



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
2003-2004

FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Addressing Racism Through Children's Literature

GROUP MEMBERS: Lori Mahon, Mary Barb Martin, Terri Pusateri, Ann Scalzo, Hillary TerBoss

The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and on disk using this form. Include information under each of the following headings.

Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

The goal of this project was to research and review children's books and related materials that address the issue of racism, and to develop effective classroom activities based on these. Each teacher was to carry out a research project centered on the selected books. Then a resource guide was to be developed and shared with the faculty, and a list of books to be ordered was to be created. The project was ambitious, yet the study group was able to accomplish almost all these things. Only two parts are not complete at this time. One is formal sharing with faculty (Group members have shared informally with their grade level teams). It was decided that this would be better done at the beginning of the next school year, when the new books would be available in the library. The other is completing the analysis and writing up of the classroom research projects. All members felt that this would be better accomplished over the summer.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

In order to accomplish this the study group met every other week. This allowed time to do the needed reading. The meetings involved reading materials on the topic of racism, sharing

children's books, and discussing the ongoing research projects. For each meeting each group member was responsible for:

1. Reading selected articles on racism and discussing them
2. Selecting and reading children's books, and then reviewing them for the others
3. Keeping a journal of personal growth
4. Carrying out teacher research on the use of these books in the classroom and reporting on it to the group. (To do this everyone read *The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher Researchers* by Ruth Hubbard and Brenda Power (Heinemann) and used this model in designing their research).

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

The first three meetings focused on defining racism, based on the materials read, and deciding on the criteria to be used in selecting the books for review. The next two meetings were devoted to learning how to carry out research in the classroom and deciding on research questions and methods. The remaining meetings consisted of reading a short article for discussion followed by reviews of children's books (over 125 books were looked at and classified) and giving each other feedback on the ongoing research.

How has participating in this study group changed you as a teacher? Have any of your teaching practices changed?

This study group was a life changing experience for everyone. First, we all learned a great deal more about each other and our personal experiences with racism. Secondly we learned to look at our teaching through a new lens, as we became researchers in our classrooms. We learned to look for patterns in the children's responses to the books, and some of us explored videotaping as a way to see ourselves reading and interacting with the children. Most importantly we all became more aware of the need to address racial issues up front with the

support of the wonderful children's books that are now available. We have found there is a need to have more diversity in the books we select to read and to have in our classrooms and school library.

What evidence is there that student achievement is improving as a result of participating in this study group? What kind of differences are you observing in your students?

Through the children's literature we read, the students in our classrooms have had the opportunity to share the experiences of people whose skin color is different from them, and have learned what racism is and what we can do about it. Their assumptions have been challenged in a new way.

What evidence is there that the goals of the study group have/have not been met?

The *Teacher's Guide to Addressing Racism Through Children's Books* that we created for our school library is the best evidence for the work that this group did. The Guide includes our definition of racism, articles on how racial discrimination develops in children, and why we need to directly teach about racism at every grade level. There is a list of exemplary activities that can be used with any children's book. Finally each book we examined is categorized by grade level and use, and questions for discussion are listed.

Link to excerpt from guide:

Guide to Addressing Racism Excerpt.doc

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

The study group process worked very smoothly for us. The need for regular meetings over a

short period of time kept us all on task. We usually met for two hours, and this sustained time on the topic allowed us to accomplish a great deal. It would have been difficult to have the kind of in depth discussion on such a difficult topic in short time blocks during the school day and when we were wrapped up with the daily requirements of teaching.

How can we make the study group program better?

Overall, the study group grant program is a wonderful way for teachers to work on teaching materials and topics that would normally be ignored or given little attention due to the lack of time to meet. It also allowed us to meet in a cross-grade level group with the school librarian.

Link to: [Guide to Addressing Racism](#)