

Rights Language, Education, and the Disruption of Adulthood Bias

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Introduction

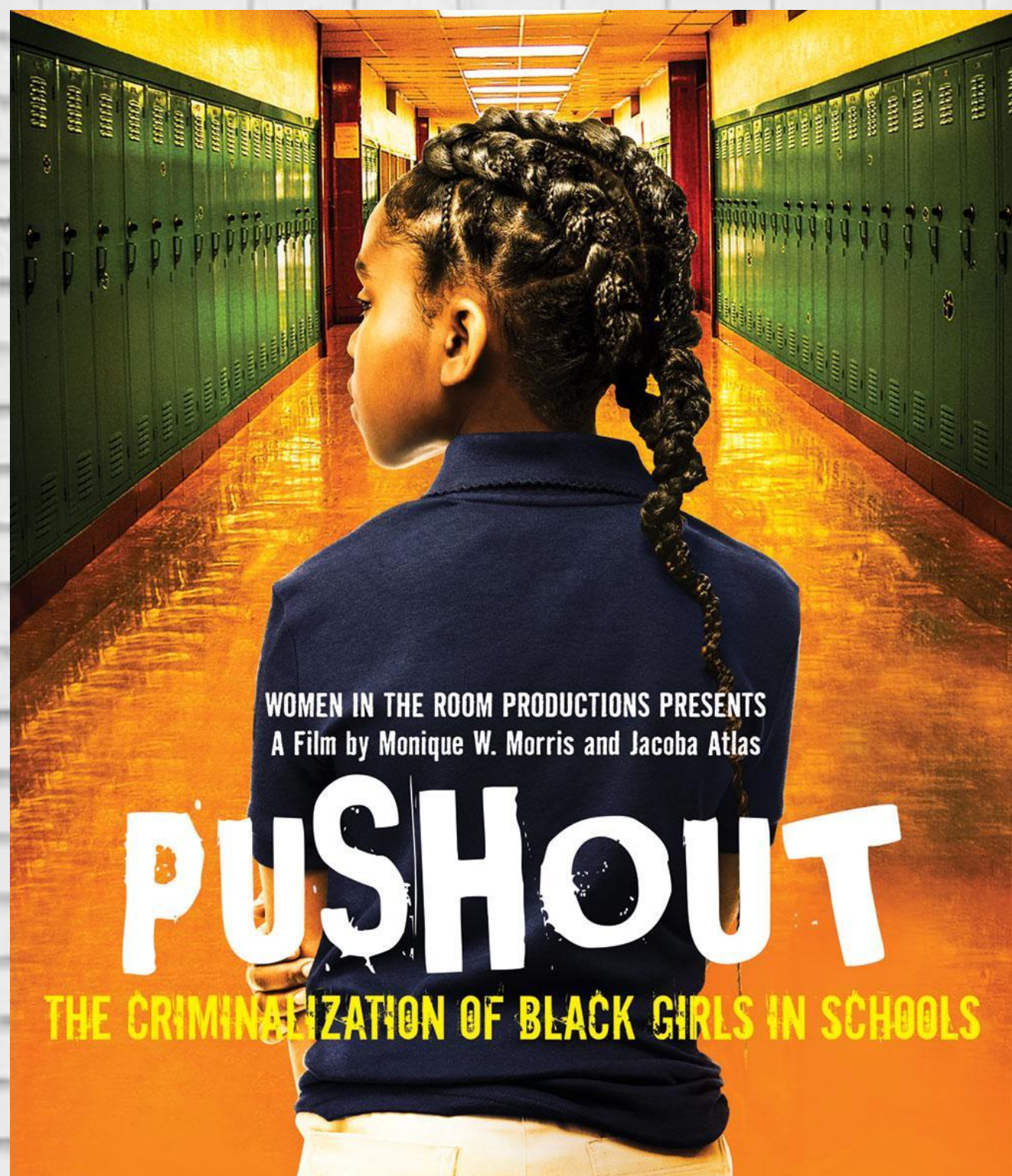
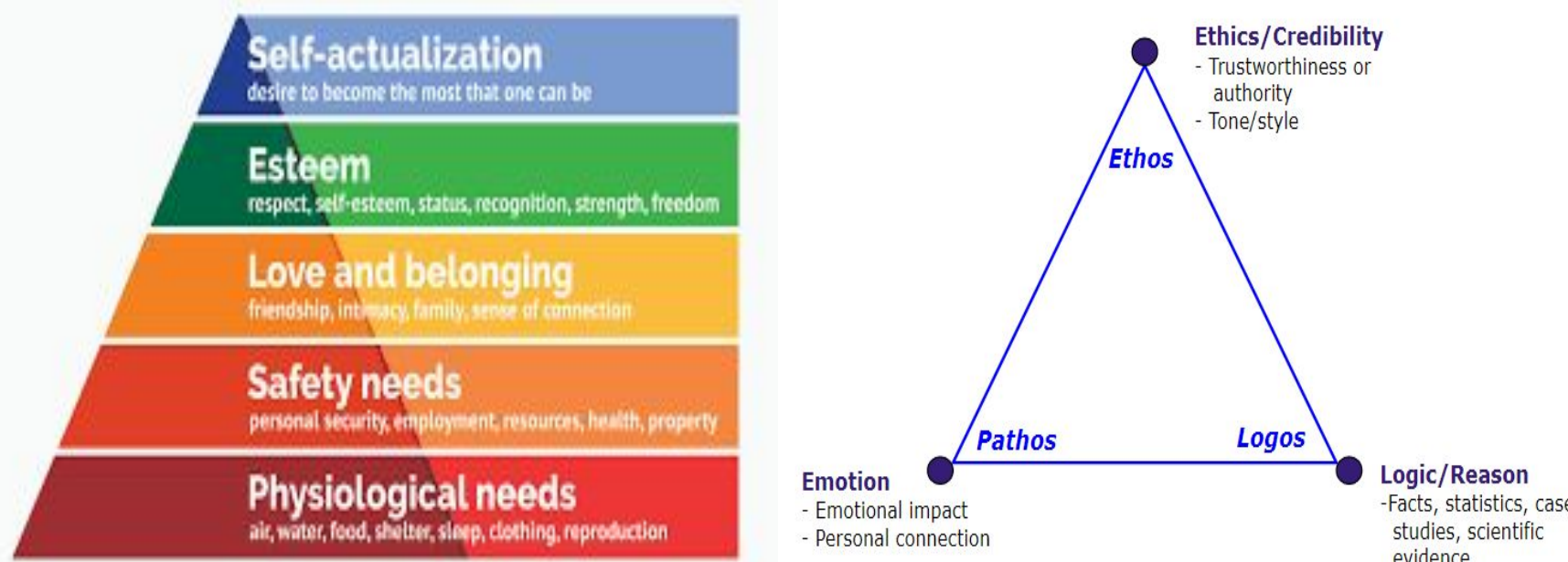
Advanced English instruction not only aims to equip students with grammatical knowledge and strong reading, listening, or writing abilities, but instruction must prepare students for real-world, informed dialogue and foster an ability to critically engage texts and public discourse in a context that is often rife with conflict. This unit incorporates aspects of rhetorical analysis with content from My Peacebuilder Foundations, Pushout (2016), and public oratory to explore educational themes. During the unit, students will evaluate strengths and opportunities for change in educational structure and discipline. The unit will begin with an overview of the 7Hs and peacebuilding/systems journey (Hello, Hope, Harm, Healing, Heart, Head, and Hands) through which students will explore Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Galtung's Triangle, the Rhetorical Triangle, and the Eight Pillars of Peace. Students also will examine the role of rights in education particularly as they pertain to students themselves. To do so, they will examine the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959), which asserts that students have a right to "receive education, which shall be free and compulsory...The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination." These rights will also inform the process of inquiry undertaken in the classroom as students explore the relationship between the educational rights of students and access to other human rights. They will discover how the denial of education often leads the denial of freedom from incarceration, housing, and health. The unit will highlight adulthood as an example of how barriers to education persist. Students' insights will foster additional discourse with the campus community. The ultimate goals of the unit are to eradicate barriers to student persistence and to change the culture of school to be more empowering to students who have traditionally pushed out.

