the term "privilege" applies

to them, but white privilege doesn't mean that someone hasn't suffered, instead it means that they've never been at a disadvantage because of their skin color (Collins). White fragility, a term that has been in the spotlight with help from Robin DiAngelo and her book *White Fragility*, is when a white person feels discomfort or defensiveness about the topic of race. In learning about our diverse students, we will learn to put our own discomfort behind us and become willing to learn about allyship and intersectional education. Ibram X. Kendi uses his book, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* to detail how Black people have been at a disadvantage or "stamped" since the beginning of America's foundation (Kendi 2017)<sup>1</sup>.

My project differs from other book studies of this sort because it does not focus on one specific text, but instead looks at many throughout the course. In addition, it will not look specifically at teaching practices but look at broadening our cultural knowledge through mostly fiction books aimed at giving perspective to teachers about different students they may have in their classrooms. Due to this gained knowledge, educators will be able to provide intersectional and inclusive resources they've learned about in this course to their students and to share with their schools. Both factors together will hopefully show teachers the need for diverse reading material that can be easily accessed by students. Included in this changing of perspectives is examining our biases, acknowledging our privilege, acknowledging the harmful effects of color-blindness, and dismantling patriarchal and colonial thought processes. Reading fiction could help take away some of the pressure that teachers may feel as they read and grow. People don't know what they don't know and could easily feel judged in a situation where they are looking at

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<sup>1</sup> Two books that detail the dangers of white fragility, privilege, and feminism are *Hood Feminism* by Mikki Kendall and *White Tears/Brown Scars* by Ruby Hamad.

historically polarizing subject matter. If educators haven't read anything to educate themselves in DEI or have had limited exposure to cultures different from their own, these low-stakes book studies could be a great opening point for them to delve into more diverse fiction for their students, fiction for themselves, or nonfiction education. Reading books on antiracism is important in an antiracism education but is just the tip of the iceberg.

A term I will draw heavily upon is "racial literacy." *Advancing Racial Literacies in Teacher Education* by Detra Price-Dennis and Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz provides the definitions I will be working from. Originally used in sociology and legal studies, racial literacy is now a prominent term in the field of education. It is a

skill practiced when individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race as it intersects with institutionalized systems... As applied to teaching and learning in schools, racial literacy is the ability of students to identify, in professionally published and student-generated texts, concepts related to race and racism, and exercise their skills in discussing the complexity of these topics. (13-14)

Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz add that a new kind of racial literacy could be viewed as moving "beyond racial categories that are defined by a capitalistic, White-dominated world. Instead, we must make space to discuss and understand the nuances of race and how it intersects with various interlocking identities" (14).

Racial literacy plays a vital role as educators choose books. They need to be aware that there will still be problematic issues, despite their best efforts. Children's literature is not the best way to teach history, as with literature there are certain historical aspects taken out, despite the best intentions of the author. Educators should make sure that characters are celebrated, nurtured, and honor the tradition. In her chapter "Diverse African American Nonfiction for Children" in

*Reading and Teaching with Diverse Nonfiction Children's Books*, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas presents guidelines educators can follow to find authentic African American children's literature. They can ask themselves questions to make sure their choices are authentic, like evaluating what kind of story is being told or who is telling the story (Thomas 90). Of note, this course does not address the rich nonfiction choices for their students and for themselves as learners. But by reading nonfiction, there can be an examination of power dynamics within the literature beyond the characters, such as the author, editor, publisher, and the contexts surrounding the publication of the text ("Introduction: Diverse Nonfiction in PreK-8 Classrooms" p. xvi).

Despite feeling overdue, the emergence of non-dominant cultures being authentically represented in literature is a "powerful vehicle for confronting racism. The accurate information and rich images they convey have the capacity to break down negative stereotypes and encourage understanding and appreciation of different cultures," (Noll p. 183). Despite authentic voices, if a children's book addresses subject matter viewed as controversial, the text then is automatically viewed as subversive. At the forefront of these debates are texts that question traditional gender norms and many books recently challenged or banned are based on adult objections to "content related to gender *and* sexuality" (Friddle). Finding authentic voices, asking questions about the peritext, and then making sure that the participants of my course are aware that authentic voices in books are important for students to have available and should not be viewed as perverse or giving children distressing messages. This has gone as far as states designing legislation to ban antiracist teaching. In her Pulitzer Prize-winning essay, *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones explores the history of the United States starting in 1619 when the first ship full of enslaved people came to the US. Since then, there has been curriculum developed for the 1619 Project as well as two beautiful books put together, *The 1619 Project*

edited by Nikole Hannah-Jones, Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman, and Jake Silverstein, and *Four Hundred Souls* edited by Ibram X. Kendi. They both compile short stories, essays, and poems telling history starting in 1619.

An unintended consequence of these works of well-researched truths is that conservative legislators call it “un-American” and placed bans on the teaching of critical race theory and the 1619 project. In response, NCTE published its own statement in March of 2022 on educators’ right to antiracist teaching. They not only state that teachers should be safe to teach antiracism, but it is their responsibility to teach it. They recommend ongoing professional development for educators, explicitly express solidarity with people of diverse backgrounds, and to promote cultural diversity. They also say that there should be funds available for meaningful professional development. They push back at the misunderstanding of critical race theory by emphasizing that everyone, not just educators, needs to deepen their knowledge of antiracism and learn strategies for countering rhetoric of fear (Long et al.). The position statement is thorough, impactful, and empowered. It gives educators a sense of purpose and gives them support they can take into their classrooms.

While this course isn’t situated in giving educators antiracist, inclusive resources to take directly into their teaching practices, there has been a lot of scholarship already done on using diverse literature in the classroom, from simple tips of differentiating language, to larger shifts. There are many aspects of current life that don’t show up in the classroom that are affecting our students, such as mass incarceration, poverty and the welfare system, the impact of militarization at home and abroad, where “an exploration from a more feminist perspective can connect to a students’ lives and expose them to a more expansive view of what history is and why it matters,” (“The New Misogyny” p. 21). Along with teaching relevant subject matter, there is much talk

about naming things the way they should, be it from expanding the term bullying (homophobia, sexual harassment, etc.) (Brown p. 46), to conversations about de-gendering classroom talk.

Work on multimodal voicing is prevalent. Multimodal is another buzzword of education, though multimodal methods are proven effective at reaching several learners. These multimodal methods help students engage within the community and expand their view on activism (Shun et. al.).

Lastly, curriculum should “help students understand that knowledge is socially constructed and reflects researchers’ personal experiences as well as the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live and work.” Students should have the opportunity to learn about stereotyping and other related biases, values shared by all cultural groups, social skills, interact socially with students from different backgrounds, and prepare students for a multicultural society (Banks et. al.). By learning the things that will help students, teachers will become better educators and make their classrooms a safer space.

## **PART 2: DATA**

To provide some situational context and background for my project, Fargo Public Schools (FPS) is in a Midwestern city with a majority white population. The city of Fargo itself has a population of nearly 122,000. The racial breakdown of FPS students from 2021-22 is 68.6% Caucasian, 14.1% African American, 4.5% Hispanic, 6.1% More Than One Category, 4% Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 2.6% Native American across 11,200 students. There are 93 languages spoken and 30.7% of students receive free and reduced meals, though all students receive free meals district-wide. 14.4% of students receive special education services, according to the 2021-22 Annual Report (“Annual Report”). Compared to 2014-15 the breakdown of nearly 11,000 students across the district were 78.6% Caucasian, 10.4% African American, 4.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.4% Hispanic, 2.8% Native American, and no option to choose More Than One Category. This data shows that not only has this district seen growth in overall student count but has also seen growth in the percentage of minority students, as well as actually taking multiracial students into account.

Recent scholarship supports that schools of all age groups, especially in suburban settings, are becoming more diverse while teachers remain primarily white females (Price-Dennise et. al., Lac et. al., Grooms et. al.). As a result, the approach to discussing race that is often taken, if it is discussed at all, by educators is a color-blind one or even worse, one that holds students of color to lower standards for academics and behavior when compared to white students. Color-blindness is when someone says they don’t see race. Well-meaning people sometimes say that they do not care if someone is green, purple, or other unnatural skin color trivializes race and thus trivializes the person (Sensoy and DiAngelo 14). In addition to lower expectations for kids of color, there’s a disproportionate number of expulsions or suspensions

and special education referrals and limited access to gifted and talented programs (Baker-Bell, Grooms et. al., Lac et. al). While a color-blind approach comes across as well-meaning, thinking that all students are equal regardless of race, it is a harmful one. Of the estimated 51 million students in the United States attending pre-K through 12th grade, approximately half are children of color. As of this writing, 2018 was the most current complete year available for these numbers available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (“Digest of Educational Statistics”).

FPS is still a majority-white district, even though the numbers are shifting. With that in mind, I will remind educators of a well-loved metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors from Rudine Sims Bishop (1990):

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (p. ix)

This metaphor is easy for educators to grasp. It uses language that is simple and relatable without being condescending or too unapproachable. The Windows and Mirrors analogy also helps provide justification for why it is important for educators in FPS to read diverse literature even though the FPS student body is still almost 70% White. Students and educators who are used to



seeing themselves in mirrors in media, television, and books can gain a lot by looking through the windows of diverse texts to help offer views otherwise unknown.

