



We help schools think and talk about issues related to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.



The Richmond High School civil rights team created this seasonally-appropriate display celebrating love and the many ways people identify their sexual orientation.

## Spreading Love for Valentine's Day

For Valentine's Day, many civil rights teams spread some love in their school communities, with a specific focus on inclusivity. They used visuals, cards, and

candy to show that everyone should be valued and loved for who they are.



## Bangor High School

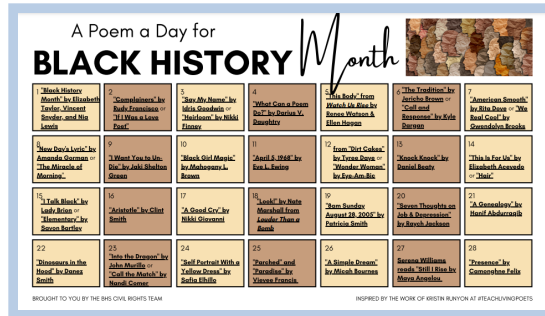
In what is now an annual tradition, the BHS civil rights team made and distributed Valentine’s Day cards and candy to all students and staff. That’s 1,250 deliveries—but quite possibly their most impressive project has been their monthly content calendars.



Each month the team selects educational resources connected to civil rights-related observances, events, and recognitions. They then compile those resources into a [calendar format](#) where each day has a link. The calendars are shared with staff, who can select any of the daily options for use with their advisory groups.



In recent months the team has done even more. For Black History Month in February they shared additional calendars featuring [work from Black poets](#) and [read-alouds of race-themed picture books](#). For Women’s History Month in March they shared short podcast options from [Encyclopedia Womanica](#), which offers quick daily lessons about incredible women in history.



Advisor Stephanie Hendrix says that “People are loving the monthly content we’re creating!” No doubt! It’s thoughtfully curated and presented, and serves as a reminder that civil rights education is timely and appropriate every day.

## Brooklin School

The civil rights team in Brooklin just got started last fall, but they’re already an established presence in their school community. They completed their first project before their winter break, sharing an inclusively welcoming message in the can’t-miss location over the main doors to the school’s only hallway.



The team has also worked to establish their presence through their Visibility Campaign,



compiling quotes in a collaborative Google doc that they then share every week at the school's morning meetings.

They most recently made Valentines cards for every student and staff member. At the school morning meeting they shared a Nelson Mandela quote celebrating the power of love and explained how it connected to their Valentine message. Later that day they hand delivered the Valentines to every classroom. Some staff members enthusiastically hung them outside their doors!

Moving forward, advisor Amy Bebell says the team is thinking about how they can encourage students and staff to use more gender-inclusive language. We look forward to seeing what they're able to do with the rest of this school year!

*"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."*

-Nelson Mandela



## Leroy H. Smith School in Winterport

At a time when many elementary school students are focused on Christmas, the civil rights team at Leroy H. Smith School [created a video](#) recognizing religious and cultural diversity in the celebration of winter holidays. They explained that not everyone shares the same beliefs and traditions, and that this is entirely OK.

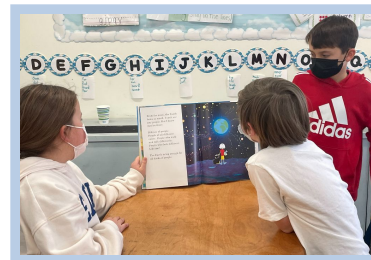


Their short, easy-to-understand video was shared during a school-wide virtual meeting and on the school's [Facebook page](#) (where their Day of Welcome display is the cover photo).

To keep civil rights on students' minds, the team also regularly reads messages during morning announcements and maintains a bulletin board featuring the voices of civil rights team members. This month, in preparation for their seventh annual Welcome Week, the students are talking about identity and what makes them who they are.

The team has big plans for this year's event, and they're hard at work preparing. They'll be presenting school-

wide and classroom readings of books related to the six civil rights categories and helping to explain them to their classmates. Each grade level will be assigned a category to create a door decoration with a welcoming message, an activity advisors Kim Raymond and Hannah Boss say is an annual favorite.



