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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.



A piece from the Bowdoinham Community School civil rights team's drawing activity

Civil Rights Team Spotlight

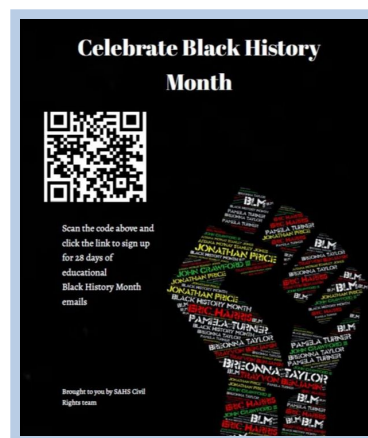
Skowhegan Area High School

Skowhegan Area High School's civil rights team is building visibility, engaging their school community, and collaborating —a fantastic and well-rounded approach!



After a difficult Day of Welcome experience in the 2021-2022 school year, the SAHS team persevered and came back strong with the support of school staff. According to advisor Mike Jones, “working with the staff provided more ownership of the Day of Welcome and increased morale within our civil rights team.” After a full staff meeting to introduce the Day of Welcome, they provided welcoming posters to teachers for every classroom to display. Everyone agreed that these should remain for the entirety of the school year! The team was able to push through last year's pushback and disappointment to host their most successful Day of Welcome yet.

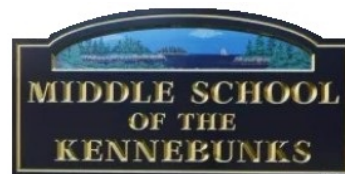
The team kept their momentum going by introducing an Ongoing Visibility Project at the beginning of the year. Each month they feature events and holidays of note on their bulletin board and connect them to the team's work. During Black History Month, they included a QR code to sign up for [28 Days of Black History](#) emails and created a series of quote posters to accompany the calendar. Mike says that this year's success reinforces how powerful a visibility campaign built into the school routine and culture really is. The consistency means that the school community has come to expect and appreciate their presence!



Most recently, team members participated in a student leadership seminar. On a day they would normally have been out of school, several school groups gathered to discuss and collaborate. It helped to solidify the team's goals for their future work!

Middle School of the Kennebunks

The civil rights team at Middle School of the Kennebunks used crowdsourcing from their Day of Welcome to create a great display!



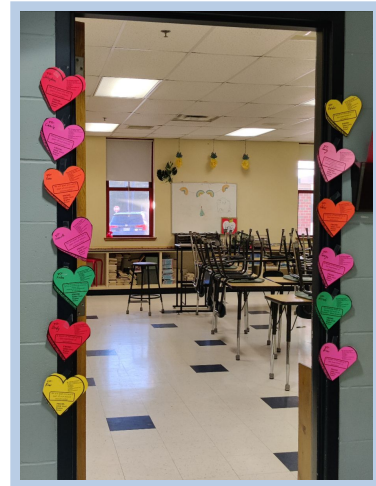


While tabling in the cafeteria for Day of Welcome in the fall, the team had students write questions in exchange for a snazzy pin. Afterward, they compiled the questions and researched answers to each to make a colorful bulletin board. Questions ranged from “What is racism?” to “How does someone know if they are trans?” Each civil rights category was covered! Moving forward, they plan to continue their work answering classmates' questions on the board as they arise.



For Valentine's Day, the team took a slightly different approach to a traditional CRTP activity. They created a heart-shaped template and made a valentine for each student. Then they posted them around homeroom doors, so students arrived to a hall covered in hearts! The valentines included great quotes from civil rights activists and messages of inclusion. Advisor Justine Lasdin says their work “made the school feel welcoming” and that everyone loved it!

It's clear that the MSK civil rights team is a visible and loved part of their school community. Justine and co-advisor Amy Murphy will be leaving next year, and we thank them for their dedication to this important work!



Bowdoinham Community School

This season, the Bowdoinham Community School civil rights team has focused on sharing their learning with their school community.



During the Day of Welcome in November, team members visited classrooms to explain what the civil rights team is and what they do. It got a great reception from students and teachers, so the team decided to continue the ambassador program into the winter months.



Since the team members were learning about disabilities, they read four different books focusing on people with disabilities and then wrote book reports to share with other students. Titles included *All The Way to the Top* by Annette Bay Pimentel (about cerebral palsy and the Disability Rights Movement) and *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco (about learning disabilities and dyslexia). The ambassadors encouraged their classmates to read the books they chose, and even received emails of thanks for their work!