While some may not feel that they are ready to do the work in educating themselves on anti-racist allyship, there is no time to waste. The murder of George Floyd in 2020 propelled many to finally realize that systemic violence against Black people has been around and ignored for hundreds of years. 2020 also brought the COVID-19 pandemic where the wealth inequality became increasingly obvious as the rich felt minimal impacts while the poor and middle-class suffered not only from the virus but the economical side effects of job and income loss (Spolar). Politicians use health care and family leave as a bargaining chip, as in the case of Congress trying to pass a giant domestic policy bill. Immigrants are being locked in cages at the southern border and challenges with immigration didn't end with the Trump administration and his calls for America first. Gun violence is rampant and there is no rush to help protect schools, concert halls, malls, and movie theaters from active shooters.

All these issues affect students directly. There is no way for schools to be politically neutral and properly prepare students to be democratic citizens (Sensoy & DiAngelo 186). For example, a color-blind approach to race can tell students that their teacher doesn't care about their unique identity and culture, so educators must be prepared to change their thinking to an antiracist mindset in order to be truly accepting of all students. Educators must see students for who they are, and embrace a variety of identity characteristics, including seeing race, gender identity, ethnicity, physical and mental abilities, and so on. As stated in *Borderlands: The New Mestiza: La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa states that “the dominant white culture is killing us with its ignorance” (108). In recent years, the “dominant white culture” has worked to widen the gap between their places of power through changing legislation around voting, gerrymandering, red-

lining, and more. As educators, it is our job to become less ignorant to the situations that are going on all around us. This course will provide one way that educators can start learning and improving. Even if we can't control the legislation and broader problems with society, we are able to make multiple small changes to be more inclusive to our students and community.

### **Acknowledgment of Self**

It is important to acknowledge my own positionality and the path I've started down towards understanding. I am a cisgender, middle-class, white woman who is married to a man. I am situated inside some communities of privilege but outside of others. I cannot represent everyone's experience, nor do I want to take away someone else's voice on these subjects. My hope is to help others continue their journeys of understanding. As I proceed through my methods, I travel with care to not amplify my own voice but work alongside those who have already situated themselves in the conversations surrounding intersectionality and education.

### **Conclusion**

Educators have much to gain by improving their knowledge of DEI work. They can expand their own perspectives, see students in new lights, and examine their biases. Being able to examine students through an intersectional light will pave the way for more inclusive education. Intersectionality needs to be at the forefront of their minds as they assess student needs, as one solution does not fit all. Saying that you don't see race, or color-blind approaches just won't cut it anymore, our students have unique traits that deserve to be highlighted and lifted up. Reading books seems insubstantial, but by providing mirrors and windows, we can start making lasting changes in the field of education and beyond.

## **PART 3: DISCUSSION OF PROJECT**

### **Problems with Color-Blind Approaches**

Robin DiAngelo is known for her work writing on white fragility, but she has another wonderful resource, *Is Everyone Really Equal?*, co-written with Özlem Sensoy. The text talks about social justice education and is a powerful professional development tool for educators. This includes how damaging color-blind approaches to teaching can be. Color-blind ideology is making it impossible for people to address unconscious beliefs and instead of interrupting racism, it denies the reality of racism and in turn, holds it in place (131). Also, by minimizing race, educators are ignoring the long history of racism, slavery, Jim Crow laws, cultural genocide, and more that have lasting and devastating impacts on the families of many of our students (Howard 32). An equally damaging image is the American melting pot as BIPOC Americans are meant to fit into this romanticized notion as their skin color proves more powerful than any other cultural marker (60). Like a color-blind approach, the melting pot ignores our differences, instead of recognizing that “our differences and similarities are coexistent, rather than mutually exclusive” (Chaudhri 103). The melting-pot is an assimilationist point-of-view, where someone wants diverse cultures to assimilate to the “American way.” Any of these images show rigidity instead of dexterity when it comes to culture.

It is impossible to be color-blind when it comes to race. Though race is a social construct and a concept that didn't exist until someone realized they could undermine a whole population of people because of it, it is something that shapes the way people are viewed, and by downplaying someone's race you are downplaying their identity. Educators should know their students and pieces of their culture so they can acknowledge the unique perspectives each student brings into the room. In her chapter of *Reading and Teaching with Diverse Nonfiction*

*Children's Books*, "Cultural Dexterity through Multiracial Nonfiction," Amina Chaudhri mentions Sheryll Cashin's idea of cultural dexterity, which is "a process of personal and social transformation that involves the recognition of racial differences as social assets and an examination of internalized biases that prevent us from welcoming differences into our lives" (Chaudhri 99). It helps provide a lens where "smaller populations maintain their unique cultural identities" (100). This idea can bring us away from color-neutral (color-blind) approaches and towards a more inclusive and diverse teaching style. By being culturally dexterous, teachers can truly be inclusive and intersectional educators. Another harmful approach to race teachers may take is to go as far as to completely ignore talking about it altogether (Lac et. al.). This may be because this can cover up their discomfort in talking about race or hide a hope that students of color will assimilate to the dominant culture (Sealey-Ruiz).

Talking about or acknowledging race has become an unfortunately heightened and hostile topic by recent legislation passed banning critical race theory (CRT), including North Dakota. Despite having no evidence of CRT in K-12 curriculum, the North Dakota House of Representatives voted to ban teaching CRT, though if a teacher "violates" the bill, there is no penalty. Many mistakenly think CRT is a leftist way of making white people feel bad about themselves because they're white instead of a theory that acknowledges the inequality that has historically plagued folks of minority races mostly used in law school (Biertenpfel).

In addition to legislation, CRT has made itself known at the most recent Senate Judiciary Hearing for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. Republican Senator Ted Cruz of Texas spent time asking her about Ibram X Kendi's book, *Antiracist Baby* and if she believes that the book can teach kids that babies are racists. After a long, significant sign, Judge Jackson stated that she does "not believe that any child should be made to feel as though they are racist, or though they

are not valued, or though they are less than, that they are victims, that they are oppressors<sup>2</sup>” (qtd. in Rogers). If we, as educators, congresspeople, community stakeholders, or just general citizens of the global community of 2022 look at race as something that has, indeed, played a role in United States history but instead should be something we view as a piece of someone’s identity, we could edge a little closer to inclusivity. An acknowledgment of race and culture can help the entire classroom to appreciate what makes one and one’s culture or position in the world unique, interesting, and valuable.

In their article “Mo’ Data, Mo’ Problems: Making Sense of Racial Discipline Disparities in a Large Diversifying Suburban High School,” Decoteau Jermain Irby offers four considerations for moving towards a progressive way of thinking about learning and discipline and thus, away from color-blindness:

- First, leaders should consider race-neutrality a characteristic of counterproductive discipline cultures.
- Second, leaders should anticipate teachers’ fragility and employment of tools of Whiteness and thus create developmental learning opportunities that productively challenge race-evasive identities and race-neutral ways of knowing.
- Third, leadership efforts to improve discipline absent organizational learning that aims to disrupt racism and racial biases will allow discriminatory discipline cultures to persist.
- Fourth, addressing discriminatory discipline is an important step in establishing organization conditions that make instructional leadership for student learning more likely to take root. (Irby)

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<sup>2</sup> Since Ted Cruz’s question, *Antiracist Baby* has skyrocketed in sales.

In sum, race-neutrality is counterproductive, leaders should anticipate teachers to feel uncomfortable in unpacking antiracism work, discipline should be improved in a way that doesn't show racial discrimination and that can be done by identifying any practices that may be discriminatory. Though it is difficult to "uproot beliefs... Questioning assumptions around what teachers and students have 'always known'" may cause disorientation but may lead to liberation as long as educators are ready to question themselves (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 63). Going forward, I am going to take these key components of Irby's list and break them down further. The four points on the list help combine the key parts of my research organized in a way that helps showcase the overarching theme of intersectional progressive thinking and teaching. Counterproductive race neutrality, confronting and helping dismantle teacher's insecurities, top-down examples and consistent discipline, and dismantling discriminatory discipline are four huge items to tackle in the field of education, but there are steps to start and research that has been done to help take the beginning steps.

### **Intersectionality: Combatting Race Neutrality and Recognizing Difference**

As we look at students' multiple diversities, it is important to avoid putting students in a box. Audre Lorde says that "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (qtd. in Quinn and Meiners). This quote points to intersectionality, which is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to show the relationship between identity and power structures. Crenshaw had started the term to describe women of color, but it can also be used to describe several overlapping identity features like LGBTQ+ people of color, girls of color, or trans women in feminist circles (Crenshaw 2015). It is a term that many outside of academia may be unfamiliar with. Students come into the classroom with more than one piece to their identity, so by being intentional about looking for intersections of identity and culture, we can see that

students, and ourselves, are made up of multiple facets. They can't be labeled as just one thing, and oftentimes marginalized identities are additive (Jimenez). Oppressions don't exist in isolation, they can be intermeshed, reinforcing and contradicting each other (Sokolower and Butler-Wall). Points of intersection that could be seen within the classroom include race, gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, language, class, geography, political views, and more.

