

## Teaching Young Learners with the C3 Framework

# Using the Inquiry Design Model to Reveal Pauli Murray's Story: A Fierce Advocate and Activist Hidden in the Elementary Curriculum

Jen Earley and Corey R. Sell

Pauli Murray has been described as being ahead of her time, a trailblazer and pioneer. She was an activist, lawyer, legal scholar, poet, author, and priest. She was also queer. Her work influenced social movements (e.g., the Women's Rights Movement) and legal cases (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*) often taught within the elementary curriculum. Therefore, it is with these *curricular certainties*—the comfortable, known topics taught to elementary students—that Pauli Murray's narrative deserves to be included. Though many will dismiss Pauli Murray's story as “controversial” due to her identity as queer,<sup>1</sup> we argue teaching her story is revelatory because her work as an activist, scholar, and spiritual leader has been erased from the teaching of these curricular certainties to preserve the “heterosexual landscape” of the social studies curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Illuminating Pauli Murray's story reveals the presence of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people in U.S. history and ensures our youngest learners are taught a more honest and accurate account of the past.

In this article and accompanying pullout, we provide background information on Pauli (see Pullout), explain how the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) helped us create an inquiry about her, describe our planning process, and share the inquiry for others to use.

### Why Use the Inquiry Design Model?

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM), developed by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant, supports elementary teachers in designing and teaching inquiry-based social studies experiences as well as students in learning social studies through inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Created as a means to scaffold the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework's Inquiry Arc, the IDM can be useful for a novice or experienced teacher when planning an elementary social studies inquiry that explores LGBTQ+ history—ensuring a more affirming history is told and the integrity of an inquiry-approach is maintained.



**Figure 1. Portrait of Pauli Murray at 30 years old with the inscription “To Mother with love – 1941”**

Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute

Pauli Murray is not found in children's books, social studies textbooks, or district curriculum. Therefore, we recognized the importance of learning the content first in order to uncover a hidden history, and the IDM provided space to do this. In addition, the IDM ensured the story of Pauli, discovered through research, could be translated to students in a manner that honors the breadth of her contributions and makes sense of her life's work. For example, rather than focusing on instructional steps and tasks once we learned the content, the IDM shifted our attention towards a compelling question, which “is a way to find the common ground between content and students.”<sup>4</sup> Designing a compelling question allowed us to honor the complexity of Pauli's story and address concepts such as change and continuity as well as civic engagement through student exploration.

When it came time to design tasks for students, the IDM gave us space to put sources (e.g., documents, photographs, and oral histories) in front of students and consider how they would access and derive meaning from them. Through this process, we were able to bring in multiple perspectives and give students access to complex texts that support content learning while developing strong disciplinary literacy skills,

going beyond what may be provided in textbooks and teacher telling. We were able to avoid “watering down” content or reducing Pauli’s experiences and instead develop a plan to teach the complexity of Pauli’s story and address issues of racism, sexism, discrimination, change and continuity, and civic engagement in a manner that provides students with a richer and more powerful social studies experience.

The final element of the IDM is taking informed action, where students “civically engage with the content of the inquiry.”<sup>5</sup> Pauli’s lifework consistently revolved around taking action, and the IDM allowed us to highlight this natural progression from content to taking informed action. Specifically, the IDM provided space for students to explore real-world examples of taking action in their lives and communities, drawing upon the content learned earlier.

## The Inquiry

We will describe our planning process using the three distinct phases of inquiry planning: (a) framing, (b) filling, and (c) finishing.<sup>6</sup> See the Pullout for a blueprint of the IDM that will be fully described below. This inquiry was written for fifth graders but could be adapted for use with other elementary grades.

### Framing the Inquiry

As we grappled with writing a compelling question for this inquiry, we kept coming back to Pauli’s own words from a 1976 interview, “I want to see America be what she says she is, and I consider it part of my responsibility to do that. It’s a kind of patriotism.”<sup>7</sup> Pauli continually pushed for change because she wanted to see the country fulfill the promise embedded within its founding documents such as freedom, equality, and rights for all American citizens. We recognized the potential of Pauli’s story to teach students about America’s unfulfilled promise, including the resistance and persistence of African Americans, women, and transgender individuals in holding the country to its promise. Pauli’s story would highlight a different form of patriotism often not taught in schools and center activism, resistance, and persistence as patriotic concepts connected to American citizens. From these musings, our compelling question surfaced: How did Pauli push for the promise?

Next, we developed argument stems that represented two possible ways students might utilize the content of the inquiry to answer the compelling question in the form of a claim with supporting evidence.

