USING DRAMATIC LITERATURE TO TEACH
MULTICULTURAL CHARACTER EDUCATION

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USING DRAMATIC LITERATURE TO TEACH MULTICULTURAL CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

TEACHING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH DRAMATIC LITERATURE

Introduction

In the fast-paced, ever changing society in which Americans live, where children bring guns to school, hate crimes are committed daily, and the suicide rate is rising, character education is essential. Multicultural character education will not only help create stronger individuals, but stronger societies. Throughout history educators have used drama to teach multicultural character education effectively.

Character Education and Its Opposition

One of the most controversial issues in all schools today is the topic of character education and teaching values. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,

character education involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect. The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens. Problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution are important parts of developing moral character. Through role
playing and discussions, students can see that their decisions affect other people and things. (ASCD 1)

Although it may seem like all teachers and parents would support these values, some still oppose character education. Opponents worry about whose values the educator or school will teach. They fear teachers will try to force their own opinions on students, infringing on religious beliefs and values taught at home. In contrast, proponents of character education argue that moral values are often not being taught or enforced at home so schools must take on the responsibility. As a result, character education is a contested issue among educators. In performing a simple ERIC\(^1\) search 6,109 articles regarding “character education” and 11,568 articles regarding “moral education” can be found, thus proving the prevalence of this topic among educators.

As a high school teacher who believes character education is needed in schools (particularly multicultural character education), I began my research by looking more carefully at both sides of the character education debate. Although I understand the opposition’s reservations, I believe that schools need to participate actively in teaching character education.

Support for Character Education

Thomas Lickona, author of *Educating for Character*, outlines “ten good reasons why schools should be making a clearheaded and wholehearted commitment to teaching moral values and developing good character” (20). Lickona’s reasons can be simplified

\(^1\)ERIC is the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), a national information system funded by the U.S. Department of Education. AskERIC is a personalized, internet-based service providing education information to teachers, librarians, counselors, administrators, parents, and anyone interested in education throughout the United States and the world.
into three important factors supporting character education. First, he explains that there is a clear and urgent need for character education and that “schools must pick up morals education as millions of children get little moral education from their parents and value-centered influences such as church are absent from their lives” (20). Many children do not receive moral education at home. If society does not teach values, it will breed anti-social children who are ignorant, intolerant, disrespectful, and unruly. For example, communities will be full of children who use offensive language or act as bullies, because they have never been asked to understand any other lifestyle. Children who have not learned to respect authority often do not follow rules or even abide by common courtesy. The lack of character education does not only affect individual people and individual communities, it affects society as a whole. Lickona declares that “democracies have a special need for moral education, because a democracy is government by the people themselves.” Americans live in a democracy whose founders asserted that moral education is essential for the success of a democratic society (6). Thomas Jefferson stated,

Democracy is government by the people; the people themselves are responsible for ensuring a free and just society. That means that people must, at least in some minimal sense, be good. They must understand and be committed to moral foundations of democracy. (Lickona 6)

In order for the American democracy to survive, there is a pressing need to cultivate children that will uphold the values needed to lead the nation.

A second reason to support character education is that formal education often teaches values in both the explicit and implicit curriculum. For example, how teachers
treat other teachers and staff, how teachers treat students, and how students are allowed to
treat staff all demonstrate the values teachers hold. If a teacher speaks disrespectfully
about a colleague in front of the class, students will think it is acceptable to disrespect
others outside of their presence. Even what teachers choose to use in the curriculum
demonstrates their personal values. For example, for decades many schools chose
reading lists of predominately white, male authors, indirectly devaluing all other
perspectives.

This leads to the third argument for character education in the American public
school system: even America’s value-conflicted society can find a common ethical
ground within our belief systems. Lickona explains, “Despite [American’s] diversity, we
can identify basic, shared values that allow us to engage in public moral education in a
pluralistic society. Pluralism itself is not possible without agreement on values such as
justice, honesty, civility, democratic process, and a respect for truth” (6). Certain values
such as honesty and respect are prevalent across most religions and cultures. Also,
“moral education” and “religious education” are not irrevocably linked. “Religion”
explores the relationship between a person and his God, whereas “morality” explores the
relationship between one person and another person and/or between a person’s mind and
conscience (Shuman 99). Universal moral values, such as treating everyone fairly and
respecting their lives, liberty, and equality, bind Americans together because they affirm
our fundamental human worth and dignity (Lickona 38).

Lickona states that the two “great moral values” are respect and responsibility.
Respect involves understanding another person’s experience as valuable in and of itself.
Responsibility is feeling the obligation to try and achieve respect for all members of a
pluralistic society. These qualities promote the good of the individual as well as the good of society. Lickona states, “Respect and responsibility are the fourth and fifth R’s that schools not only may, but also must teach if they are to develop ethically literate persons who can take their place [sic] as responsible citizens of society” (43). Lickona believes that teaching respect and responsibility are as important as teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. “Respect” and “responsibility” are broad terms and include such traits as honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, and courage.

Character Education in Regard to Understanding Multicultural Perspectives

Thus far I have discussed character education in general. However, character education is essential in teaching students to understand, appreciate, and respect multicultural diversity. Multicultural education is increasingly important in our diverse world. James Banks, a prominent advocate for multicultural education, states, “Multicultural education assumes that race, ethnicity, culture, and social class are salient parts of U.S. society…This diversity also enriches a society by providing all citizens with more opportunities to experience other cultures and thus become more fulfilled as human beings” (Grady 11). The following chart maps out social identities taken from Pat Griffin’s *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice.*
This tool identifies the locations of groups in relation to other groups. It is a starting point to understanding the way society categorizes our multicultural society.

How educators implement a multicultural agenda is a matter of great debate. Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant discuss five lesson plan approaches that teachers can use to implement multicultural education in the U.S.:

1. Teaching the Culturally Different – This method attempts to improve the achievement level of students of color or of a specific multicultural background. It seeks out culturally compatible methods of teaching to improve success rates and to make students who are “different” as “mainstream” as possible. This method asserts that something in a student’s cultural experience prevents him/her from performing to the “norm.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identities</th>
<th>Examples of Social Group Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td>Black, White, Asian, Latino/a, Native American, Pacific Islander, Biracial</td>
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<td>GENDER</td>
<td>male, female, transgender</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>poor, working class, middle class, owning class</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL / MENTAL /</td>
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<td>DEVELOPMENTAL ABILITY</td>
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<td>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</td>
<td>lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELIGION</td>
<td>Catholic, Jew, Protestant, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>young people, young adults, middle-aged adults, old people</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Gray, 9)
2. Human Relations – This method targets all children and promotes unity, tolerance, and acceptance of differences. Role-playing and sensitivity training are essential aspects of this method. This method tends to lead students to believe that social problems can be resolved by simply learning to get along.

3. Single Group Studies – This method develops a curriculum geared toward understanding in-depth a particular group’s oppression.

4. Multicultural Education – This method “promotes social structural equality and cultural pluralism” (Grady, 12). School is used as a means to practice basic democratic principles with hopes of reforming the democracy and pluralism of school structure.

5. Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist – This method combines multicultural education and teaching students how to take social action. (Grady 11-12).

Educators debate which approach to multicultural character education is the most effective. This study will combine Human Relations, Multicultural Education, and Multicultural and Reconstructionist approaches in lesson plans divided by Single Group Studies. These lesson plans will help provide teachers with ideas on how to incorporate multicultural character education in their classroom. Multicultural character education is necessary for keeping peace and equality in the classroom and beyond. Learning to respect and understand other cultures will help create a supportive learning environment and prepare students for the diversity of people they will meet in the “real world.” As Patricia Sternberg, author of Theatre for Conflict Resolution, states, “The more we know about those different from ourselves, the better equipped we are to understand them in
relation to their world and ours. When we take offense without trying to understand simple cultural or ethnic difference, however, the doors open for conflict and/or violence” (7).

What Teachers Must Know before Embarking on Multicultural Character Education

Teachers cannot begin multicultural character education without first understanding their own beliefs and how belief systems/morals are developed. Teachers must overcome their discomfort about discussing controversial issues. Counseling psychologist Janet Helms asserts that white teachers must make the following commitments:

1. To decide to abandon racism. One cannot buy into stereotypes or judge another based on skin color. Skin color does not define a person’s personality or lifestyle.
2. To observe ways in which racism is maintained in their environments. One must be aware when racism and prejudice occurs in society and acknowledge it is happening.
3. To learn the difference between the expression of racism and the expression of white culture. One should recognize differences in backgrounds and history and celebrate those differences equally. A white person who does not celebrate their child’s quinceanera or Kwanzaa is not racist. These events are simply not a part of white culture.
4. To discover what is positive about being white. Developing a positive white identity not based on superiority but based on valuing diversity is essential if
racism is to be abolished. Teachers need to recognize and accept their own
social identities without feelings of guilt.

(Grady 32)

Although this specific list is written concerning racism, it can be used as a guideline for all social identity biases. For example, one could adapt this strategy to sexual identity by exchanging the word racism with homophobia and white with the word heterosexual.

For teachers to understand their own morality and that of their students, they must understand the moral development process. Moral decision-making is a basic developmental skill; therefore, teaching and assessment strategies should help students cultivate this skill. Teachers should give students the opportunities to work as independent learners and decision-makers (Shuman 99). Psychologists, notably Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget, have developed the concept of cognitive learning stages. Lawrence Kohlberg and Elliot Turiel, moral theorists, went one step further and developed seven stages of culturally universal moral development stages.

The first stage is the Premoral. At this stage one neither understands nor judges good or bad in terms of rules or authority. One simply knows "good" as what is pleasing, and "bad" as what is painful or fearful (Shuman 102).

