Teaching Abolition in the Classroom

Companion Curriculum to
Enough is Enough! MPD150 Report
How-to-Use Guide

Summary and rationale

TWIN CITIES, MN - Education is always a political act. When we enshrine textbooks or other curricula as “objective,” we obscure the decisions that went into determining which stories matter enough to be included. We offer this companion curriculum to MPD150’s history of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) because it matters and is relevant to our lives. We believe the report stands as a critical counter-narrative to the dominant story about the role of police in our communities and that it is imperative to bring that counter-narrative into our classrooms.

This curriculum was developed in the summer of 2020 after a group of educators and students came together around the realization that the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing uprising was too central to be ignored in our classrooms the following fall. All of our lives were deeply impacted. We refuse to return to our previously scheduled programming. We created it as a tool for processing students’ experiences and understandings of police murder, the Minneapolis uprising and the national movement for Black liberation. It is grounded in the voices of Minneapolis residents demanding community safety and justice.

In our weekly meetings, we have found solace, reprieve and inspiration at a time when so many of us feel pushed past our limits. Because of this, we believe that learning our past and listening to one another is the vital enterprise to engender a shift away from reaction and towards empowerment. This is the gift we aim to offer classroom communities - the chance to center empowerment. Like the report teaches us, when we lay out the map of where we’ve been, where we are and where we’re going, we permit ourselves the following: the space to choose, the freedom to pace ourselves and the beauty to arrive in all our moments with our whole selves intact. We are not here to ‘save the day,’ instead, we are here to build the capacity and community and dreams that fruit true equality...with you. Thank you for joining.

“We hope this curriculum travels far & wide and is adapted to fit its new environment.”
How to use this curriculum guide

As educators and learners, we recognize that utilizing a curriculum means making choices that respond to our learning communities. By design, this is a “mix & match” curriculum with options to help you decide which activities to use in your setting. We have developed four mini-units corresponding to Social Studies and English/Language Arts classes at the middle school and high school levels. These mini-units can be taught as part of interdisciplinary studies, as stand-alone units, or as part of in-depth studies of the prison industrial complex, community safety, or racial justice.

The mini-units are intended to provide a framing and application of abolitionist theory. The three lessons in each mini-unit correspond to sections of the MPD150 report, Enough is Enough!. The first lesson examines the historical context of the 2020 Minneapolis Uprising and seeks to explore the question, “Where have we been?” The second lesson examines the contemporary relationship between Minneapolis residents and the police, considering “Where we’re at.” The third lesson considers the future of policing in Minneapolis and the country, asking, “Where are we going?”

This curriculum addresses police violence and murder, as well as interpersonal and systemic racism. These key issues impact students differently based on their actual or perceived race, class, sexuality, gender and other aspects of identity. Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ people and unhoused people routinely experience risk of harm in police interactions. The MPD has a documented pattern of racist violence towards Black and Native people especially. Educators, particularly white educators, have the responsibility to acknowledge and hold space for traumatic experiences relating to police, and work to establish practices (for example, conversation protocols and affinity spaces) so that students can more safely share and process their experiences in addition to accessing this content as they are able, at the pace they set. For this reason, learners and educators should intentionally establish norms for discussion and listening.

We hope this curriculum is used to highlight the empowering pursuit of co-creating visions of community safety and not just to tell stories of harm and violence. In this way, we intend for the classroom to become an authentic space of abolitionist practice where a classroom community will work together to take care of each member honorably.
How to use the mini-units & appendices