- a. Pauli pushed for America to provide its promise of equal rights and protections to African Americans and women by engaging in individual acts of civic engagement. She took part in acts of civil disobedience such as refusing to sit in assigned bus sections, writing letters to people

advocating for herself and others, and publishing works on race, gender, and U.S. constitution.

- b. Pauli pushed for America to provide its promise of equal rights and protections to African Americans and women by engaging in collective acts of civic engagement. She helped form and work with organizations such as Congress of Racial Equality, National Organization for Women, and the Committee on Civil and Political Rights.

Identifying the possible claims students would make by the end of the inquiry—the summative assessment—at the start of the inquiry helped us create a stronger learning experience for students with supporting questions, tasks, and sources that more fully aligned to the summative assessment. Moreover, knowing the claims students would make to answer the compelling question provided guidance on the content we would teach in this inquiry as well, and this content led us to recognize several state social studies standards this inquiry would meet (see Pullout).<sup>8</sup> Ideally, this inquiry would be introduced to students once they have built knowledge about the founding of the nation and the ideals laid out in its founding documents, part of the fifth-grade curriculum. This would allow students to draw upon their knowledge of America’s promises and ideals to better understand why Pauli needed to push for change and the fulfillment of the promise as well as the importance and impact of civic engagement.

### Filling the Inquiry

During the second phase of planning—filling the inquiry—we shifted our attention to developing a “clear instructional path that allows students to acquire the content knowledge and argumentation skills necessary” to answer the compelling question.<sup>9</sup> We focused on creating a sequence of supporting questions for students to answer using primary and secondary sources via specific tasks. These three components—supporting questions, tasks, and sources—ensured students were active inquirers and the teacher a facilitator of learning.

### Supporting Question One

It is likely that most students have not heard of Pauli Murray; therefore, we suggest guiding them through a series of tasks using primary and secondary sources to build knowledge of her and her work: (a) Bubble Map of Influences, (b) See-Think-Wonder Protocol, and (c) Observe-Reflect-Question Protocol. At the end of all three tasks, students will be able to answer supporting question one: Who is Pauli Murray?

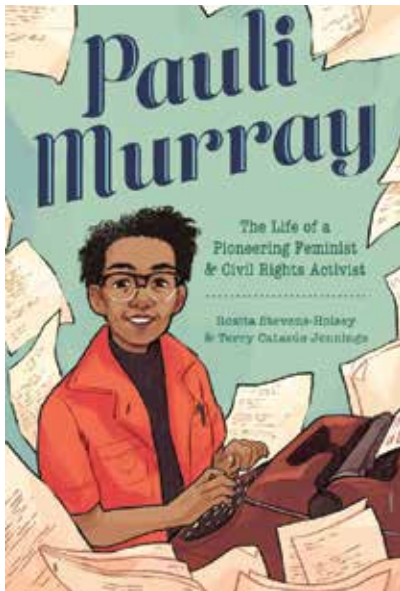
For the first task, students will reflect upon the various influences on Pauli’s life using excerpts from *Pauli Murray*:

*continued on page 17*

## PAULI MURRAY'S STORY: A FIERCE ADVOCATE

from page 16

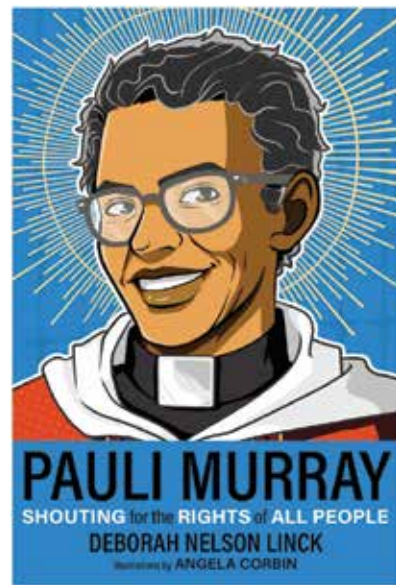
*The Life of a Pioneering Feminist & Civil Rights Activist*, a biography in verse.<sup>10</sup> Consider reading four sections of the text that will each highlight a different influence on her life: “The Bottoms—The Influence of Place” (pp. 12–22), “Childhood—The Influence of Family” (pp. 23–27), “Proud Shoes—The Influence of Heritage” (pp. 38–47), and “Shades—The Influence of Color” (pp. 48–55).



After reading each section aloud, ask students to reflect on the gist of each one posing the question: What words, event(s), or people stood out to you? Record students' thinking on what influenced her life using a bubble map with a circle for each area of influence. Next, have students infer aspects of Pauli's character (attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) based on these four influences. Record these in the center circle of the bubble map. Be sure to show students the family pictures on pages 56–57.

