

## Lesson 3:

### The Role of African American Community Organizations in Equality in Public Education

#### *Purpose & Rationale:*

Students are often familiar with the court case of “Brown v. the Board of Education” and with the general idea of desegregation in schools during the Civil Rights Era of United States history. Often left out of this narrative are the ways, other than segregation, in which educational opportunities for African Americans were limited. This lesson will examine the situation in Portland Public Schools, in particular Roosevelt High School, regarding equality in education in the years just after desegregation. Students will see how community organizations, in this case the Urban League of Portland, continued to play a vital role in assuring equal access to education and equal treatment of students. This lesson will follow two lessons that give a broad overview of the methods and goals of the Urban League of Portland.

#### *Goal:*

Learn about efforts of the Urban League of Portland to provide equal treatment in public education.

#### *Lesson Objectives:*

- Identify ways in which educational opportunities were unequal for African Americans after desegregation.
- Examine the response of community organizations to inequalities in education.

Time Needed: 60 minutes (may be extended or modified for shorter class periods)

Background knowledge or skills students need prior to lesson. Students will need to have some very basic knowledge that there was a movement for desegregation and equality in education (the Civil Rights Movement) on the part of African Americans during the 1950’s and 1960’s.

#### Materials required:

- Overhead projector
- Document camera or laptop
- *Handout 1: Letter of Complaint to Portland School Board from Parents and Black Community Coalition*
- *Handout 2: Demands of Parents and Black Community Coalition* (Handout is two pages)
- SOAPS+Claim (middle school) – This is appropriate for middle school and high school students with barriers to learning or less proficiency in English
- SOAPS+Claim (high school)

#### **Hook or Introduction (10 min):**

1. Display the question “Have you ever felt unfairly treated by school employees? Why do you think you were treated this way?”
2. Students will write a quick response to this prompt. After a few minutes, have students turn to a neighbor and discuss their responses.
3. If time allows, ask students to report out their responses

### Instruction: 30-40 minutes

1. Describe the situation of Portland in 1970. Schools were no longer segregated and attempts had been made to move students around so that each school would have a more diverse student population. The Civil Rights laws had been passed. This means that according to law African Americans should be given equal treatment and equal access to all sectors of public and private society. (5 min.)
2. Explain that the students will work in pairs to examine a document using “SOAPS+Claim”. If students are unfamiliar with SOAPS+Claim use another analysis method that has been used previously in class or take a few extra minutes to model how SOAPS+Claim works. (5 min.)
3. In pairs, students will read Handout 1: *Letter of Complaint to Portland School Board from Parents and Black Community Coalition* and complete SOAPS+Claim procedure. (10-15 min.)
4. With the same partner, students will use the SOAPS+Claim procedure to analyze Handout 2: *Demands of Parents and Black Community Coalition*. (10-15 min.)
5. During the cooperative work time the teacher will circulate around the room to assure that students understand the material and interpreting it correctly.

### Class Discussion: 10-15 minutes

1. Using their SOAPS+Claim analysis students will discuss the following questions as a class (project on screen)
2. What were some of the problems for African American students following desegregation?
3. What action did community groups take to attempt to lessen some of these problems?
4. What solutions to the problems are suggested, i.e., what does the Black Community Coalition demand?
5. The teacher will mediate the class discussion. The bulk of the conversation should consist of student responses to the material and the questions, rather than the teacher explaining the “correct” answer to each question. Allow the conversation to develop around the questions and guide it with leading questions when necessary.

### Assessment of Student Learning:

The class discussion and observations of the teacher during the cooperative work time, in addition to the completed SOAPS+Claim sheets will serve as the formative assessments for this lesson. The use of SOAPS in this lesson will also help students prepare to interpret texts for the DBQ.

### Modifications and Extensions:

For students with barriers to learning or low skills, use SOAPS+Claim (middle school) instead of SOAPS + Claim (high school). Also the text of one or both handouts could be truncated to fit the language and reading levels of your class. To increase the rigor of this lesson for academically gifted students, include questions about whether the demands of the Black Coalition are appropriate for the complaints that they have brought forth and if they believe that these demands will remedy the problems listed during the closing discussion.