In early 2022, Florida legislature signed House Bill 1557, more commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay" bill. Despite its vague nature, the bill looks to ban teaching instruction on gender and sexuality that is not developmentally appropriate for students in kindergarten through 3rd-grade, allow parents to sue schools if school districts engage in these topics, and could pave the way for rewritten counseling standards to take away any support for LGBTQ+ students (Alfonseca, Goldstein). Amid the outrage across the country, the people most in danger of this bill are lower-income LGBTQ students that don't have access to resources as their more affluent peers may have. Stephanie Anne Shelton talks about the lack of intersectional LGBTQ+ resources in "Aren't There Any Poor Gay People Besides Me?" She states that "almost every openly gay character on a prime-time show is an economically stable white male, and many online testimonies by LGBTQ adults and youth who have survived trauma offer the same demographics or slight variations (Shelton 117). Adding to the need for intersectional characters, popular middle-grade author, Jacqueline Woodson says that she has so many intersectional characters because,

I think it's important to respect the genre of realistic fiction by keeping it real. I also am concerned with making sure the stories of people who have been historically missing from our body of literature are on the page. I try to mirror their experiences in the real

world. My hope is that my work reflects a broad range of identities and experiences.  
(Watson).

When BIPOC authors write authentic stories that mirror their own identities, it allows kids to finally see themselves in books. Educators should notice that their students come into the classroom with a wide range of experiences, identities, and cultures. Classrooms should show diverse perspectives, not only to give BIPOC students a mirror but to let all students gain access to more cultures, thus increasing everyone's cultural dexterity. Bills like the "Don't Say Gay Bill" and states' banning CRT show the ignorance some have for what resources and books kids need.

There are multiple sources that discuss the importance of intersectionality and what it means through various lenses. Intersectional feminist analysis looks at the overlap of "race, ethnicity, class, and other factors on gender and how gender relates to these factors" (Cummings p. 43). Looking at "the intersection of gender and ethnic performativities is more than a meeting of analogies, as both refer to aspects of subjectivity as constantly performed constructions rather than as essential attributes," (Lee and Stephens p. 76). Intersectionality also means looking at systems of privilege and oppression (Launius and Hassel).

Crenshaw writes,

Ignoring differences within groups contributes to tension among groups... Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains... Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and



negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics. (Crenshaw 1991).

While Crenshaw's words don't specifically speak to the education system, her words speak to the work that still needs to be done, especially at the intersection of gender and race. As teachers, it is important not to make students commit to one or the other, but to acknowledge that their identities are complex and profound.

### **Gatekeeping: Confronting and Changing a Culture of Fragility**

Irby's second point states that leaders should consider their teacher's fragility when learning and talking about race. Due to preexisting assumptions, someone might hesitate to change because something has "always been done this way" or because "this isn't my problem." These attitudes are a clue that there is a lack of emotional intelligence about racism, sexism, ableism, homophobic, xenophobic, etc. This then may lead to intended or unintended gatekeeping. Gatekeeping methods can be viewed in a variety of areas within education "such as grades, test scores, and college preparatory curriculum associated with smartness" (Boffone and Herrera p. 152) as well as discipline policies (Irby). Mingshui Cai defines the real gatekeeping points as "power structures and struggle" (271) and concludes that "multicultural literature is an important tool in achieving the goal of diversity and equity within the multicultural education movement" (p. 276). In an effort to remove gatekeeping points and increase access to multicultural education, North Dakota passed Senate Bill 2304 in 2021 "requiring all elementary and secondary public and nonpublic schools in the state to include curriculum on Native American history" ("North Dakota Passes Education Bill SB#2304").

The reality of these gatekeeping points that are in place, is not that the smart, hardworking students are rewarded, but that the ones who fail are told that they're lazy or dumb.

These gatekeeping points are largely connected to race and class, thus upkeeping the status quo (Bonffone and Herrera p. 152). Other harmful gatekeeping methods employed in schools include banning books that call norms into question (Friddle p. 129). Along with gatekeeping mechanisms at school, students and their families face a multitude of racist, classist, and ableist hurdles to overcome in all aspects of life, like healthcare or the judicial system (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 76). Learning about gatekeeping can increase one's cultural dexterity by knowing what societal roadblocks students may be facing.

### **Literature Review: Resources to Improve Organizational Learning**

Irby's third point notes that if effort from leadership to improve discipline lacks knowledge of antiracist practices, the racist biases will continue. For every well intentioned restorative circle, community service, parent meeting, restitution or any other method schools may try to implement because they're desperate or want to seem "woke," there's a reason why it won't work the way it should if there's a lack of purpose behind it. Looking at diverse books, there are many people interested in looking at the way diverse literature can help all students in schools to find role models, feel included, and push back against feelings of inequality. Equity and inclusion are a movement in the field of education in the wake of #BackLivesMatter, #SayTheirNames, the 2016 presidential election and proceeding xenophobic and racist political movements, and arguments over Critical Race Theory. As educators start to dig into equity work, they might become frustrated or overwhelmed with their findings and how much work is to be done. James Baldwin says it best, "The paradox of education is precisely this-that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated" (qtd. in Price-Dennis et. al.).

Starting conversations on seemingly hot-button topics like race, disability, or socioeconomic status can be potentially frightening and stressful as educators realize their own biases and that they're working within an educational system that has its foundation built with white fragility due to an ongoing cycle of underprepared teacher educators. As these discussions get into the thick of equity work, leaders or facilitators need to prepare for the barrage of emotions that may surface due to these conversations. They may feel their white fragility pull to the front of their feelings as they do the equity work. Since I've become aware of all the work, I have to do to unlearn biases I have, I've become increasingly conscious of broken pieces around me, either at school or in society as a whole. This project serves as a way that I can continue educating myself and teach what I know to others. By teaching educators, I hope my reach will continue to make ripples as they educate their coworkers or bring new practices into their teaching.

One example of something I've become more conscious of and hope other educators will become more aware of is microaggressions. Microaggressions- intentional or unintentional instances of racism, homophobia, or sexism- and "racial battle fatigue"- feeling exhausted by having to educate white people about race- (Lac) should be expected, especially by educators of color as they are often viewed as the expert. Examples of microaggressions could include grabbing a purse when a person of color enters the same space as you or using terms such as "black sheep." "What is 'just a comment' for us is one of a thousand daily microaggressions for the minoritized group" (Sensoy & DiAngelo 194). Van Lac emphasizes that educators of color need to emphasize self-care, be that looking for spaces that are "better prepared for meaningful changes and leaving those that are not" (Lac). And they need to be supported by their white allies who will assume responsibility for educating others about DEI. As they learn, educators can find

space to dream about the possibilities that could be and then use those dreams to help redefine the reality of education today.

Despite myriad information looking at book studies for educators and intersectionality within the educational system, there are some gaps that I will fill with my work. Most of the prior research focuses on just one subset of diversity, looks at the experiences of teachers, not their practices, explicitly is aligned with social justice scholarship, or is inconclusive (Rowan, Leonie, et. al.). My work aims to call attention to multiple intersections within students through reading YAL or middle-grade literature. Giving educators a window into the lives of diverse student populations will help them make accessible connections to their teaching practices and add to their personal knowledge on identity and culture.

In addition to the literature, the supplemental material the course provides looks to fill those gaps in knowledge educators may have about diverse topics. The supplemental material was chosen for a multitude of reasons, primarily because it addresses a topic that participants needed more information on but also because the materials were digestible. This could mean they were short, visually appealing, presented in a variety of forms, such as videos or infographics, and from reliable, straight-forward sources.

### **Intersectional Module**

The Intersectional Module (Preliminary Module 1) starts off with 3 videos that feature Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw. Dr. Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality.” The three videos are offered in different formats: TEDtalk, interview, and conference speech. The three forms of videos will offer different perspectives of Crenshaw talking about her work and how intersectionality came to be a recognized term. Though Crenshaw developed the term in her legal work, the term has spread to encompass multiple diversities in all fields.

Following the intersectionality videos, there are 4 TEDtalks by Black women discussing four key terms or concepts:

- Dwinita Mosby Tyler’s talk about allyship. She details the how one person can make a lasting impact when they chose to be an ally.
- Mellody Hobson talking about the concept of color-blindness, a harmful outlook surrounding race. She describes her experience in the investment sector and how dangerous a color-blind approach to viewing race is.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s famous “Danger of a Single Story” talk, that focuses on her experiences as a Nigerian woman in the United States as well as Nigeria. She powerfully proclaims that Africa is made up of many countries made up of many cultures.
- Monique W. Morris, author of *Pushout*, looks specifically at the intersectionality in Black girls and how they are overrepresented in school disciplinary statistics. Morris lays down harmful stereotypes, statistics, and solutions to point out the disparities and how to fix them.

I chose these videos because TEDtalks are, for the most part, a familiar concept to people. The length is just enough to get the information across, and the talks are filled with personal and professional anecdotes as well as factual information. I find that TEDtalks are beneficial for learning because the viewer can form a connection with the presenter and quickly build trust with the speaker. The last piece of viewing material is to explore the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture page on anti-racism or listen to an episode of NPR’s Life Kit podcast about being “not racist” is not the same as being “anti-racist.” These last two materials really tie the group together before moving on.

After consuming the supplemental materials, I encourage the participants to dig a little deeper into their beliefs and ask them to take Harvard's Project Implicit Implicit Bias test to discover what their own biases are. This is not meant to shame them, but instead to help them see themselves in a new light and have a direction they can go to become a better educator for all their students. I saved this for last as it may bring up some negative feelings or pushback. There are a handful of tests that participants could take. For example, in the Race test, participants must click as quickly as they can to identify photos of Black or white people as well as identifying good and bad words. The time between clicks can help to partially show whether the participant has some negative perceptions of white or Black folk. I was pleased that I found myself pretty solidly in the middle of that test, not giving an advantage towards white or Black folk. That has come with intentional work on my part to deconstruct negative perceptions that were engrained into me from a young age from multiple sources. My hope is that once participants see some of the videos and read the books, they will be aware that their biases don't make them bad people, but instead can be points of change. It is difficult work to dismantle biases, but the first step is to be aware of your own biases.

