

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Its Purpose

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Legacy of Racial and Social Justice: A Curriculum for Empowerment is a teacher’s resource guide that provides activities for students in kindergarten through eighth grade to explore the rich history of the civil rights movement and the persona of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through creative, interdisciplinary lesson plans and interactive resources, the curriculum focuses on building on students’ current civil rights knowledge and helping them to compare present-day realities to past struggles for justice in America and throughout the world. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site, the Auburn Avenue area, and surrounding neighborhoods provide a picturesque and reminiscent backdrop for the guide’s goals. In fact, the guide’s greater purpose lies in its goals:

- (1) To have students discover issues of race and social justice in the past and present, and
- (2) To have students determine how The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and what it stands for can empower them and further the causes of racial and social justice in America and throughout the world.

The guide includes reproducible, “teacher friendly” materials in social studies, civics, history, writing, reading/language arts, and literature. Through the scaffolding of relevant historical and sociological information within appropriate grade level contexts, students focus on creative problem-solving and experiential learning. They are encouraged through this curriculum to determine their own personal agendas for improving race relations and for becoming advocates for social justice in their communities, their country and their world.

Graphic organizers are a part of each lesson and assist students in developing a depth of understanding and awareness of social issues. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is presented as a role model of character and leadership in the struggle for racial and social justice. As well, the unsung heroes of the struggle are spotlighted to attest to the bravery of the common man. Children of courage are profiled who brought humility and compassion to the civil rights movement, demonstrating, without question, the best of our humanity. This curriculum goes beyond the range of teacher/student interactions and learning. It goes to the heart of the human spirit to reveal to our children the heritage and legacy of greatness to which each of us is called.

Its Format

The Guide is divided into 5 major sections:

- ◆ **Section 1** – Guidelines for Teachers
- ◆ **Section 2** – Lesson Plans and Units by grade levels K (kindergarten) and 1, grades 2 and 3, grades 4 and 5, and grades 6 through 8
- ◆ **Section 3** – The Visitor Center Exhibits
- ◆ **Section 4** – A Problem-Solution Project
- ◆ **Section 5** – References

Guidelines for Teachers

It is important for teachers using a new resource for the first time to get some tips on the best use of the materials and to be forewarned about any possible procedural and/or judgmental pitfalls. Since this guide deals with issues on race and social justice, this section points out the potential sensitive nature of such issues for children and their parents. Teachers should find the contents both informative and helpful in dealing with his/her various constituencies.

Overview of Lessons

A list of the lessons and units by grade level provides the titles and the topic of each lesson. Teachers may use this section to assist them as they plan the content of lessons and units they wish to teach.

Lesson Plans and Units

The lesson plans in this guide are interdisciplinary and address the **Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) objectives** outlined for the state of Georgia. Each lesson plan includes **critical questions** for students and teachers to examine as the lesson is taught. **Background** building is an important introductory component for each lesson. A motivating experience is written to excite students about the lesson and to provide a **hook** for the content to be learned. There are step-by-step **procedures** for delivering the lesson content and **center and extension ideas** for reinforcement in small groups. **Synthesis** ideas are a part of each lesson to help students internalize and build on the concepts learned. Students get opportunities to transfer their learning in new and different ways **before their visit** to the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site, **during their visit** and **after their visit**. A listing of **materials, resources, and references**, including online resources accompany each lesson. **Graphic organizers** are used to help students more thoroughly investigate and retain ideas. **Attachments** are meant for teacher use and **handouts** are to be used by students. Lessons that are closely related often constitute a **unit** wherein several lessons are written to support each other. This structure allows students to better bridge their understanding of more complex concepts. All of these components complete a package of experiential learning.

The Visitor Center Exhibits

At the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, **Courage to Lead** is a wonderful exhibit for the students to explore. It

presents the topics/titles: Segregation, the King Family, Call to Lead, Timeline, Visiting the Mountain, Expanding the Dream, Overcoming Loss, Freedom Road, and the Photo Gallery. For each topic/title, a list of questions is presented in a visual or graphic organizer format. The answers to the questions appear at the end of this section. Students will have fun using materials that are found in this section of the guide.

A Problem-Solution Project

Inspiring students to become critical thinkers and advocates for racial and social justice is the most intriguing challenge of this guide. A model of a Problem-Solution Project appears in the guide as an example of the type of activities that can be done with students to stimulate them to become young activists. From simple letter writing tasks to nonviolent demonstrations, caring adults (e.g., parents and teachers) can guide students towards making a difference in their neighborhoods, communities, city, state, country and the world. The challenges of solving simple to complex issues in our society are before us. Our children are our most valuable resource.

References

The materials listed in the final section of the guide will assist teachers in finding additional resources to support the curriculum and their own personal investigations and learning.

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