

Youth Diversity Education



A Guide to Teaching Students
How to Embrace Diversity and
Understand Differences

By Cassandra Gildert

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The Program: Youth Diversity Education

This is a program that will teach students what diversity means. Students will learn how diversity can be a good thing and that everyone is different, but this is okay. They will learn the importance of understanding and respecting one another. At the same time, they will learn to love and respect themselves. The program will combine a number of different components to teach children in a fun and interactive way.

How the Program will work: This is a program that would take place during elementary school. It would not be every year, but ideally twice in a child's elementary education, once in the lower grades and once in the upper grades, as issues change for students.

At the beginning of the year, the class would have a big class meeting to discuss rules for how they should treat one another. They will talk about different ideas and explain what words like *diversity*, *respect* and *understanding* mean.

This would be a weekly program, incorporated like a special, such as gym or music class. The class would be broken up into several units. The topics that can be covered are endless, so students and teachers should decide amongst themselves what units they should create. Students would have weekly discussions and play games and interact with other students.





A special project would be due once a month. These would be group projects and students would get time to work on them in class. Projects might include putting on a play, creating artwork or shadowing another classmate for a day.

Once a month, there would also be a special activity, such as a field trip or a guest speaker.

In addition, some diversity education can be incorporated into regular classroom subjects, such as history or English.

All these components together would work to keep students motivated and interested in learning and communicating with fellow students.



Important Definitions

Before students can begin learning more about diversity, it is important for them to learn about a few key definitions. These are definitions from Webster's Dictionary. These definitions become very important to think about when teaching a class on diversity.

Diversity-the quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas, etc.

:the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization



Discrimination-the practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people

Respect-a feeling of admiring someone or something that is good, valuable, important, etc.

: a feeling or understanding that someone or something is important, serious, etc., and should be treated in an appropriate way

: a particular way of thinking about or looking at something

Types of Diversity

In order to teach a class on diversity, teachers must also be prepared for what types of diversity they might find. We are going to focus on common types of diversity found in an elementary school classroom. These types include:

Race/Cultural differences-Students may come from different backgrounds, have different skin colors and speak different languages. Cultural differences may also include different religious beliefs and ways of life.



Disabilities-There may be students in a classroom with disabilities. These can include physical disabilities, such as hearing impairments, the use of a wheel chair or motor impairments. This might also include learning disabilities such as autism, ADD or ADHD.

Economic/Social Class-Students may come from different economic situations at home. Some children will have parents who are more financially stable than others.

Why Children May Not Accept Diversity



The following may be possible reasons not only children, but people in general, may not accept those who are different or may not want to learn more about those who are different. This is important to know before teaching students about respect and acceptance.

- Fear of someone who is different.
- Fear of having one's own beliefs ridiculed.
- Fear of being forced to reconsider one's own beliefs.
- Fear of feeling guilty.
- Personal upbringing.
- Lack of understanding.

It's important to keep these fears in mind when teaching the program and remind students that there is nothing to be afraid of and it is not about focusing on the past, but looking toward the future. The goal is not to change or question beliefs, or to make anyone feel bad, but to understand and respect others through education and interactive activities.

How to Fix the Problem



Diversity is not a problem. Lack of understanding diversity is the problem, but this is something that can be fixed with proper education. Students can learn how to get along with one another and understand differences.



Goals of the Program

Before beginning this program with students, educators must have these goals in mind.



- Students will understand that differences among people are okay and that they can learn from those who are different.
- Students will begin to better understand those who are different from them.
- Students will learn more about one another.
- Students will learn more about themselves.
- Students will respect themselves and others.



What Students Will Learn

In addition to eventual goals of Youth Diversity Education, there should also be concrete ideas that educators should focus on teaching students. The following ideas should be included in the program.



Students will get the opportunity to learn the backgrounds of different cultures. Students likely come from many different backgrounds and this will show them where other students come from. They can also learn more about their own background. This will give students an appreciation of different cultures, religions, and languages. It will also be very interesting for them.