Evidence of unacceptable practices, acts, policies and procedures in the  
Portland School system as determined by the, PARENTS and BLACK COMMUNITY  
COALITION

JANUARY 11, 1970

1. Wanton abuse and arrest of Black students without any efforts to ascertain facts.
2. Of prejudging Black students, as to conduct and guilt, based upon previous student experiences.
3. Arbitrary suspension of Black students who have permission to be out of class.
4. Arbitrary expulsions of Black students without just cause.
5. Failure on the part of school administrators to follow existing procedures and guidelines, dealing with suspensions and expulsions.
6. Failure on the part of school administrators to communicate and to relate to staff and students alike as to established procedures and guidelines dealing with suspensions and expulsions.
7. Of administrator and staff abuse of Black students, both physically and verbally.
8. Of False and malicious writing and submitting of reports on Black students on the part of the school investigation department.
9. Of lack of sensitivity and awareness of the delinemas and frustrations of black students, by Administrators and Staff.
10. Of capricious intent on the part of the total administration to misinterpret everything about Black people.
11. Of white students and white adults intimidating, harrassing and assaulting Black students without any efforts on the part of the school administration to take the necessary steps to alleviate such acts.
12. That the armed police in the school premises is merely aiding and abetting the unfair treatment of Black students, and is a threat to their personal safety.
13. Of discriminatory practices on the part of coaches toward Black student athletes.
14. Of discriminatory hiring practices, at all levels.

DEMANDS OF PARENTS AND BLACK COMMUNITY  
COALITION

TO: Portland School Board

DATE: January 11, 1970

- I. All school employees (Teachers, Principals, etc.) will cease and desist from all treatments, insults and assaults of Black Students. This is intended to cover verbal, psychological and physical displays of disrespect, contempt and brutality.
- II. Reinstatement of all suspended and expelled Black Students until hearings on each of these matters are arranged. Adjudicating bodies for Student hearings are to be composed of:
  1. Community People
  2. School Officials.
  3. Student Representatives
  - a. Black Students who participate in demonstrations relevant to their welfare will not be punished by School officials.
- III. All Police authority must be withdrawn from surveillance over Black Students.
- IV. Provide curriculum offerings that are relevant to Black Students. Increase the number of Black Teacher Aides and Community Agents in all schools where there are white problems created for Black Students.

- V. From this point forward, the school administration must redirect its intents and efforts to reflect in all of its policies and practices, respect and receptivity for the inputs and demands of Black people to make Public Schools meaningful educational settings for Black Students.
- VI. Justice must be at the heart of all Administrative procedures used in the suspension of Black Students. Administrative follow-up in providing education for dismissed students must be adequate to guarantee the continued intellectual development of the Black Student who has been capriciously removed from school.
- VII. Provide sensitivity training for racist Teachers and antagonistic administrators in order to educate them out of their inhumane behavior patterns.
- VIII. Black persons selected by the Community Coalition will be included on all School Board deliberations that deal with the dissatisfactions of Black people in matters of public education.
- IX. Black Seniors participating in Boycotts against the Schools which are called by the Community Coalition will not be prevented from graduating.
- X. A Black Community Review Board representing the Black Community Coalition will review all complaints, charges and decisions in cases where Black Students are subject to suspension or expulsion.

## SOAPS + Claim (Middle School)

Analysis of historical documents, artifacts, maps, artwork, and other visual representation of an historical nature

	Questions to Ask	Response Sentence Frames
Subject	What is the document about?	The subject of this document is:
Occasion	What is special about the time and place during which this document was created?	The author is creating this document at this specific time because:  The author is creating this document at a specific place because:
Audience	Who is the author's main audience? Who does the author want to communicate with?	The author wants _____ (specific persons or groups) to see or use this document.
Purpose	Why did the author create this document? What does the author want to persuade the audience to do?	The author's purpose is to:
Speaker	Who is the author? Why should we believe what the author is saying?	The author is:  We should believe what the author has to say because:
Claim	What is the author trying to prove?	The author wants to show that:

### SOAPS+Claim (High School)

	Questions to Ask	Response Sentence Frames
Subject	What is the document, artifact, map, artwork all about?	The subject of this document or artifact is...
Occasions	What is special about the time and place this document, map, or artwork was created?	The occasion for creating this document/artifact is... He/she is creating this at a specific <b>time</b> because... He/she created this <b>where</b> they did because...
Audience	Who is the author/creator's main audience?	The intended audience is probably..... The creator of this document/artifact wants_____ to use or read this.
Purpose	Why did the author/creator produce this document or artifact? What does he/she want to tell or convince you of or what does he/she want to persuade you to do?	The author/creator's purpose is to convince_____to_____. The author/creator wants his/her audience to know that..... The author/creator wants to persuade the audience to do this..... I'm not sure what the author/creator's purpose is but I think it might be.....
Speaker	Who is the author/creator? What are his/her credentials? Why should you take seriously what he/she has written or produced?	The author/creator is_____ and I think this affects their attitude toward_____ because..... I find/don't find the author creator credible because..... The author/creator probably believes..... I don't know a lot about the author/creator but I can find out more here.....
Claim	What is the author/creator intending to prove or establish?	The author/creator claims that..... The author/creator wants to show that..... The author/creator may be trying to claim that..... I'm not sure what the author is claiming, but I think it might be.....