The second stage is the Preconventional. Here, one begins to understand moral reciprocity in terms of physical or hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, etc.) or in terms of the physical power of those in authority. As in Piaget's framework, the reasoning of Stage 1 is characterized by ego-centrism and the inability to consider the perspectives of others (Nucci). The physical consequences determine
“goodness” or “badness.” In Stage 2, moral reciprocity begins to emerge. “Right” is determined by what satisfies one’s own needs and occasionally the needs of others.

The third stage is the Conventional. At this stage, one has a basic understanding of conventional morality and can reason with an understanding that norms and conventions are necessary to uphold society (Nucci). One views morality as acting in accordance to what society deems as “right.” In Stage 3 “good” is determined by what pleases others and is approved by them. Stage 4 marks the shift from defining “right” in terms of local norms and role expectations to defining right in terms of the laws and norms established by the larger social system.

The final stage is the Post Conventional. This stage is characterized by reasoning based on principles, regardless of other’s authority. In Stage 5 one reasons based on ethical fairness about how laws should be devised. Regard for life and human kindness overrule cultural and societal norms and obligations. In Stage 6 “right” is defined by decisions of the conscience based on logical, self-chosen, ethical principles. “These are the universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of the respect of human beings as individuals” (Shuman 103).

Kohlberg and Turiel’s theorize that teachers should view students as “moral philosophers,” while the teacher acts as both “moral philosopher” and “moral psychologists” to understand and stimulate students’ growth. However, teachers should not simply instill their own personal beliefs on children, but rather encourage each student to come to an understanding of his/her own morals. Teachers should not operate under an “anything goes” attitude, but should encourage students through examples of real moral conflicts and problems to understand solutions to these problems that may
conflict with their own. Kohlberg’s stages can provide a framework to challenge students with moral perspectives that conflict with their own.

Kohlberg and Turiel feel it is the teacher’s responsibility to facilitate moral development as a means to help the student focus on genuine moral conflicts and think about his/her reasoning in the ways he/she solves conflicts. The teacher should help the student discover inconsistencies and inadequacies in his way of thinking and find a way to resolve this problem. Kohlberg and Turiel also believe that “teachers must 1) have knowledge of the child’s level of thought, 2) match the child’s level by communicating at the level directly above, 3) focus on reasoning, and 4) help the child experience the type of conflict that leads to an awareness of greater adequacy of the next stage” (Shuman 109).

Sharon Grady, author of *Drama and Diversity: A Pluralistic Perspective for Educational Drama*, suggests another way of approaching multicultural character education. She proposes the “ABC” approach: A – Analyze an area of diversity; B – Build awareness about the issues with students through lesson plans; and C – Create an environment for inclusion and respect. The websites of Teaching Tolerance, Live Wire Media, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development provide additional suggestions for ways to organize and facilitate multicultural character education in the classroom effectively.

Every teacher must determine which teaching strategy will best work in their classroom to promote multicultural character education. What may work in one classroom may not be an effective method in another classroom due to teaching strategies or class composition. However, teachers across the board must step up to the plate and
acknowledge the necessity of multicultural character education in our society.

“Educators in every arena need to move beyond simply attending to the symptoms and begin to build greater understanding about why these various biased attitudes exist, how bias affects people, the benefits and costs of bias, and what we can do to alleviate it” (Grady xvi).

Why Drama Specifically?

Educational psychologists, drama teachers, and theatre professionals agree that drama is an excellent way to teach students about their world and the world around them. There are several reasons that all contribute to the successful teaching of character education through different types of dramatic activities including teaching dramatic literature, drama performance, and applied theatre. Brian Way, one of the most well-known advocates for drama-in-education, explains, “Indeed, it is true to say that drama, so far from being new, is closely interwoven in the practical implementation of both the spirit and substance of every Education Act that has ever passed, especially the idea of the development of the whole person” (2). He continues, “Education is concerned with individuals, drama is concerned with the individualities of individuals, with the uniqueness of the human essence. Indeed this is one of the reasons for its intangibility and immeasurability” (3).

Drama can be one of the best ways to help students know themselves more fully. Students must be able to identify their own beliefs, values, and hypocrisies to better understand the world. The Socratic aphorism “know thyself” is essential as a child
develops and matures. As Shuman explains:

Henrick Ibsen wrote, “A student has essentially the same task as the poet: to make clear to himself, and thereby to others, the temporal and eternal questions which are astir in the age and in the community in which he belongs.” Drama in Ibsen’s view…is basic to man’s understanding of who and what he is, and how his society operates and how his fellow beings function (Shuman 158).

Once students are able to understand their own morality, they will be able to better understand the society in which they live. The use of drama can help students achieve their own understanding of morality. James Hoetker, author of Dramatics and the Teaching of Literature, states, “Drama, rightly used, can free people to act more surely, perceive more freshly, and relate more honestly and humanely to other people” (17). Hoetker supports this idea by stating that the goal of humanities, with drama as an essential component, is:

…to further our understanding of such enduring values as justice, freedom, virtue, beauty and truth. And provide us with wisdom and the ability to make judgment, to provide an understanding of cultures other than our own…to encourage creativity and concern for man’s ultimate destiny, to produce better men (Hoetker 68).

Art imitates reality. And no other art form captures reality more sincerely than drama. Through drama, the students are encouraged to be involved in the lesson. They experience direct involvement through improvisation, role playing, pantomime, characterization, etc. They also experience indirect participation through empathizing
with the characters. As an audience member or reader, “the individual simultaneously identifies with the onstage characters and actors, and yet disassociates himself from both. The child sits secure and safe, and yet undergoes soul-wrenching experiences indirectly” (Brizendine 6). This relates directly to Aristotle’s idea of “catharsis.” Through drama, a student is able to identify with characters and have an emotional experience. That connection can then help the child better understand his/her own as well as others’ experiences in the real world.

Through reading, performing, and watching drama, students learn four different classes of information. First from the content of the play students learn about culture, history, science, etc. Second, they learn the conventions of the theatre. Like all institutions, the theatre has specific, unique conventions – technical effects, dramatic structure, etc. Third, students experience cultural learning. Plays help student understand cultural patterns of thought reflecting the period, playwright, location, etc. Finally, students learns ethics. Students can learn “right” and “wrong” from drama (6-7).

Students also learn socialization skills through role awareness and character identification. In experiencing a play, students can come to know a dozen or more characters. Social intelligence begins when one is able to empathize with others. The student can also experience personal maturation through recognizing his own personal crisis and recognizing it in another, the child learns that the problem can be solved (7)

For example, Oedipus Rex is often taught in schools. Students learn the culture of Ancient Greece, including different locations, how women were treated, and ruling hierarchy. They learn about the different elements of a Greek play such as the chorus as a character, the prologue and exodus, and choral odes. They learn the important lesson of
hubris – excessive pride – and its role in the protagonist’s downfall. Students meet characters of different genders, social classes, and personalities.

Teaching multicultural character education through drama seems to be an obvious and natural choice. As Sternberg states, “Drama is conflict, The very essence of the theatre is conflict: man against nature, man against man, man against himself…What could be more natural than to learn how to resolve conflict through drama and theatre techniques?” (1).

Conclusion

Multicultural character education is essential to help students become positive and productive members of society. America’s founding principle, “all men are created equal,” can sometimes be forgotten as students confront difference and face fears. Teachers can help students to live according to this basic human code by encouraging moral development in their classrooms. I agree with Shuman that “educational drama is eminently useful in helping teachers perform these tasks” (109). The following chapters include lesson plans and rationale to teach multicultural character education through dramatic literature based on social identities and dramatic techniques that encourage respect and responsibility.
CHAPTER II

TEACHING TOLERANCE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Current Trends in Teaching Tolerance

One of the foundations of respect is tolerance. Tolerance is one of the hallmarks of civilization and helps make the world safe for diversity. There are many definitions of “tolerance,” but I believe Lickona summarizes it best: “Tolerance is a fair and objective attitude.” In other words, tolerance is being open minded and immediately not judgmental to ideas, lifestyles, creeds, and choices different from one’s own.

Many schools already teach elements of tolerance. High school teachers often teach To Kill a Mockingbird, The Diary of Anne Frank, and Grapes of Wrath. To Kill a Mockingbird focuses on racial differences. The Diary of Anne Frank examines religious prejudices. Grapes of Wrath discusses class issues. Through these books teachers have made strides in teaching tolerance of different lifestyles and the tragic events which can occur when we fail to recognize and respect diversity.

The Fear of Discussing Sexual Orientation & the Necessity of the Discussion

Although schools have become more diligent in promoting religious, racial, and socio-economic tolerance, there are still several social identities that are not discussed or protected. One form of tolerance that few schools teach is tolerance of sexual orientation.
Some high school teachers feel afraid to discuss sexual orientation with students due to its controversial nature. They would rather avoid confrontation and pressure from parents and administrators. Statistics show that 77% of teachers would not encourage a class discussion on homosexuality, and 85% oppose integrating gay/lesbian themes into their existing curricula (Just the Facts). But, in simply avoiding the topic, schools are failing society and breeding homophobia and ignorance toward sexuality issues and choices. (See Appendix A) Glenda Valentine, Associate Director of the Teaching Tolerance Institute, questions, “As educators, how can we walk away? When a difficult discussion comes up in a classroom, will we walk away from it? What kind of example is that for students” (Valentine 1). Teachers must set an example and talk through serious and important issues; unfortunately, sexual orientation does not usually make the list.

