**Let’s Talk About Race and Prejudice Using Picture Books**

Rebecca Zeren, NEH July 2015, “The Most Southern Place on Earth”

**Objectives:**

Encourage questions and dialogue about the 1950’s and 60’s Civil Rights Movement.

Create an open, safe space for students and teachers to share and learn about race and prejudice.

**Introduction:**

G4 and G5 students will read picture books written by award winning, recognized authorities, about race and prejudice in order to make the school’s January celebration of MLK’s birthday more meaningful.

The Librarian will introduce the unit with selections from *Hip Hop Speaks to Children: a Celebration of Poetry With a Beat*, edited by Nikki Giovanni, using Apple TV so students can read the poetry, too.

Let’s Talk About Race and Prejudice Using Picture Books is a “prequel” to the annual G4 and G5 African-American classroom studies in January and February.

**Activity:**

Week One:

The Librarian will read the picture book, *Let’s Talk About Race* by Julius Lester, using the document camera. I will demonstrate close reading by reading the first five pages alone; then the class will be invited to read together, aloud, the next six pages; the rest of the picture book will be read aloud by students individually.

Students will create a definition for “race” and “prejudice,” first using their own ideas, and then adding additional information from the dictionary (online and in print). The Smart Board will be used to record and wordsmith a definition agreed upon by the class.

Each student will read a picture book selected from the attached list.

Week Two:

Each student will create an essential question about race or prejudice based on their reading, and write it on a white file card. (One of our school’s yearlong themes is “Essential Questions.”)

G4 and G5 classes, which meet on different days in the library, will divide into four or five discussion groups to share their essential questions and to try to answer some.

Guidelines will be established first: good listener; mutual respect; commit to learning; do not blame or shame; avoid inflammatory language; tolerate different points of view

Each group will have a student facilitator, recorder, summarizer, connector, and timekeeper; a minimum of 4 adults, including classroom teacher/paraeducator/parent volunteer/librarian will rotate among the student groups. (This is a tight schedule; time may be expanded if it can be found)

File cards with essential questions and group written notes will be collected at the conclusion of the discussion.

Students will read and sing using either *We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song* by Debbie Levy or *We Shall Overcome: a Song That Changed the World* by Stuart Stotts.

**Assessment:**

Week #3

Staff and students will take time the following week to reflect on the discussion and make suggestions for follow-on activities.

**Picture books selected from the Tang Library at Trinity School:**

*Across the Alley* by Richard Michelson

*Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki

*The Blessing Cup* by Patricia Polacco

*Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation* by Andrea Davis Pinkney

*Busing Brewster* by Richard Michelson

*A Child of the Civil Rights Movement* by Paula Young Shelton

*Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson

*Fishing Day* by Andrea Davis Pinkney

*Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* by Carole Boston Weatherford

*Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles

*Freedom School, Yes!* By Amy Littlesugar

*Goin’ Someplace Special* by Patricia McKissack

*Just As Good: How Larry Doby Changed America’s Game* by Chris Crowe

*Lillian’s Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* by Jonah Winter

*Malcolm Little: the Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X* by Ilyasah Shabazz

*Mr. Lincoln’s Way* by Patricia Polacco

*One Green Apple* by Eve Bunting

*The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson

*Pap*a’s *Mark* by Gwendolyn Battle-Lavert

*Ron’s Big Mission* by Rose Blue

*Ruth and the Green Book* by Calvin Alexander Ramsey with Gwen Strauss

*Separate is Never Equal: Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation* by Sylvia Mendez

(used by Spanish class in 2015)

*Shake Rag: From the Life of Elvis Presley* by Amy Littlesugar

*Sit-in: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Davis Pinkney

*The Soccer Fence: A Story of Friendship, Hope, and Apartheid* in South Africa by P. Bildner

*The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles

*A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson

**Follow On Activities:**

The classroom teachers lead the Grade 4 Civil Rights’ Literature Unit with students divided into literature circle groups: last year they read

*Bud Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis

*The Watson’s Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis

*One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia

I suggested that 2 books be added this year:

*Glory Be* by Augusta Scattergood

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson

The classroom teachers lead the Grade 5 Civil Rights Movement Unit. Their focus is on the study of people who participated, especially those less recognized. Students use a mix of print and online resources, including primary documents. Their culminating project varies from year to year.

I am planning to incorporate a new book into the G5 curriculum: *Revolution* by Deborah Wiles. Three copies are available but have gone unused. I’m looking for the right place and time.

Near future—Let’s Talk About Race Picture Book unit may be incorporated in other grades with modifications as appropriate following the G4 and G5 assessments.

**Concluding Statement:**

At our Faculty Summer Institute, Aug 2015, Trinity School, we reviewed our diversity mission statement and renewed our commitment:

Trinity School is committed to creating an inclusive, equitable, and empathetic community that welcomes, embraces, and respects each individual. We recognize the interconnectedness of all people and contributions of all individuals, including those of different ability, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, family composition, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.