

LESSON: What Does DEI Mean in a Multiracial Society?

GRADE LEVEL: High School

SUBJECT: History, Current Events, Economics

TIME REQUIRED: 90 minutes

This lesson will allow students to engage with the idea of DEI programs and their effectiveness at achieving their goals of equity.

RATIONALE

This lesson will allow students to think about the role of DEI in a multiracial democracy and the institutions that help it function. By examining what DEI is supposed to do and how it is enacted, students will create their own conceptions of equity in this world.

NOTE: This lesson is meant to have students think about the legacy of *Brown* and what equity means in the modern day.

This lesson plan and materials needed to teach it can be found at the Thurgood Marshall Institute: <https://tminstituteldf.org/>

OVERVIEW

This lesson will have students think about what DEI is and how it is implemented in a multiracial democracy by critically examining DEI initiatives post-George Floyd's murder and thinking about what society can do to more effectively promote inclusive initiatives.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How can we treat people fairly and justly, when equally is not enough?

OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

After the lesson, students will...

- Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and explain their significance in a multiracial society.
- Critically analyze the challenges and opportunities related to DEI in society.
- Identify and propose steps for creating positive changes within their own community.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Since DEI is considered a "hot" issue in today's teaching climate, make sure you give your administration heads up that your class will be engaging with this question.

SCAFFOLDS AND ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNERS

Reading support...

The reading is from news articles, which should be accessible for high school students. Scaffolds could be created, especially for multilingual students, such as reading guides

or graphic organizers that not only organize the ideas from the readings, but also set up thinking to help with the action proposal assessment.

Differentiation...

One way to differentiate is to alter the assignment to increase or decrease the reading responsibility. Another would be to increase the scope of this assignment and add a research component to it, where students would map the action plan onto an existing institution and, using their own metrics, come up with an action plan that addresses a problem they already have with DEI.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SEQUENCE

Begin class by asking students what DEI means. Give students time to go to the board and write down answers, reminding them that the class community is one built off of respect and that this topic is both a serious one and one that many people have strong opinions over. Using the definitions on the board as a starting point, create a class definition of DEI and the three elements that make it up (diversity, equity, inclusion). Definitions should end up looking something like the following:

Diversity: difference in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, abilities, religion, etc.

Equity: fairness and justice in providing opportunities and resources to all individuals.

Inclusion: the creation of environments where everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their differences.

Once the definition of DEI has been established, students will be given two of the four articles linked below. While it is up to teacher discretion how to divide up the readings, the following groupings could be used to assign readings:

Group 1: CNN and Elon Forbes

Group 2: 5 Ways Forbes and The Brink

Group 3: CNN and 5 Ways Forbes

Group 4: Elon Forbes and The Brink

After reading, have students in groups of four (one student from each of the groups above, so that each article was read by two students) summarize all four articles and their position on DEI. With these readings in mind, student groups will now be tasked with brainstorming a positive step toward equity. Each group will identify an institution (this could be a business, a school, anything) and will try to create a specific initiative or program to promote meaningful DEI. To start, students will have 10 minutes to choose their setting and the problem they want to address, such as hiring practices, initiatives to encourage inclusive activities, etc. Then students will come up with an action plan: a document that has the goals for their project, strategies to achieve the goal, a timeline

for completing the goals, a list of responsible parties, and a brief explanation about why and how their initiative will help the company with DEI. Once this document is complete, students will share with the entire class their proposal and will field questions and respond to criticism from other members of the class. Finally, students will have some time to refine based on the criticism and questions they received before turning in their final proposal.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment for this lesson will be the action plan proposals students turn in. Students should demonstrate a nuanced understanding of DEI and its purpose through a proposal of some kind to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within an institution of their choice. This plan will be a document that has the goals for their project, strategies to achieve the goal, a timeline for completing the goals, a list of responsible parties, and a brief explanation about why and how their initiative will help the company with DEI.

You will now demonstrate your understanding of effective and nuanced DEI initiatives. You will demonstrate a nuanced understanding of DEI and its purpose through a proposal of some kind to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within an institution of your choice. First, pick an institution (company, school, government office, etc.) that you want this initiative enacted in. This proposal could be a single initiative, event, policy, or whatever you think would be an effective way to promote DEI. This plan will be a document that has the goals for your project, strategies to achieve the goal, a timeline for completing the goals, a list of responsible parties, and a brief explanation about why and how your initiative will help the company with DEI.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ENRICHMENT

[What is DEI and why is it dividing America? | CNN](#)

[Is Elon Musk Right About DEI? Exploring Popular Critiques of DEI \(forbes.com\)](#)

[5 Ways DEI Has Been Ineffective and How We Make It Better \(forbes.com\)](#)

[Are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives Helping Workers—or Dividing Them? | The Brink | Boston University \(bu.edu\)](#)