- Each mini-unit includes three lessons. They are split into a “warm up,” an “activity,” and a “closing.” For a 55-minute class period, we suggest allocating 10 minutes for the warm up, 40 minutes for the activity and 5 minutes for the closing. Each lesson may take more than one class period, depending on which options you choose.
- While the MPD150 report is the central text of the curriculum, each “warm up,” “activity,” and “closing” includes additional resources and activities. Outside resources are hyperlinked in the document.
- With longer class sessions or additional asynchronous learning time, we imagine that these lessons could be taught in a minimum of three days. However, we recommend giving each lesson at least two or three days, and encourage educators to consider turning these lessons into a longer unit of study.
- All lessons were designed for the grade levels noted in the mini-unit title. For example, ‘high school’ means 9-12th. However, most activities can easily be adapted to middle school, out of school or higher education settings as well.
- Opportunities for formative assessment and student reflection are woven into each mini-unit.
- Each mini-unit is aligned to MN State Standards, Common Core ELA Standards and the C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards. These standards are listed in Appendix BL. The BL stands for ‘Black Lives,’ in tribute to the BLM movement.
- Additional activity options are included in Appendix M. The M stands for ‘Matter,’ to tribute the BLM movement.

Icon system

As educators and learners, we recognize that lesson planning requires deep consideration for how a given curriculum will play out with a particular group of students in a particular context. Racism and police violence are inherently vulnerable topics. Sharing and reflecting on these topics may not feel safe for all students, many of whom may become escalated, dysregulated, or triggered when reflecting or discussing. We know that effective teaching and learning is built on trusting relationships and the co-creation of spaces where we can be vulnerable. As you consider the options offered, reflect on how much trust your students have built with each other and with you and how much vulnerability you are asking from your students.

- □ Slow down: A yellow square denotes that the following content may not be suitable for all classroom communities/learning modalities. An educator might wish to pause, slow down and choose an activity that will best suit your classroom community. We believe the activity would be best suited to a community with a high level of trust. This can look like: Learners in the community call each other in when
microaggressions happen; shared norms developed in the learning setting provide opportunities for all voices to contribute.

- **Digital adaptation:** A magenta square denotes possible adaptations for digital learning environments or integration.

**Youth-Centered Practices to Incorporate**

**Embodyed Practice:** Throughout these lessons, we encourage educators to consider/continue using embodied practice with their classes. This can look like physical movement as part of the lesson time, physical interpretations or expressions related to the content such as tableaus and/or body scans.

**Setting Norms:** Students are often more receptive to classroom norms if they have the opportunity to create them.

One way to establish classroom norms is to create a simple T-chart with “Rights” on the left and “Responsibilities” on the right. Students work in small groups to brainstorm what rights they have in the classroom (“I have the right to be safe, I have the right to express myself, I have the right to learn,” etc.) Once those are established to their satisfaction, the class decides what responsibilities we all have in the space if those rights are to be protected. (For example, for “I have the right to be safe,”: “We will choose our words carefully and avoid harmful language,” “We will use classroom materials safely,” etc.) At the end of the process, the educator may synthesize the brainstorm (if there are any non-negotiables that have been left out, this is the time to add them!) and ask for consensus. Finally, ask each class member to sign.

Educators should also consider best practices for themselves as they hold space for students. Consider:
- At the beginning of the unit, establish the protocol for either affinity spaces, healing spaces, or visits with a trusted adult for students who are triggered by topics in the curriculum.
- Interrogate your own identity and potential biases. Stay reflective and open to feedback about how these biases may be showing up in your practice.
- Avoid putting students on the spot. Do not “cold call” during these lessons, but only call on students who have volunteered to share. Find alternative ways to hear from students who are not comfortable sharing in front of the class: writing, partner conversations, one-on-one meetings with you, etc.

**Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) Project (for larger unit):** One way to use this curriculum is to kick off a year-long YPAR project for your
class. You would support students with learning and defining theory, community and trust. This would look different for each class depending on what questions are coming up for students, what conversations are happening in your school and neighborhoods and what kinds of relationships exist or need to be built in the class. For an introduction and many resources to support this work, check out UC Berkeley’s YPAR Hub.

Questions to consider:
- What is the school community asking or wanting to learn more about?
- What could be taught or shared with other grades and classes?

This could be explored by students thinking about their physical neighborhoods, or defining digital community safety.

Overarching Compelling Questions

- How does knowing a history help us understand current events?
- How does racism manifest in social institutions?
- What role has the police department played in the Minneapolis community?
- When is an institution “unreformable”?
- How can people keep one another safe and hold one another accountable?
- What keeps people safe?

Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand the historical and contemporary context of structural racism within the MPD.
- Students will understand the reasons why Minneapolis community members are demanding that the police department be abolished.
- Students will understand that communities have the potential to develop community safety structures that do not include the Minneapolis Police Department.

Enduring Skills

- Students will identify patterns of government response to community issues.
- Students will use historical thinking and research to contextualize a current problem.
- Students will analyze the evidence and reasoning used to develop the central claim of a non-fiction text.
- Students will use action research methods to gather and interpret multiple perspectives on a local issue and design evidence-based responses to that issue.
- Students will share their perspectives and learn to take other perspectives that they haven’t considered before.
It is with gratitude and celebration that this group was able to support the work of the MPD150 report & website creators.

In solidarity,
-the authors
**Lesson 1 - The Past**

Time needed: 2 to 3 class periods.

Lesson Overview:
In this lesson, students reflect and revisit their experience of the summer of 2020, and consider the concept of “safety”. They are introduced to the MPD150 report and read the “Intro” and “Where We’ve Been” sections, identifying themes, citing evidence and reflecting on their reactions and connections to the text. Educators can extend the lessons with supplemental text options and vocabulary extension activities. Materials and resources are hyperlinked in the lesson plan.

Compelling Questions:
- What role has the police department played in the Minneapolis community?

Enduring Understandings:
- Students will understand the historical and contemporary context of structural racism within the MPD.
- Students will understand the reasons why Minneapolis community members are demanding that the police department be abolished.

Enduring Skills:
- Students will identify patterns of government response to community issues.
- Students will analyze the evidence and reasoning used to develop the central claim of a non-fiction text.

**Warm-up**

Show [George Floyd by Shirien Damral](https://example.com)
Invite students to respond to the following prompts in their journals:
What do you see? What words come to mind when you think about the events of the summer of 2020 in Minneapolis? What does it make you remember about what happened / is happening in the Twin Cities and country? Did you think about safety this summer and if so, what were you thinking?

- **Share Thoughts**
Invite students to share their thoughts with a neighbor. Students could have the options to read their writing, share a few thoughts or questions related to the prompts, or simply listen to a neighbor depending on trust levels.

*Icon key:* 🔄 = slow down  ● = digital adaptation
Show [Welcome to MPLS]
Invite students to write their thoughts of the image and/or of the Minneapolis Police Department on sticky notes and hang them on a shared poster/board.

- Consider using tools such as Padlet, Talkwall, or Jamboard for a digital version of this activity.

Identify Trends
Pause student response additions to the poster/digital space. Have students review the collected responses and identify trends. Keep the poster/digital space throughout the unit.

Create Timeline
Invite students to consider significant dates and events from the Minneapolis Police Department’s history and add events to a shared timeline poster. These events can come from their own knowledge, through a scan of the MPD150 report, or a quick research activity online. Consider guiding questions, such as: When did the department start? What are some major events in the city that have included the Minneapolis Police Department?

- Consider using tools such as Padlet, Talkwall, or Jamboard for a digital version of this activity.

Identify Trends
Pause student response additions to the timeline. Have students review the collected events and discuss any new learnings or gaps in the timeline. Keep the timeline throughout the unit.

Activity

Show: [cover of “Enough is Enough”/MPD 150 report]
Prompt students to examine the cover image and write down observations. Consider guiding questions, such as: Are you familiar with this document? If so, what is it and how does the content relate to the design of the cover? If not, what do you expect/predict this document to be about based on the title, the description, the image, the colors? What perspective do you think this document might be written from? What else do you notice?

Discuss
Invite students to share their thoughts with the class.

Introduce Reading Norms & Read “Intro”
Establish reading norms. There are options to listen to the audio version of the MPD150 report or read the text digitally. Once norms are established, invite students to read pages 2-3.

Notes and Vocabulary
Have students capture words and phrases that are unfamiliar to them or that they think are significant to understanding the document in a “Vocabulary” box/section of notebooks or digitally. Also, invite students to write down surprising information, main ideas and connections to self/texts/world.