### **Activism Module**

The Activism Module brought me some challenges when looking for supplemental material. It is one thing for participants to read fictional stories about students being activists, but it is another for them to hear about real-world examples that may not align with their beliefs. I made my focus about young activists for participants to view the supplemental material as a comparison to the fictional characters' battles.

This can be seen in several ways. Amanda Gorman is a young Black poet-the youngest poet laureate to perform at a Presidential Inauguration- and readers of *Watch Us Rise* and *Moxie*

can see examples of how writing can make a difference. Gorman is being interviewed by Trevor Noah and their interview is easy to watch and funny. Greta Thunberg's speech shows us that kids can and should be taken seriously in their activism and that they can make a change, which should be evident in the middle-grade reading choices for the module, *Go with the Flow* and *The First Rule of Punk*. Thunberg's attitude is much more severe and passionate, showing that activism can take many forms and fills kids with varying emotions. Since taking a knee can be viewed as quite controversial, instead of finding an article about that to relate to *Why We Fly*, I found sources on other movements that have been on our students' minds-DAPL and book banning. NPR put out a great timeline of events during the Dakota Access Pipeline protest and I found an article from a Texas newspaper that describes how students are pushing back against book bans at their school. The article featuring 8 young activists can also help adults see what students are working to better. Since rioting and taking a knee are both viewed as part of the #BLM movement, the rioting article can help contribute to that conversation. It looks at the psychology and history of rioting as well as building empathy with those who riot for what they believe in. Then, despite not having direct ties to the modern novels, I thought it was important to make sure participants received a true picture of the suffrage movement in the United States and how it did not feature intersectionality. We often view suffragettes on pedestals, but it is important to look at their flaws as well as victories. The site was made by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, and it features a ton of great resources to explore including biographies, videos, and articles. While I try to provide choice, these sites are all so different that I wanted participants to interact with all five pieces.

There was no choice in this module, so I focused on aspects of andragogy that would help buy-in for the supplemental material. I'm hoping that the diversity of the articles, not just in

subject matter, but in the ways the information delivered will help educators draw from their own experiences as a teacher, see the value in the information, and see how they can apply that knowledge to their teaching practices and pedagogical philosophy right away.

## **Identity Module**

Identity is a broad category, so the supplemental material for this module covers a lot of things, though not nearly everything I could cover. I primarily look at race, sexuality, and gender, but wish I could have had multiple resources on religion, disability, and socioeconomic status. I chose to narrow my focus so I could highlight a few perspectives in fewer fields than just pick one piece that only represents one part of a particular subject.

I have three videos to start, one that explains the myth of race, one on the history of Native American boarding schools, and one on gender identity and pronouns. I find that these topics are topics that people are unfamiliar with or have preconceived notions surrounding the two topics. These videos are visually appealing, which helps keep viewers engaged and interested. The video on race can be paired nicely with *Black Brother Black Brother* and the gender identity video pairs nicely with almost all the texts in the module: *Spin with Me*, *Obie is Man Enough*, and *Cemetery Boys*. Next, I have a choice of two videos. One that looks at news headlines and their implicit biases and one featuring Dr. Bernice King, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter talking about how the US needs to reevaluate its values. These two videos can help demonstrate the importance that race can play in people's perception of others. This can be paired with any of the books that feature students of color (all except *Spin with Me*). The last section of videos regard LGBTQ+ history. I picked two short history videos with well-known Queer celebrities: Billy Porter and Wanda Sykes. Both feature digestible information and colorful graphics. The third video I chose was sponsored by AARP but featured a number of



lesser-known moments in LGBTQ+ history. While most of the books in this module feature queer characters, they are living in the present and their experiences are different than those of their peers in the past. With LGBTQ+ history, it is also important to note that queer folk have always been around, but legislation and equal rights measures have been very slow to recognize and support them.

The reading material is a mix of articles, infographics, and guides. The first article is from UNICEF detailing the inequality with LGBTQ youth during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the second article shares a Black educator's experience working with Black youth at Rikers Island and the white folk that come in thinking they'll be able to play the savior role. "BIPOC or POC? Equity or Equality? The Debate Over Language on the Left" is a narrative article from the *New York Times* that looks at the differences in language in DEI work. I think this article is important because the terms people use can become overwhelming to anyone. It also does a great job showcasing a plethora of perspectives. The two that feature more infographic information discuss racial stereotypes in Hollywood and a timeline of LGBTQ+ history. The former is from Deutsche Welle, a German media company, and the timeline is provided by GLSEN, a leading activist organization for LGBTQ+ youth. Lastly, there is a guide provided by the Trevor Project, another great organization helping LGBTQ+ youth, on how to be an ally to transgender and nonbinary youth. With transgender and genderqueer students having more of a voice now than ever before, many educators feel uncomfortable with supporting students. This guide is approachable and useful. These print resources are not necessarily to be paired with their teaching but to help inform the educator.

There are so many more pieces of supplemental material that I wanted to include or that could have been useful. In order to keep this around the 45-hour mark for a three credit class.

Even though I don't provide a mountain of materials, if an educator were to decide to use one of these texts in their classroom, they could ask me for resources or feel like this course helped provide them with the resources they'd need to go out and find their own reliable materials.

### **Previous Book Studies**

There are a number of scholarly articles that describe book studies within an educational setting. These book studies take place in smaller groups outside of school hours where the group reads one text and discusses it over time. Some of the groups looked at multiple texts over longer periods of time. They may work on anti-racism, but more often than not, the book studies were interested in finding books that could be used for classroom instruction. Despite the purposes of the book studies or educator book clubs, there was an emphasis on the ability to build community through discussion and reading. Participants in these previous studies enjoyed the sense of community that was created and the discussions they were able to have to surround the themes of the book studies. In addition, they were provided a safe space to ask questions that may arise and help each other as they grew together (Lac, McGlenn et. al.).

One article that has many similarities to my project is "The Onus is on Us": How White Suburban Teachers Learn about Racial Inequities in a Critical Book Study, *Equity & Excellence in Education* by Van T. Lac, John B. Diamond, and Maria Velazquez. This article looks at a critical book study on race for teachers in a Midwestern suburban city. Particularly helpful are the findings from their research:

- a. Reading a critical text compelled many participants to move away from cultural explanations for racial inequality toward more structural and organizational explanations.

- b. Reading and reflecting on a text that centered on the lived experiences of Black youth encouraged teachers to reconsider how Black students at OMHS experienced the school environment.
- c. Engaging in critical reflection throughout the book study shifted how white teachers reported addressing racial disparities in their daily practices.

Additionally, while some teachers evolved in their thinking, the changes weren't automatic and teachers "seemed more comfortable attributing racial disparities to students and families- in line with the cultural racism/culture of poverty frame- rather than to themselves as teachers or the school as an institution" (Lac et. al.). Most importantly as I look forward, the authors note that, "the book functioned as a tool that triggered awareness to these white teachers about the everyday lived experiences of Black youth in schools and the salience of their racialized experiences," and that "participants observed that white students at Oak Meadows contributed to a hostile culture for Black students at the school, at times, with the help of teachers and administrators." (Lac et. al) Learning from the bumps in previous scholarship will help me when I am framing my coursework.

By giving participants the option to choose what texts and supplemental material they look at, instead of expecting them to dig into everything I choose, will hopefully help educators feel some sort of ownership over their learning. In addition to choosing their own texts, there's a variety of texts to choose from, not just one book, partially in hopes that if someone gets nervous or triggered by what they're learning, they'll be able to switch books instead of giving up. Learning about being an intersectional ally can be delicate for those that view their own previous experiences and decisions in a negative light. I hope to avoid as much resistance as possible by trying to meet educators at multiple starting points.

### **Need for the Course: Addressing Discriminatory Practices**

The last point Irby makes is that there is a deep need to address discriminatory discipline in order to establish long-lasting, positive impacts on student learning. Educators have seen the disparity in which students receive free or reduced meals, which students get suspended repeatedly, and which students are assumed to be less intelligent. Schools across the nation are not set up for students of color to succeed in a way that is equal to their white peers. In order to shift this narrative, educators at all levels need to reconfigure their learning to abolish these patterns. That can start at the university level with preservice teachers and go up to professional development for veteran teachers.

### **Preservice Teachers/Teacher Education Programs**

Part of changing the field of education is starting at the beginning with teacher education programs. Moreover, students in teacher education programs as well as their instructors, tend to be white women, while research shows that students benefit from learning from diverse teachers (Rogers-Ard, Rachelle, et al.) If preservice teachers know tactics to be better educators for a diverse population of students, then the students will be able to be successful from the beginning. NCTE has recommendations for how to help preservice teachers know more about teaching ELA in a way that is advantageous to a diverse student body. Their “Standards for the Initial Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts 7-12,” is a list of five standards that preservice teachers should be proficient in by the time they are working in the field. Standard 1 calls for educators to learn how to create an “inclusive learning environment that supports coherent, relevant, standards-aligned, differentiated, and antiracist/antibias instruction.” The next three standards ask preservice teachers to be able to apply, demonstrate, and implement their knowledge of theories, research, and texts in a way that is “coherent, relevant, standards-aligned,

differentiated, and antiracist/antibias” (“NCTE Standards for the Initial Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts 7-12). If candidates can make these standards a part of their pedagogical philosophy, then they can go into the classroom with their biases at the door, thus making them better educators. As in the section above, if book studies can create a safe space for teachers to talk about racism, then a teacher-education program should also provide the space needed to grow in a way that supports their learning.

