

National Education Association Educator’s Locally Led Book Clubs Focused on Disability Rights and Inclusion

The National Education Association is expanding its Disability Rights and Inclusion (DRI) initiative through a local-level book club program to deepen member engagement and understanding of disability perspectives at the grassroots level. This innovative approach aims to raise awareness about the experiences of people with disabilities while exploring the environmental, social, and attitudinal barriers that impede true inclusivity and accessibility within local NEA affiliate communities.

Who can participate in the NEA Locally Led Book Clubs?

The NEA Book Club is open to all members! This is a great opportunity for members to take what they learn and share key concepts about disability with their community.

How do the NEA Locally Led Book Clubs work?

NEA members can register as book club leaders to organize local meetings, either in-person or virtually, focusing on disability rights and inclusion. The program provides up to 12 books and comprehensive online resources per local affiliate. It empowers local leaders to facilitate meaningful discussions and create collaborative learning environments that advance understanding of disability rights within their communities.

Where, when, and how will the Book Clubs meet?

Each local book club leader will share information about the book club and collaborate with interested members to identify meeting logistics, including the number of meetings and their duration, time, location, and format. The reading guide for *The Pretty One* is structured to complete the book study in three sessions. Local leaders can adjust the reading assignments, number of sessions, and other logistics to meet the needs of the local participants. The reading guides are available at NEA.org/disabilities.

The Pretty One

By Keah Brown



Author Keah Brown offers a vulnerable and honest examination into her journey of acceptance and activism as a Black woman with a disability experiencing life through the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and disability. *The Pretty One* is a memoir that offers the author’s perspective and invites the reader to join her. The book is organized through a series of essays that chronicles the author’s life from her early childhood through her acceptance and acknowledgment as a young Black woman with a disability. The reading guide (and book discussions) will take you along her journey as follows: “Introduction” through “Pop Culture and Me: A (Sometimes) Unrequited Love Story”, “You Can’t Cure Me, I Promise It’s Fine” through “The Human iPod,” and finally, “Cry, Baby, Cry” through “I Like Me Now, Too.”

Reading Guide: *The Pretty One*

What NEA Leadership Competencies are addressed in this book?

You will gain a foundational understanding of advocacy, communication, leading our profession, organizing, and social-emotional learning. Find out more about [NEA Leadership Competencies](#).

What are the main objectives?

Author Keah Brown states, “I adapt to the world because I have to in order to live . . . I don’t do things in spite of anything—except for maybe the people who told me I’d be nothing and no one. I don’t mind being an inspiration if it is for a valid reason, such as admiring how many slices of pizza I ate, an essay or article I wrote, my clothing choices, or how quickly I can learn the lyrics to songs. As long as the inspiration doesn’t come with pity or self-congratulatory pats on the back, I am all for it!” (pp. 1–2).

As you read this book, consider Keah's personal experiences. They are no different from those of the students, colleagues, and other individuals we encounter in our lives. An individual's journey is personal, and one's desire to find acceptance and be accepted for all one offers is a real struggle. Approach this book with that objective in mind.

Session 1: “Introduction” Through “Pop Culture and Me: A (Sometimes) Unrequited Love Story,” pp. 1–89 (to be read before the first book club meeting)

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- The continued need to challenge how people with disabilities are viewed in society and
- The awareness of the intersectionality of individuals who have been historically marginalized as a critical component to understanding the compounding discriminatory effects of overlapping identities and barriers to positive representation of persons with disabilities.

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. How do you define accessibility?
2. What is intersectionality, and how do you define it?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. In what ways does accessibility pose limitations on persons with disability? How can you create and support inclusivity in your educational environment?
2. “Opportunity is another imperative part of the conversation about identifiers because I have received many opportunities that other people with disabilities have not. There is privilege in opportunity. Privilege influences opportunity and vice versa.” (p. 57) How can you foster more opportunities for individuals with disabilities?

3. Privilege, identity, and representation have an unusual, interconnected relationship. In your learning environment, what are the ways that you have examined your privilege to create opportunities that elevate representation for learners who exist within intersecting communities?

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can you promote learning opportunities that center on the work to dismantle those impacts of privilege, power, and identity?
2. How can learning opportunities that center on privilege, power, and identity also challenge status quo/deficit thinking about people with disabilities?

Next Steps

Read “You Can’t Cure Me, I Promise It’s Fine” through “The Human iPod.”

Session 2: “You Can’t Cure Me, I Promise It’s Fine” Through “The Human iPod,” pp. 90–184

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- The personal journey to acceptance and self-love that each individual must experience through their self-discovery and
- Reshaping how we think about, discuss, and engage with individuals with disabilities.

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to live within the various intersections of race, gender, and disability?
2. How do you engage and interact with people with disabilities (e.g., adults, students, colleagues, casual acquaintances)? Are you conscious of how you engage?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. After reading these chapters, what are your biases about disability and related to people with disabilities that you’ve become more aware of?
2. What are the biases that you carry about people with disabilities, and how do you check your thinking and behaviors when interacting with individuals?

Discussion Questions

1. What are the ways that non-disabled people can work to create inclusive environments, especially for those individuals who exist across intersecting identities, including disability?
2. What are the most significant takeaways for you from these chapters?

Next Steps

Read “Cry, Baby, Cry” through “I Like Me Now, Too.”

Session 3: “Cry, Baby, Cry” Through “I Like Me Now, Too,” pp. 185–240

Main Objectives

As you are reading the identified chapters, approach the content with the following objectives in mind:

- The continuous journey of being mindful of one’s views and actions (i.e., ableist and biased behaviors). Are you showing up in ways that uplift or hinder your students and colleagues who exist within intersecting communities? and
- “...I believe that marginalized people, in particular, are expected to do so much quietly and without acknowledging the work that has gone into the thing we are being complimented on. I am not doing that; I have worked too hard and spent too much time trying to dim my light so others could shine. My emotions and I are over that, and we will be loud and proud. Celebrating smaller and bigger wins is imperative in being unapologetic...”

Pre-Reading Reflection Questions

1. In what ways do you use language and/or engage and interact that might reflect devaluing or pity-like approaches with people with disabilities?
2. What are your biases about people with disabilities, especially those who come from communities whose stories have been historically overlooked?

Post-Reading Reflection Questions

1. What did you learn through these essays? What were places where you saw yourself, a student, or an acquaintance? What have you learned about your journey as an educator?
2. What barriers or opportunities do you create for students based on your beliefs about their abilities and potential? How might you begin to dismantle these beliefs and approaches?

Discussion Questions

1. How can we unlearn and disentangle ourselves from prejudice toward people with disabilities, especially people with disabilities of multiple marginalized identities—and begin to move toward a more inclusive, accepting world?
2. Representation matters—how do you create spaces that support representation across historically marginalized communities? What can you do to uplift and support representation across the learning environments that you are in?

Next Steps

Recommend the book to others in your community and have conversations about what you learned.