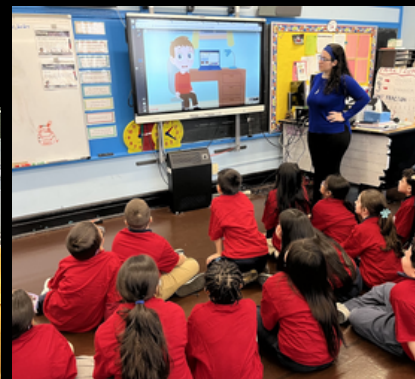




TEN'S ANNUAL SUMMER ORIENTATION IN NEWARK



UTR RESIDENT BLANCA CAGUANA

ARCHEOLOGY OF SELF: EXCAVATING OUR RITUALS

December is a time of year jam-packed with activity, leaving little room for critical reflection. One key aspect of this season is the prevalence of rituals. A ritual is any act performed regularly, often without much conscious thought. Schools and classrooms are places where we actually encounter ritual all year long. School rituals might include the way we line students up for lunch, greet them at the beginning of class, or implement a daily exit ticket after instruction.

Rituals are important for students because they help create a sense of community ([Milne, 2024](#)). Some rituals are intentional, actively working to bridge cultural gaps that may exist between teachers and students—for example, a teacher who developed personalized handshakes for each of his students. Other rituals are more automatic and less nuanced, such as rewarding students who are sitting quietly with first access to computers. How often do we pause to ask ourselves: why is sitting quietly an activity that deserves constant praise and reward?

Given that this time of year is so richly layered with rituals, we invite you to use the Archeology of Self ([Sealey-Ruiz](#)) framework as a tool to examine the practices you repeat, both consciously and unconsciously, and more importantly, the why behind them.

The Archaeology of Self model invites individuals to examine their personal belief systems and the biases and values that inform them. This important work involves “recognizing the influences that have shaped us throughout our lives, including our families, culture, and society. It is crucial to pause and consider the extent of these influences, which often go unnoticed” ([Sealey-Ruiz, 2024](#)).

Dr. Sealey-Ruiz also notes that social and cultural conditioning can be one of the greatest barriers to

engaging in the self-excitation work necessary for greater awareness. This is because it is hard to challenge heavily ingrained beliefs. The process of Archaeology of Self is a key part of one’s racial literacy development, which Dr. Sealey-Ruiz describes as “an action-oriented process towards eradicating one’s own racial bias with the goal of changing systems governed by racism and inequality” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2024). For educators who feel uncertain about how to tackle the pervasive racism experienced in schools, Dr. Sealey-Ruiz suggests starting with the self. She writes, “working toward the elimination of racism from personal belief systems... can then help to dismantle the systemic racism that permeates civil society” (2024).

By examining the connections among the Four I’s of oppression and advantage—Ideological, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Internalized—we understand that challenging oppression in any one of these dimensions can affect the others. Archaeology of Self work “fosters the personal reflection.. and growth that are required for societal change” (Sealey-Ruiz, 2024). Let’s start digging!

A Process for Excavating Ritual:

1. **Choose a practice** that you repeat daily, weekly, or even annually in your setting.
2. **Ask yourself the WHY** behind this practice. Is this something you consciously choose, or are you perpetuating a ritual that has gone unexamined?
3. **Engage in reflective thought** around the practice. Journal, watch videos, speak with a colleague or mentor, or even discuss it with your students.
4. **Excavate any biases** you may discover within the ritual. Consider what social and cultural conditioning you might be replicating—or disrupting.
5. **Revamp your ritual** if necessary, aligning it with your antiracist values and the needs of those you serve.
6. **Repeat** this process as needed.

SPOTLIGHT ON.... ALYSSA LEVER

ALYSSA LEVER IS A GRADUATE OF NTP AND AN LDS TEACHER AT ELLIOTT STREET SCHOOL IN NEWARK. SHE ALSO COACHES MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL.

How did you get involved in TEN?