Students will learn more about economics. They will learn that not everyone comes from the same social class, but that a higher social class does not make someone a better person. They will learn more about the economics of the world and these lessons will be adjusted to age level.

Students will learn more about various disabilities. They will learn what it means to have autism, ADHD or another learning disability. They will learn about learning differences and styles of learning. They will see that not everyone learns in the same way. They will learn more about physical disabilities as well such as cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis and spina bifida. This will help them understand students with disabilities.

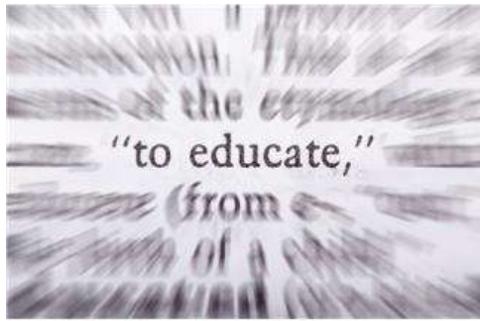


Students will learn languages. Students will learn words and phrases in different languages, including sign language. Students can help teach each other new languages. This can help break communication barriers and students can understand one another better. It is also beneficial for students to learn new languages.

Students will learn from others. Students will be exposed to art, books, drama, music and other forms of creative expression. They will visit museums and listen to guest speakers. They will see what it is like to be someone else. Students will get the opportunity to teach one another and learn from one another as well. Students will talk to one another and to teachers about personal experiences.



Components of the Program

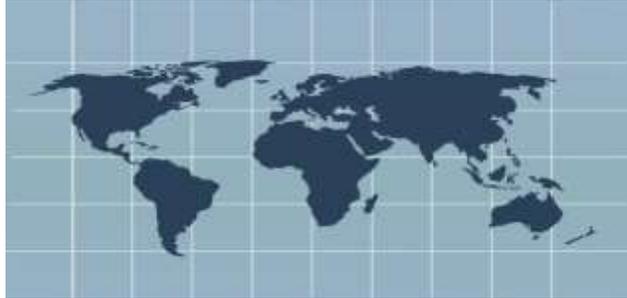


To achieve the goals of the program and teach students, the program must be run in a fun, interactive format. This should be a fun part of a student's day. The atmosphere should be inviting and relaxed. It should also not be the same every day. To keep it interesting to students, there are several components that make up the program. The components include:

- Teacher education
- Discussion
- Games
- Activities
- Projects
- Outside Speakers



Teacher Education



Before teachers can educate students on a topic they must become educated themselves. This program should be taught by multiple teachers of different backgrounds.

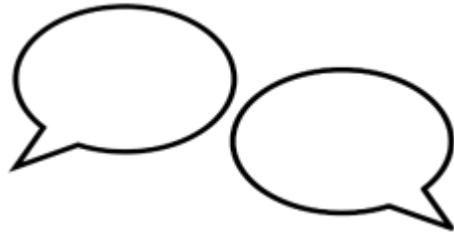
Teachers must learn how to be a culturally responsive teacher and set up their classrooms in a way that is inviting to all students. Teachers must be educated on disabilities, economic status and different backgrounds in their classrooms.

Teachers must be patient and willing to listen to students. This class should be an open class where students are able to share their feelings and the teacher must recognize this.

Before teaching the class, teachers should go through necessary training to prepare themselves for this class. Then, teachers will be ready to teach the class in an effective way.



Discussion



Discussion should be a big part of Youth Diversity Education. Students should come into the class and feel safe to share their feelings on different topics that matter to them. Students should listen to one another and feel comfortable talking.

Students may be apprehensive to bring these topics up so teachers can begin discussions with prompts, such as:

What do you know about different cultures?

Do you know anyone with autism?

Was there a time when you felt like you were left out because you were different?

Do you ever feel bad because you have less money than your friends?

Was there a time when you left someone out because they were different?

How do you feel when you see hear others talking about someone who is different?