Discuss
Pause students in their reading for a quick check-in discussion.
(con’t)
Consider prompting thinking with questions such as: What do you notice about how the document is structured? How does what you have read connect to the predictions you made? What have you read that surprised, interested, or caused a reaction for you? What words, phrases, or notes did you write down so far?

Read “Where We’ve Been”
Invite students to continue/finish reading the “Intro” and then move on to “Where We’ve Been,” (pp.4-11). Encourage students to continue taking notes and capturing vocabulary words/phrases. If students read this in class, it will likely take at least two class periods.

Discuss
Invite students to review their notes so far. Consider prompting thinking with questions such as: How does what you have read connect to the poster/digital space/timeframe that we made at the beginning of this lesson? What have you read that surprised, interested, or caused a reaction for you? What words, phrases, or notes did you write down so far?

Concept/Vocabulary Extension
Invite students who have finished reading to investigate terms that they wrote into their “Vocabulary” notes. Encourage students to choose 3-5 words or phrases and investigate the root words, common/contemporary usage, dictionary definitions and their own interpretation of each word. Have students generate their own definitions of these words/phrases.

Supplemental Text Groups
Organize students into groups of 2-3. Instruct groups to study two text sets—one personal essay and two songs. After reading and listening to the texts, invite students to collaborate on responding to prompts (react, identify main ideas, cite evidence, make personal/text/world connections).

Texts
Personal Essay:
*Crying, Laughing, Crying at the George Floyd Protests in Minneapolis*
By Danez Smith
June 5, 2020

Songs with accompanying videos and lyrics:
“Lockdown” by Anderson .Paak
“The Bigger Picture” by Lil Baby

Closing

Identify Argument & Cite Evidence
Invite students to identify the main argument or theme of the MPD 150 “Where We’ve Been” section. Instruct them to cite a line or passage of textual evidence to support the argument.

Reflect on Warm Up & Activity
Invite students to review their prompted writing and notes. Instruct them to add connections between the MPD 150 report and their prompted writing from the first lesson of the unit. For example: ‘The report connects to (my experience of events of the summer of 2020, concepts of safety, George Floyd’s murder, the
*Lesson 2 - The Present*

Time needed: 2-3 class periods.

Lesson Overview:
In this lesson, students co-create definitions of “reform,” interview each other, read the “Where We’re At” section and continue collecting evidence for the argument of the report. Educators can extend the lessons with supplemental texts, reflection activities and vocabulary extension activities. Materials and resources are hyperlinked in the lesson plan.

Compelling Questions:
- What role has the police department played in the Minneapolis community?
- When is an institution “unreformable”?

Enduring Understandings:
- Students will understand the reasons why Minneapolis community members are demanding that the police department be abolished.

Enduring Skills:
- Students will analyze the evidence and reasoning used to develop the central claim of a non-fiction text.
- Students will identify patterns of government response to community issues.
- Students will share their perspectives and learn to take other perspectives that they haven’t considered before.

Warm-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>option</th>
<th>Concept/Vocabulary Extension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In small groups, invite students to share their definitions of “reform” and the other words that they captured while reading. Encourage students to share out to the whole class: What did you notice when you defined these words? Were your definitions similar? What is a definition we can use for reform? What reforms do you remember being mentioned in the &quot;Where We’ve Been” section? How do the authors of the report characterize those reforms? What argument does the report make about police reform?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>option</th>
<th>Sticky Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invite students to add thoughts of the image and/or of the Minneapolis Police Department on sticky notes and hang them on the shared poster/digital space started in lesson one. (con’t)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify Trends
Pause student response additions to the poster/digital space. Have students review the collected responses and identify any new trends. Keep the poster/digital space throughout the unit.

Create Timeline
Invite students to add events to the shared timeline from lesson 1.

Identify Trends
Pause student response additions to the timeline. Have students review the collected events and discuss any new learnings or gaps in the timeline. Keep the timeline throughout the unit.