Unfortunately, scholarship shows that teacher education programs are lacking in these areas. They fail to state that “white dominant ideology undergirds the need for multicultural and culturally responsive education” (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 37) and that “the focus remains on *cultural* divergence; therefore, conversations and change around some of the most pernicious racist acts we see play out in schools against students of color persist: zero-tolerance policies, disproportionality in suspensions, and special education placements, school expulsions, a school-to-prison pipeline, and others” (76). Thus, under the guise of diversity, racism continues to be prevalent in education. Antiracism education needs to be ongoing, even after graduating and getting a job in the field of education, because the educational system is set up on a foundation of inequality (76). Since there is this lack in teacher education programs, teachers enter the field with racist biases inadvertently attached to their pedagogy. The course I’m creating will help break down these inequalities and provide new and veteran teachers alike with continued professional development.

It is vital to have teacher education programs that foster racial literacy and allow teachers to talk about their “fears and uncertainties in embracing this type of pedagogy” (Sealey-Ruiz). Racial Literacy in teacher education programs should encourage reading of texts to help acquire language, acknowledge that they need to engage in self-examination around notions of race, hold

preservice teachers accountable for practicing racial literacy, discuss and critique personal experiences with race and racism, and act against discriminatory practices (adapted from Sealey-Ruiz). Ideally, this will help preservice teachers to have the skills to discuss difficult and sensitive matters and move beyond their own biases (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 5).

### **Bolstering Racial/Digital Literacy**

In their visionary book, *Advancing Racial Literacies in Teacher Education: Activism for Equality in Digital Spaces*, Dr. Detra M. Price-Dennis and Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz emphasize the importance of preservice teachers who are “prepared and have the skills to talk about difficult and sensitive issues in the classroom; able to move beyond their own biases; and ready to navigate how to develop curricula and pedagogy informed by skill and reflexive practice” (5). The definition of racial literacy Price-Dennice and Sealey-Ruiz use is a “skill and practice with which individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the harmful effects of racial stereotypes” (3). Racial and digital literacy are vital to helping educators learn more about teaching a diverse population of students.

The benefits of racial literacy are numerous, including helping teachers develop “agency to organize and respond to inequalities that plague our education system” (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 30), examine the intersections of race, digital literacies, and pedagogy, and thus examine the “relationships between pedagogical processes and the cultural, historical, institutional, and political factors that shape them” (p. 35), and support learners as they learn digital literacies across multiple digital tools and platforms (p.48). Within teacher education, racial literacy looks for educators learning about systems of injustice and how they can teach students what they’ve learned and asks teachers to “take action against injustice in their school settings once they

recognize it,” and requires educators to recognize their “unconscious bias and unintentional racism, microaggressions, and structural racism” (p. 56).

Once teachers identify these issues, they need to be reflexive in their thinking and can acknowledge when they’ve made bad decisions in the past (p. 72). “Without racial literacy, teacher educators and their students will continue to find themselves powerless in systems based on race” (Sealey-Ruiz). Teachers need to know that the literature they choose to use in their classroom sends a message to students about what is valued, in literature and beyond and that includes choosing inspiring texts for struggling students instead of watered-down texts (Bean and Moni).

### **Professional Development Opportunities for Diversity Education**

While Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz stress the importance of preservice teachers' fluency in digital and racial literacy, there are many veteran teachers who do not have the same proficiency. One way this could be helped is through professional development. Professional development should be viewed in a way that the time teachers have is precious and limited. “School leaders must think deeply about the type of professional development they offer their teachers and the opportunities they provide for reflection on their practice” (Price-Dennis et. al. p. 28). The data on diversity programs shows that there are a lot of inconsistencies with what works and what doesn't. The research seems to show that diversity programs aren't embraced, but instead just implemented when society applies pressure and that the choice companies make is usually whatever is easiest for them to implement (Dobbin and Kalev, Kalev et. al.). While administrators can identify the problem (lack of equity and diversity in this case), it does not mean that they also know the ways of solving the problem.

Professional development needs to be content focused, incorporate active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, job-embedded, instructional focused, collaborative, and is of sustained duration (Brodeur et. al and Hunzicker). Educators do better when there is space to reflect, and it isn't just a one and done retreat or PD day (Sacramento). When implementing an equity series, teachers need to take students' backgrounds into account and provide teachers a "greater self-awareness of their own cultural identity and bias" (Haven).

Banks et. al. goes even further by saying that professional development should help teachers:

- uncover and identify their personal attitudes toward racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups;
- acquire knowledge about the histories and cultures of the diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups within the nation and within their schools;
- become acquainted with the diverse perspectives that exist within different ethnic and cultural communities;
- understand the ways in which institutionalized knowledge within schools, universities, and the popular culture can perpetuate stereotypes about racial and ethnic groups; and
- acquire the knowledge and skills needed to develop and implement an equity pedagogy, defined by James Banks as instruction that provides all students with an equal (Banks et. al.)

Haddix, Marcelle, and Price-Dennis add that English teachers are in a unique position to help other teachers with their professional development. The power and potential to use literature



to transform understanding of other educators is invaluable. The tricky part is education in equity and inclusion is hard to measure, education is a numbers-obsessed field, where data drives most decisions, while DEI work looks “at the larger perspective of how human nature and motivation actually function” (Cobb et. al. 3). Professional development is often guided by what’s trendy, buzzy, or whatever is being marketed at conferences (4). While DEI may be a current fad, it is important that it is lasting and invites critical conversations in professional development, and not viewed as one more thing, because the ultimate casualties of that are our students (12). In the wake of COVID-19, much of the professional development offered can be sorted into a small handful of categories, two of which are self-care and DEI work. When educators take the DEI courses they often say they were more helpful than they thought they’d be, inferring that they didn’t think it would be helpful at the start. Knowing this, plus knowing methods to teach adult learners can help my professional development course be successful and beneficial to educators.

### **Andragogy**

Andragogy is the method used to teach adult learners. While looking at professional development offered for teachers, it is important to remember that the teachers in the class are learners first at that moment. Adults have different needs than children do when it comes to their learning. Key aspects of adult learning are to let them compare ideas and understandings, a climate of respect, active participation, build on their own experiences, allow collaboration, learn for action, and empower the students in question (Blanton et. al.). Adult learners should be able to have direct communication with the instructor and even help design instructional content to suit their needs as learners. This helps promote trust within the class and enhances self-awareness (Chan).

In the article, “Applications of Andragogy in Multi-Disciplined Teaching and Learning,” Sang Chan discusses Malcolm Knowles’s six main assumptions on the perspective of andragogy:

1. Self-Concept: Adult learners are self-directed, autonomous, and independent.
2. Role of Experience: Repository of an adult’s experience is a rich resource for learning. Adults tend to learn by drawing from their previous experiences.
3. Readiness to Learn: Adults tend to be ready to learn what they believe they need to know.
4. Orientation to Learning: Adults learn for immediate applications rather than for future uses. Their learning orientation is problem-centered, task-oriented, and life-focused.
5. Internal Motivation: Adults are more internally motivated than externally.
6. Need to Know: Adults need to know the value of learning and why they need to learn (Chan).

This list makes me nervous as I am dealing with what could be perceived as a controversial topic. I think that the need for diversity education is extremely high, but other educators may not think that. In order to reach educators and to teach them, there needs to be sufficient buy-in from teachers. That buy-in comes when educators understand that this course will not only help them as educators, but also help their students feel safe and supported at school. Educators will hopefully draw from previous experience, both positive and negative, that will help them grow in this process.

Within the course, I took these pedagogical choices and perspectives to heart. I wanted to make sure the adult learners I had felt like their learning needs were met and that I would ensure that they left the course feeling satisfied with the knowledge they gained and the way they learned it. I want to convey respect for the learners and make sure they know that the knowledge

they gain from this course can be used immediately in their teaching. By giving the participants choice, that will hopefully help them in their readiness to learn and help with their buy-in of the course.

### **Conclusion**

It is possible for educators to make lasting changes in their teaching practices. While addressing biases and social movements, removing color-blind approaches, and continuing professional development can seem daunting and like just one more thing (or many more things) to do, looking at these practices is the best thing an educator can do to create an ideal learning environment for all students. Not only are they helping their students, but by improving upon their racial and digital literacies, they can add a multitude of tools to their toolbelt of educational resources.

Fargo Public Schools is a growing district in population and diversity, but the pool of teachers remains significantly white. This course will help teachers learn how to create safe spaces for their students. This includes providing diverse books for their classrooms and reading diverse books themselves. FPS educators need to stay on the forefront of their antiracist antibias education to help support themselves as well as the growing district. Microaggressions and gatekeeping methods can be a thing of the past. Though this may seem like something that will happen in the distant future, I have hope that not only the educators within the FPS system, but also educators from other places may view my course as the first steps towards a brighter future for everyone.

In the wake of legislation trying to suppress diverse education, books being banned, and an ongoing global pandemic, knowing that there are resources out there to help educators continue the fight to give their students their best is comforting. While I can't fix every problem

in the education system, knowing that I can take part in making small changes that can make even a small impact, helps me feel like I am trying my best for my students. As Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in her Senate Judiciary Hearing, “I think generally, in our society, change is incremental, and real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time” (Carmon and Knizhnik 60).

