

Lesson #3:

Lesson: The Desegregation of Portland Public Schools

Purpose/Rationale: Students will examine whether Oregon schools have effectively promoted equal opportunities for all students regardless of ethnicity and consider how can schools better achieve this goal.

Lesson Goal: To expose students to the history of segregation in Portland schools, as well as introducing them to the different perspectives involved in the debate over current efforts to combat de facto segregation.

Lesson Objectives:

Students will evaluate the effectiveness of desegregation efforts.

Students will evaluate the worthiness of combatting de facto segregation and consider who should play what role in these efforts.

Common Core Standards:

9-10. RH2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary course.
9-10. WHST. 9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Oregon Department of Education Standards:

HS.35 Examine the pluralistic realities of society (e.g., race, poverty, gender, and age) recognizing issues of equity, and evaluating the need for change

Time Needed: One 90 minute block period

Materials / Resources:

The suggested documents for students to research from:

- Johnson, E., and F. Williams. 2010. "Desegregation and Multiculturalism in the Portland Public Schools". Oregon Historical Quarterly. 111 (1): 6-37.
(<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5403/oregonhistq.111.1.6>)
- United States Commission on Civil Rights, and Roberta Jones-Booker. 1977. School desegregation in Portland, Oregon: a staff report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. [Washington]: The Commission.
(<http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12d4528.pdf>)
- PPS 2013 demographics: http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/data-analysis/2013_Enrollment_Summary.pdf

- Brown v. Board of Education 60th Anniversary: What's the State of Racial Integration at Portland Public Schools
(http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2014/05/brown_v_board_of_education_60t.html)
- PPS Advisory Group Leans Toward Recommending an End to Neighborhood-to-Neighborhood School Transfers
(http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2014/06/pps_advisory_group_leans_toward.html)

Procedures:

1. Students begin class with a Quick Write responding to the following prompt: Should efforts be made to ensure that schools be as racially and ethnically desegregated as possible? Why/why not? If so, whose role is it to lead these efforts?
2. Students are assigned one of four positions to research and argue:
 - a. The desegregation efforts in Portland Public schools, beginning in the 1960's have been effective.
 - b. The desegregation efforts in Portland Public schools, beginning in the 1960's have been ineffective.
 - c. Ensuring our schools are racially and ethnically desegregated is a worthwhile goal.
 - d. Ensuring that our schools are racially and ethnically desegregated is not a worthwhile goal.
3. Students utilize the documents provided by the teacher to find evidence and reasons that support their position (groups can work together and share a computer if needed, or, in the case of no class computers, teacher can print out document packets).
4. After researching their positions, each group confers briefly to share findings and/or help each other clarify any points-of-confusion.
5. Students participate in a "Silent Debate." The As go up against the Bs, and the Cs match up with the Ds. In this debate the students respond to one another by (silently) writing on a paper. For example, a member of Group A will write down a piece of evidence from the documents that supports their position, and then a member of Group B will respond with a written rebuttal. Students are expected to cite their findings.

-- These debates can be one-to-one match-ups, or, depending on your students,

can consist of multiple As vs multiple Bs -- given that they rotate turns as responders.

6. At the end of the silent debates, the teacher leads a brief share-out -- students are called on to identify the best evidence that the other side presented. During this time the students who did not argue the position being talked about are able to use their peers' stated evidence and fill out the worksheet that asks them to provide reasons that support each position.
7. Students are now allowed to abandon their given positions and participate in a philosophical chairs activity. The same questions are asked, the students stand on a given side of the classroom depending on their views, and then are given a chance to justify their position.
8. Closing activity: students compose a medium-Quick Write, in which they respond to the same question posed at the start of the class. This time students are asked to provide evidence that supports their views. Students turn-in the Quick Writes (both pre and post) as they exit the class.

Assessment: Teacher formatively assesses students based on their participation in the silent debates, as well as the share-outs.

Teacher uses the pre and post Quick Writes to assess student learning.

Modifications: The teacher may modify and/or annotate documents for students with varying levels of literacy comprehension. Spending extra time on step number 4 may be beneficial for students who are less adept at gleaning information from texts.

Extensions: An additional topic for students to explore further is PPS' current policy of "student-choice." Teacher can provide students with articles in favor of, and articles against the policy. Have the student describe how they would advise the district in regards to Student-Choice.

BLACK UNITED FRONT

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The following is a summary of the Black United Front's plan for providing quality education for children in our community.

1. Black children deserve the opportunity to receive a quality education at their neighborhood school.
2. The BUF plan focuses on the improvement of education at neighborhood schools rather than the development of a complex system of redrawn school boundaries and reassignment of large numbers of children.
3. The option of all parents and children to choose schools outside their neighborhood remains in the current BUF proposal.
4. In order to provide Black children with sufficient positive role models, the Portland Public School system must develop a comprehensive affirmative action hiring plan. This plan will insure that schools will have at least the same percentage of Black administrators, teachers and support staff as the percentage of Black students in the system.
5. This plan gives the opportunity for parent participation in the selection and evaluation of teachers and principals.
6. The current school board desegregation guidelines require that the Black enrollment in a school cannot exceed 50% which implies that Black students cannot be educated without the presence of a white majority. This rule perpetuates a racist view of Black children's learning ability.
7. Existing desegregation laws and interpretations of the Constitution upon which these laws are based have been successfully challenged in other cities. The Board of Education and the community at-large should challenge laws that force Black children to participate in educational arrangements that have been academic and psychological failures.
8. The BUF ask that Eliot and Kennedy be made into middle schools so that children in our community can attend neighborhood middle schools.
9. The BUF insist that Black history and culture be made a part of the entire curriculum and that the total academic offering for our children be improved.

Black United Front press release circa 1979-'80 (Rutherford Collection, Portland State University)