One wonders, however, how educators can ignore this controversial issue. It affects up to 10% of their students. Studies indicate that between 2% and 10% of the United States population is homosexual (Bennett 2). That percentage does not include bisexual, transgender, or questioning students. Further, this issue especially affects adolescents. A 1999 report by Cornell University states that the average gay or lesbian American youth “comes out” at around fourteen to fifteen years old (Walker 1). The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Teachers Network argues that the average “coming out” age may be as young as thirteen years old. Adolescent males report “feeling different between the ages of five and seven years old, though they did not yet connect this feeling to sexual orientation.” (“Just the Facts”)
Openness about their sexuality often exposes these young people to homophobia and even abuse at a young age. The statistics about such abuse are both shocking and frightening. The following is a brief list of some of the issues gay students face:

- More hate crimes are committed against gay people in this country than against any other group except African Americans (Rhein 2).
- According to a 1984 survey conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, nearly half of all gay men and one in five lesbians are harassed or assaulted in secondary schools (Bennett 3).
- According to the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 97% of students surveyed in Massachusetts hear anti-gay comments and epithets, such as “faggot,” in school on a routine basis, with rarely a response from a teacher (Bennett 3).
- According to a 1989 US Department of Health and Human Services Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide, 28% of gay and lesbian youth drop out of school because they are made to feel unsafe or uncomfortable (Bennett 3).
- See Appendix A for additional research and statistics.

These statistics illustrate the fact that schools are not providing a safe learning environment for our children.

Our Responsibility as Educators

Educational pedagogy and constitutional amendments require teachers and schools to provide a safe learning environment for students. Educators are taught through
the Pathwise Domains\textsuperscript{2} that they must provide an environment that is conducive and safe for learning. Teachers cannot expect students to reach their full potential if we do not take action to create an environment where all students feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. The Equal Protection Clause of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendment declares:

All students have a federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law. This means that schools have a duty to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students from harassment on an equal basis with all other students. If school officials fail to take action against anti-LGBT harassment because they believe that LGBT students should expect to be harassed, or because they believe that LGBT students bring the harassment upon themselves, or because the school is uneducated about LGBT issues and uncomfortable addressing the situation, then the school has failed to provide equal protection to the student. (Laws and Policies Impacting LGBT Youth in Schools 1)

\textsuperscript{2} Pathwise\textsuperscript{TM} is a tool for the assessment of classroom performance. The assessment system's foundation (definition of 19 essential teaching criteria) is supported by significant research and the consensus of hundreds of professional educators from around the country. The 19 Pathwise\textsuperscript{TM} criteria are organized divided into four domains: Domain A (Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning), Domain B, (Creating an Environment for Student Learning), Domain C (Teaching for Student Learning), and Domain D (Teacher Professionalism).
Despite the clarity of this law, however, the aforementioned statistics prove that schools are indeed failing to provide a safe and conducive learning environment and equal protection to those with an alternative sexual orientation.

Educators must find a way to change these victimization statistics. Rebecca Hilliker, theatre professor at the University of Wyoming recognizes this fact when she states in *The Laramie Project*, “We have a lot of work to do. We have an obligation to find ways to reach our students” (9). She elaborates in a personal interview with the online version of *Time Magazine*:

Father Roger, in the play, has a great line about if you call someone a “queer,” you’re violating them. It’s violence against them. But it goes further than that. As a teacher, as even a friend, you can’t let other people use that language. You can’t let people stereotype. You have to always be vigilant, as a teacher in particular, and say, “I’m not going to tolerate any kind of intolerant speech in my classroom.”

Prohibiting intolerant language not only stops verbal and physical violence against individuals, it can also stop self-inflicted violence. As the statistics show, mental and physical abuse often leads to feelings of isolation, depression, and even suicide. On the flip side, Safe Zone Programs research indicates:

Students who can identify a supportive faculty/staff member are more likely to feel a sense of belonging at their schools then those who cannot. For many students, the presence of allies to whom they can turn for support – or even a simple knowledge that allies exist – can be a critical
factor in developing a positive sense of self, building community, coping with bias, and working to improve school climate. (1)

Opposition to Discussion of Sexual Orientation in Curriculum

Parents may at first oppose literature or lessons regarding sexual orientation, fearing that these lessons promote homosexuality and sin. I experienced such opposition during my own student teaching when I taught a lesson using the short story “Am I Blue?” by Bruce Coville. I did not originally intend on teaching the lesson. However, the students were watching a television news program geared toward middle and high schools in order to discuss the topics on the show. On one particular day the news program discussed the same-sex marriage debate in Massachusetts and across America. My students were very eager to debate the topic and share their beliefs. Following class, several students approached me to find out if we could continue with the topic the next day. I was ecstatic that my students were finally interested in something and eager to learn, actually volunteering to write essays and do research. Encouraged by their enthusiasm, I planned a lesson for the next two days over “Am I Blue?” The students read the story one day and we planned a discussion and writing assignment the next day.

Unfortunately, my lesson met resistance from a few parents who felt I was trying to promote sin and undermine the religious upbringing of their children. However, once the parents realized that I was not asking their children to accept homosexuality, but that, in fact I encouraged the students to share their beliefs either for or against the topic, they felt more at ease. I explained that my lessons never forced a student to agree with another student’s belief, but did require each student to share and compare respectfully
his or her own ideas with the ideas of others – both fictional and non-fictional characters and people – while fostering an environment in which every person is treated with tolerance and respect regardless of race, religion, or creed. The parents realized that this idea actually went hand-in-hand with their Christian upbringing of “love thy neighbor” and they accepted the lesson.

When faced with opposition, it is important to help people examine the situation from different perspectives. If a parent opposes a lesson on sexual orientation, the teacher should explain how the lesson could benefit their child by leading to a violence-free environment. For example, Kevin Jennings, Executive Director of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network and author of “What Does Homosexuality Have to Do with Education? An Answer” helps justify teaching a lesson on the tolerance of homosexuality and what role it plays in our society. He states:

> We must help [a mother] understand that bigotry and name-calling represent a greater threat to her child’s welfare than an open discussion on touchy issues. We must help her understand that silencing people will never make an issue go away, but will simply cause it to fester. We must help her understand that homosexuality is not a threat to her children; homophobia is. (1)

Learning about other cultures promotes understanding and enlightenment, while shunning other cultures can lead to hatred and violence. Father Roger Schmidt discusses this very idea in the play *The Laramie Project*:

> Matthew Shepard had served us well…I think right now our most important teachers must be [Matthew Shepard’s murderers] Russell
Henderson and Aaron McKinney. They have to be our teachers. How did you learn? What did we as a society do to teach you that? See, I don’t know if many people will let them be their teachers. I think it would be wonderful if the judge said, “In addition to your sentence, you must tell your story, you must tell your story.”

Matthew Shepard’s sexual orientation did not even come close to hurting anyone as much as the homophobia practiced by his killers, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson. Their ignorance and intolerance cost a young man his life. This case finally shed light on the desperate need for tolerance. Multicultural education is one way to stop the violence and brutality so many people must face every day.

Conclusion

Chapter III is a unit lesson plan that may be used as a guide for implementing a section on “Tolerance of Sexual Orientation” in a multicultural theme classroom/unit. The Laramie Project by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project will be the focus of the unit, along with supplemental resources. The Laramie Project chronicles the events that occurred in Laramie, Wyoming during and after the beating and death of a young gay man, Matthew Shepard. The play is composed of interviews of the people from the town, journal entries written by members of the Tectonic Theatre Project, and other existing texts.
CHAPTER III

THE LARAMIE PROJECT LESSON PLANS

Overview of Lesson Plans

The lesson plans contained in this chapter as well as Chapter V could be used in a high school drama class or language arts drama lesson. They are not canned lesson plans, but rather should be used as guides for possible activities that could be expanded or contracted to fit the amount of time the teacher has and the needs of the class. Teachers are free to choose the activities that will best suit the dynamics and needs of their classroom. The lessons may be used to teach dramatic literature, to teach multiculturalism, to raise awareness of discrimination, or to examine different character perspectives in literature. Often literature taught in schools is written by Caucasian men with Caucasian male protagonists. The plays analyzed here, as well as many contained in the Suggested Reading List (Appendix D), feature characters from a variety of lifestyles, genders, races, and religions.

Each lesson plan contains a rationale, objectives for the lesson, specific Ohio Academic Content Standards covered, and necessary materials. The plan also contains preliminary activities to introduce the topic and engage students, as well as activities for
discussion and assessment during the reading and lesson, and reinforcement activities to help conclude/culminate the lesson.

*The Laramie Project* Lesson Plan Overview

The importance of contacting parents regarding this assignment cannot be overstated. After an explanation of the subject matter, parents are more likely to be open to the topic. It is also important to get parental consent for this lesson because the language of *The Laramie Project* can be offensive to some people. If parents absolutely forbid their child(ren) from participating in this assignment, an alternate assignment and work should be provided for that student. A sample permission slip is included. (See Appendix B).

To fully understand the play, the class may benefit by doing initial research on Laramie, WY and the Matthew Shepard story. The play should be read aloud and scenes discussed periodically throughout the reading. Quizzes over each act and a final unit test are advised to ensure reading comprehension.

October is National Gay and Lesbian History Month and is an ideal time for this particular lesson. It is also the month that Matthew Shepard was beaten and killed.

