

Part I: Historical Context–“Little Rock Nine” (5–10 minutes)

Time

5–10 minutes

Procedures

1. The day before you start this lesson, preview the [audio interview with Minnijean Brown Trickey](#) and the [transcript of the interview with Melba Pattillo Beals](#). Decide whether to use both or one of the interviews for this lesson.

NOTE: Trickey and Beals are both members of the “Little Rock Nine,” a group of African-American students who were initially prevented from attending Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas in early September 1957, but who were ultimately admitted later that month under the protection of the U.S. Army and subjected to a year of physical and verbal abuse by many of the white students.

2. Assign students to either read [transcript of the interview with Melba Pattillo Beals](#) or listen to the [audio interview with Minnijean Brown Trickey](#) for homework. Tell students that both women are members of the “Little Rock Nine” and ask for a volunteer to explain what that term refers to (or provide a brief explanation if no student is aware of the term). Ask students to be prepared on the next day to share what they know about Little Rock and the Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and to pose any questions they have about these topics.

Optional: If students are unfamiliar with the terms commonly used in school integration discussions, have them review the handout [Understanding the Language of School Integration](#) as part of their homework assignment.

Understanding the Language of School Integration

When discussing racial equity in schools, there are several important and unique terms, such as integration and integration that may be unfamiliar or mean different things to different people. Because these terms are frequently used in such discussions, it is important to work from shared definitions. The following list includes these commonly used terms and their definitions, as defined by ADL.

Segregation

Segregation is the policy or practice of separating people of different race, class or ethnic group, as in separate educational facilities. De facto segregation occurs by fact, rather than by law; usually on the basis of socioeconomic factors, while de jure segregation occurs by law. [NOTE: The term segregation should not be used to refer solely to the experiences of “minority” communities, as majority or dominant groups also bear the consequences of racial separation in U.S. society.]

Desegregation

Desegregation describes the efforts to eliminate segregation by removing laws or practices that require or encourage separation. Desegregation aims to reduce racial imbalances, usually by moving and mixing racial populations to end racial isolation. As it has played out in most U.S. educational settings, desegregation requires students of the non-dominant group (most often students of color) to assimilate into the school and culture of the dominant group (most often white) without changes in school structures to meet the needs of the new students. [NOTE: It is important not to use the words desegregation and integration interchangeably, as the spirit of each term is markedly different.]

Equality

Equality is the quality, fact, or state of being equal (not varying from one person or part to another).

Equity

Equity is the fairness or justice in dealings between persons.

Integration

Integration is the incorporation of individuals from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups as equals into a school. Integration moves beyond removing legal barriers and simply placing students of different backgrounds together. It addresses the racial hierarchies and prejudices that exist in school communities by reforming structures to be more inclusive and transforming the culture of the school. [NOTE: It is important not to use the words desegregation and integration interchangeably, as the spirit of each term is markedly different.]

Resegregation

Resegregation traditionally refers to the growth of segregation, where schools have once experienced periods of desegregation. Resegregation can occur because of school districts abandoning or altering race conscious desegregation plans, either by choice or court order, as well as the result of segregated racial housing patterns or school district practices that reinforce segregation.