On a personal level, I’ve already seen growth in myself as I’ve gone through the process of writing this paper and all the research that has gone along with it. As an elementary-trained teacher, all the information on andragogy was new to me. Designing this course with adult learners in mind required me adding tools to my teaching toolbelt about the best ways to help them learn the information. This includes information on successful professional development. PD should be sustained, focused, active, support collaboration, and provide assistance. All of these make me realize how much of a disservice the previous PD has been for most educators. The one-day approach isn’t sufficient if we are looking for lasting results. While my course is self-paced so there isn’t much collaboration during the class, my hope is that participants will be encouraged by what they see their colleagues doing within the discussion posts and final projects.

Within the content, I found the information from *Advancing Racial Literacies in Teacher Education* by Detra Price-Dennis and Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz to truly shift my mindset when it comes to racial and digital literacies. Their book was short and to the point. It felt like a book actually written with educators in mind and you could feel the passion the authors had to make a change in the educational system. I was able to see Dr. Price-Dennis and Dr. Sealey-Ruiz speak at the NCTE conference, and they are so inspiring. They are doing the work to fix many of the injustices built into the field of education.

As I went through the process of my master's coursework, I wasn't really sure where I wanted to go with my newfound knowledge. I was sure it would be something that would get me an increase in salary and would help quench my thirst for knowledge. While it did do that, I didn't realize how all-encompassing it would be. I found myself thinking about my project 24/7 and noticing the areas around my school that need improvement. Specifically, within my reading, I was drawn to the disparity that Black girls face in school. This led me to create a club, called the Empowerment Club, with some of my students. They come in every morning before school and most of the time they do art journaling, incorporating pictures and writing in collage forms. This is a relatively quiet space for the group to come in and get their morning off to a good start, as opposed to being in the loud library or cafeteria. This group has been one of the best parts of my teaching career.

## **PART 4: CONCLUSION**

As arguably one of the toughest years to be a part of the education field, the importance of professional development or continuing education can feel like just one more thing piled onto educators' plates. The effects of multiple pandemic learning are showing up in students, the burnout levels are high, and morale is low. This doesn't stop our students' changing needs though. School populations are becoming more diverse and include students with unique needs that are often met on the fly. When educators take time to understand the unique needs that come with unique intersectionalities, they become more understanding teachers.

I include myself in the above statements. The 2021-2022 school year has been a massive challenge. I find myself overwhelmed with new concepts to try in all aspects of my teaching. I don't feel like I'm connecting with students as well as I normally do and I feel like they don't listen to me in ways that are expected of students. There are so many students that have fallen through the cracks in pandemic years and because they're well-behaved. I see bullying, especially surrounding gender and sexuality, and feel frustrated that I can't reason with my students the way I wish I could. This paper has shown me that I can make a difference and start making a difference. I have more tools in my toolbelt to help students find their voices and I am more aware of times where I may have used a color-blind approach. I am more intentional with the lessons I teach and making sure they are inclusive to all students. I've always had a fire in my heart for protecting minority students, especially ones that are struggling with their identities, but now I feel fiercely protective of these students and want to help not only them, but the students that don't yet understand their peers' identities. This project has also guided me to think bigger and broader. I can educate my students and show them compassion and how to show compassion to their peers, but if I can show other educators the same and teach them why they should

educate themselves on intersectionality, identity, and activism, then they can bring that to their schools and their students and their colleagues. I may have rose-colored glasses, but I think this work could be the first pebble drop that creates lasting ripples.

My hope is that educators will find something resilient or enlightening about a Persian immigrant living in Oklahoma, a soccer stud living in the barrios of Argentina, a Afro-Latina who channels her anger into poetry, a group of girls who want to get period products into their school's bathrooms, a middle schooler who loves punk music, brothers who just want to fence, kids dealing with first crushes, a transgender boy who just wants to swim, a boy coming into his own identity through drag, and a trans boy who is struggling to fit into his traditional family's customs. Educators will hopefully see their students in these characters and hopefully see bits of themselves as well. These texts will create mirrors and windows for educators and enable them to nurture their students more than they already do.

As I prepare to teach this course, I can't wait to see what teachers gain from this course "just" by reading young adult and middle grade books and reflecting on their writing. I think combining powerful supplemental material with the lower stake texts will help educators grow. I hope that educators will learn about their biases and make changes to their teaching philosophy and practices to get rid of these biases. The work is difficult, and the work is new to many people, but now is the perfect time to start putting in the effort. Educators will hopefully recognize their privilege and the advantages that brings to the classroom, especially as the majority of educators are white. Teachers can be on the forefront of social justice and that work will affect generations to come. Our everyday world is divided as ever, and books are a comforting and non-confrontational way to learn about social justice, anti-racism, and intersectionality. I look forward to seeing what gains participants make as they reflect on their

reading. By enrolling in the course, they are already making a statement that they want to know more so they can do better.

If anything, sitting down and reading these books or listening to the audiobooks can serve as the self-care everyone seems to think will solve teacher burnout. On a serious note, while I can't solve the problem of teacher burn-out, I do believe that books can heal us by providing links to each other that we didn't think could be made.



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## APPENDIX: COURSE CONTENT

### Syllabus

#### EDUC 2000: Identity & Activism in Young Adult and Middle Grade Literature

#### Part 1 or 2

#### 3 Professional Development Credits

#### Summer 2022

**Instructor:** Meghan Stinar

**Email:** [stinarm1@fargoschools.org](mailto:stinarm1@fargoschools.org)

#### Course Texts:

Module 1: Introductory Module Pick 3 of 6

- *Ancestor Approved* edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith
- *Everything Sad is Untrue* by Daniel Nayeri
- *Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani Larocca
- *Furia* by Yamile Saied Méndez
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender

Module 2 OR 3: Pick 3 of 5 books

Module 2: Activism

- *Go With the Flow* by Lily Williams and Karen Schneemann
- *Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu
- *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez
- *Why We Fly* by Kimberly Jones and Gilly Segal
- *Watch Us Rise* by Ellen Hagen and Renee Watson

Module 3: Identity

- *Black Brother Black Brother* by Jewell Parker Rhode
- *Spin With Me* by Ami Polonsky
- *Obie is Man Enough* by Schuyler Bailar
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas

**Note: Books may be read in whatever format works best for you: purchased, from the library, e-book, and audiobook all work.**

**Course Description:** This course offers a book study of current fictional Young Adult Literature (YAL) and middle-grade (MG) literature to help educators increase their knowledge of the diverse students within their own schools and classrooms and reject a color-blind approach to teaching. Upon completing this course, educators will have reached a deeper emotional intelligence surrounding issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, that will lead them to foster more inclusive and welcoming classrooms and will lead them to a selection of diverse and impactful literature to foreground inclusion and belonging for all their students. Though this course is asynchronous, participants are encouraged to engage in discussion with others through discussion boards as well as sharing final projects and reflections.

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards:** The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate a high level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and commitments. This course aligns with 4 of these standards.

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning
2. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
3. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
4. Teachers are members of learning communities.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- identify your own biases
- understand what intersectionality is and how it affects your students
- analyze and evaluate texts for authenticity, accurate representation, and bias
- synthesize knowledge into an organized project
- use new knowledge in your classroom
- find useful resources to incorporate into your teaching and/or pedagogical philosophy
- identify pieces of your curriculum that are giving minority students a disadvantage



- provide rich representative literature to students

### **Key Questions:**

- How can Young Adult/Middle-Grade literature help educators learn more about their students?
- How do our biases affect our teaching?
- How can providing our students with diverse texts help them expand their knowledge and hopefully their love of books and reading?
- What is intersectionality and why is it an important concept in education?
- What are our biases regarding race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.
- What do we know and what don't we know about the identity and culture of our students?

### **Course Materials:**

#### **Module 1 “Required” Texts:**

Borrowing books from friends or libraries, listening to audiobooks, reading the ebook are all fine if you don't want to/aren't able to purchase the books. Choose 3 of the 6 that interest you the most:

- *Ancestor Approved* edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith: A short story collection surrounding different characters and their connection to an upcoming powwow.
- *Everything Sad is Untrue* by Daniel Nayeri: A memoir about when Daniel moves from Iran to Oklahoma and the stories he tells to stay connected to his family and his culture.
- *Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani Larocca: A novel about Reha struggling between being the only Indian American at her school and making her family proud when she finds out her mom is sick.
- *Furia* by Yamile Saied Méndez: Camila Hassan is a dutiful daughter but also has a secret identity in her small conservative town in Argentina.
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo features Xiamora Batista trying to discover who she is by channeling her big feelings and family troubles into poetry.
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender: A novel about a trans boy in high school struggling with his identity and what he wants to do after graduation.

### **“Optional” Texts:**

This course can be taken twice. The first time, pick one module and if part two is taken, you’d pick the other part. For each module, choose to read 3 of the 5 texts.

### **Module 2-Activism:**

- *Go With the Flow* by Lily Williams and Karen Schneemann: A graphic novel about a group of high school friends who take matters into their own hands about getting period products into the bathrooms at their schools.
- *Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu: A YA novel about a girl fed up with the toxic masculinity at her school and starts creating a secret zine to distribute throughout the school.
- *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez: A middle-grade novel about a biracial Latina girl who is finding out her identity as a “non-traditional” Mexican girl who loves punk music
- *Why We Fly* by Kimberly Jones and Gilly Segal: When Eleanor and Chanel spontaneously decide to take a knee during the national anthem with their cheerleading squad, the backlash is worse than they thought it would be.
- *Watch Us Rise* by Ellen Hagen and Renee Watson: A novel about a group of friends who start a feminism club at school.