Objectives

This is a skeleton list of objectives regarding *The Laramie Project* as well as the *And They Dance Rea Slow in Jackson* lesson plan included in Chapter V. These objectives directly correlate to the Ohio Drama Content Standards. This is not an all-inclusive list, but rather a framework to guide teachers to develop their own objectives.
- To have students examine their own beliefs as well as be open-minded to the beliefs of others
- To encourage tolerance in the classroom and society while respecting individual’s beliefs and values
- To engage students in class discussions
- To foster learning across the curriculum including language arts, drama, health, science, history, and psychology
- To understand how dramatic elements such as plot structure, characterization, setting, etc. influence that play
- To analyze different forms of media including journalism, film, and literature
- To develop an understanding of how technical theatre elements can influence a production.
- To examine plays from both a performance and literature perspective

Ohio Drama Standards Covered

A complete list of the Ohio Drama Standards can be found on the Ohio Department of Education website (www.ode.state.oh.us/). Below you will find which standards correlate to this lesson by grade level.

Historical, Cultural, and Social Standards

9th – 1, 2, 3, 4  
10th – 1, 4, 5  
11th – 1, 3, 4  
12th – 1, 2, 3

Creative Expression and Communication

9th – 1, 2, 4, 5, 8  
10th – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8  
11th – 1, 2, 3, 4, 7  
12th – 1, 2, 4
Analyzing & Responding

9th – 1, 3, 4, 5, 6    10th – 1, 2, 3, 5    11th – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6    12th – 1, 2, 4

Valuing Drama/Theatre/Aesthetic Reflection

9th – 1, 2    10th – 1, 2    11th – 2    12th – 2

Connections, Relationships and Applications

9th – 1, 2, 3    10th – 1, 2, 3    11th – 1, 2, 3    12th – 1, 2, 3

Materials

- Classroom set of *The Laramie Project*
- Handouts
  - “That’s Not a Scarecrow” article by Howard Chua-Eoan in *TIME*
  - *The Laramie Project* Teacher Guide
  - *The Laramie Project* Student Guide
  - “Writing for a Change 1.3: Rating Your Behavior”
  - “Writing for a Change 1.2: Generating a Description”
  - “Writing for a Change 1.5: Uncovering Attitudes About Sexual Orientation”
- Computers with internet filter
- *The Laramie Project* movie (written and directed by Moises Kaufman. Full video can be found on Youtube.com or ordered from HBO.com)
- Hate crime statistics
Assessment

- Participation in class discussions
- Writing prompts
- Debates
- Portfolio projects
- Monologue/scene presentations
- Quizzes over individual acts
- Unit test over play

Preliminary Activities

Many students may be unaware of their own biases or the prejudices and stereotypes LGBT Americans face on a daily basis. The following activities will help students identify biases and set ground roles for a respectful classroom environment. Also included are activities that will help students understand the background of *The Laramie Project*, including how Matthew Shepard’s body was found and how the play is set up. These activities are discussion and writing based and should be structured to promote class discussion, honesty, and respect.

1. Brainstorm class agreed upon rules for class discussions
   a. Ex. No one should be singled out, no one will be forced to divulge information they are uncomfortable sharing, derogatory slurs will not be used unless referencing the text, etc.
b. Teachers should be prepared to facilitate these workshops. Below are a list of resources to help prepare educators for incorporating an LGBT lesson in the curriculum


ii. “Roadblocks and Responses: Responding to Resistance from teachers, Administrators, Students, and the Community” - an article written by Warren Blumenfeld and Laurie Lindrop of GLSTN discussing how to address concerns and strategies for overcoming resistance when LGBT issues arise in the classroom.

iii. “10 Ways to Make Your Workshop Inclusive” - an article written by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network to help educators ensure all members of the discussion are feel included.

iv. “Everybody Carries a Piece of the Truth” – is a teachers’ guide with lesson plan suggestions written by TIME to accompany the movie The Laramie Project.

2. To help students understand the background of the play, read “That’s Not a Scarecrow,” a news article printed in TIME shortly after the incident. This will give students the factual basis needed to understand the play.
3. Ask students to define the following terms: tolerance, acceptance, homophobia, bigotry, stereotype, hatred. More words can be added as seen fit. Unknown words found while reading the play should be noted and defined.

4. Ask students to take the “Test for Hidden Bias.” Also check out “Writing for Change 1.3: Rating Your Behavior Handout.” This can help reveal other potential biases as well.

5. The Teaching Tolerance website (www.teachingtolerance.org) includes many more handouts that are excellent for generating ideas and discussion topics that would be helpful in the lesson.

6. Discussion/Possible Research Activity
   a. How is Laramie, WY like our town? How is it different? Research Laramie, WY and your town. Consider population, diversity, land area, location, socio-economic factors, etc.

7. Discuss famous homosexual figures throughout history – some confirmed, others suspected.
   a. Rosie O’Donnell, Ellen DeGeneres, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Elton John, etc.

8. “Writing for a Change 1.2: Generating a Description” handout regarding first impressions and stereotypes.

9. “Writing for a Change 1.5: Uncovering Attitudes About Sexual Orientation” handout regarding “homophobia” and “compulsory heterosexuality.”

10. Discuss playwright Moises Kaufman’s use of “Moments” versus chapters.
Activities and Discussion and/or Writing Prompts While Reading the Play

Dramatic literature is best brought to life and understood through performance, not silent reading. I encourage teachers to read the play aloud in class so that discussion can occur naturally as topics and issues come up. Below are some suggested discussion topics. These could also be used as quiz questions to check for reading comprehension. Students will likely come up with additional questions and topics to be discussed

1. Could this happen in our town?
   a. Refer to the following passages:
      i. Zubaida Ula – “We need to own this crime. Everyone needs to own it. We are like this. We ARE like this. WE are LIKE this.” (58-59)
      ii. Tiffany Edwards – “Jesus Christ, that’s not how it is here.’ Well how is it here?” (49)
      iii. Rob Debree – “Well once we started working on the case, and actually speaking to the people that were gay and finding out what their underlying fears were, well then it sort of hit home. This is America. You don’t have the right to feel that fear.” (86)

2. Make sure students are aware of the relevance of Waco, TX and Jasper, AL (9). Discuss how these incidences are similar and different than those which occur in the play.

3. Why is the trip a risk for the Tectonic Theatre Group? Why must they take precautions? (10)
4. How does Rebecca Hilliker believe religion affected the Laramie community? How were the students responding? (11)

5. Look at Marge Murray’s monologue on page 16. Is this true in our town – is there an obvious class distinction? Do parents’ occupations affect how children are judged? Are there occupations that people should not be proud to do – or is every job important for a functioning society?

6. What is ironic about the Catholic priest and what is ironic about how the other ministries reacted? (24-25)

7. What role does Zubaida Ula play in The Laramie Project? What is her significance? What does she stand for?

8. Look at Dr. Cantway’s speech on page 37. Does society often try to place the blame elsewhere – looking to point the finger rather than accept blame? (Also look at Lockwood’s speech on page 46.)

9. How would you react if you heard news through the grapevine about your friend like Romaine Patterson found out about Matthew? Would you believe the news?

10. Examine how newperson 2 describes Russell and Aaron. (47) Why does he point out they are from broken home and from “the poor side of town”? Is it stereotyping or a sad reality? Is he trying to lay the blame on parents and environment? How does nature versus nurture affect children?

11. Why was Tiffany Edwards so upset about the media ambush in Laramie, WY?

12. Examine Bill McKinney’s speech on page 49. Is he right? Would the case have been as big of a deal if Matthew had been a heterosexual?

13. Examine the parallel with the Holocaust the E-mail writer points out. (56)
14. Why were vigils held across the country? Why do you think made this case so significant?

15. What impression do Shannon and Jen give of Aaron and Russell? (60-62) How do Shannon and Jen react to the whole incident? What does Shannon mean when he states “We’re a product of our society.”

16. Why was the parade such a phenomenal sight to Harry Woods? Why does he thank Matthew?

17. Examine Sherry Johnson’s speech. (6465) Why is she upset?

18. Hate crimes
   a. What does Sherry Johnson say about hate crimes? (65)
   b. Discuss hate crime statistics – see Appendix A
   c. Look at additional hate crime activities listed under “Follow-up Activities”

19. What is violence?
   a. Father Roger Schmidt – “You think violence is what they did to Matthew – they did do violence to Matthew – but you know, every time that you are called a fag, you know, a lez or whatever…(a dyke) Dyke, yeah, dyke. Do you realize that is violence? That is the seed of violence.” (65-66)

20. What is Doc O’Connor’s message? What is the significance of this? What can we take from this? Notice his use of repetition as well as his repetition of spelling out the word. (71-72)

21. Predictions:
   a. What will be the outcome of the trial?
b. What will happen to Reggie Fluty – will she have acquired the HIV virus?

22. How is the weather the day of Matthew’s funeral symbolic?

23. Why was Kerry Drake worried when he saw the skinhead at Matthew’s funeral?

(78) How did the skinhead surprise him?

24. What did Romaine Patterson do to stand up against Fred Phelps? What other famous political activists have taken this approach (nonviolent resistance)?

25. Were you surprised by the verdict regarding Russell and Aaron? If you were on the jury, how would you have punished them?

26. How does Jedidiah Shultz catch his mother in a contradiction/hypocrisy?

27. What scare does Reggie Fluty face during the play? How is it resolved?

   a. Discuss stereotypes regarding HIV/AIDS.

   b. Discuss the ways in which people catch HIV/AIDS.

28. Father Roger Schmidt discusses Russell and Aaron being “our teachers.” (88-89)

   What does he mean by this? How can they be our teachers? How is this ironic?