What can you do to help others become accepting of differences?

Students should not just be answering questions, but also talking to one another. This is not a formal class where everyone must raise their hand to talk, but students should be encouraged to not talk over someone else. Discussion can help students learn more about how their classmates feel about certain situations involving diversity.



Games



Children like games. Games are a fun way for children to learn and games keep the class from getting boring. Games are interactive and give students the opportunity to interact with one another and to move around. There are many different games that help students learn more about diversity. Here are a few examples:

Jeopardy

The students are divided into two or three teams, depending on the number of students. The teacher creates a Jeopardy board on the white board or a bulletin board. The teacher will ask a question about a specific culture the students have learned about. When the students have the correct answer, they get the points. This game can also be adjusted and include questions about disabilities, economics, race, languages and religion.

Role Playing

Students can put on a little skit based on events they have witnessed and then talk about the events. Their skits can be about anything that has to do with diversity.

How Much Do You Have?

Give each student a different amount of pretend money. Set up stations of different things they might need to survive, such as food, clothes, shelter, etc. The items should include price tags. The students must attempt to get what they need with the money they have. At the end, ask the students questions like:

Who do you think has the most money?

Can you tell who doesn't have very much money?

How do you feel if you don't have enough money to get what you need?



Walk Apart, Walk Together Activity

Two students come to the front of the classroom. Students in the room make a list of things that are different about the two people. Each time a difference is noted, the students take a step apart. After the students are far away from one another, other students name similarities instead of differences and the two students begin to walk together. This allows all the students to see similarities and differences among them.

Label Activity

The teacher gives every student a different label or stereotype to wear on their forehead. Some might say good things, like “talk to me,” and others will say things like, “ignore me.” The students then walk around the classroom for a few minutes and socialize. Afterward, the students talk about how they felt knowing they were wearing a label and how it felt to walk around with the label. They can talk about what kind of label they think they might have.

These are only a few examples of games students can play. There are many games that can be created to teach students about diversity. Games should include all students and spark discussion ideas as well.



Projects



Games are fun for students, but projects are another way for students to express themselves. In this program, projects would be due once a month. Many projects would involve group work so students can interact with one another. Teachers should be open to a variety of different projects since not all students learn the same way. Projects could include art, books, music, drama and other creations. Projects would be based on the particular topic and students would be allowed to choose what type of project they want to do. These are some examples of projects students might choose.

- **A book review.** A student would read a book about diversity and complete a book review on the particular book.
- **Write a poem.** A student might write a poem on the topic that is being discussed.
- **Create music.** Students could play music from a particular culture or create their own music based on how they feel about a topic.
- **Put on a play.** Students could create a play and perform the play for the school.
- **Shadow another student.** Students can pair up and shadow someone who is different from them in some way.
- **Teach a lesson.** Students can create their own lesson and teach the class. They might teach the class about their culture, teach a different language or some other topic of their choosing.



Activities

Not everything can be learned in the classroom. Once a month, teachers should take students on a field trip or invite a guest speaker to come into the classroom.

Field trips to museums are a great way to learn about other cultures. Museums can include historical museums, art museums and museums that focus on culture or religion.



Other field trip ideas include visiting a children's hospital or a homeless shelter to help out for the day. These trips can help students see how other people live.



Movies also make great activities for children. Movies will hold their attention and help children learn in a visual way. Teachers can look for movies about people with disabilities, movies on overcoming discrimination or movies on economics or social class. There are many options.

Guest Speakers

Students should also have the opportunity to hear from others besides teachers who have knowledge on diversity.

There are many different types of guest speakers schools might ask to come visit. There are guest speakers who have careers speaking about diversity at different events.



A school might also look into individuals who were former students. There are likely many students who struggled because of some form of diversity. Hopefully, students have overcome this. These people are excellent examples to younger students and make great guest speakers.

Other types of guest speakers might include artists or musicians. Artists create things based on feelings and emotions. There might be an artist who creates art based on a culture or based on something else they have gone through in their lives.



