



Letters to Gabby

GRADES 1-5

As a social worker, I have created a venue for students to voice concerns regarding a variety of topics including bullying, racism, family discord and typical conflicts among peers.

Students submit anonymous letters to "Gabby" (my identity is known only to staff) and selected letters are published bi-weekly in a "Letters to Gabby" newsletter. "Letters to Gabby" is distributed to all students in 3rd through 5th grades to be read individually and then brought home to their families.

"Letters to Gabby" has several purposes:

- It offers clear, developmentally appropriate advice to students;
- It serves as a vehicle for teacher-directed "out of the box" discussions; and
- It models for parents the possibility of open discussion of sensitive topics.

The goal of the newsletter is to encourage independent problem-solving and teach students to think and act with empathy.

As an offshoot of the "Gabby" con-

cept, I began a program in which 5th-grade students respond (in much the same way "Gabby" responds to their letters) to questions from 1st- and 2nd-graders. Many of the older students were selected due to their own reputations as bullies; the exercise helped them develop empathy.

Through structured activities, students began to develop sensitivity to the needs of the younger letter writers. Over time, they looked beyond the overt content of the questions to underlying conflicts, concerns and fears even older students could identify with.

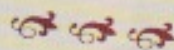
Cooperative problem-solving among 5th-graders and group discussions of concepts such as empathy, building self-esteem in others and tolerance of differing abilities resulted in a productive experience for all students involved.

For more on helping students develop

Dear Gabby,

In my group two people bully other people, I am the one who gets bullied. These two people come from the U.S. Me and the other person come from different countries. What can I do?

Signed,
Sad But Proud of My Country



Dear Sad But Proud,

Sometimes it's difficult for students to realize there is a world of people who are different from them. They may have been taught that being born here, or having a certain skin color or being a certain religion is the best way to be. But there are many best ways to be! Tell your classmates that their words are hurtful. If they keep bullying you, tell your teachers. That type of behavior isn't allowed in our school, and adults can make it stop.

Signed,
Gabby

a caring environment as the foundation for growth and learning, order *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together* (\$32.95) at Center Source Systems, 85 Liberty Ship Way, Suite 104, Sausalito, CA 94965. Phone: (707) 838-1061. (ISBN# 0932762409)

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Holocaust Art Education Project

GRADES 7-9

The Respect Diversity Holocaust Art Education Project teaches students throughout the nation about tolerance, understanding, respect and how they each can make a difference. They learn history, poetry writing and principles of visual art.

The study of the Holocaust encourages discussion about what it means to be a responsible citizen.

First, Michael Korenblit, author of *Until We Meet Again* (ISBN# 0964712407), the true story of his parents who are Holocaust survivors, speaks to students about how the Holocaust relates to issues of today.

Then students explore diversity through the arts and are asked to collaborate on symbols of respect for diversity. Their symbols range from origami art collages to poetry anthologies to multi-media displays. They learn about the art of Marc Chagall and

other Holocaust survivors as well as music and writings of survivors. In addition, they learn about rescuers who risked their lives to help others, including American Varian Fry.

For one of many projects, students from eight diverse schools worked together to complete their symbol of respect for diversity. Each student created their own unique mandala patterns that were added to a larger three-dimensional mixed media collage titled "Rising in Unity," designed by artist and teacher Vicky Longhoffer Jackson who explained, "The mandala is a perfect symbol since circles are universally perceived as symbolizing unity."

Hanging from "Rising in Unity" are dozens of colorful ribbons containing messages of understanding and respect in the form of haiku, like the following:

HUMANITY

*We are all one race
Black, white, red, tan, yellow, brown
Color me human.*

"Rising in Unity" is one of many traveling art pieces that, with a framed information sheet, is teaching the community about the importance of respect for diversity.

For more information about how your district can participate in the Holocaust Art Education Project, call (405) 359-0369, email rdfrdf@cox.net or visit www.respectdiversity.org. Find out more about Russian-born Jewish artist Marc Chagall and culture in the Third Reich by going to the online resources at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org. Joan Korenblit, executive director Respect Diversity Foundation Edmond, Okla.

Write for Us!

If you're involved in a project that successfully promotes acceptance of diversity, community-building, peace and justice, tell us about it – and earn some extra money in the process.

Teacher essays (up to 1,000 words) describe effective classroom programs related to tolerance and diversity. Fees range from \$300 to \$800 per published essay.

Activity Exchange items (up to 400 words) should include concise information on specific classroom activities. A fee of \$100 to \$200 is paid for each Activity Exchange item published.

Longer lesson plans will be considered for inclusion on our website.

Fees for web activities range from \$200 to \$500.

Study previous issues of the magazine to see the style and content we're looking for, and send your manuscript to:

Teaching Tolerance

ATTN: Submissions

400 Washington Ave
Montgomery, AL 36104

We also welcome artwork or photography relating to the activity.