### **Module 3- Identity:**

- *Black Brother Black Brother* by Jewell Parker Rhodes: A middle-grade novel about two brothers, one who has darker skin than the other, who discover how to handle injustice through fencing.
- *Spin With Me* by Ami Polonsky: A middle-grade novel about a girl who moves and has a crush on a non-binary person in her class.
- *Obie is Man Enough* by Schuyler Bailar: Obie loves swimming, but when he came out as transgender, his coach kicked him off the team.
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta: A novel in verse about a boy coming to terms with being bi-racial and gay.
- *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas: A YA fantasy novel about a trans boy who is finding their way in their traditional bruja/o family.

### **Course Assignments:**

Specific assignment guidelines will be provided in the course.

- **Introduction Post:** Students will write a short introduction discussion board post
- **Discussion Board/Reflections:** Students will write reflections on the books and materials read throughout the course. There will be prompts available to help guide thoughts. (7 total)
- **Supplemental Material:** Students will view all additional course materials, be it articles, videos, or some other format outside of the class novels.
- **Supplemental Material Discussion Posts:** After viewing the supplemental material for a module, students will write a reflection/discussion post. (2 total)
- **Final Project:** Students will create a culminating project that reflects what they learned. There will be multiple options for what format this project can take.
- **Final Reflection:** Students will create a final reflection that includes their plans for further learning after the course is completed.

### **Course Grades:**

**S/U**

- Introduction post, discussion board/reflections, supplemental material will be graded credit/no credit
- The final project and final reflection will be graded pass/fail

**Letter Grade (A-F)**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Discussion Posts</b>	<b>Final Project</b>	<b>Final Reflection</b>
<b>A</b>	All 7 posts are done with 200+ words, -Introduction Post (250+ words) -3 Posts for Module 1 1 Post for Module 2 or 3 2 Posts for Supplemental Material	Shows evidence of effort and reflects learning, references to texts were made	Shows evidence that the participant will continue their learning after the course is completed
<b>B</b>	5-6 of 7 Discussion Posts were completed OR Discussion Posts didn't quite meet requirements	Shows some effort and some reflection of learning. References to texts may not have been made	Shows some evidence that the participant will continue their learning
<b>C</b>	4 of 7 Discussion Posts were completed OR Discussion Posts didn't meet requirements	Shows a bit of effort and a bit of reflection. References to the texts were probably not made.	Shows a bit of evidence that the participant will continue their learning
<b>D</b>	2-3 of 7 Discussion Posts were completed OR Discussion Posts missed a lot of requirements	Shows very little effort and very little reflection. References to the texts were not made.	Shows very little evidence that the participant will continue their learning
<b>F</b>	0-1 of 7 Discussion Posts were completed OR all Discussion Post requirements were missed	Shows no effort and no reflection. References were not made.	Shows no evidence that the participant will continue their learning.

**Diverse Text Statement:** Note that these texts contain a multitude of themes, some of which may be mature, including explicit language, sexual content, abuse, or use of illegal substances or underage consumption. These books may feature themes that challenge your thinking and at times be frustrating as a learner. Texts may include political or social ideologies that are different from your own. It is important to keep an open mind and encourage yourself to look through the windows of the text. Discrimination of any form will not be tolerated in this class.

**Due Dates:** There are 2 major due dates throughout the semester. The preliminary module will be due halfway through the semester, to prevent procrastinating, and the choice module will be due at the end of the session. (Dates forthcoming). If there are issues with this, email me.

**Students with Disabilities:** Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor as soon as possible.

**Land Acknowledgement Statement:** We collectively acknowledge that we gather at NDSU, a land grant institution, on the traditional lands of the Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda) and Anishinaabe Peoples in addition to many diverse Indigenous Peoples still connected to these lands. We honor with gratitude Mother Earth and the Indigenous Peoples who have walked with her throughout generations. We will continue to learn how to live in unity with Mother Earth and build strong, mutually beneficial, trusting relationships with Indigenous Peoples of our region.

**Representation:** Our class welcomes anyone who wants to share their personal multicultural and diverse experiences with the class, but no one in this class will ever be asked to speak on behalf of a group based on their identity. We will recognize that anyone who wants to share speaks as an individual, not as a representative of a group of people. We will also recognize that the authors and works of literature we read do not represent all experiences or perspectives of their identity group, and we will be careful not to make generalizations about a group of people based on limited insights or information.

**Academic Honesty Statement:** All work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct.

## Course Outline

Note: This is a self-paced course, so this is just a suggestion to make sure you have things done by the due dates.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Read</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
1 (June 27- July 3)	Module 1: Text 1	Introduction Post (Due July 10) Discussion Post (Due July 24)
2 (July 4- July 10)	Module 1: Text 2	Discussion Post (Due July 24)
3 (July 11- July 17)	Module 1: Text 3	Discussion Post (Due July 24)
4 (July 18 - July 24)	Module 2 or 3: Text 1	Supplemental Material Module 1 and Discussion Post (Due July 24)
5 (July 25 - July 31)	Module 2 or 3: Text 2	
6 (Aug. 1 - Aug. 7)	Module 2 or 3: Text 3	Module Discussion Post (Due Aug. 21)
7 (Aug. 8- Aug. 14)		Supplemental Material Module 2 or 3 and Discussion Post (Due Aug. 21, but must be done before Final Reflection) Final Project (Due Aug. 21)
8 (Aug. 15- Aug. 21)		Final Reflection (Due Aug. 21)

## Assignments

### Introduction Post:

Introduce yourself by creating a discussion post that is 250+ words. I'd like to know where you're from, what school district you work for, and what you teach or position you're in and the students you serve. Include what you hope to gain from this course, what experience do you have in diversity, equity, and inclusion work or learning? The rest is up to you, I love fun facts so feel free to include family, pets, hobbies, favorite shows or movies, or whatever you feel the need to share. Additionally, as this is a literature course, I would like to know about you as a reader, what you like to read or don't like to read, your experience as a reader growing up, or your favorite or least favorite books.

Due by the end of Week 2

### Discussion Boards/Reflections:

**Preliminary Module:** Write a reflection 200+ words on each of the books you read for the initial module (3 of the 6 required texts). Consider the big questions in your reflection: biases, intersectionality, what you learned, how it could help your students, etc. Each book will have other questions to consider as well. You do not need to pick all three questions; they are there to help guide your thoughts. Remember that I am not looking for a summary of the text, but instead for you to dig deeper and synthesize what you read into the text to look at the bigger picture. Include text evidence as needed. Please respond to 2 of your classmate's responses for any of the books you've read.

- ***Ancestor Approved* edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith**
  - **Question 1:** *Ancestor Approved* is a collection of short stories that showcases a number of Native American authors and characters. Was this an effective way to

highlight intersectionality in the Native American community? How could a novel format change how you read the story?

- **Question 2:** Relationship building helps the characters grow and go out of their comfort zone. How do you use relationship building at school to help your students grow? How can you extend your relationship building?
- **Question 3:** This book was written as a collaborative effort. What do you see as the challenges and/or strengths of writing in this format? What is your experience with collaborative efforts, either in your professional or personal life? What have you found to be the biggest benefits and hindrances in collaboration?

- ***Everything Sad is Untrue* by Daniel Nayeri**

- **Question 1:** This book is categorized as an “autobiographical novel,” meaning that the book is categorized as fiction but draws heavily from Nayeri’s life. In what ways could multi-genre texts be used in your classroom to teach intersectionality?
- **Question 2:** How does Daniel’s storytelling style add to the story? How would you react if a student told stories in this way? In what ways could this style g
- **Question 3:** The big themes of this book are love, kindness, and trust, but also justice. Is justice needed to have the other 3? In what ways do you see this in your life or at your school? Did reading this text change how you would handle certain interactions with students, particularly immigrant students?

- ***Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani Laroocca**

- **Question 1:** Does food and/or music shape someone’s identity? Give some examples from yourself or your students.
- **Question 2:** In what ways do you see students or other adults change or alter themselves to fit in at school? What potential implications could there be if people alter their identity for the benefit of fitting in?
- **Question 3:** In what ways do or don’t you see BIPOC, immigrant/refugee, or first-generation American students manage the intersection between their cultural community and American culture?



- ***Furia* by Yamile Saied Méndez**

- **Question 1:** This is the only text that takes place outside of the United States. Do you think adding a text from another country is beneficial when looking at intersectionality and identity?
- **Question 2:** What would you say is the central conflict of this story? Can you pick one out or do they all muddle together? Reflect on how the conflict(s) of the text add or detract to the authenticity of the plot and characters.
- **Question 3:** This text was picked as a Reese Witherspoon x Hello Sunshine Book Club YA pick. Would you pick this for a book club pick? Is there value in getting this book into young adult readers? Consider the student population at your school or district, what aspects of this book would be most likely to engage them? Could/did this text help to examine biases surrounding women, Latinx, and/or athlete communities?