Anticipated Outcome



Ultimately, the program will achieve the goals set forth by teaching students in a variety of ways. The program will be interesting for students. Students will learn from teachers, guest speakers, other students and their experiences. They will also learn from themselves. At the end of the program, the hope is that students will be able to do two things.

Students will educate others on diversity. This is very important. Students will be able to spread the message to older friends, younger friends, family and others. They will have the tools to become respectful people. These students are the future of the world and if they can become good people, they will create a better world.

Students will carry the lessons they have learned with them throughout their lives. Students forget many things that they learn throughout school. The hope is that they will not forget what they have learned in this program. What they learn will stay with them as they grow into adults and enter the world as adults with opinions and goals.



Sample Unit Plans



Students and teachers in each particular Youth Diversity Education class should work together to create a plan for what they want to cover, but here is an example of what a plan might look like for one school year.

Unit One: Cultural Diversity

Week 1-What is Cultural Diversity? What do you know about different cultures? What can the class teach us about cultures? Show video on various cultures.

Week 2 -Do you feel like you have ever been discriminated against because of your culture? Have you discriminated against others?
Project Discussion

Week 3-Monthly activity-guest artist

Week 4-Project Presentation. Read *Whoever You Are*, by Mem Fox

Week 5-What are your personal opinions about cultures that are different from yours? Do these people make you feel uncomfortable and why? Does culture matter when choosing friends?

Week 6-Exploring languages/Project discussion

Week 7-Monthly activity-visit to an art museum

Week 8-Project Presentation/Jeopardy game

Week 9- Exploring languages continued/Read *What I Like About Me*, by Allia Zobel Nolan.

Week 10-Final unit project discussion /What can the class teach us about cultures?

Week 11-guest artist/musician

Week 12 -Final unit project presentation

Unit Two: Diversity in Learning Styles and Physical Ability



Week 1-What are some physical or learning disabilities you know of? What does it mean to have one of these disabilities? Read *Susan Laughs*, by Jeanne Willis. Play “Labels” game.

Week 2-Do you or does someone you know have a disability? What is it like to have a learning disability? Project discussion.

Week 3-Monthly activity-visit to a children’s hospital

Week 4-Project Presentation

Week 5-Have you ever made fun of someone with a disability? Have you ever been made fun of for a disability? How did you feel?

Week 6-What can the class teach us about disabilities? Project discussion.

Week 7-Monthly activity-guest speaker

Week 8-Project Presentation. Read, *Different Like Me, My Book of Autism Heroes*, by Jennifer Elder

Week 9-learning sign language/Video on learning disabilities

Week 10-learning sign language continued/Final unit project discussion

Week 11-Movie day

Week 12-Final unit project presentation



Unit 3: Diversity in Social Class

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Week 1-What is social class? Do students at this school have different social classes?

Week 2-Have you or has someone you know ever been discriminated against for your social class? Have you discriminated against someone else? How do these things make you feel? Project discussion.

Week 3-Monthly activity-visit to a homeless shelter

Week 4-Project Presentation. Read "Getting' Through Thursday," by Melrose Cooper.

Week 5-What do you think when you see a homeless person? What are some ways you can help people who are homeless? Read, *A Shelter in Our Car*, by Monica Gunning

Week 6-What can the class teach us about social class and economic diversity? Project discussion.

Week 7-guest speaker

Week 8-Project presentation

Week 9-Have your opinions changed since the beginning of this unit?

Week 10-Final project discussion/"How Much Do You Have?" game

Week 11-Making plans to volunteer for a local charity/Movie Day

Week 12-Final unit project presentation



Vital Information

Author

Cassandra Gildert

Subjects

Diversity Education

Topic or Unit of Study

Diversity in Learning Styles and Physical Ability

Grade/Level

Third Grade.

Objective

Students will learn more about different types of disabilities including physical and learning disabilities. At the end of the lesson, students will have a better understanding of these disabilities.