The Literature of Bullying

GRADES 6-8 Nearly one out of every three students between the ages of 11 and 18 has experienced some form of bullying. Our school chose two pieces of literature in every grade level that dealt with the reality of bullying. Our selections were:

6TH-GRADE STORIES

- Joan Bauer's story *A Letter from the Fringe*, included in the anthology *On the Fringe* (ISBN# 0-8037-2656-2)
- Norma Fox Mazer's story *Tuesday of the Other June*, included in the anthology *Short Takes: A Short Story Collection for Young Readers* (ISBN# 0-6880-6092-7)

7TH-GRADE STORIES

- Susan Cooper's story *Muffin*, included in the anthology *When I Was Your Age (Volume 1)* (ISBN# 0-7636-1034-8)
- Nancy Werlin's story, *Shortcut*, also included in *On the Fringe*

8TH-GRADE STORIES

- Gary Soto's story *Your Turn, Norma*, included in Soto's anthology *Petty Crimes* (ISBN# 0-15-201658-9)
- Alden R. Carter's story, *Satyagraha*, also included in *On the Fringe*

We developed reading strategies – before, during and after – to go with each story. We created materials to activate students' prior knowledge of the subject and make predictions both before and during reading. We included graphic organizers that feature story elements such as setting, characterizations, plot and theme. Pulling from the book *Mosaic of Thought*, we included suggestions on questioning, drawing inferences and using sensory images. We had students compare and contrast not only the two stories but also the characters' experience with their own schooling experiences.

We got the community involved by bringing in *Imagination Theater* (www.imagination-theater.org) and its "Ease the Tease" presentation. Finally, other departments collaborated with us to enrich students' comprehension of the concept of bullying. The social studies classes discussed historical situations where countries and people had experienced bullying and talked about how it could be prevented. Our language classes discussed stereotyping, prejudice and racial profiling. Music courses sang and discussed Peter, Paul and Mary's "Don't Laugh at Me" and The Beatles' "We Can Work it Out."

As students reflected on the ideas in the stories, each reading class created a statement and an image to be represented on a quilt square. On another square, each student in the class signed his or her name. The quilt, which is prominently displayed in the front hall of school, is a tangible and beautiful reflection of the ideas developed and lessons taught through literature.

To order *Mosaic of Thought* (\$26.10) by Susan Zimmermann and Ellin Oliver Keene, visit www.heinemann.com. (ISBN# 0-435-07237-4)

Carol Hillsberg and Helene Spak
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Developing a Media Portfolio

GRADES 9-12 Popular media influence the development of self in young people. Teenagers view commercials and popular shows as role models for behavior and fashion. This four-step lesson helps students learn more about how the media influence their life choices.

STEP ONE Students define media. Have students discuss the vehicles used by the media to feed images to consumers. Possible answers: commercials on television, radio advertisements, magazines, billboards, newspapers, junk mail, computer images, television shows, movies, music videos and lyrics.

STEP TWO In small groups, students are given magazines and asked to pick out the ads that appeal to them. They write responses to the questions:

- Why do you like this ad?
- Does it make you want to purchase the product?

- Is the ad fair to the people pictured in it? Are they depicted as real-looking, or are they too skinny or muscular? Are they posed in natural ways or in strange positions?

- Is this image positive, negative or neutral? Why?

STEP THREE The whole class analyzes the ads of each group. What are they selling? Who is the target audience? Are the images real-looking or obviously posed?

STEP FOUR: MAKING THE PORTFOLIO

For the next two days, have students gather samples of the ways media depict people in advertising. Students may focus on one type of person (gender or race) or gather a variety of samples. Students will analyze each sample and write a letter to someone in the future reflecting on the samples. Each portfolio must contain:

- A decorative cover.
- Fifteen samples: five from television

or movies, five from radio or music and five from magazines.

- A response for each sample. Include the title of the sample, the date it was released and between three and seven sentences describing it. Does it depict gender or race in positive or negative ways? Is it neutral? Who might see it? Who might be influenced? What does this sample "say" about media?

- A reflection letter, which should discuss the media and the images you've collected. Letters should be one page, double-spaced. They may be addressed to anyone in the future (e.g., a future grandchild or the next president of the United States).

For more on media literacy, see *Teaching Youth Media: A Critical Guide to Literacy, Video Production and Social Change* (\$18.95) at www.tpress.com. (ISBN# 0-8077-4288-0)

Melissa Cameron
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Orangevale, Calif.

Community Through Photography

GRADES 9-12

The communities we live in determine a good part of our lives. This is especially true for children, who are not able to move about as easily as some adults. Yet we rarely examine what constitutes community. Putting into words or pictures a concept so vital, so primal and so basic through the process of taking pictures, writing about community and asking for reflection allowed my students the



opportunity to uncover common problems and find strategies to address them.

