

# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

## SOCIAL SKILLS LESSON PLAN

### CASEL COMPETENCY: SOCIAL AWARENESS

### SOCIAL SKILL: APPRECIATING DIVERSITY

Created by: Robyn Orr

#### BOOK INFORMATION

Book title: Separate is Never Equal

Author: Duncan Tonatiuh

Publisher and date of publication: ABRAMS Books for Young Readers, 2014

ISBN: 978-1-4197-1054-4

Number of pages: 32

Reading level or interest level:

#### BOOK SYNOPSIS

Sylvia is embarrassed on the first day of school after a boy says she does not belong there. Sylvia's mom reminds her of the fight to get her to school. Three years before, Sylvia and her brothers were not allowed to go to the school in their neighborhood, but had to go to the Mexican school. Sylvia was an American who spoke perfect English. Her dad, Mr. Mendez, was from Mexico but was a U.S. citizen and her mom was from Puerto Rico. Sylvia's father spoke to many different supervisors on the school board and they all told him that his children could not go to the neighborhood school. The Mexican school was dirty, surrounded by electric wire, and did not have a swing. The teachers expected the students to drop out. Mr. Mendez worked with a lawyer to start a lawsuit. They got many families from the county to join. For five days, people testified, and the superintendent of one district lied. It took the judge a year but he made the decision that public school would be open to everybody no matter their lineage. However the school board appealed, so other organizations representing other ethnicities, such as the NAACP and the American Jewish Congress, helped the Mendez family. Finally the court of appeals ruled in favor of the Mendez family. So Sylvia went back to the neighborhood school and instead of feeling embarrassed when children made fun of her, she was proud of herself and made friends with children from all backgrounds.

This book would be great supplemental reading for students who are learning about the judicial branch. This book could be used to help students appreciate diversity and show respect to others regardless of their background.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is for students to understand that some groups have been historically left out of education so it is important that each person helps others, especially those who may seem different than themselves, feel comfortable and respected. When students feel like they belong they will feel safe.

## LESSON MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION

K-2 materials:

- A piece of construction paper for each student
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils for each student

3-6 materials:

- A piece of lined paper for each student
- A pencil or pen for each student

Advance preparation:

- Get preferred and less preferred objects for the students
- There may be more unfamiliar terms than listed under "Key Vocabulary and Concepts". The book contains a glossary with many judicial terms and simple definitions. Decide which of these your students may benefit from.

## KEY VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

Superintendent: head of a school district

Appeal: to request, after a trial is finished, that a higher court review the outcome

Lawsuit: a dispute brought to a court for a decision to be made; a case

Inferior: of lesser quality

Justice: fairness

Ethnicity: a group of people who have a common national or cultural tradition

Stereotype: An over-simplification of a particular type of person

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Divide the class up between those wearing red and those who are not (or by some other attribute not associated with their ethnicity or gender). Give those wearing red some preferred item (like a small candy) and those not wearing red get a carrot. After a few moments where student may complain that it is not fair, introduce the book. Explain the title and that what you did was separated them and gave them both something to eat. Ask the students if what they received was equal. Why not? What if you gave both groups the preferred item but kept them separated. Would that make everything better? Explain that they may miss out on spending time with some great people. Tell them that this book is based on a true story from the 1940s.

## READ THE BOOK

## POST READING DISCUSSION

Make sure that students have a chance to have the preferred item.

Show the students the first page. Ask them how they would feel if a classmate told them to go to another school. Ask the students why Sylvia and her brothers were not allowed to go to the school when her cousins were? What was the Mexican school like? How would you feel if you had to go to a school with those bad conditions and where your teachers do not care how you do in school?

Show page 18. Ask the students why this sign is disrespectful. Show them page 22. Ask what is wrong about a World War II vet's child not being able to go to public school. Show page 26. Explain that the superintendent was using stereotypes. Ask students if stereotypes are true. Why should we not use them when trying to make friends?

Ask the students why they think other groups, such as the NAACP, cared about this case. Ask the students why Sylvia decided to be proud of herself the next day. How did that help her make friends? Explain that we can make friends when we are proud of the things that make us different.

#### POST READING ACTIVITY

*K-2:* Ask students to divide their paper in half. On one side, have them draw a picture of a time where they showed somebody respect. On the other side, have them draw a picture of a time when somebody showed them respect. Ask for volunteers to show what they drew.

*3-6:* Play the song "Respect" by Aretha Franklin (See YouTube). Ask the students to spell out R-E-S-P-E-C-T down the side of their piece of paper. Explain that they should write an acrostic poem of how they can better show respect to people with a different background than themselves. Ask students to share their poem. Between each student's turn, have the class sing, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T/ Find out what it means to me/ R-E-S-P-E-C-T/ Take care, TCB".

#### CLOSURE

Remind the students that some groups, such as those with dark skin, have been left out of education in the past, so it is important that even though the law allows everyone to have a public education, we still need to do our part to be respectful so other students know they are wanted at our school. Explain that we can show respect to other students by appreciating diversity. Explain that when students feel like they belong they will feel safe.



"Leave everyone a bit better than  
you found them."  
- Anonymous