

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF *PERSPECTIVES FOR A DIVERSE AMERICA*

See how our K-12 anti-bias curriculum has grown!

BY MONITA K. BELL

IT'S BEEN EXACTLY one year since Teaching Tolerance launched *Perspectives for a Diverse America*—and a productive, jam-packed year it has been! From beefing up the site with user-suggested improvements to winning a major award, we saw *Perspectives* grow and become a go-to resource for many educators in our community. Over the months, we've heard how *Perspectives* is helping educators rethink the way they approach literacy instruction. Teachers, counselors and instructional coaches have told us that, with this curriculum, they *can* address social emotional skills and social justice while also diving deep into complex texts that are relevant to their students' lives. And the best part is that *Perspectives* is being used in totally customized ways—all over the country and the world. Here's a look back at year one in the launch of something totally new, including a glimpse at how three anti-bias educators have used the curriculum to meet the unique needs of the students in their classrooms.

2014

SEPTEMBER 9

After three years of development, we released *Perspectives* to the world! The initial release included more than 242 texts, 52 student performance tasks and 69 teaching strategies.

MID-FALL

We received thumbs-up from some highly respected colleagues in the anti-bias education realm.

“What a remarkably rich resource that will help any literacy teacher work with an anti-bias perspective. I love the custom design scaffolding that enables teachers to craft their own anti-bias lessons that align to Common Core while fitting the needs of one's own classroom.”

— Christine Sleeter, Professor Emerita, California State University, Monterey Bay

2015

JANUARY

We offered our first of eight two-day workshops for educators at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California, at its beautiful and inspiring facility. Since then, we've completed 18 total in-person trainings across the country for nearly 1,000 educators.

EARLY WINTER

“Always Running,” an excerpt from Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis J. Rodriguez' memoir *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, became the most popular *Perspectives* text among users and has remained in the top spot ever since.

“The *Perspectives for a Diverse America* curriculum is a wonderful resource for teachers looking for complex, diverse and engaging texts to use with their students. The texts, coupled with the anti-bias standards and literacy strategies, offer helpful opportunities for teachers looking to implement the Common Core Standards and involve their students in discussions around social justice, equity and diversity. I am thrilled to have this resource to share with teachers in our network!”

— Marc Skvirsky, Chief Program Officer, Facing History and Ourselves



SPOTLIGHT: PERSPECTIVES IN THE CLASSROOM

242/285

Texts when *Perspectives*
launched / today

50/146

Number of states / countries from
which users have registered

20,000+

Users currently registered
on the site

“THEY WERE WAITING TO TALK ABOUT IT.”

Kenyatta Greer, a seventh-grade social studies teacher in Justice, Illinois, found several relevant texts in *Perspectives*, including César Chávez’ “Commonwealth Club Address” and the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to support a unit on labor and poverty. Greer’s classroom included a significant number of immigrant and ELL students who were more than ready to discuss these texts using the Socratic Seminar and Critical Listening Guide as foundational strategies.

“It’s almost as if they were waiting to talk about it because it’s something that they see,” Greer says.

The icing on the cake for Greer and his students was the opportunity to take action. “I think the best part was when we did the Inventing a Better World,” he reflects, “because it allows them to look at some of the global issues that we have and come up with their own practical, concrete solutions.” Using the Writing Letters for Change task, the students communicated their proposed solutions to their local elected officials.

As for what’s next, Greer has his eye on the multimedia selections in the anthology. “Those short video clips are really good for the different learners [who] are present in the classroom, especially in a topic like social studies,” Greer says. “They can get a visual with what they’re reading in some of the written texts.”

EARLY SPRING



In response to user suggestions, we added a keyword-search feature to the anthology, making it possible to search easily for a relevant text.

MARCH 7

When President Barack Obama spoke at the 50th anniversary commemoration of Selma’s “Bloody Sunday,” we knew the speech addressed all four domains in the Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework (ABF): Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. By that Monday, we’d mapped the speech to the ABF and added it to *Perspectives*.

“The single most powerful word in our democracy is the word *we*. ‘We the people.’ ‘We shall overcome.’ ‘Yes, we can.’ It is owned by no one. It belongs to everyone.”