While focusing on gender stereotypes, ambassadors had students draw a picture of a character who has a specific job. They tallied up the drawings to see what percentage of students drew a woman or a man for each job, then presented a [slideshow of the results](#). As a great conclusion, the team had a whole-school assembly where they invited a teacher, principal, school resource officer, fire fighter, and game warden to talk about gender stereotypes in their professions.



Advisors Nicole Dunton, Chris Corcoran, Jessica Fournier, and Heather Lubey say that the BCS team has had great success with their ambassador program, and they plan to continue it for the rest of the year!

Welcoming New Teams



This winter, new civil rights teams sprouted at these schools:

- Brewer Community School
- Canal School in Westbrook
- George Weatherbee School in Hampden
- George J. Mitchell School in Waterville
- Gray-New Gloucester Middle School
- Mt. Ararat Middle School in Topsham
- Oxford Hills Middle School
- Saccarappa School in Westbrook
- Saco Middle School

Welcome to the Civil Rights Team Project!

Civil Rights Team Shoutouts



Great Falls Elementary School in Gorham: Civil rights team members are visiting classrooms to read aloud civil rights-related picture books. December's book (also gifted to every K-5 teacher) was *All Are Welcome*, February's theme was Black History Month, and in March the books featured characters with disabilities. Advisor Ellen Berry says, "The kids have had a blast reading to friends, former teachers, younger and older siblings, and visiting new classrooms. It has really engaged the entire school community!"

Mt. Blue High School in Farmington: The civil rights team designed [the first page](#) for their school yearbook! It's inspired by the words from the Day of Welcome, and proudly declares "Mt. Blue Welcomes All." Advisor Meadow Sheldon hopes that they have the opportunity to do this again, and so do we!

Saccarappa School in Westbrook: This new team had a great experience with their Welcome Everyone project! Advisors Steph Nadeau and Kelly Berry reported "so many smiles and comments from staff and students alike." Students wrote and displayed Just Because poems, which inspired staff and administrators to write their own. The team took great pride in their work, and it sparked civil rights conversations in the cafeteria and at recess!

Winthrop High School: The team is featuring civil-rights related media in their school news program. WBUS 75, a newscast produced by students that's shown to the whole school, now includes a segment they're calling "Hidden Gems". The first recommendation was the 2016 film *Hidden Figures*, and an after-school showing got a great turnout. Advisor Liza Marshall says this will be an ongoing segment, updated regularly with new recommendations!

Woodland Jr.-Sr. High School in Baileyville: Advisor Jillian Jacobs reports that the civil rights team has been discussing current events on an almost daily basis after school, even when there is no civil rights team meeting scheduled! They talk about topics that the students are the most concerned about, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. We love to see this kind of enthusiasm!

Yarmouth High School: Advisor Melissa Audy says students are talking about and looking forward to each installment of the civil rights team's Ongoing Visibility Project! The team creates monthly calendars with celebrations and observations, and each calendar includes a QR code to a presentation of further resources. Check out the January [calendar](#) and [presentation](#)!

Goodbye from the Previous Director

We are saying goodbye to Brandon Baldwin, Director of the CRTP from 2008 to 2023. He'll be missed very much! Here is his final message to you as advisors and readers of *The Torch*.

For almost 15 years, no matter what the event, I always ended it the same way. I offered what I called my “non-conclusion conclusion.” This was to call attention to the idea that our work, however you might define it, never really ends. It’s *ongoing work*.

While this is true, it also served as convenient cover for my dislike of endings. I never know what to say, but I desperately want to get it right.

And so, here we are. I feel good about the work we’ve done in the last fifteen years in the Civil Rights Team Project. I feel good about the fact that the work really is ongoing, and that it’s being left in such capable hands. I know that Katie and Jake will keep the work going, but also continue to innovate and improve upon what’s already there. I know that passionate and committed advisors will continue to lead civil rights teams, and student participants will continue to impress us with their insights and ideas.

I look forward to cheering on the CRTP from the sidelines, and I can’t wait to see what comes next.



Brandon's earliest days on the job, 2008



Brandon on his last day, 2023

Welcoming a New Director



We welcomed Jake Kulaw as the new Director of the Civil Rights Team Project on March 13. Jake is joining us from Deering High School, where he was a health and PE teacher and civil rights team advisor. He's been an educator for 27 years and started teams at three schools!

Jake attributes his boundless passion for civil rights and social justice to his mother. He moved to Maine in 2012, and loves the state for its natural beauty and wonder (and all the hiking opportunities!) In his new role, he looks forward to working with and supporting civil rights teams across the state in their important work.

"Thank you for showing up for students and making your school a safe and welcoming place for all!"

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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Jake Kulaw
Project Director



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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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