29. What does Zackie Salmon mean by “The Twinkie Defense”? (91)

30. What is “gay panic” and how did Aaron try to use it as his defense?

31. How does Aaron act during the trial – remorseful? Indignant? Careless?

32. What does Dennis Shepard grant Aaron? What does this show of Mr. Shepard’s character?

33. How has Romaine Patterson changed from the beginning of the play to the end?

34. Why is Jonas Slonaker disappointed? (99)

35. What is significant about the last line of the play?
36. Although the play is very emotional – sad and somewhat disturbing – are there some hints of comedy? Where? What does this do for the play?

37. How does the constant change in point of view affect the play? What other novels are you familiar with that do this?

38. Could this story effectively been written as a novel or in chapter form? Why or why not?

39. Choose a character and discuss their direct versus indirect characterization.

40. How does the use of subplots help create suspense and interest? Consider:
   a. Reggie Fluty and the HIV scare
   b. Jedidiah Schultz and his growth as an actor, his relationship with his parents
   c. Zubaida Ula and her religious beliefs
   d. Romaine Patterson’s change in career choice – rockstar to political activist

41. Originally this was performed with only 8 actors. What kind of directing challenges would that create? Acting challenges? Do you think this makes the play more or less effective?

42. There are very few occasions that the townspeople interact with one another in the play. Why are these interactions significant?
   a. Shannon & Jen
   b. Marge & Alison
   c. Marge & Reggie

43. A slideshow is often used in the background projecting images of Laramie and the events occurring. How would this enhance or detract from the play?
44. Why do you think Kaufman chose not to make Matthew Shepard a character?  
How would this have changed the play?

Research and Reinforcement Activities

After reading *The Laramie Project*, students may feel angry, confused, or sad. Some students may want to focus on more political issues, such as how to end this type of discrimination in their school or community. Other students may want to focus on the production concepts of this play including design and performance work. Below is a list of activities to further engage students. Many of the activities are cross-curriculum to enhance understanding and benefit learning.

1. What can we do to make sure this does not happen in our community?
   a. “10 Ways to Fight Hate”

2. Hate Crimes
   a. Discuss the debate over having different penalties for hate crimes.

3. Debate Topics
   a. Should hate crimes have more severe punishments?
   b. Should homosexual couples be allowed to marry?
   c. Who should determine death penalty cases?
   d. Should homosexuals be allowed to openly serve in the military?
   e. Should homosexual couples be allowed to adopt?
   f. Should sexual orientation be a protected class?

4. Consider reading *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later.*
5. Have students choose monologues from the play to perform for the class and add to their portfolio/repertoire.

6. Have students divide into groups and assign each group a scene. One student will act as director while the other students will act out the scene.

7. Writing Prompt: Which character do you most identify with and why?

8. Watch the HBO film of *The Laramie Project*.
   a. Compare/contrast the images/ideas we had from reading the play vs. watching the movie.
   b. Which medium did you find more effective?
   c. If you were to cast the play/movie today, what actors would you cast?

9. Further investigate the Tectonic Theatre Project. What type of plays do they usually write? Read another of their plays and compare/contrast the different styles.

10. Create your own slideshow of images that could be used in the production. Work in order of the play and be able to support your choices.

11. Create a set design that could be utilized for the play. Remember, the play takes place in many settings and is usually done minimally.

12. Create a lighting design for the play. Include
   a. Fixture types and locations
   b. Zones
   c. Light plot (cues, zones, gels, gobos, fades, intensity, etc.)
13. Create a sound design for the play. Record all sound cues in order on a CD.

Don’t just include ideas given in the script – use your own imagination to create a diverse soundscape.

14. Choose ten characters and create a costume design for each. Consider characters of different ages and socio-economic statuses. Pull inspirations from colors, fabrics, textures, etc. Include this with hand-drawn sketches.

15. If you were to cast this show with modern television and film actors, who would you cast an in which roles?

Conclusion

Bullying against LGBT students is a top concern with schools today. As statistics prove, discrimination against sexual orientation both in and outside schools is still a problem. However, this is not the only type of discrimination plaguing schools and society. The next two chapters focus on another important, though perhaps lesser known, type of discrimination.
CHAPTER IV

DISABILISM AWARENESS

Disabilities in America

When I was diagnosed as legally blind in 1982, doctors suggested my parents put
my arms in splints for two years so I couldn’t take my glasses off. Although I met all the
requirements when I was tested for kindergarten four years later, my parents were
couraged to institutionalize me because I would “never be able to succeed in normal
schools or society.” Lucky for me, my parents didn’t listen to either of these suggestions.
I graduated from the public school system with few accommodations and went on to a
private school that provided no accommodations. I’ve become used to people seeing me
read and telling me, “You need glasses,” even though I’m wearing my contact lenses.
And I can remember friends admitting that before they got to know me well they thought
I was very stuck up because I never waved back at them on campus. They didn’t realize
that I simply couldn’t see them waving.

The disability movement in the United States has often been called the last civil
rights movement. In fact, society is just now experiencing the first wave of the disabled
rights movement. People with disabilities for years have been institutionalized or hidden
in back rooms, yet there is a significant amount of the US population living with some sort of disability.

According to a 2002 report, 51.2 million Americans (18.1% of the US population) live with some sort of reported disability, with 32.5 million (11.5%) living with a severe disability. These statistics do not include those American with disabilities who are institutionalized or are under six years of age (National Council on Disability 1). Of those individuals, only one-third is over the age of 65 (Trulove 1). The United States Government has taken strides to help accommodate the disabled population with policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act, as well as policies specifically geared to students with disabilities including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504.

Even with these policies in place, many Americans still face prejudice in the workplace, education and society. As Silvia Yee, International Law Fellow for the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund states, “the phenomenon of disability prejudice is not widely understood or truly accepted among the political, legal and social institutions that are counted upon” (Yee 1). It is this ignorance of disabilities and the challenges persons with disabilities face that deserve attention.

Ignorance Regarding Disabilities

More often than not, disability prejudice stems from either ignorance that this form of prejudice even exists or from ignorance of the actual disability. Disablism, also referred to as ablism or disability prejudice, has not garnered general acceptance as a
term like “racism” or “sexism” have. Mary Johnson explains this ignorance when she criticizes a politician’s statement:

Iowa Senator Tom Harkin once said, “No one is against the Handicapped”…[but] therein lies the extreme problem: Because nobody really believes that society is actually bigoted against disabled people, it’s extremely difficult for ideas about disablism to gain any purchase. This may be the single biggest problem confronting disability rights. (2)

Some members of society believe people with disabilities face private, medical matters and not matters of discrimination or that people with disabilities simply need medical intervention, charity and government benefit programs. T

Too often a person with a disability is seen only for their disability and not as an individual. Instead of seeing a person in a wheelchair, they see the wheelchair as the dominant factor, not the person. Placing the person first is the key to acknowledging that the disability is only one characteristic of the individual, and not all encompassing.

Ragged Edge Online quotes the Supreme Court’s Brief of Paralyzed Veterans of America:

...the mere fact of having a disability is still believed to convey important information about a person’s potential and limitations beyond the disability itself. People tend to think in terms of a handicapped person instead of a person who is handicapped. It is imagined or perceived that [the disability] is the central life experience of that person and influences all his other mental and social abilities.” When a person's entire being is
thus reduced to what is perceived to be a negative characteristic -- her physical or mental impairment -- attitudes about the individual's capabilities in other areas also tend to become negative.  

This perception is known as the “spread” phenomenon. For example, people speak to people with disabilities as if they were children; they speak to a person who is blind as if he or she is deaf; they assume people with psychiatric conditions are violent; or they assume people with physical disabilities are also mentally impaired. People take the knowledge of one impairment, and form negative attitudes about other unrelated characteristics of persons with disabilities.

Some individuals feel psychological discomfort when dealing with people with disabilities. “Normal” people feel embarrassed when they see a person who is handicapped. This embarrassment generally leads to avoidance. Treating a person who is disabled like they are not there is probably the most common discrimination abled persons demonstrate. A study by the National Council on Disability, National Health Association, and the National Council for the Mentally Ill and reported in *Ragged Edge Online*, found that:

- When people interviewed a person with an apparent disability they were more restricted in their communication, expressed views less representative of their actual beliefs, and terminated the interviews sooner than when interviewing the same person when that person appeared to have no disability.

- Nondisabled persons maintained greater physical distance when teaching origami to persons with disabilities.
• Subjects demonstrated inhibited physical gestures when interacting with physically disabled persons.

• Subjects were given the choice of viewing one of two similarly-themed films. Choosing one film required the subject to sit next to a person with a visible physical disability; choosing the other film would enable them to sit next to a person with no apparent disability. The subjects routinely selected the film that did not require sitting next to the person with a disability.

• Additional statistics can be found in Appendix C.

These statistics prove that too often the disability and its stereotypes are seen as dominant over the actual person.

Violence against Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities do not just feel the social shun of avoidance, but they are also often victims of acts of physical brutality. Unfortunately, many of these crimes go unreported or if they are reported are not specified as hate crimes. According to FBI statistics, less than one in a million of the hate crimes committed are against persons with disabilities (Sherry 1). However, many law enforcement officials attest this number is considerably low considering the staggering statistics regarding violent crimes committed against people with disabilities. The number of media stories far outnumbers the crimes reported. Mark Sherry, author of Disability Hate Crimes and professor of Disability Studies at the University of Toledo, found that hate crimes were often not just underreported, but unreported. For example, one of the most notorious disability crimes
in US history – the 1999 kidnap and torture of cognitively disabled Eric Krochmaluk – was not reported in the FBI statistics on hate crimes (Sherry 1).

