

New Trier Township High School  
English Department

Summary of English Equity Work: Year 1  
Equity Training for English Educators

Dates: 09/04/2019, 09/06/2019, 10/02/2019, 10/25/2019, 11/06/19, 12/04/2019,  
01/08/2020

The English Department Equity Team designed a series of workshops for 2019-2020 meant to familiarize our colleagues with best practices in planning and executing lessons around texts that deal with the issue of race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Teachers moved between introspective, personal reflection using elements of the SEED program, and lesson planning for texts in the curriculum using research-based tools meant to both facilitate conversations about identity issues while also safeguarding vulnerable populations. A focus on how to contextualize and instruct around pejorative language in literature was also presented.

All English teachers are called upon to use texts that demonstrate the various experiences and dilemmas experienced by minority groups and the white majority group in American literature. As such, teachers need a background in how best to present these texts and they need to develop an understanding of their own possible biases in order to safe-guard the education of students. Teachers in our workshops moved back and forth between personal reflection to awaken their own consciousness of bias as well as practical hands-on activities to develop lessons to better address issues with students in the classroom.

We designed this approach to both help deepen conversations about race, gender, sexual orientation and religion in classroom discussions. In the end, our goal was for students to see difficult topics handled with greater sensitivity to their various identities, and also gain a stronger understanding of the texts they read and their possible historical and social significance.