



PERSPECTIVES *for a DIVERSE* AMERICA

Coming this fall—a Teaching Tolerance curriculum makes rigor relevant. BY DARLENE KOENIG

LAUREN GALLANT IS COMMITTED TO MAKING SOCIAL JUSTICE issues part of her U.S. history teaching. An avid user of Teaching Tolerance materials, she’s always in search of tools “that help illuminate the subject matter and the human condition.” But the Simi Valley High School, Calif., teacher has a typical challenge: There is little time for “extras” while working to meet state and district goals. And she’s currently in the middle of training on the Common Core State Standards. Adopted by 45 of the 50 states, the standards are to be formally implemented by 2015.

Teaching Tolerance is stepping up to meet that challenge. Next fall, it will launch *Perspectives for a Diverse America*—a literacy-based, K-12 anti-bias curriculum that pairs the relevance of multicultural content with the rigor of the Common Core standards.

The free, web-based curriculum will include the following components:

Anti-bias standards—the first of their kind—that are grouped into the perspectives of identity, diversity, justice and action.

An anthology of central texts—non-fiction essays and speeches, literature, songs, video clips and maps—that will help students consider and challenge multiple points of view.

An integrated learning plan that

offers flexible components for teaching the texts. Teachers will be able to choose and download options for vocabulary development, reading comprehension, discussion, persuasive writing and social action. These parts of the learning plan align to the Common Core anchor standards of language, reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The Anti-Bias Standards: An ‘Explicit Blueprint’

Teaching Tolerance’s anti-bias standards are the soul of *Perspectives*. Emily Chiariello, who has headed the development of *Perspectives* at Teaching Tolerance, says the Teaching Tolerance team realized early on there were no widely accepted standards, so they began by looking at Louise Derman-Sparks’ four goals of anti-bias education. The goals are included in her 1989 book, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*.

Chiariello says the *Perspectives* development team unpacked Derman-Sparks’ goals into 20 standards in four perspectives: identity, diversity, justice and action. The resulting standards are being used to select texts for the curriculum. She says they also helped match a “culturally responsive pedagogy with the rigor of the Common Core.”



“An invaluable resource for teachers committed to keeping equity and social justice at the forefront of the curriculum”

— Amy Vatne Bintliff

“The fact that *Perspectives* is literacy-based and makes use of diverse texts is important,” says Dr. Jennifer Trujillo, an associate professor and teacher education coordinator for Linguistically Diverse Education at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo. “But it is the four unique anti-bias perspectives ... that make it distinct.”

“Based on my experiences ... this will be the first curriculum of its kind to offer an explicit blueprint designed to move students into the position of advocate,” says Trujillo, who is also an advisory board member for Teaching Tolerance. “This will have a great impact on learner success.”

A ‘Gold Mine’ of Rich Text

If the anti-bias standards are the soul of *Perspectives*, the central text anthology is its heart. The framework’s central texts alone “are a gold mine,” says Dr. Alfred Tatum, author of *Teaching*

Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap. “I am excited to gain access” to them.

The anti-bias texts will reflect the Common Core’s approach to complexity, range and quality. And they will represent both literary and informational text types. Visual and multimedia texts will also be included in the online anthology, giving students opportunities to locate information among photographs, political cartoons and recorded interviews.

Chiariello says researchers are scouring available resources for texts that highlight and foster the exploration of identity, authentic accounts of real-life experiences, intergroup understanding, historical empathy, the awareness of prejudice and injustice, individual and collective struggles against injustice and—finally—action against injustice.

With the Common Core’s focus

on literacy across curriculum areas, “everybody is a reading teacher,” says Chiariello, who emphasizes that the texts will reflect a balance of issues and voices. The topics will go beyond the more common issues of race and ethnicity to include wealth and poverty, disabilities, religious discrimination and immigration.

“I’m always accumulating new books about diversity issues to read to my first-graders,” says Chicago teacher Joel Blecha. “I am particularly drawn to the fact that the texts in *Perspectives* encompass themes covering not only race and ethnicity—there are countless books available on these topics—but less-covered, equally important themes like gender, sexual orientation and class.”

Amy Vatne Bintliff, author of *Re-engaging Disconnected Youth: Transformative Learning Through Restorative and Social Justice Education*,



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A K-12 LITERACY-BASED
ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

says the anthology “allows teachers to easily access a variety of complex texts in one central location—texts filled with opportunities for rich discussion around social justice themes ... it’s an amazing collection of powerful texts.”

Building a Modular Learning Plan

Teachers will have the opportunity to dig right into *Perspectives*’ always-accessible anthology, and they will have their own control over teaching the texts.

The *Perspectives* integrated learning plan will include five phases: Word Work (vocabulary); Close and Critical Reading (reading comprehension); Community Inquiry (discussion); Write to the Source (persuasive writing); and Do Something (social action).

Thom Ronk, senior manager of teaching and learning at Teaching Tolerance, says teachers will choose among 10 or more strategies for accomplishing these phases—essentially building their own lesson plans depending on classroom goals and skill levels. Teachers then will be able to download and print their chosen strategies or move them to another platform.

That means that *Perspectives* will not have conventional or scripted lesson plans. This flexibility will allow

COMING FALL 2013

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teachers to match the meaningful text content with effective, curated instructional strategies.

Meredith Liben is with Student Achievement Partners, a nonprofit organization that pulls together educators and researchers to improve student achievement. The group was founded by three of the contributing authors of the Common Core State Standards. She says SAP reviewers did a careful reading of the *Perspectives* curriculum.

“[We] were happy to see that it achieves the key instructional shifts called for by the Common Core State Standards for Literacy,” she says. “The texts are authentic and complex, and the questions and activities focus on the readings and consistently require readers to produce textual evidence for their positions.”

Of course, veteran

users of Teaching Tolerance materials know there are hundreds of supplemental lesson plans already on its website. Those existing plans will still be available, says Ronk. And similar materials will still be produced around topical issues and in partnership with outside organizations.

What all Teaching Tolerance materials will have in common are the new anti-bias standards.

“I’m certain that Teaching Tolerance veterans will be thrilled with this streamlined curriculum and that ‘newbies’ will learn how to implement this framework for teaching tolerance and addressing justice in their schools,” says Trujillo. The curriculum is “fresh and innovative, yet its marriage to the Common Core will allow it to be widely implemented.”

Bintliff agrees that “*Perspectives* will be an invaluable resource for teachers committed to keeping equity and social justice at the forefront of the curriculum.”

But it’s Gallant, the Teaching Tolerance veteran in the classroom, who’s most excited. She can’t wait to get started.

“I love the idea of materials that will help us achieve three goals at once,” she says, “addressing social justice issues and building literacy, while continuing to provide our students with the background” across subject areas. ♦



Toolkit

Sample anti-bias text exemplars.

VISIT >> tolerance.org/perspectives-toolkit

