

Civil Rights Pioneers Recognition Project

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Abstract

This lesson involves a project that will enable students to research early leaders in the African American struggle for civil rights and equality. Students will present information to the school board (the class) about naming a new school in their community after a local, state, or national figure involved in civil rights issues prior to 1955. In addition, students will also identify documents and artifacts that should be included in the new school's gallery devoted to the school's namesake.

Essential Questions

1. Who are some of the pioneers in African American civil rights issues prior to 1955?
2. What are some of the major struggles and accomplishments in which they were involved?
3. Why should they be remembered and commemorated today?
4. How did the actions of these individuals help lay the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement in 1955 and beyond?

Assessment

Students will demonstrate knowledge of early civil rights figures by writing a persuasive proposal explaining why a school should be named after their assigned figure. In addition, they will also identify key documents and artifacts that should be included in the school's historical gallery. Lastly, they will also present a 3-5 minute PowerPoint presentation to the school board encouraging them to recognize their subject. (See Student Handout 1) At teacher discretion, this project could be done individually, in partners, or as a group. Also at teacher discretion, the class could vote following all of the presentations for the new school name.

Setting the Purpose

Prior to this lesson, students will have learned about Jim Crow laws and the prevalence of inequality issues in both the North and the South. This lesson is designed to help students understand the people that were involved in these issues and the importance

of their actions. Potential subjects for research include A. Philip Randolph, Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. Dubois, Dr. Ossian Sweet, Ida Wells Barnett, Ella Baker, James Weldon Johnson, Thurgood Marshall, Walter White, Marcus Garvey, and Charles Houston to name a few.

Analysis of Primary Sources

Students will have time in the computer lab to find primary source resources and artifacts. Given the broad nature of potential topics, it is difficult to list every resource that might be used; however, a good starting point for student research would be the Civil Rights Digital Library (<http://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome>) and the African American Odyssey Site by the Library of Congress (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aointro.html>). These are both excellent sites for introductory research. In addition, many schools and libraries subscribe to online databases of African American history, such as the Oxford African American Studies Center and the Gale Student Resource Center.