Summary

The lesson will include discussion about different types of disabilities. Students will talk with teachers and with one another. They will discuss what they know about learning disabilities. Students will also watch a video about learning disabilities.

Implementation

Learning Context

This lesson is part of a larger unit dedicated to learning about disabilities. This unit is part of a special class that teaches students to become respectful and understanding of one another. Students are learning about diversity. Learning about these different types of disabilities will help students understand those who have a disability.

Procedure

The class will begin with the teacher asking the students what they know about learning disabilities. Students will share what they know about disabilities. There will likely be some students in the class who have some type of disability. These students may want to share their experiences. After some discussion, a video about children with learning disabilities will be shown to the class. The class will discuss what they thought about this video. The teacher will then read the book, *Different Like Me, My Book of Autism Heroes*, by Jennifer Elder. The students will discuss the book. The class will end with some sort of game involving what the students have learned.

Differentiated Instruction

During the course of this program, students are learning in many different ways. There is discussion involved, along with games and interactive activities. There will be videos, books, music and art involved throughout the course. Students have the option at the end of every unit to pick a project to complete, so they can choose something that is interesting to them.

Sample Student Products

At the end of the unit, the students will complete a project. The students choose what type of project they do, but all projects will relate to the lessons in the unit.

Collaboration

The students will collaborate with one another in every class. Each class will include discussion. Students will also have group projects and group field trips at the end of the unit. The students will be watching video and playing a game together for this particular class.

Time Allotment

45 minutes-1 hour.

Author's Comments and Reflections

This program is something that's very important to me and students learn something new in each lesson. This is one of the first lessons in the unit on Diversity in Learning Styles and Physical Ability. This lesson lays the groundwork for the rest of the unit.

Materials and Resources

Instructional Materials

Different Like Me, My Book of Autism Heroes, by Jennifer Elder

Labels for the "Labels" Game

White Board

Resources

Introduction to Autism Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydGdZdTiy5c>

Video on Cerebral Palsy

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_Lax4zFFoA

Standards (From Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks)

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.htm>

Reading Standards

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. (grade 3)

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text. (grade 4)

Comprehensive Health Standards

Identify appropriate accommodations and aids for people with physical disabilities . (by the end of grade 5)

Identify and describe the experience of different feelings (such as elation, joy, grief, and rage) and how feelings affect daily functioning . (by the end of grade 8)

Assessment and Rubric

Students will understand what it means to have a learning disability.
Students will learn how to better communicate with students who have learning disabilities.

Students will understand those who learn differently.

Students will share what they learn.

Students will understand what it means to have a learning disability or a physical disability.

Children will know what different disabilities mean and why someone has a certain disability.

Sample Lesson

This lesson plan is an idea of how to integrate diversity education into a history lesson.

Vital Information

Author

Cassandra Gildert

Subjects

History/Diversity Education

Topic or Unit of Study

Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" Speech

Grade/Level

Fifth Grade.

Objective

Students will learn more about Martin Luther King Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" Speech. They will understand the meaning of the speech and how powerful it was to many people. They will understand what it meant for King to make a brave speech like this and how it affected others. They will see the importance of creating change when you think something is unjust. Diversity education will be incorporated into a history class.

Summary

The class will include reading and listening to the "I Have a Dream" speech. Student discussions and feelings will follow. A book on Martin Luther King Jr. will be included in the class. A project will be assigned at the end of the class.

Implementation

Learning Context

This lesson is part of a diversity class, but it is a lesson that is incorporated into a history class. At this point, the diversity program will already be going on. Students will be aware of the issues they will discuss. They may be able to offer more insight since the weekly classes on diversity education have already begun. After this lesson, the weekly diversity classes will continue. Lessons like this incorporated into regular school subjects will allow students more time to think about diversity and apply it to classes in the future. This is an iconic speech that focuses on equality, which is part of diversity education.