Jack Glaser, assistant professor at UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy whose research specialties include hate crimes and stereotyping, theorizes that the likely reason for the underreporting of crimes against persons with disabilities is “the likely perception, by law enforcement agents, policy makers, and perhaps victims, as well, that people with disabilities are attacked not because of hate so much as vulnerability” (“Flawed FBI Reporting…” 1). Hate crimes are often mislabeled as “abuse” and dealt with through counseling as opposed to criminal prosecution. In Sherry’s report “Don’t Ask, Tell, or Respond: Silent Acceptance of Disability Hate Crimes,” he quotes the Office for Victims of Crime stating, “Many crime victims with disabilities have never participated in the criminal justice process, even those who have been repeatedly and brutally victimized” (Sherry 2).

Sherry believes other factors also contribute to the un-/underreporting of disability hate crimes. The victim himself may not recognize the bias motivation or may not report the abusive language which indicates a bias motivation or officials don’t recognize that persons with disabilities could be prejudiced against other persons with disabilities. For example, a person with mental illness may feel hatred toward people with mental retardation. Officials recognize that each individual has a disability, but not that there are multiple layers to each individual’s personality and perspective. In still other cases, a person’s disability will be overlooked for another part of their identity when assessing a hate crime. For example, many people know that James Byrd was viciously killed in
Jasper, TX in a hate crime. Byrd was black; but few people know that he was also disabled. Lennard David, professor of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois and director of Project Biocultures states, “in the case of violent hate crimes which combine racism and disablism, it is commonly assumed that the violence is primarily the result of color and much less the result of the disability… ethnicity tends to be considered so much the ‘stronger’ category that disability disappears altogether” (147).

It was not until 1997 that the FBI started gathering information regarding disability hate crimes. Only twenty-three states provide penalties to hate crimes sentences. The late addition of this social identity to the laws, or lack thereof, shows disablism is still not considered a serious offense by law officers.

Disablism in Schools

Federal laws such as the Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 have helped reduce disablism in schools, requiring schools to provide services in the least reclusive environment to students with disabilities. Unfortunately, these laws are not always followed. Although schools try to accommodate each student with special needs, many still slip through the cracks for a variety of reasons. For example, some students go undiagnosed. Parents or teachers may dismiss Attention Hyperactivity Disorder as an unruly child or a child with dyslexia as simply having reading difficulties. A study called “Putting a Face on Learning Disabilities” found that between 51% of students between the ages of six to fifteen have a learning disability, but half of them will go
undiagnosed (Preston 1). The National Institute of Literacy estimates that 30-50% of the population has an undiagnosed learning disability (Kenyon 1).

It’s also essential that parents become aware of their child’s rights as a student in the public school system. As previously mentioned, I am legally blind. My parents and I were self-advocates and made arrangements with each teacher for preferential seating and limitations in physical education class; however, no one ever made us aware that these were my rights as a student. It was not until I was a senior in high school and I needed a large print college entrance exam that my guidance counselor made my family and me aware of my rights. Until that time, we thought “special education” was just a separate classroom for students with severe mental disabilities. My counselor made us aware that I was missing out on several accommodations because I was never placed on a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan. My own story is one of many examples of a student with a disability slipping through the cracks.

Although the school and teachers must take responsibility to ensure that students are being provided with all accommodations on the 504 Plan or IEP, students and parents must stay involved. As a teacher, I’m supposed to receive an “IEP at a Glance” or “504 Overview” at the beginning of each semester for any student who is diagnosed with special needs. These forms document what the students goals are and what I need to do in my classroom to help the student reach these goals. Sometimes intervention specialists

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3 An IEP, or Individualized Educational Plan, is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The plan works as a guide for the goals set forth for a student for the school year as well as any special services needed. IEPs are for students who need specialized instruction due to their disability. A 504 Plan spells out the accommodations and medications a students with special needs requires to have the opportunity to perform at the same level as their peers. Both are legal documents teachers, administrators, and districts must follow.
(teachers who work with students with disabilities and determine their accommodations) forget to send out the forms, a student may change classes, or forms are not sent out in a timely manner. It’s possible that the general education teacher has no knowledge of the disability, or has received the information but has not connected it to the child. This is particularly common when students with less severe or noticeable disabilities take general education classes. It is helpful for intervention specialists, parents, and/or students with disabilities to work with the general education teacher to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Funding is another challenge facing the enforcement of special education. The government mandates that schools provide services, but schools often do not have the financial resources to provide adequate accommodations. With school funding annually being cut by both the state and national governments, schools must reduce intervention teachers, paraprofessionals, and services. Some of the financial responsibility is then placed on the parents. However, the “Putting a Face on Learning Disabilities” study found that 29% of parents with children with learning disabilities were unable to afford learning aids or services their children needed (Preston 1).

Unfortunately, the social stigma attached to special education still exists and many students don’t want to be labeled as “special ed,” “learning disabled,” or (as they see it) “different.” One particular student and I discussed the possibility of having her evaluated by the intervention team. She was struggling with ADHD and a learning disability. She had recently transferred to our school and had never been placed officially on any type of plan at her previous school. She recognized that she had a
problem and needed help, but she was concerned with how she would appear to the other students. Her only question was: “Will I have to wear a giant nametag and stay in that special room?” I’ve worked with other students who receive accommodations, such as extended test time, who were too embarrassed to use these aids because they didn’t want to look different to their peers.

Students with special needs are also prone to be victims of violence and bullying in schools. One of the most famous cases involved four football players who sexually assaulted a student with a mental disability using a baseball bat and broomstick in New Jersey in 1993. Similar cases continue to plague schools. Students with special needs are often more vulnerable, making them an easy target for bullying. Children with learning disabilities are at a greater risk of being teased and physically bullied (HRSA 1). Students with severe cognitive disabilities tend to have low self-esteem, look to others for cues or guidance, and lack the awareness to realize they are in potentially dangerous situations (Flynt and Morton 1). See Appendix C for additional statistics concerning violence and crimes against persons with disabilities.

Conclusion

Prejudice still exists against persons with disabilities. These prejudices affect both the public and private sector of American society and determine the way nondisabled people view people with disabilities. Unfortunately, many Americans fail to see disablism as a problem. The only way to abolish this problem is to admit its existence and confront it. Teachers must put their foot down to disablism in the
classroom and ensure that all students are receiving an equal opportunity at education.

Chapter V focuses on how teachers can facilitate this in their classroom.
Overview

This lesson could be used in a high school drama class or language arts drama lesson. This is not a canned lesson plan, but rather should be used as a guide for possible activities that could be expanded or contracted to fit the amount of time the teacher has and the needs of the class. Teachers are free to choose the activities that will best suit the dynamics and needs of their classroom. Lesson ideas and activities can be found in Appendix D.

*And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson* is a play by Jim Leonard, Jr. based in the fictional town of Jackson, Indiana. Elizabeth Willow is a young woman in a wheel chair who lives life shut away after being crippled from polio at a young age. Elizabeth wants to live a “normal life,” but both the townspeople and her family stand in her way. The play consists of dream sequences, flashbacks, and current situations Elizabeth must face. The play ends with her ultimate demise after being figuratively raped by misguided children of the town.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness month; however, many cities, states and schools celebrate a general “Disabilities Awareness Month” at other
times during the year. This lesson could be incorporated at that time, or could mark the beginning of the celebration at your school.

Ohio Drama Standards Covered

Historical, Cultural, and Social Standards

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Creative Expression and Communication

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Valuing Drama/Theatre/Aesthetic Reflection

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Connections, Relationships and Applications

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Materials

- Copies of *And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson*
- Computers with internet access
- Disability statistics
- Handouts
  - Writing for Change 1.3: Rating Your Behavior
  - Writing for Change 1.2: Creating a Description
Assessment

- Participation in class discussions
- Writing prompts
- Debates
- Portfolio projects
- Scene presentations
- Quizzes over individual acts
- Unit test over play

Preliminary Activities

Prior to reading *And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson* it is important to discuss ground rules and ensure students have a background understanding. One student in the class may never have encountered a person with a noticeable disability, whereas another student in the class may be a student with a disability. It is important to create an environment of understanding and respect.

1. Discuss ground rules and sensitivity.
   a. Ex. No one should be singled out, no one will be forced to divulge information they are uncomfortable sharing, derogatory slurs will not be used unless referencing the text, etc. These rules should be created by the
student with encouragement and direction from the teacher. If students come up with their own rules they are more likely to follow them.

2. Writing for a Change 1.3 – Rating Your Behavior.

3. Discuss what “disability” means. Could begin activity with a modified version of Writing for a Change 1.2 – Generating a Description. What are some common disabilities? Help students brainstorm less common disabilities.

4. Writing for Change 1.6: Looking at Looks.

5. Discuss famous people with learning disabilities
   a. Winston Churchill (multiple learning disabilities), Alexander Graham Bell (learning disability), Cher (dyslexia), Whoopi Goldberg (ADD), Tom Cruise (dyslexia), Beethoven (dyslexia, ADD, bipolar, and later deaf), Howie Mandel (obsessive-compulsive disorder), Homer (blindness), Thomas Edison (hearing-impaired), Albert Einstein (learning disability)

6. Consider a time where you may have been treated differently for a physical or mental hardship – being on crutches or having a broken arm, being the last to understand a concept in class, taking longer than others to learn to tie shoes or read. How did that make you feel? What did you learn from that experience?

7. Discuss how the word handicapped came to be from “hand in cap;” a reference to a person with a disability putting their hat in their hand and begging for money.

Activities and Discussions and/or Writing Prompts While Reading the Play

As previously stated, dramatic literature is better understood when it is read aloud as it was written to be preformed. I encourage you to read the play aloud with your
students. This will help students better understand what is happening figuratively in the play as well as encourage dialogue about the play. Below is a list of suggested discussion topics. Students will come up with additional questions and topics and those should be addressed as well.