Activity

Partner Interviews
Organize students into partners. Have the partners work together to develop interview questions for each other which are connected to their thoughts and experiences with the police as well as their thoughts on the MPD150 report as of this lesson; or provide students with interview question ideas. Next, instruct partners to interview each other for ~5 minutes per partner. Then spend ~5 minutes for student volunteers to share interesting experiences with this activity and topics that surfaced in their interviews.

Show image [image 3 of “Enough is Enough”/MPD 150 report]

Where We’re At
Invite students to read the “Where We’re At” section of the report (pp. 15-24). Have students continue capturing vocabulary words and surprising information, main ideas, connections to self/texts/world. If students read this in class, it will likely take at least two class periods.

Discuss
Pause students in their reading. Consider prompting thinking with questions such as: What do you notice about how the document is structured in this section? How do the interviews in this section connect to the interview between you and your partner? What have you read that surprised, interested, or caused a reaction for you? What words, phrases, or notes did you write down so far?

Concept/Vocabulary Extension
Invite students who have finished reading to investigate some of the terms that they wrote into their “Vocabulary” notes. Encourage students to choose 3-5 words or phrases to investigate root words, common/contemporary usage, dictionary definitions and their own interpretation of each word. Have students generate their own definitions of these words/phrases.

Supplemental Text Groups
Organize students into groups of 2-3. Instruct groups to study the text. After reading, invite students to collaborate on annotating or analyzing the text. Consider prompting students to write about their reaction, identify main ideas, cite evidence, make personal/text/world connections, etc.

Texts
(con’t)
News Article:
Can Minneapolis Dismantle Its Police Department?
By Benjamin Wallace-Wells
August 8, 2020

Discuss
Consider prompting thinking with questions such as: How does what you have read connect to the report? What have you read that surprised, interested, or caused a reaction for you? What words, phrases, or notes did you write down so far?

Closing

Identify Argument Progress & Cite Evidence
Invite students to take notes on the progression of the main argument of the MFD 150 report. What new information do the authors add to support their argument? Instruct students to cite 3 lines or passages of textual evidence to support the argument.

Prompted Writing
Invite students to reflect on the process of reading the MFD 150 report. For example: How does my body react to reading the MFD150 report? How does it affect the way I view my community or myself? Are any of my ideas or beliefs changing as I read the report? Are any of my ideas or beliefs confirmed or challenged by the report? How does it feel to do this work in this classroom space and with my classmates and teacher?

Concept/Vocabulary Extension
Invite students to investigate the terms “safety” and “abolition” (and other words that they wrote into their “Vocabulary” notes). Encourage students to investigate root words, common/contemporary usage, dictionary definitions and their own interpretation of each word. Have students generate their own definitions of these words/phrases. Especially encourage students to consider: What does the word “safety” mean to me? What does it look like for me and for my community? What does abolition mean?

*Lesson 3 - The Future*

Time needed: 2-3 class periods.
Lesson Overview:
In this lesson, students co-create definitions of “safety,” finish reading the report, participate in a Shared Inquiry Discussion and reflect on any changed views that they may be adopting. Educators can extend the lessons with reflection and vocabulary extension activities. Materials and resources are hyperlinked in the lesson plan.

Compelling Questions:
  ● How can people keep one another safe and hold one another accountable?
  ● What keeps people safe?

Enduring Understandings:
  ● (con’t) Students will understand that communities have the potential to develop community safety structures that do not include the Minneapolis Police Department.
Enduring Skills:
- Students will share their perspectives and learn to take other perspectives that they haven’t considered before.

Warm-up

**Sticky Notes**
Invite students to respond to the following prompts on sticky notes: What does safety look like? Feel like? Sound like? Who keeps us safe? How do we keep each other safe? Then, invite students to add responses to a shared poster/digital space.

**Identify Trends**
Pause student response additions to the poster/digital space. Have students review the collected responses and identify trends. Keep the poster/digital space throughout the unit.