Abstract

Research has shown how the devastating effects of the adulthood of Black youth have both short-term and long-term consequences in schools. Adulthood is a bias that perceives youth of color as more mature than they are, resulting in the belief that these students should be held to a higher standard of accountability and receive harsher punishment for behavior that is consistent with white children of the same age. It is structural, institutional, and interpersonal violence that manifests in the belief that students of color (and especially Black female students) are more violent, disruptive, and manipulative. Current racial equity research reveals that Black students in the Charlotte Mecklenburg System were 7.1 times more likely to be suspended when compared to white students, which alludes to the persistence of adulthood in the day-to-day interactions between Black students, teachers, and administration. Utilizing Monique Morris's Pushout (2016) and the tools of peacebuilding in My Peacebuilder Foundations, this research explores practical, language-oriented solutions for undermining the devastating effects of adulthood. AP English Language students will explore de-escalation strategies, the eight pillars of peace, the language of rights, hope, harm, respect, and dignity. They will use these concepts to lead critical conversations and will ultimately become voices of student mediation. The aim of the research is a student-devised action plan that disrupts adulthood bias in school. The implications of the research centers the wellbeing of students, empowering them to identify barriers to and to take agency for the positive future they envision.

Observations

Rights education potentially has a positive impact both in the classroom and in the long-term maintenance of a rights-oriented society (Covell, Howe & McNeil, 2010). Therefore, establishing a classroom culture in which students understand their rights, and giving students room to question the boundaries of those rights, prepares students for the world beyond high school, and it leads to a fruitful experience for both the student and the teacher, one that ultimately allows for students to explore their notions of identity. Schools have been known historically for suppressing students' rights and individuality; this is especially a reality for students of color due to cultural differences. Chris Emdin, in *Ratchedemic: Reimagining Academic Success* (2021), argues that the traditional school framework does not work with students of color because it originates from a white pedagogical framework that supposes the inferiority of cultures of color. Teachers operating from this framework suppress and devalue the voices of Black students. Emdin outlines seven rights that must be allowed for students to express their fullest selves: 1) The Right to Be Here, 2) The Right to Feel, 3) The Right to Act, 4) The Right to Love and Be Loved, 5) The Right to Speak, 6) The Right to See, 7) The Right to Know. These rights align with those mentioned in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Children, and the My Peacebuilder Foundations. These rights will further justify the approach to classroom management as students explore the 7H peacebuilding curriculum with particular emphasis on needs, harm (violence), and rhetorical appeals.



Black women understood that education was a core civil and human right. It was the foundation upon which a life of opportunity stood. It was a critical tool for advancement in a society that regularly practiced discrimination against women and against people of color" (Morris, 2016, p. 6)

Essential Questions

1. How can youth in public schools take agency ensure the same rights as others?
2. How does language foster hope, cause harm, or promote peace through an acknowledgement of rights?
3. How can one use language to tear down barriers to educational rights and access?
4. How can public school students apply the principles of positive peace and affirming language to real-world conflict and positive change?

Lesson Plan Standards

RI 11.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
RI 11.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.
W 11.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
SL 11.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will identify and explain the rhetorical situation of each text/speech examined.
2. Students will apply knowledge of connotation and context to an analysis of rights and violence.
3. Students will explain the relationship between, rhetoric, violence, positive peace, and productive action.
4. Students will synthesize information obtained from various texts to engage public dialogue at West Charlotte High School.
5. Students will define and implement a peace project that is relevant to their community setting.