Like many communities prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, ours was terribly segregated. Robeson County, N.C., had at least three school systems, one for Blacks, Whites and Native Americans. The process of desegregation was painful and violent for each group, and still there are resentments today.

In a county with such distinct cultures, how do you get students to see outside their own perspectives without aggression? How do you give students a different view, something a little more panoramic?

We started with a photograph and began to explore

one another and ourselves.

We taught our students how to take photographs and then had them write about these pictures. Some of them had cameras, and some didn't. We had disposable cameras available. They were to photograph something that was important in their lives and communities.

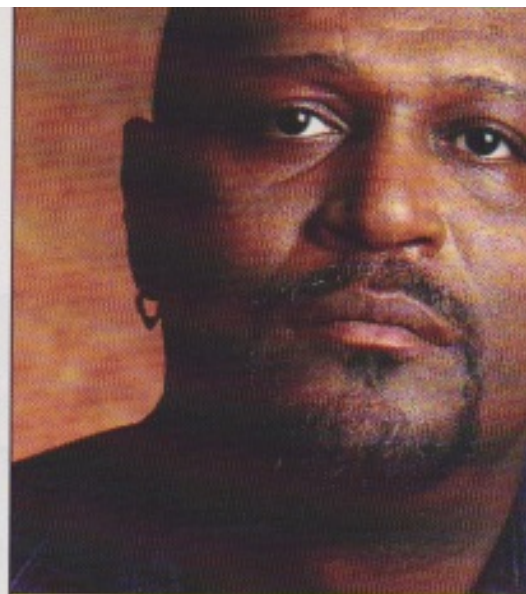
Shemelia, one of my students, wrote about a dilapidated barn:

"The old barn was built in 1905. It looks like this now because a storm called Fran caused it to be down like that. It belonged to my great-great grandfather and grandmother. I like to look at it because I try to remember all the good things they did when my mother tells me about it."

In this way, a seemingly old barn that practically everyone would have dismissed became as precious as the most esteemed historical building in our county. The Community Through Photography project allowed students the opportunity to picture and talk about community from new perspectives.

Learn more about mining your own community for across-the-curriculum lessons from www.foxfire.org. Get *Teaching by Heart: The Foxfire Interviews* (\$15.95) at www.tcpress.com. (ISBN# 0807745383)

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THAT'S SO GAY.

THAT'S SO LAME.

THAT'S SO GHETTO.

HOW RETARDED!

They are the everyday moments that make us cringe, that leave us wondering what to do, what to say, how to respond...

The Southern Poverty Law Center asked hundreds of everyday people how they handled such situations. Their ideas can help you prepare for your next encounter with everyday bias and bigotry.

SPEAK UP!

A GUIDE TO
INTERRUPTING
EVERYDAY BIAS
AND BIGOTRY

COMING THIS FALL

www.tolerance.org/speakup

Collective Poetry

GRADES 1-6

We all have stories. In telling our personal narratives, we come to know each other and ourselves. What are the lyrics of your students' favorite songs? What happens when children begin to imagine this country or their homeland before they were born? What happens when children and their teachers begin to explore the stories of ordinary people, families and self?

This activity creates opportunities for students to write poetry, investigate history, distinguish between the ideas of fact and opinion and participate in the dramatic reading of a story poem.

Woven into the curriculum is the theme of patterns. People are connected to each other through societal patterns. Families are woven into a genetic pattern based on ancestry. And poets and artists often use patterns to express their art. The lesson objectives include student exploration, analysis and creation of patterns.

Collective poetry is an exercise designed to encourage students to work from a shared pattern in order to join their voices in a collective rhythm. It builds community and encourages participation from those too shy to share individually.

Collective Poem Procedure

- Give students a 3-by-5 card.
- Ask students to number 1 to 5 on the left border.
- Then ask them to list:
 - Your parents/guardians say that annoys you, makes you laugh, makes you feel safe or scares you.
 - Your favorite sound three times.
 - Your favorite place in the world.
 - Your favorite color five times.
 - Your favorite thing to do.

Ask five students to collectively read their poems. They take turns each reading one line at a time. They read each line in any order until they each have read all five phrases. For instance, the first student might choose to first read his or her favorite sound. After the others choose and read a line, then the first student chooses a second line to read, as do the others, until all five students have read all five lines.

Here is an example of how the first line read of a collective poem might sound with five readers participating:

- Student 1: blue, blue, blue, blue, blue
- Student 2: in my pink bedroom with my butterfly bear
- Student 3: not until you finish your homework
- Student 4: tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock
- Student 5: Whatever!

The lyrical and rhythmic way the collective poem flows often pleasantly surprises both audience and actor. Introduce the idea of patterns with this activity, explaining how the pattern they used to create their list transfers into the rhythm of the collective poem.

For information regarding other lessons in this unit, email the author at herains@uga.edu.

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