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## Civil rights lessons help bridge racial gap at middle school

*By Meghan Pryce  
Correspondent*

*Published: Wednesday, August 28, 2013 at 6:35 p.m.*

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington 50 years ago, but students at Howard W. Bishop Middle School only started realizing the impact of King's dream on Wednesday, with the help of two teachers.

The seventh-grade students at the middle school, 1901 NE Ninth St. in Gainesville, commemorated the march when Steven Doherty and Shravana Ogle combined their classes to discuss the speech and to ask students what their dream was for the world 50 years from now.

Ogle teaches civics to mostly African-American students in the main school, while Doherty teaches biology to predominantly white kids at the Academy of Technology and Gifted Studies. Although both programs are housed on the same campus, the students have limited interaction with each other.

Doherty, 51, said the discussion was particularly important for children at Howard because it is not an entirely integrated school.

"The whole separate-but-equal clause exists on some level on this campus with the academy," he said. "And so we look for opportunities to bridge the main programs."

Students in the academy program have been tested and are invited to join. The main school, however, has no requirements to get in.

Ogle, 40, said it's interesting how little knowledge some of the students have about the civil rights movement.

In the beginning of the discussion, she asked the students to raise their hands if they had heard about King's Aug. 28, 1963, speech. She said she was alarmed when some students rested their hands in their laps.

"I was actually surprised that so many people know so little about their history," she said. "To me, that makes it even more important that we're doing something like this."

Ogle said the discussion was an opportunity to really live the dream and let the students work together. The students eventually will need to know how to work together as a nation. She said having the students work together as one school is a good stepping stone toward that goal.

Each student was paired into a group, and the groups were asked to complete a

worksheet titled "We Have a Dream."

In the first box, the groups wrote their favorite part of King's speech. In the second box, students wrote down what they thought America was like during the civil rights era. In the third box, they wrote what they want the world to look like in 50 years.

One group said there shouldn't be any more racist comments; another said they didn't want people to die.

Max Tuchman, 12, a student in the academy program, said he looks at the march with a different perspective now. He said there were things about the march and King's speech that he didn't know before.

"It was super surprising to find out that Martin Luther King actually didn't even plan to give the 'I Have a Dream' speech," he said. "That was pretty amazing."

For Maya Clark, 12, a student at the main school, the discussion reinforced the fact that people shouldn't be stereotyped. She said she learned "not to judge people by the way they look or their color."

Mike Gamble, 50, the principal of the middle school, said he thought the discussion was a good way to mark the historic day.

Gamble said the whole idea of King's speech is equality for all. He said the purpose of public education is to provide that opportunity for all kids.

Gamble agreed that students in the main school and students in the academy program don't work together in an academic setting. He said they usually mix only for sports, gym classes, lunch and band.

When kids aren't familiar with each other, it can be easy for them to place stereotypes. He said the school is able to knock down those barriers whenever the children are integrated.

"It's always a good thing when we can bring our kids together," he said.

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