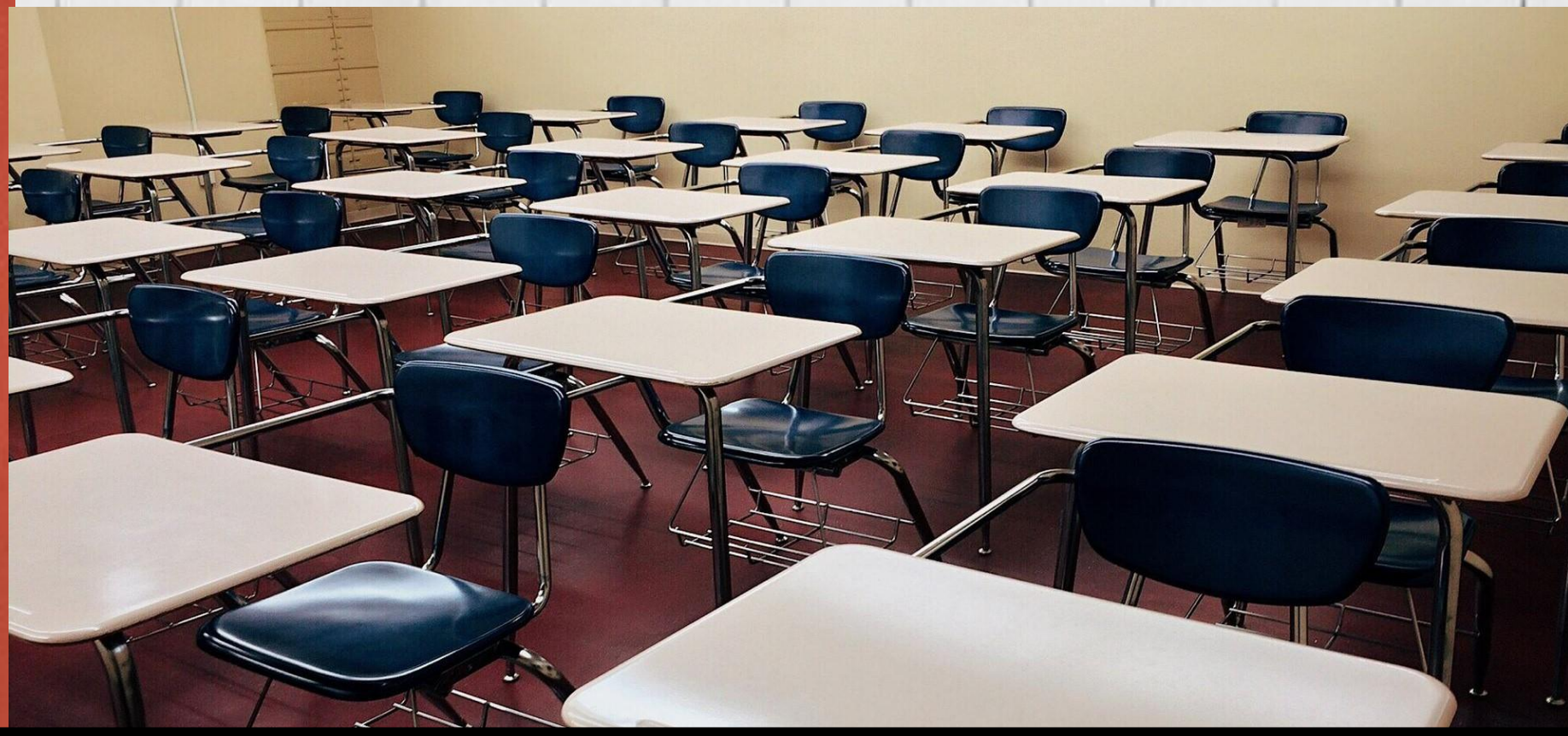
Thematic Unit Outline

AP English Language & Composition (11th grade)
10 Class Sessions Sept/Oct. 2022

Lessons 1-Hello: General overview of My Peacebuilder Foundations and the importance of rhetoric for evoking positive change/peace. Rhetorical triangle and Rhetorical situation. Text: Chadwick Boseman Howard University Speech.
Lesson 2: Hope: Introduction to Rights. UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Declaration of the Rights of Children (1959). "Where Do You Stand" activity. Student will explore the eight pillars of peace and will develop shared definitions of terms related to rights, peace, harm, advocacy, oppression, power, and disparity. Activity: Mapping Concluding activity: Harm and Hope in Our City.
Lesson 3-5 (Harm): Selected Chapters of Pushout (Morris, 2016); Pushout documentary with discussion around chapter questions. Analyzing Peace Project Case Study: Teens Against Trafficking.
Lessons 6-9 (Healing, Heart, and Head): Texts covered: Mary McLeod Bethune's "What American Democracy Means to Me" (1939). Historical examination of Black women who pioneered education to Black students when it was illegal (i.e.: Catherine Ferguson and Fanny Jackson Coppin. Brown v. Board of Education, school desegregation and West Charlotte's historic role as a national model of desegregation.
Lessons 10 (Hands): Malala Yousafzai's UN Assembly Speech (2013). Students will analyze Yousafzai's speech using a graphic organizer.

Evaluation

The eleventh class in the unit description will measure the effectiveness of the lessons. Students will write an in-class essay posing a solution to a rights issue, incorporating ideas from the lessons (such as direct violence versus cultural violence, self-actualization, etc.). The essays will guide further discussion about a real-world peace project and encourage participation in the full My Peacebuilder Foundations course (for certification). As a long-term proactive measure toward establishing a peace and justice-oriented culture, students will begin to develop a West Charlotte manual for peaceful procedures (to be completed by the 2023-24 academic year). The purpose of the manual is to offer alternatives to the cycle of referrals and suspensions. However, the immediate goal is to guide students toward positive strategies for addressing other areas of concern that they deem relevant to their educational journey. Given that this unit is about rights in education, students will have the opportunity to voice their own experiences and to identify their own issues of concern beyond adulthood.



"Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects" (Friere, 1970 p. 85)

References

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EDUCATION IS BOTH A HUMAN AND A CIVIL RIGHT