

Session 1 Case Study

A Moment of Microaggressions

Ms. Jackson, an eighth grade math teacher, wandered the halls of Engelwood Elementary while waiting for her daughter to end her softball practice. In order to pass the time, she began reading the student work on display in the fifth grade hallway. From the looks of the work, she figured the students must have researched a country of their choice and then created a poster containing interesting photos and facts they learned.

As Ms. Jackson began reading the posters, she was immediately taken aback when she saw a poster about a country in West Africa that said early Africans were brought to the United States as involuntary immigrants. In addition to the inaccurate generalization, several of the posters used verb tenses incorrectly.

Ms. Jackson couldn't believe a teacher would display student work that was not proof-read and/or edited. Ms. Jackson made a mental note of the teacher's name as she made her way back to the gym to meet her daughter. That evening, Ms. Jackson wrote an email to the fifth grade teacher inquiring about the posters. She attempted to sound constructive rather than critical and was elated to see a quick response from the teacher early the next morning. That elation was quickly dropped as she became dismayed upon reading the teacher's response.

"Dear Ms. Jackson, Thank you for your inquiry. I am glad you took the time to review our students' work. The posters you saw on display reflect each student's current reading and writing level. Since students are on varying levels of reading and writing, we allow them to publish at the level they are on assuming the reader will be able to understand what they mean. In regards to the inaccurate generalizations, the students researched and wrote the projects themselves, and I don't believe the generalizations are inaccurate."

Ms. Jackson sat back from her computer and contemplated whether or not to contact the principal for further discussion.