

# Intersectionality and Disability

## Resources

- [Intersectionality and Disability \(2:11\)](#)
- [Intersectionality and Disability \(Lesson Slideshow\)](#)

## Identities & Themes

- Identity affirmation
- Racial identity and racial bias
- Intersectionality
- Black/African American
- Ability and Neurodiversity

## Summary of Resource

Keri Gray advises professionals, businesses, and organizations around issues of disability, race, gender and intersectionality. In this video, she talks about how affirming one's intersectionality is crucial to inclusion.

### Condition for Belonging: Equity

#### Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- Empathy & Understanding
- Healthy Complex Identities
- Respect Across Differences
- Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- Responsiveness & Action

#### Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness

# Before You Teach

## Vocabulary

**Personal Identity** - Personal identity refers to an individual's personal characteristics, personality traits, and experiences without regard to a larger group.

**Social Identity** - Social Identity refers to how an individual defines themselves based on their membership in a particular group. The groups are often based on the socially constructed categories of race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

**Intersectionality** - the social, economic and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression and privilege connect, overlap and influence one another.

Kimberlé Crenshaw first used the term intersectionality in 1989 in her essay, [“Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”](#) to describe how the experiences of black women were different than the experiences of white women or black men.

Crenshaw describes in a later essay, [“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”](#), how it is important to recognize the different experiences different identities within a group have, and how failure to do so causes tension among groups.

To read more about intersectionality from Learning for Justice, see <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2016/teaching-at-the-intersections>

**Marginalization** - the process by which individuals or groups are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and seen as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or “mainstream” society (Racial Equity Tools Glossary)

## Teacher Reflection Questions

- Think about what you know about the identities of your students. How is intersectionality impacting their lives?
- How much is intersectionality talked about in your school or district when it comes to creating belonging for students with disabilities? Where could more conversations happen?

## Materials Needed for Lesson

- [Intersectionality and Disability \(Lesson Slideshow\)](#)
- Ability to project a slideshow and video
- Journal or notebook
- Blank sheets of paper for each student
- Three pieces of poster paper
- Sticky notes

## Process of Implementing

- Project the [Intersectionality and Disability \(Lesson Slideshow\)](#)
- Introduce the lesson and vocabulary.
- Show the video.
- After showing the video, give students time to complete a written reflection to at least one of the journal prompts.
- Lead students through the discussion questions.
- Complete the Follow-up Activity if time allows.

## Journal Prompts

- Think about the various social identities you hold.
  - Which ones do you think about the most often? Why do you think that is?
  - Which ones do you not think about that often? Why do you think that is?

## Discussion Questions

\*Essential questions are in bold.

- **Based on what Keri Gray says in the video, how are disability rights and intersectionality related?**
- **In the video, Keri Gray says, “The thing that I find to be harmful is when we’re not building in a coalition.” What does she mean by this?**
- How does understanding intersectionality help us practice more inclusive activism?
- **What are some other marginalized identities that may experience intersections of injustice not mentioned in the videos?**

## Follow Up Activity

Give out blank pieces of paper to each student. Invite students to use their creativity to write down the social identity groups they feel most connected to. It could be a flower drawing with many petals, a Venn diagram, or mind map that highlights their different social identities and demonstrates how these identities interconnect and overlap. (See the [lesson slideshow](#) for a list of social identities.)

Once students have finished, put the completed visulas up around the classroom to do a gallery walk. Before beginning the gallery walk, put up three posters - one that says each of the following:

- What did I learn about intersectionality?
- What do I notice that surprises me?
- What questions do I have?

Give out sticky notes to all students. As students walk around and view each other's drawings, ask them to write down their answers to the questions and stick them to the appropriate posters. Encourage students to write on at least one sticky note to answer each question, but they can do more if they choose.

Leave time to share the sticky notes and answer any questions students may have. There may be questions you can't answer, and that's ok! Tell students that the topic of intersectionality is an ongoing discussion that will be returned to.

Activity adapted from the *My Name Is Pauli Murray Discussion Guide*,  
[https://participant.com/sites/campaigns/files/2021-09/PAULI\\_Guide\\_web.pdf](https://participant.com/sites/campaigns/files/2021-09/PAULI_Guide_web.pdf).