**Sticky Notes**
Invite students to respond to the following prompts on sticky notes: What does abolition look like? Feel like? Sound like? Who participates in abolition? Does abolition make sense for our community and why/why not? Then, invite students to add responses to a shared poster/digital space.

**Identify Trends**
Pause student response additions to the poster/digital space. Have students review the collected responses and identify trends. Keep the poster/digital space throughout the unit.

**Concept/Vocabulary Extension**
In small groups, invite students to share definitions and visions of “safety” and “abolition”. Encourage students to share out to the whole class: What did you notice when you defined these words? Were your definitions similar? What are definitions we can use for “safety” and “abolition”?

**Discuss**
Invite students to respond to the following prompts aloud: What does the report say about “safety”? What does the report say about “abolition”? What arguments do the authors make about these topics?

Activity

**Read “Where We’re Going”**
Invite students to finish reading the report. Encourage students to continue taking notes and capturing vocabulary words/phrases. If students read this in class, it will likely take at least two class periods.

- **Shared Inquiry Discussion**
  Consider taking multiple days for preparation and discussion.

- **Individual Reflection**
  Distribute reflection questions and prompts to students (or develop questions with students). These questions and prompts will serve as the foundation of a discussion. Have students examine their notes from the
unit and any supplemental activity materials (timeline, posters, Padlets, etc) that may have been completed. Instruct students to write notes, cite evidence and prepare responses for the questions. Possible questions include:

- What is the main argument of the MPD150 report? How do you know (cite evidence)?
- Is the argument supported/convincing?
- How would you describe the tone/perspective of the report? Why do you describe it this way? / How do you know?
- What role did the structure of this report have on the argument?
- What are some major takeaways you have from studying this unit?
- Have your views or beliefs changed throughout this unit? How have they changed or why have they not changed?
- What are different aspects of community safety and how can they be achieved?
- What does “abolition” mean and what do you think about the police abolition movement?

Discussion
Arrange students into small groups (or whole-class) for discussions based on the questions that they prepared responses for in the previous activity. Coach students on discussion strategies and establish norms together. For example: Use "I" statements, validate each other, push back on statements that you disagree with, do not interrupt, stay on topic, monitor your airtime, etc.

Supplemental Text Groups
Organize students into groups of 2-3. Instruct groups to study the poem and then listen to it through video. After reading, invite students to collaborate on responding to prompts (react, make personal/text/world connections). Educators can teach about literary devices or strategies through this poem and connect them to the wider MPD150 report.

- Text
  Poem: Give The Police Departments to the Grandmothers [text][text]
  By Junaida Petrus

Discuss
Consider prompting thinking with questions such as: How does it feel to read and hear this poem? What images come to your mind? What have you read that surprised, interested, or caused a reaction for you?

Closing

- Sticky Notes
  Invite students to write any updated thoughts of the Minneapolis Police Department and the idea of abolition on sticky notes and hang them on the poster/board. Keep posted for independent student reflection.

- Identify Possible Next Steps
  Educators can extend this closure for a longer unit in which students develop next step ideas and follow through with them.

- Have students reflect on action steps they would be interested in taking at the end of the unit. For example: Learn more about police abolition/MPD150/MPD; tell friends/family about my experience with the unit; write/call a local politician; join an action; etc.
Prompted Writing

Invite students to reflect on the process of completing the MPD 150 report and participating in a Shared Inquiry Discussion. For example: Am I overall satisfied with this unit? What aspects did I dislike, what aspects did I appreciate. How did my body, mind and spirit react to different aspects of this unit? What was my experience in the Shared Inquiry Discussion? How was the group dynamic? Did I voice my opinions? What went well? What could go better?

Reminder - Standards & More

- MN State Standards and Common Core Standards are included as Appendix BL. The BL stands for ‘Black Lives,’ to tribute the BLM movement.
- More activity options are included as Appendix M. The M stands for ‘Matter,’ to tribute the BLM movement.

It is with gratitude and celebration that this group is able to extend the work of the MPD150 report & website creators.

In solidarity,
-the authors