1. Discuss how people with even severe mental and physical disabilities still have hormones/sexual urges and the challenges this comes with.
2. Discuss how persons with disabilities, regardless of age, are often treated as children.
3. Why does the Chorus change the lyrics to “I’m a Little Teapot.” What role does the Chorus play?
4. Are men really calling Elizabeth? Why does she say/imagine this? (17)
5. Why does Elizabeth “get in a tizzy” as her mother calls it? (18-19)
6. Why did Nancy really come over? How does this make Beth feel? (19-20)
7. Why does Ben tell this story? (20)
8. What other plays are you reminded of when the townspeople begin describing Jackson? Ex. Our Town, The Laramie Project (21-22)
9. What is it called when characters talk directly to the audience? (21) Why might have the playwright written it this way? Do you think it is an effective technique?
10. Note the time jump on pages 22-23. How have the children remained the same? How has Elizabeth changed?
11. Describe the Skeeter’s character.
12. Why does Skeeter think Beth is a “bitch”? What does he mean? (28-29)
13. When he says he would “deep six himself”? (25)
14. Describe the school Elizabeth goes to and how she feels about it. (25)

15. How do you know Elizabeth is upset about Skeeter’s comments about her school playing baseball? Why does this upset her so much? (26-27).

16. Why do you think Ben is always with a whiskey bottle? (28)

17. Predict what you think has happened to Elizabeth. (28-29)

18. What is the Moose Lodge? Research the Moose Lodge and its history. (31)

19. How might Ben’s definition of “special” be different from Russell Taylor’s definition? (32)

20. How does Moose describe the institution? (32)

21. What do we learn about the Willow’s financial situation through Moose? (32)

22. Compare the children’s stories with other fictional tall-tales. Ex. Boogie Man, Boo Radley. (34)

23. What is ironic about Beth’s response to Ben’s “outrageous idea”? (36)

24. Discuss Beth’s ideas on working/jobs. (36) Do you agree or disagree? (36)

25. Describe Emma and Judith’s characters. (41)

26. Why do you think Elizabeth had a hard time accepting the news about Zelda’s health? (44)

27. How do Bobby and Ben’s views of family values differ? (46)

28. What type of relationship do the younger children have? (47) Is this true to life?

29. The men are again looking for Elizabeth. Has your prediction changed about what may have happened to her at the river? How do you think she has changed? (49)

30. Why is the reverend preaching? (50)
31. Discuss Elizabeth’s breakdown at the end of Act 1. Some could argue a piece of her died that day. Do you agree? Does this happen to all of us when someone close to us dies? (52)

32. Predict what you think Elizabeth and Skeeter are going to do. Describe their relationship. Were you surprised with what they actually did? (56)

33. How do Emma, Beth, Ben, and Russell’s views differ on childhood. (58-59)

34. Who doesn’t Elizabeth like the center in Evansville? (60-61)

35. What does Judith and Bobby’s parenting style at about where and how they live? (62-63)

36. Discuss traditional Midwestern values/mentality. (63)

37. Discuss a time you felt humiliated in public. How did the parents’ feelings differ from the children’s feelings? Do you think the parents reacted appropriately? (65-66)

38. This is the first time we see Elizabeth really get frustrated with “ghosts.” Why does she finally break down? Discuss the “flat” world she dreams about – why does she want a flat world? How would her life be different? (69)

39. What misunderstanding do Elizabeth and Skeeter have? How might this have happened and why is it embarrassing for both of them? (72)

40. Note the scene shift. Now predict again what you think happened down at the river. Has your prediction changed over the course or the play? (73-74)

41. What does the title mean? How does it relate to the play? To specific scenes? (76-77)
42. Discuss Elizabeth’s desire to grow up and her parents resistance. When have you experienced this in your life? (78)

43. Why is it so significant when Beth uses the word “crippled”? (79) Can you think of another play that a character struggles with that particular word?

44. Why can’t Ben join in Bobby’s business plan? How does this affect Ben? (80)

45. On page 81, what is ironic about Judith and Emma’s first lines in this scene?

46. Who is Billy and why do you think he is at the river with Elizabeth? (83)

47. What do you think Beth means when she says “I don’t think I’m going back home”? (84) Suicide? Running away?

48. How can “nothing be the same yet nothing ever change”? What does Elizabeth mean by that? (84)

49. Why do the children do this? (85) Were they trying to be cruel? Compare this to another historical or fictional event. Ex. When the boys attack Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, riots.

Research and Reinforcement Activities

After reading the play, give the students further opportunity to research disablism in their school and society. The following activities are designed to help students further understand the significance of the issue. Also included are activities for design and performance.

1. What prejudices have caused schools and society to discriminate against people with learning disabilities, and how can we fight this discrimination?
2. How does prejudice and discrimination against people with learning
disabilities connect to other forms of prejudice and discrimination, and what
can we do to fight against these biases?

3. What are some advantages of living in a world in which people learn in
different ways?

4. Write a one-act play or scene about a person struggling with a disability. Be sure
to play this realistically and not offensively.

5. Complete the “Who’s Voting Now?” Activity comparing the Civil Rights Act of

6. Reflect on how reading the play and the discussions have changed your
perception on disabilities.

7. Writing for Change 1.9: Seeing the Whole Person.

8. Collaborate with a special education teacher to have students with special needs
and general education students interact.

9. Discuss where we continue to see violation of ADA and write a letter encouraging
change.

10. The play is not divided into scenes. How will this be challenging from a
directorial, acting, and design perspective.

11. The playwright gives specific set design guidelines. Would you choose to follow
these? What challenges does that design pose? Create a set design of your own
or a design supporting the playwright’s concept.

12. Music is suggested throughout the play. If you were to make a soundtrack for the
production, what types of music and songs would be on it?
13. Similar to *The Laramie Project*, four chorus members play the majority of the characters. Would you keep it that way or would you divide the roles?

14. The play is not supposed to have a specific time period. What challenges does that pose? What time period would you choose to set the play in?

15. Create a costume design for the characters. Consider characters of different ages and socio-economic statuses. Pull inspirations from colors, fabrics, textures, etc. Include this with hand-drawn sketches.

16. Create a lighting design for the play. Include
   a. Fixture types and locations
   b. Zones
   c. Light plot (cues, zones, gels, gobos, fades, intensity, etc.)

17. If you were to cast this production with modern actors from film and television, who would you cast?

18. Divide the class into groups. Choose a scene, choose one student to act as director, and cast the other students in roles. Present the scenes to the class.

Conclusion

It is important for teachers to remember not to pick out certain students for their disabilities or family members who may have disabilities. This not only breaks privacy laws, but could also make the student feel insecure or embarrassed. The classroom environment needs to help all students feel secure and open to such lessons – whether it is regarding a topic they can personally relate to or have no experience with. Students need to be exposed to these various ills of society so they may help to
eradicate them in the future. Both this lesson as well as *The Laramie Project* lesson can help students understand that discrimination exists and is as prominent as it ever was. Students can identify with people/characters like Matthew Shepard and Elizabeth Willow. They are seen as peers, making it easier to take responsibility to make sure the fate of similar people in their own community is different than the fate of Matthew and Elizabeth.
CHAPTER VI

Character Education Within the Curriculum

Character education should be a part of education during the primary years and continued throughout primary and secondary grades. Character education is best enforced and learned when it is interwoven throughout the different disciplines of studies.

Norma Faerber, principal at Harrison Elementary School who has participated in a three-year study of character education in Hamilton County Schools, believes integrating character education is essential for its success. She states, “Sometimes we used to do a lesson on a character trait, but it didn’t have the depth of meaning until it became part of our everyday life” (Gauthier 2). Therefore, generic lessons solely on a character trait are not enough. On the other hand, when character education is infused in every day education, students are better able to understand the importance and necessity of traits such as respect and responsibility in their own lives and see how these character traits can impact their communities.

The lesson plans included in this paper are examples of how character education can be woven into the curriculum. Instead of simply telling students “Homophobia is wrong” or “Disabled people are the same inside as we are,” students will come to these conclusions on their own. Through reading the plays, researching real life examples, and examining their own thoughts and feelings, students will discover the different forms of discrimination that exists today but so often go unnoticed. Students will have the
opportunity to reflect on their own behavior and the behavior of their peers and make a conscious effort to stop discriminatory language and actions. These lessons guide students to come to their own conclusions without preaching what is right and wrong. The goal in teaching one of these lessons is that students will find the connection to other forms of discriminations.

Additional Sources for Inspiration

_The Laramie Project_ and _And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson_ are just two of the many plays that can help teach students respect and responsibility. Appendix D is a suggested reading list that is divided by social identity and contains several other plays that can help teach multicultural character education. Dramatic literature can help students feel as if they have first-hand knowledge and understanding of issues, and therefore better prepare them for interactions with a multicultural society.

According to a Hamilton County Schools study, teachers often need to be better trained on what character education should look like in the classroom (1). There are several organizations and websites dedicated to educating teachers, including Character Counts! and the Character Education Partnership. There are also several grants for both schools districts and teachers to help train teachers and implement character education in the classroom.

Conclusion

Teaching multicultural character education will not completely end hate crimes or intolerance. As long as people are different for one another, there will be those who are
prejudiced and find ways to discriminate. However, if society can teach children to
celebrate the diversity of our differences and respect one another regardless of social
identity, then future generations will be able to live in a more peaceful, loving world.
Challenging our own beliefs as teachers and changing one mindset at a time through
multicultural character education can be a first step in accomplishing this goal.
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APPENDIX A

SEXUAL ORIENTATION STATISTICS

Violence and Hate Crimes

- According to Heterick-Martin Institute Violence Report, 19% of gay/lesbian youth report suffering physical attacks based on their sexual orientation (“Just the Facts”).

