



Spotlight on Excellence: *We Are America*

TO: Jeannine Durkin, Acting Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Robin Desmond, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment *Robin Desmond*

DATE: March 14, 2019

RE: *Spotlight on Excellence: LHS Student Book: We Are America*

Twenty-eight students at Lowell High School recently published the book: *We Are America*. The students are all part of the Seminar on American Diversity, offered at LHS. This year, Jessica Lander challenged her students to explore their own personal history and draw connections between their history and the larger history of America.

Students spent a semester exploring their histories, and telling their stories. In *We Are America* these young people courageously and proudly share stories *their* American histories. These are deeply personal stories of finding the courage to speak, of searching for home, of seeking acceptance, of asking for help. Many capture the importance of families such as: the power of parents or grandparents who came seeking a brighter future, the admiration for a mother's strength and the joy that comes from building a bond with a father. These are stories filled with self-discovery, growing awareness, and a deepening understanding of the hopes for and the commitment to their future and their community's future that each student has.

We are America is the third book to be published by this class. Two years ago, the class wrote and published *Defining Diversity* a book of essays, charting a concise journey through a century-and-a-half of seminal moments in American history, summarizing key ideas, federal laws, Constitutional Amendments and Supreme Court decisions that have shaped our society. *Defining Diversity* is now in more than 160 schools in almost all fifty states (and Canada). Last year the class published *Achieving Equality* shedding light on a few of the many women and men who have worked to create a more perfect union.

The class is currently working to share *We Are America* with people both in the community and with schools in the Commonwealth. The students have also, on their own, created a website to share their book and work: <https://lhsweareamerica.com/>

I would like to thank Jessica Lander, Lowell High School teacher, for providing the information contained within this report and sharing this wonderful book.