I grew up in Essex county playing sports in a primarily white town with no diversity, so I feel like I missed out on part of my education. I wasn't exposed to any diverse topics, but playing sports in high school against schools in Newark showed me what I was missing. I wanted to learn more so I joined the Newark Teacher Project (NTP) to ensure I could teach in Newark and I loved it. It was exactly what I needed to prepare for the work I wanted to do—it was perfect.

What is your “why” for antiracist/social justice education?

I feel like not that many people and teachers know about and practice [antiracism] in their teachings. I want my students to have the opportunity to have those experiences and learn about those things so they have an equal chance, as well as to have someone in their corner when they might not always have someone like that. Everything that I practice in my classroom is centered around the well-being and care of my students

What rituals do you use in your classroom? How do they affect your students?

I work in a special education classroom, so rituals and routines for everyday are important. I make a ritual of having the lessons and concepts relatable to them. For example, our last unit was on communities, neighborhoods and cities, so in class I looked up their neighborhoods on Google Earth which got them excited and helped them remember the information and better understand it. In another unit, we talked about citizenship and



looked up different flags. I brought in a bunch of flags and students could recognize their own country's flag or the flag of the country their parents are from. When we visited a community garden in Newark, which was a blast, I used pictures and videos of them on that trip for our unit on producers and consumers to explain which kept them highly engaged. On the whole, it's just really hard to learn something that's not connected to them, so making those connections has become a ritual of sorts, to go back and think about things we've done and lived experiences they've had.

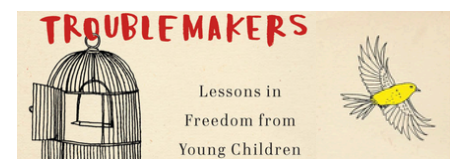
Another ritual I use to help them is body movement, and that has been working so well. For the key terms I find a video of someone doing the word in sign language, and for the definitions I'll add body movements. That has been a game changer for my classroom this year. I work in a severe learning disability classroom, a lot of my students have an issue with memory when it comes to things like the alphabet, for example. But when I used the sign language alphabet my students are now writing whole words and sentences!

What is one change that you'd like to see in public education?

Special education. A lot of students are not in the right placements because there's not enough space and not enough time. Case workers and social workers are overworked, they have so many kids on their plate that things just get pushed to the side sometimes. All schools have teacher coaches who are great, but they don't always have the background to help in special education so you're stuck on your own. It's really hard, which is why teachers get burnt out and special education teachers leave. Admin try their best to support you but there's never a clear answer and the districts have expectations of what all their teachers should be doing that are not realistic when it comes to special education classrooms. Even the paraprofessionals, they're great but they don't have the training needed. I don't have the training on specific behaviors either but I know the most in the classroom so it falls to me which takes away from my teaching the other students in the classroom. So yeah special education needs the most change.

What is a book that changed your life?

Troublemakers by Carla Shalaby. I got it in NTP. It showed me as educators we are responsible for viewing children with a lens of care and respect so we can build classrooms that foster personal growth rather than conformity and compliance.



ANTIRACISM & SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES

HOW CAN WE ASSIST OUR STUDENTS IN THEIR ARCHEOLOGY OF SELF JOURNEY THROUGH SELF REFLECTION RITUALS?

Learning for Justice webinars offer helpful guidance and great ideas from experienced teaching and learning specialists and from innovative educators in the Learning for Justice community.



Values Assessment activity to help you identify and align with your core values. Use with your students too!

Healing Society through the Archaeology of Self™: A Racial Literacy Development Approach by Dr. Sealey-Ruiz explores an action-oriented approach to racial literacy through the self-reflection Archeology of Self provides.



Fostering inclusivity through classroom rituals
Ideas for how to foster inclusivity through rituals at all grade levels.



Oxford Academy has self-reflection resources for students that will help get students on a path of personal growth and self-discovery!



Rethinking the Three Rs: Rituals for Caring Classrooms

DID YOU KNOW

The Pledge of Allegiance is a mandatory daily ritual in 46 states. The words “under God” did not appear in the Pledge of Allegiance until 1954 due to fear of communism at the height of the Cold War.