Procedure

The lesson will begin with the class reading the “I Have a Dream” speech. They will then listen to the speech, read by Martin Luther King Jr. They will see how effective it was to listen to this man telling his dream to the world. They will watch how he delivers the speech. The class will talk about the speech and what it means to them. They will talk about how they think he changed people. Discussions will continue as students decide what they would like to talk about. After the discussion, the teacher will read *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, by Doreen Rappaport. The teacher will then assign the class to each create their own speech. The speech should focus on their own dream for the world.

Differentiated Instruction

In this lesson, different methods will be used to teach. There will be a book, as well as a text of the speech. The book will include pictures for visual learners. There will also be a video. Students will be able to decide how they feel and what they would like to discuss. The assignment can also be completed in a variety of ways. If students do not want to write the speech, they could make a picture book, recording or some other creative project explaining their dream.

Sample Student Products

Students will create their own “I Have a Dream” speech.

Collaboration

The students will have discussions with each other during class. The teacher will lead discussions, but students will also be encouraged to talk with one another about feelings and ideas.

Time Allotment

1 hour.

Author’s Comments and Reflections

I really enjoyed creating this lesson. I believe Martin Luther King Jr.’s, “I Have a Dream” speech is one of the most iconic moments in history. Children can learn a lot from his dedication and passion. Students can learn that they can make a difference. They can also see how diversity should not cause people to be segregated. People are all human beings and although they have differences, they are still all people.

Materials and Resources

Instructional Materials

Text of the “I Have a Dream” Speech, by Martin Luther King, Jr.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkiveadream.htm>

Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by Doreen Rappaport

Paper, art materials, computers, tape recorders for students to create their own speech

Materials and Resources

Instructional Materials

Text of the “I Have a Dream” Speech, by Martin Luther King, Jr.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>

Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by Doreen Rappaport

Paper, art materials, tape recorders for students to create their own speech

Resources

Video of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” Speech

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs>

Standards and Assessment

Standards (From Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks)

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

History

Give examples of the different ways people in a community can influence their local government (e.g., by voting, running for office, or participating in meetings). (Grade 3)

Interpret timelines of events studied. (Grade 5)

Define and use correctly words related to government: *citizen, suffrage, rights, representation, federal, state, county, and municipal*. (Grade 5)

Writing

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. (Grade 5, further explanation can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>)

Speaking and Listening

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 5 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Grade 5)

Assessment and Rubric

Students will understand the meaning of Dr. Martin Luther King’s speech.

Students will be able to make connections between past and present.

Students will understand the meaning of equality.

Students will be able to see how King changed the world.

Students will develop their own dreams and goals.

Children's Books on Diversity



Whoever You Are, by Mem Fox

Different, Just Like Me, by Lori Mitchell

The Don't-Give-Up Kid: and Learning Disabilities, by Jeanne Gehret

Different Like Me, My Book of Autism Heroes, by Jennifer Elder

Getting Through Thursday, by Melrose Cooper

Tight Times, by Barbara Shook Hazen

A Shelter in Our Car, by Monica Gunning

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A guide to Daily Happiness for Kids, by Carol McCloud

What I Like About Me, by Allia Zobel Nolan

Learning to Feel Good and Stay Cool, by Judith Glasser

Susan Laughs, by Jeanne Willis

Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by Doreen Rappaport

Resources For Teachers



The Complete Learning Disabilities Handbook: Ready-to-Use Strategies and Activities for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities, by Joan M. Harwell

Differentiating Instruction for Students With Learning Disabilities: New Best Practices for General and Special Educators, by William N. Bender

Education for the Intercultural Experience, Edited by R. Michael Paige, Chapter 2 Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, by Milton J. Bennett

Building Culturally Responsive Classrooms: A Guide for K-6 Teachers, by Concha Delgado Gaitan

Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching: Classroom to Community and Back, by Steffen Saifer

Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults, Pennsylvania State University, <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ui335.pdf>

Critical Multicultural Pavilion Awareness Activities, an EdChange project by Paul C. Gorski, <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/> The Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Facing Social Class: How Societal Rank Influences Interaction, by Susan T. Fisk

Class Matters, by The New York Times