- ***The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo**

- **Question 1:** In what ways can poetry help shape identity? Do you use writing or poetry to help students discover parts of their identities? If not, in what ways can students discover parts of their identity in your classroom?
- **Question 2:** *The Poet X* has been on the Banned Book List. In what ways have you seen banned books impact your school or district? What happened as a result of the books being banned? How did you react to the book ban? How did your students react?
- **Question 3:** Xiamora is at an intersection of being a girl and a woman, she has strong feelings throughout the book: furious, confused, anxious, shy, unsure, happy, overwhelmed, gracious, and more. What are some examples from the text that show her struggle or success of trying to grow up? Explain why this would shape her future identity. Consider biases that could be used when examining Xiamora as a character.

- ***Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender**

- **Question 1:** This book shows how important social media can be to kids. In what ways does the presentation of digital conversations (via text or social media) help build Felix’s identity? Social media can bring drama from outside of school into school. In what ways can outside situations affect students during the school day? What can educators do to help support students in school?
- **Question 2:** As an educator, how would you handle some of the situations or conflicts Felix was put in at school or faced outside of school? As you’ve gone through this course, how might your reactions have changed?
- **Question 3:** *Felix Ever After* is praised because it is a book about a character who has already “come out of the closet” and highlights how Felix is still discovering who they are. On the reverse side, it has been put on banned book lists for a number of reasons including that it says the F-word 66 times. In what ways can teachers or librarians showcase diverse books as a necessity in schools while still acknowledging that the content of the text contains mature themes?

Due Date: Halfway point

**Choice Modules Discussion Post:** After reading all 3 of the 5 texts for your module, you will write one discussion post/reflection synthesizing information from all the texts to create one overarching post. Consider the big questions in your reflection: biases, intersectionality, what you learned, how it could help your students, etc. Each module will have specific questions to examine as well. You are welcome to explore other ideas than the questions listed, but there should be no plot summaries from the text, just a synthesis of the large ideas and themes. This post should be 400+ words and include the titles of the texts you read as well as examples from the text within your answers.

- **Module 2: Activism**

- **Question 1:** What are the barriers to participating in activist efforts? What reservations might some students or teachers have about engaging in activism? How can educators support their students in their pursuits?
- **Question 2:** In the texts, characters have used websites, poetry, blogs, zines, and more to be activists. What mediums have you seen students use to advocate for something or themselves? What mediums have you used to advocate for something or yourself?
- **Question 3:** These texts have shown how students can struggle to be activists and still “follow the rules” at school. Has your school ever done something that hides pieces of students’ identity, even if it was out of “good intentions?” If so, how could things change to avoid downplaying students' concerns in the future?

- **Module 3: Identity**

- **Question 1:** Identity can be made up of so many pieces, physical appearance, heritage, sexual identity, gender identity, and more. What barriers do education systems face from being able to showcase all aspects of a student or educator’s identity at school? What steps or changes could be made to help decrease biases, increase student or educator education on various identity pieces, or to ensure a culture of acceptance?
- **Question 2:** Have you ever been reluctant to accept a piece of your identity? In what ways has your family shaped your identity? Have you ever seen students hesitant to accept themselves? What are some reasons why they might be hesitant? How can you as an educator guide your students as they shape their identities?
- **Question 3:** Many of the protagonists in these books have a strong support system either from their friends, families, or both. They also usually have friends, family, or both that are reluctant to support them wholly. What reservations may educators face as they interact with students growing and shaping their identity?

Due Date: End of the course

## Supplemental Material

Each module will include some supplemental material to gain background knowledge to the texts. Participants will be required to complete supplemental material in a module before they can complete their second discussion post.

### Preliminary Module 1:

#### Watch:

Pick at least one of these videos with Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term “intersectionality.” You may also watch bits of all three.

- [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#): TED Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw
- [What Intersectionality Really Means for Movements](#): Interview with Kimberlé Crenshaw
- [Crenshaw at the 2020 MAKERS Conference](#) Kimberlé Crenshaw

Watch these four videos:

- [Want a More Just World? Be an Unlikely Ally](#): TED Talk by Dwinita Mosby Tyler
- [Color Blind or Color Brave](#): TED Talk by Mellody Hobson
- [The Danger of a Single Story](#): TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- [Why Black Girls are Targeted for Punishment at School](#): TED Talk with Monique W. Morris

#### Explore One:

- [Being Antiracist](#): Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture
- [Not Racist is Not Enough](#): NPR Life Kit podcast

#### Do:

- [Implicit Bias](#): Take the Harvard Implicit Bias test

### Module 1 Supplemental Material Discussion Post:

Synthesize what you learned into a discussion post of 300+ words.

Key Questions to answer or reflect on in your post:

- What did you learn?

- What surprised you?
- Were there any parts of the supplemental material that added to your understanding of the module books?
- Did the supplemental material make you think of the texts as more authentic?
- How can you use this information to shape your teaching or help your students?
- If you're comfortable, reflect on your own biases. (We all have them, so no judgment!)

## **Module 2: Activism**

### **Watch:**

- [Amanda Goreman and Trevor Noah](#): Amanda Goreman on the Daily Show with Trevor Noah
- [Greta at the UN](#): Greta Thunberg advocating for climate justice at the United Nations

### **Read:**

- [Dakota Access Pipeline](#): A timeline of the Dakota Access Pipeline Protest
- [The Problem with Women's Suffrage](#): Explore the site to learn more about intersectional suffrage.
- [8 Young Activists](#)
- [The Psychology Behind Riots](#)
- [Students Push Back Against Book Bans](#)

## **Module 2: Activism Supplemental Material Discussion Post**

Synthesize what you learned into a discussion post of 300+ words

### **Key Questions:**

- What did you learn?
- What surprised you?
- Were there any parts of the supplemental material that added to your understanding of the module books?
- Did the supplemental material make you think of the texts as more authentic?
- How can you use this information to shape your teaching or help your students?

### **Module 3: Identity**

#### **Watch:**

##### *Watch All:*

- [Race Debunked](#)
- [Gender Identity & Pronouns](#)
- [Native American Boarding Schools](#)

##### *Pick One:*

- [How to Deconstruct Racism](#): TED Talk by Baratunde Thurston
- [The US Needs a Radical Revolution of Values](#): TED Talk by Dr. Bernice King

##### *Pick Two:*

- [LGBTQ History with Wanda Sykes](#)
- [LGBTQ History with Billy Porter](#)
- [Living History of LGBTQ Movement](#)

#### **Read:**

- [What Hollywood Movies do to Perpetuate Racial Stereotypes](#)
- [BIPOC or POC? Equity or Equality?:](#) New York Times article (read if you're able to)
- [If You Think You're Giving Students of Color a Voice, Get Over Yourself](#)
- [LGBTQ Timeline](#)
- [LGBTQ Youth and COVID-19](#)
- [Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth](#)

### **Module 3: Identity Supplemental Material Discussion Post**

Synthesize what you learned into a discussion post of 300+ words

#### Key Questions:

- What did you learn?
- What surprised you?
- Were there any parts of the supplemental material that added to your understanding of the module books?

- Did the supplemental material make you think of the texts as more authentic?
- How can you use this information to shape your teaching or help your students?

**Due Date:** End of semester, but must be done before writing the second module response.

### **Final Project:**

After completing all supplemental material and discussion posts (excluding your final reflection), you will create a final project. The options you could take with this project are pretty limitless, if you want to stray off the list I provided, just email me to check if it'll work-most likely it will.

### **Potential Project Ideas:**

- Design a Teaching Unit
  - This could use one of the texts we read or look at one or more of the themes the course covered
  - The project should be at least one week's worth of lessons and any supplemental materials
- Design Professional Development
  - You've completed this course and gained knowledge that you're excited to share with your coworkers. This could be implemented at the team or department level, your educator friends, at the building level, or with their PLC (professional learning community). Professional development could look like a book study, video, podcast, presentation, or other forms that they could push out to other educators.

- Zine
  - A few of the texts featured in the courses feature zines, a zine is a short collection of original or appropriated texts and images, oftentimes trying to spread the word about a particular topic.
  - Create a physical copy and scan it in or a digital version.
- Graphic Novel
  - Using online resources or templates, or on paper, create a graphic novel or informative text reflecting what you learned or would want to share with others.
- Multimodal project
  - Multimodality means including multiple literacies within one medium. That means-in the simplest form- that there is a combination of visual (images, media, maps), aural (spoken words, music, sounds), and/or text (written words)
  - Examples of multimodal projects include newspapers, children's books, blogs, emails, video, games, posters, and more
- Self Portrait
  - Create a self-portrait featuring your own identity and intersectionality. This could be done with any medium, digital, collage, written, and more.
- Traditional research paper/project
  - If you want to dig deeper into one of the subjects mentioned, you may write a traditional research paper. Length should be 8-10 pages and include at least 3 scholarly sources.

Participants are encouraged to submit their final assignments to the class in a discussion post for others to view. As educators, one of the most powerful resources we have is each other.



Due at the end of the course

### **Final Reflection**

The very last you should do is create your final reflection. Final reflection could include:

- overall thoughts on the course
- whatever was most impactful for you
- where you're going next in your journey of anti-bias education
- positive affirmations of yourself that you are making progress

This part of the reflection should be around 250 words. The second part of your final reflection is your "What Next" list. This list should be a list of media that you want to check out after the course is done. It could be a list for your students or yourself. It should include around 10 items (books, movies, documentaries, journals, interviews...) that you will use to keep learning. It could be other books from modules you didn't do, books for any age (including for adults). This list should be a list that is actually interesting and curated, not just copied off of a list from the internet. You could narrow down your focus or do a mix. After completing your list, if you feel comfortable, add it to the last discussion post for others to see and get ideas.