Consider Alyssa’s ritual of creating connections to her students lives. How can we, as teachers, make the ritual of the pledge more inclusive to our classrooms?



History of the Pledge

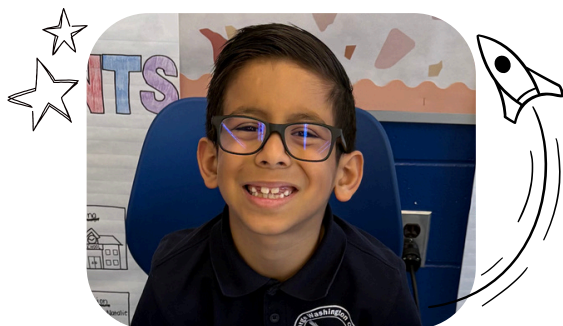
PR Gimmick to Patriotic Vow

WINDOWS INTO THE CLASSROOM

This page is dedicated to highlighting and uplifting the work of the children in our Residents' classrooms.

In this edition students are focusing on honoring people and their communities.

MEET THE STUDENT BEHIND THE WORK



Brian

George Washington Carver | 2nd Grade

What they love about their community:

Taking walks, going to church, the park, the pizzeria, and the market.

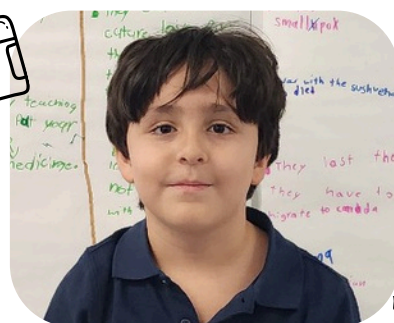
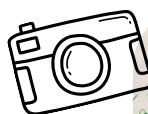


Prompt: Draw your community highlighting the things that you love.



Prompt: Create a Google Doodle that would honor the Lenni Lenape.

MEET THE STUDENT BEHIND THE WORK



Gabriel

Salome Ureña | 3rd Grade

What they love about their community:

I like that my community teaches me stuff.

TEN HAPPENINGS

CRITICAL URBAN EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS:

JESSE HAGOPIAN

THURSDAY
JANUARY 30, 2025
VIA ZOOM
5PM EST | 2PM PST

Explore how educators, students,
and communities are uniting to
defend honest education and
promote anti-racist learning!

[CLICK HERE FOR TICKETS](#)

Free and open to the public
ASL interpretation



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 10 6:00pm-7:30pm
Craft as Cultural Memory:
Preserving Traditions in Object-
Making

December 13 3:00pm-9:00pm
Caudal: Puerto Rican and
Dominican Dialogues on
Feminism and Queerness

January 10 3:45pm
Induction Happy Hour at
Pineapple Express in Montclair

January 23 8:30am-2:30pm
Behavioral Brilliance:
Embracing the Potential in
Student Behaviors with Alicia
Drelick, EdD & Michelle
Damiani, PhD



DRS. PICOWER + MALONEY
PARTICIPATED IN THE **TEACHING
TO TRANSGRESS** PANEL WITH
ARTIST **NA'YE PEREZ**. CHECK
OUT HIS ART ON DISPLAY UNTIL
DECEMBER 15TH IN KASSER
THEATER LOBBY ON CAMPUS.

TEN GOT THE
OPPORTUNITY TO **REP
NTP** AT THE **TEACHER
EDUCATION FAIR!**



KNOW SOMEONE
INTERESTED IN NTP?
[CLICK HERE](#) TO SHARE THE
APPLICATION!

**NEW TEACHER
INDUCTION PD EVENT!**



TEN HAD TWO PRESENTATIONS
AT THE **INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON URBAN
EDUCATION (ICUE)**!

COME CHECK OUT OUR

**A+ TEACHER
TAKEOVERS**

GRADUATES AND RESIDENTS
ARE TAKING OVER INSTAGRAM
STORIES EVERY THURSDAY!

CONNECT WITH US!



DONATIONS

THANK YOU FOR READING!
— LOVE, KIYOMI —
TEN'S OFFICIAL MASCOT

