Developing Students’ Capacity to Connect with History

Overview

In this classroom video, social studies teacher Tareeq Rasheed teaches the lesson “The First Day of School” from the Choices in Little Rock unit. This lesson examines the decisions that the citizens of Little Rock, Arkansas, made in response to Brown v. Board of Education. This lesson begins with the desegregation of the city’s largest and most prestigious high school, Central High. The lesson explores civic choices—the decisions people make as participants in a liberal democracy. Mr. Rasheed starts by asking students to reflect on their first-day-of-school experiences, particularly their first day of 8th grade. As he moves through the lesson, Mr. Rasheed asks students to engage in perspective-taking by reflecting on the decisions they would make as parents during this period.
Questions to Consider

1. At 0:05, Mr. Rasheed starts the lesson by asking students to reflect on their first day of school. A student responds by saying, “I was nervous I wouldn’t make new friends.” Why do you think the teacher begins the lesson this way?

2. At 1:02, after asking students to reflect on their first-day experiences, Mr. Rasheed says, “I initially started this year off thinking about identity, diversity, and what role it plays and every student’s life—and how a person’s identity, how the world sees them, how that may influence their roles in society itself.” What impact does the exploration of identities have on how students make connections to this history? What effect does starting with students’ own reflection on their first day of school have on their engagement with the lesson? How do you think this approach shaped the rest of the discussion?

3. At 3:31, Mr. Rasheed reflects, “The thing that excites me the most is touching on things that have happened in the past that I feel that students either have experienced now or will experience later on in their lives.” What might Mr. Rasheed mean here? What evidence do you see of students making connections to their own lived experiences? How does Mr. Rasheed encourage this practice?