- According to the 1984 National Anti-Gay/Lesbian Victimization Report 45% of gay males and 20% of lesbians report experiencing verbal harassment and/or physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation during high school (“Just the Facts”).

- According to a 1984 survey conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, nearly half of all gay men and one in five lesbians are harassed or assaulted in secondary schools (Bennett 3).

- According to FBI statistics, the greatest growth in hate crimes in recent years is against Asian-Americans and gays and lesbians. (“10 Ways to Fight Hate”).

- Most hate crimes occur in the North and West, not in the South, as many assume (“10 Ways to Fight Hate”).

- Every hour someone commits a hate crime (“10 Ways to Fight Hate”).
• Every day at least eight blacks, three whites, three gays, three Jews, and one Latino become hate crime victims (“10 Ways to Fight Hate”).

• More hate crimes are committed against gay people in this country than against any other group except African Americans (Rhein 2).

• According to the FBI's 2008 Hate Crime Statistics, 1617 of 7780 hate crime offenses occurred based on sexual orientation. This includes five murders, six rapes, 232 aggravated assaults, 501 simple assaults, and 419 uses of intimidation, in addition to crimes against property (US Department of Justice).

• According to the Office of Criminal Justice Services, 345 hate crimes occurred in 2008 in Ohio, of which 17% of these were based on sexual orientation, second to race. 3.8 hate crime incidents occurred per 100,000 people in Ohio. This above the national average of 2.9 incidents per 100,000 people (Ohio Department of Public Safety).

Schools

• According to a 1989 US Department of Health and Human Services Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide, 28% of gay and lesbian youth drop out of school because they are made to feel unsafe or uncomfortable (Bennett 3).

• 53% of Students report hearing homophobic comments made by school staff (“Just the Facts”).
• According to the Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 97% of students surveyed in Massachusetts hear anti-gay comments and epithets, such as “faggot,” in school on a routine bases, with rarely a response from a teacher (Bennett 3).

• According to James Sears’s article, “Educators, Homosexuality, and Homosexual Students: Are Personal Feelings Related to Professional Beliefs,” 80% of prospective teachers report negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian people (“Just the Facts”).

• According to the aforementioned article, 1/3 of prospective teachers can be classified as “high-grade homophobes.”

• According to the aforementioned article, 2/3 of guidance counselors harbor negative feelings toward gay and lesbian people. Less than 20% of guidance counselors have received any training on serving gay and lesbian students.

Self Esteem, Suicide, and Health Issues

• 80% of gay and lesbian youth report severe social isolation (“Just the Facts”).

• According to the University HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, 68% of adolescent gay males use alcohol (26% or more once a week) and 44% use other drugs. 83% of adolescent lesbians use alcohol, 56% use other drugs, and 11% use crack and/or cocaine (“Just the Facts”).
Gay and lesbian youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts, according to a 1989 US Department of Health and Human Services Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Youth Suicide (Bennett 3).

According to the aforementioned survey, a successful suicide attempt by a gay teen occurs every five hours and 48 minutes.

20% of gay and bisexual adolescent males attempt suicide at least once (“Just the Facts”).
APPENDIX B

THE LARAMIE PROJECT PERMISSION SLIP

Sample Guardian Permission Slip

The next piece of literature the class will be reading is *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project. *The Laramie Project* chronicles the events following the murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student from Laramie, Wyoming. The play is comprised of personal experiences of the playwrights while visiting the community as well as interviews with townspeople ranging from university professors to ranchers, friends and family members of Matthew Shepard to the men who killed him.

In no way is this lesson encouraging homosexuality, but rather it encourages students to look at critical issues from a multicultural perspective. *The Laramie Project* is a critically acclaimed play and movie and has been produced in high schools, colleges, community and professional theatres across the country. To get a better idea of the play and this lesson’s purpose, please check out *Time* magazine’s website regarding teaching *The Laramie Project*. [http://www.time.com/time/classroom/laramie/](http://www.time.com/time/classroom/laramie/)

Please know all viewpoints presented in a respectful manner are encouraged and will be heard. If you or your children have any concerns regarding this lesson, please contact me. Please return the permission slip below before the start of the unit on ___(date)___.

Sincerely,

(Teacher Name)

_____ Yes, my child has permission to participate in this lesson.

_____ No, my child does not have permission to participate in this lesson and should be provided and alternate assignment.

__________________________________  ________________
Guardian Signature  Date

___________________________________________
Student Name
APPENDIX C

DISABLISM STATISTICS

Violence and Hate Crimes

- According to the FBIs 2008 Hate Crime Statistics, 85 crimes against persons with disabilities were reported in 2008. Of these, 28 were anti-physical disability, 57 were anti-mental disability (US Department of Justice).

- According to the aforementioned survey, 53 crimes were committed against persons including three accounts of rape, seven accounts of aggravated assault, 23 accounts of simple assault, 17 accounts of intimidation, and 3 accounts of other attacks. Thirty-one crimes were committed against property including two accounts of robbery, one account of burglary, nine accounts of larceny/theft, 15 accounts of destructions/damage/vandalism, and four other accounts (US Department of Justice).

- According to the Office of Criminal Justice Services, disability hate crimes have been on the rise in Ohio since 2001 (Ohio Department of Public Safety).
• According to the aforementioned survey, less than 1% of all hate crimes committed nationally are disability based. However, 10% of hate crimes committed in Ohio are disability-based (US Department of Justice).

• Only one disability hate crime has ever successfully been prosecuted (Sherry, 1).

• A study of deaf youth found 54% of deaf boys and 50% of deaf girls are sexually abused (Sherry 1).

• According to a Joint Statement by the National Council on Disability, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, and the National Center for the Victims of Crime, Children with a disability are 68% more likely to be victims of maltreatment than children with no reported disability (National Council on Disability 1).

• According to the aforementioned statement, women with developmental disabilities are at a four to ten times greater risk of sexual assault than women in the general population (1).

• According to the aforementioned statement, one-fourth of persons with severe mental illness were victim of a violent crime in the past year, a rate more than eleven times that of the general public (1).

• According to that same statement, 15,000 to 19,000 people with developmental disabilities are raped each year in the United States (1).

• More than half of all abuse of persons with disabilities perpetuates from family members and peers with disabilities. Service providers including
paid or unpaid caregivers, healthcare workers, and providers of other community services are generally responsible for the other half. (1)

- According to the US Health and Human Services, children with learning disabilities are at a greater risk of being teased and physically bullied (1).

- According to the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are more likely than other children to be bullied. They are also more likely to be bullies (US Department of Health and Human Services 1).

- According to *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, children with medical conditions that affect their appearance (ex. cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy) are more likely to be victimized by peers (US Department of Health and Human Services 2).

- According to the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, children with hemiplagia (paralysis of one side of their body) are more likely than other children their age to be victimized by peers, to be rated as less popular than their peers, and to have fewer friends than other children (US Department of Health and Human Services 2).

**Schools**

- “Putting a Face on Learning Disabilities,” a study released by the Learning Disabilities Association found that 29% of parents with students with learning disabilities said their children needed learning aids or services but they could not afford them
• The aforementioned study found that between 5-10% of children aged six to fifteen have a learning disability, but approximately half of them will go undiagnosed (1).

• According to a study by the Learning Disabilities Association of America, 35% of students identified with learning disabilities drop out of high school – twice the rate of their non-learning disabled peers (Learning Disabilities Association of America 1).

• According to the 23rd Annual Report to Congress by the US Department of Education, 2.9 million school-age children between the ages of six and twenty-one are classified as have specific learning disabilities and receive some type of special education support. These numbers do not include children in private or religious schools or home-schooled children (Kenyon 1).

• The National Institute of Health estimates children with learning disabilities or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) compose between 10% - 15% of the school-age population and represent over half the children who receive special education services in the United States (Kenyon 1).

• The National Institute for Literacy estimates 30-50% of the population has an undiagnosed learning disability (Kenyon 1).

• According to the 2001 23d Annual Report to Congress, the percentage of students who spend 80% or more of their time in school in special education classes increased from 21% to 45% since 1992 (Kenyon 2).

• According to the same report, 51% of students receiving special education services through the public schools are identified as having learning disabilities (2).
According to the same report, 27% of students with learning disabilities drop out of high school (2). However, the National Longitudinal Transition Study finds the dropout rate to be closer to 35%. Of those who graduate less than 2% attend a four-year college (2).

According to a 2003 National Institute of Health report, specific learning disabilities have increased 22% over the past 25 years. In the past decade, the number of students ages six to 21 years identified with specific learning disabilities has increased by 38% (2).

Self-esteem, Employment, and Health Issues

- The “Putting a Face on Learning Disabilities,” study found that depression, anxiety, and unemployment are significantly more common in people with learning disabilities than in those without. (Preston 1)

- A study found by the Learning Disabilities Association of America found that 62% of students with learning disabilities were unemployed one year after graduation (Learning Disabilities Association of America 1).

- According to the aforementioned survey, 50% of females with learning disabilities will be mothers (many of them single) within one year of leaving school (1).

- According to a “Bridges to Practice” survey, 43% of the persons with learning disabilities are living at or below the poverty level (Kenyon 2).

- 48% of those with learning disabilities are out of the workforce or unemployed (2).
APPENDIX D

SUGGESTED READINGS

This list is compiled from various works I have read, as well as works suggested through play services and by fellow theatre educators.

Appearance and Disability


Class


Ethnicity and Race


Gender


Religion


Sexual Orientation


