



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4M: African American Education

TOPIC:

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

2. History and Movement
4. Social Movements and Equity

Values and Principles:

2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):
Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. (RI.11-12.2)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):
History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)

Examine the impact of social movements and reforms, including the civil rights movement and efforts to desegregate schools, on changing societal norms and policies. (11.10)

Analyze the impact of landmark Supreme Court cases and legislation, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on the advancement of civil rights and liberties. (11.10, 12.5)

Lesson Purpose

Students will research historically Black colleges and universities and K-12 education desegregation in order to determine their positive contributions to African American education. Students will also research the realities of desegregation.

Essential Questions

What were the positives of historically Black colleges and universities and K-12 desegregation for African Americans' education? What were some of desegregation's realities?

How has life changed for African Americans over the last 250 years?

Materials

[PBS: Historically Black Colleges and Universities | Making Black America](#)

[Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture: The Struggle Against Segregated Education](#)

[PBS: Brown v. Board of Education](#) (video 4 minutes, 53 seconds)

[Scholastic: Celebrating Ruby Bridges](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

separate but equal
Booker T. Washington

historically Black colleges and
universities (HBCUs)

Plessy v. Ferguson
Brown v. Board of Education

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students if they remember discussing *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Refer students back to the event card on the timeline. Do they remember the term “separate but equal” from this case? What does the term mean? How was it used to support Jim Crow laws of desegregation? In what ways is separate never equal, especially in education?
- Do students also remember the case of *Mendez v. Westminster*, where Thurgood Marshall represented Ms. Mendez for desegregation in California schools for Latino and Hispanic students? The victory for Latino students was not nationwide; it was only for California.
- What did African Americans do to support an interest in positive educational outcomes during the Jim Crow period? What do students know about historically Black colleges and universities? Have students watch [PBS: Historically Black Colleges and Universities | Making Black America](#) (video 6 minutes, 19 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on what the positive outcomes are for African Americans who can attend HBCUs. Is there a negative to learning trade skills? Stop the video frequently for students to take notes. When students have finished watching the video, have them share with a partner, and then have partners share with the class. Identify as many positives as possible. Students should also understand, though, that current HBCUs face many of the same problems as other colleges, such as underfunding and relevance in today's diverse college campus atmosphere (see more in Additional Readings and Resources at the end of this lesson.)

Step 2:

- Ask students what they know about K-12 schools for African Americans during the Jim Crow period. What do they remember about American Indian boarding schools? What do they remember about segregated Latino and Hispanic schools? Even by the 1950s, no federal laws had struck down “separate but equal” for K-12 schools, so segregation persisted across the nation. What do students know about *Brown v. Board of Education*? Let students know that they will be creating a bulletin board display of positive educational outcomes from the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case. Put students into pairs and have them read and watch the following resources. Ask students to select one positive aspect of the case for the display and carefully cite their sources. Students should also state the who, what, where, when, and why of their positive aspect and can choose to illustrate their display.
- [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture: The Struggle Against Segregated Education](#)
- [PBS: Brown v. Board of Education](#) (video 4 minutes, 53 seconds)
- When students have completed their research, have them check with several other groups to see if they have a unique positive. Students should strive for as many unique positives as possible.
- When students have completed their research, as a whole class, work with the students to create an event card for the timeline. Then have pairs present their display of the positive outcomes from *Brown v. Board of Education* and post on the bulletin board. (Make sure students see the connection between Earl Warren serving as the governor of California during *Mendez v. Westminster* and being on the Supreme Court during *Brown v. Board of Education*.)

Step 3:

- Ask students if they know whether integration was automatically implemented after the positive outcome in *Brown v. Board of Education*. What might integration have looked like? Have they heard about Ruby Bridges? Have students watch [Scholastic: Celebrating Ruby Bridges](#). While students watch, have them take notes in order to answer this question, “What were some of the realities of K-12 student integration after *Brown v. Board of Education*?” When students have completed the video, have them share with a partner and then share as a whole class. (Make sure students understand that integration was resisted for more than a decade in the South and was implemented unevenly. Also, more than 40,000 Black teachers lost their teaching jobs, and many whites fled the public school system—see Additional Readings and Resources below.)

Step 4:

- As a whole class, ask students to answer this lesson’s question, “What were the positives of historically Black colleges and universities and K-12 desegregation for African Americans’ education? What were some of desegregation’s realities?” Also, ask this unit’s question, “How has life changed for African Americans in the last 250 years?” Record what was learned on this unit’s KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits, and for homework, have students watch [Crash Course: Booker T. Washington vs. W. E. B. Du Bois](#). Ask students to watch the video and create a T-chart that analyzes the differences between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois’s views on education and civil rights activism, especially in regard to the speed of change that they were advocating. At the bottom of the T-chart, students should create a summary in their own words.

Additional Readings and Resources

Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

[BlackPast: Structure Academic Debate: Booker T. Washington and W.E.B Dubois](#)

“Booker T. Washington and Voc-Tech: Interview with Robert Norrell” (podcast episode). Pioneer Institute, February 7, 2024. <https://pioneerinstitute.org/featured/u-tns-robert-norrell-on-booker-t-washington-voc-tech/>

Glenn, Charles L., Jr. *African American/Afro-Canadian Schooling: From the Colonial Period to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Gutman, Herbert G. “Schools for Freedom: The Post-Emancipation Origins of Afro-American Education.” In *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 260–297.

[KUFMS: The Unintended Consequences of Brown v. Board of Education](#)

[PBS: Resistance to Integration After Brown v. Board of Education](#)

[PBS: Simple Justice 1: A Handful of Lawyers](#) (video 6 minutes, 57 seconds)

Riley, Jason L. “Brown v. Board of Education: Right Result, Wrong Reason.” *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 2024. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/brown-v-board-of-education-right-result-wrong-reason-d888b3c0>

Sowell, Thomas. “Black Excellence—the Case of Dunbar High School.” *The Public Interest*, Spring 1974. https://www.nationalaffairs.com/public_interest/detail/black-excellence-the-case-of-dunbar-high-school

Sowell, Thomas. *Black Education: Myths and Tragedies*. David McKay Company, 1972.

Sowell, Thomas. *Charter Schools and Their Enemies*. Basic Books, 2020.

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 183–224.

Thomas SowellTV. “How Black Education Succeeded.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkMnTfB5Swo>

Thomas SowellTV. “Thomas Sowell Debunks Lies About Black Education.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t82lm9SbJAo>

Thomas SowellTV. “Thomas Sowell on the Failures in American Education.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujga_GcWkD8&t=874s

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 4A: KWL Chart

KNOW	WONDER	LEARNED
<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>