(D17, D19, D110)

MID-SPRING

The 10,000th user registered for the site. We were thrilled to see the *Perspectives* community growing.

We added yet another user-requested enhancement: Lexile scores on each *Perspectives* text, making it easier to find texts to fit specific classroom needs.

All *Perspectives* texts align to anchor standards in the ABF. This quote from Obama’s speech aligns to three anchor standards from the Diversity domain.

MAY 26



Our first-ever Twitter chat addressed how *Perspectives* texts can reflect students’ lives and experiences and sharpen their critical literacy skills. Nearly 70 users joined the discussion, using #TalktoTT.

JUNE 3

Perspectives became an award-winning curriculum when the Association of American Publishers named it the winner of its REVERE Innovation Award for Whole Curriculum.



REX FEATURES VIA AP IMAGES





SPOTLIGHT: PERSPECTIVES IN THE CLASSROOM

“I WONDER WHY...”

As a third-grade teacher at a dual-language school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Emmanuel Godoy and his colleagues wanted to address a topic that would be relevant to their students’ lives—immigration. Godoy got his unit rolling with an essential question: “What is it like to be an immigrant?” He then assessed what his students already knew and wanted to know with a K-W-L chart. When the class played a game to learn about different immigration experiences, things really got interesting. They pretended to be traveling on a ship, and some students had more food and better quarters than others. The class then compared those experiences with “StoryCorps” narratives on immigration from the *Perspectives* anthology, resulting in “a-ha!” moments throughout the class.

“I wonder why what I see today in my neighborhood kind of reflects what I’m learning about immigrants in terms of how they’re being treated,” Godoy remembers a student telling him.

The students’ investigations resulted in engagement with community members who shared their immigrant experiences and details of their home cultures. Thanks to a co-teacher, Sherry Silverthorn, the class also received a visit from a student’s grandmother who had emigrated from Asia. She shared artifacts and explained what her life had been like. The students presented what they learned in a culminating poster project. The takeaway for Godoy? “It just really taught me that it’s completely possible to, one, create lessons that are student-driven and, two, create lessons that reflect our students’ identities.”

“THE PROBLEMS ALL STUDENTS FACE”

For Greenville, Alabama, middle school teacher Denise Schofield, engaging her students about diversity wasn’t a priority until her son came out as gay during junior high school. After witnessing the mistreatment her son endured and learning that some of her students were having similar experiences, Schofield committed to helping young people become more open to diverse identities. That’s where *Perspectives* entered the picture.

The first text she used was Maya Angelou’s classic poem “Still I Rise,” which quickly became a class favorite. Schofield attributes its popularity to the fact that her students—mainly African-American and living in the Deep South—could relate to the struggles Angelou describes in the piece. They broke the poem down with a strategy called Text Graffiti, which allows students to examine small pieces of a work out of context to focus deeply on particular concepts and then to make predictions about the work as a whole.

Pairing “Still I Rise” with Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” led to class conversations on gender and gender equality in the workplace. What resulted was a powerful Do Something project: a class-produced PSA about what equality means for everyone. “I think the PSA helped them to connect not just to the problems that are out ‘there’ but that all students face,” Schofield says.

PERSPECTIVES

by the numbers

TEXTS BY LENS

25

Ability

34

Place

131

Race & Ethnicity

21

Community

39

Religion

55

Gender

37

Immigration

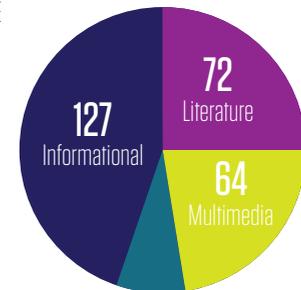
54

Class

35

LGBT

TEXTS BY TYPE



MORE TO COME!

Perspectives for a Diverse America has even more growing to do! Look for these improvements in year two and beyond.

- Larger selections of student tasks and teacher strategies
- Text-dependent questions for each reading
- The ability to include multiple texts in an Integrated Learning Plan
- The ability to search by time period
- Alignment to the C3 Framework
- International resources
- A community forum
- A rating system



TOOLKIT

Put this story into action! VISIT » tolerance.org/year-in-the-life