Kim says all the work the team is doing has had a great impact. “Our district leaders and several community members spoke with us about how welcoming and inclusive our school is and how proud they are of the work our team is doing to promote equity for all.”

## Civil Rights Team Shoutouts



**Durham Community School:** A combination of high student interest and COVID restrictions have led advisors Lexie Trigiani and Natasha Huber to create four civil rights teams at their school this year. Lexie meets with the grade 4 and grade 8 teams, and Natasha meets with the grades 5-6 and grade 7 teams.

**Deering High School in Portland:** The civil rights team created and shared [these snazzy pronoun posters](#) for their teachers to display in their classrooms.

**Gerald E. Talbot Community School in Portland:** The civil rights team celebrated their school’s diversity by surveying students about their countries of origin and languages spoken. They then shared the results (26 countries, 17 languages) on a world map display.

**Madawaska Elementary School:** Advisor Tricia Armstrong reports that their new team is growing: “We gain another member at least once a month. I think the team talks in their classes and it makes other kids want to join.”

**Noble High School in North Berwick:** The civil rights team’s efforts to organize a cheering section for the Unified basketball team were a great success. (Unified Sports is [a program by Special Olympics](#) that brings students with and without disabilities together to play on the same team.) Advisor Bridgett Wright said, “The [athletes] loved having us as a cheering section and loved that we always had big signs waving for them when they were on the court.”

**Woodland Jr./Sr. High School:** Advisor Jillian Jacobs reports that students are very excited about their new civil rights team: “It has provided a space for expression of their identities that was not there previously, and successfully encouraged activism on multiple fronts.”

## Our Advisor Couples

A select group of civil rights team advisors are lucky enough to have partners/spouses who are also civil rights team advisors. We asked them:

***What do you like about having a partner/spouse who is a civil rights team advisor?***

### **Darcie and Erin Finn**

Windham High School and Falmouth High School



**Darcie:** "Being able to talk out the projects that we both have worked on over the years. Erin and her team at Falmouth have done some amazing work over the past couple years and has been an inspiration for me in my work with my newer team at Windham!"

**Erin:** "Feeling support at home. We have had the unique perspective of watching each other grow as advocates throughout the years. I have loved hearing about Darcie's startup activities with her team!"

### **Aliza and Mike Jones**

Bloomfield Elementary School and Skowhegan Area High School

**Aliza:** "Because we are both doing the work to make our school communities safer and less biased, and we can work through challenges and celebrate successes together."

**Mike:** "The work we do within our community is a shared responsibility, and we can hold each other to our best work. It's nice to always have a CRT partner available at home to talk about the progress and connections to our community."



### **Zack and Maria Reinstein**

Buckfield Junior-Senior High School



**Zack:** "We will often catch something on TV or the radio that we want to share with the team. Since we are usually together, we can start planning how we will share this story or information."

**Maria:** "We find inspiration for both CRT discussions and events along with using this inspiration in our songs as part of our music group, Fun Run. We are able to share the message of the CRT to a greater audience that way."

## Geoff and Rosa Slack

Thornton Academy and Portland High School

**Geoff:** "Having a partner at home allows me to see issues from a perspective larger than my own bubble at school — I have the opportunity to understand the importance of our work over our broader community and state."

**Rosa:** "We got to have a 'day date' at the last in-person conference!"



## Anna and Isaac Thomas

Lawrence High School



**Anna:** "It means constantly being able to bounce around ideas and thoughts, and having another vantage point and moral compass to assess situations in the school, in the world, and to best support our students and community."

**Isaac:** "Working alongside Anna models for students how two very different people can work together lovingly and effectively to overcome the significant challenges we face and build a more free school and world."

**Thanks for reading!**

**That's all the recent news from the CRTP! Expect another edition of *The Torch* at the start of the summer season. Until then...**

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## Administered by the Office of the Maine Attorney General

The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in our schools.

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