In the second task, students analyze and interpret photographs of Pauli using a See-Think-Wonder protocol in order to recognize Pauli's non-conforming gender identity (see Pullout for references for photographs). The images include a gender-conforming photograph of Pauli at age 16, scrapbook pages documenting the period of time in which she adopted the more gender-neutral name “Pauli” with labels on the photographs such as “The Vagabond” (Boy Scout uniform), “The Dude,” and “Peter Pan.” Questions for *See* include: What do you notice in the photographs? What, if any, words do you see? Guiding questions for the *Think* portion include: What is happening in the image? When do you think it was taken? What can you learn about Pauli from these images? Finally, for *Wonder*, students can generate questions they may have about the images.

Next, have students complete an Observe-Reflect-Question protocol using one of two timelines of Pauli's life, either a timeline provided in the children's biography by Deborah Nelson Linck, *Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Rights of All People* (pp. 47–52),<sup>11</sup> or a simplified timeline available online from the Pauli Murray Center.<sup>12</sup> When using this analysis tool from the Library of Congress, consider having students reflect upon the following: (a) What event seems important to you in the life of Pauli and why? (b) What information on the timeline helps us learn more about Pauli? and (c) What questions do you have about the events? After students complete the analysis tool, have students discuss the salient events in Pauli's life, and then, in pairs, have students work to create an abbreviated timeline of the events they deem most important in Pauli's life in order to summarize their analysis and interpretation work.



### Supporting Question Two

Pauli's life was dedicated to equal rights, and it is not possible to examine all of Pauli's work. Therefore, we suggest guiding students through a set of tasks that will give students an overview of two social justice causes she participated in: racial equality and women's rights. This will allow students to identify different forms of action and a variety of ways citizens can work for change. By the end of these tasks, students will be able to answer the second supporting question: How did Pauli's individual actions push for “America to be what she says she is”? As with the first question, these lessons may take several days. To support students in answering the supporting question, we suggest creating an anchor chart titled, “Pauli pushes for change.” Have students record their thinking across all tasks so that, by the end, they will have constructed a detailed answer that can be corroborated across sources.

The first set of tasks detail Pauli's fight to end racial discrimination and segregation. Begin with a short read aloud of Deborah Nelson Linck's *Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Rights of All People* (pp. 23–27). This chapter provides background information on two events to be examined in further detail: admittance to the University of North Carolina (UNC) and riding a segregated bus. Next, provide students with a letter Pauli wrote to the UNC president challenging the school's segregation policy and asking to be admitted as well as the president's response. Discuss several vocabulary words first such as *Mason-Dixon line*, *inequities*, *prejudices*, etc. Then conduct a shared reading of the text. Have students pay attention to the section where Pauli poses ten questions for the president to consider. At the end, have students reflect on the following: (a) What words or phrases stand out to you? (b) What was the author's message or argument? (c) What can you tell about the person writing the letter and about that person's point of view? (d) How do these letters explain Pauli as an activist?

Next, have students listen to an oral history where Pauli describes an incident of resistance on a segregated bus. Students can use the Oral History Analysis Tool (see Pullout) to analyze and interpret this source.<sup>13</sup> Afterward, students can share the following: (a) Who is telling this story? (b) What is their point of view? (c) What did you learn from this story? Engage students in a class discussion about this type of civic action/protest and the ways that Pauli's actions pushed for change and add their responses to the anchor chart.

Finally, do a repeated listen to *Pauli the Podcast*, "Episode 2: Laying Down the Law."<sup>14</sup> After the first listen, have students reflect and share: What did you learn from this podcast? Prior to the second listen, ask students: What was the purpose of the book she wrote? Then, have students reflect on the importance of Pauli's writing in the fight against racial discrimination and in the civil rights movement during the second listen. Add students' responses to the anchor chart. After the repeated listen, share with students background information on *Brown v. Board of Education* and Thurgood Marshall's role.

The second set of tasks focuses on the concept of Jane Crow and the intersectionality between race and sex discrimination and how Pauli's work to fight Jane Crow would go on to inspire Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Begin with a short read aloud of chapter eight from *Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Rights of All People*. This will provide background information for students. Next, have students engage in a See-Think-Wonder using the Class of 1944 Howard Law School photograph that depicts Pauli as the only woman in her class. Third, have students watch a short interview with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, featured in a documentary by filmmakers Margo Guernsey and Llewellyn Smith in 2017,<sup>15</sup> where Ginsburg details how Pauli's ideas on sex discrimination and the 14th

Amendment influenced her and her work. Students should reflect on the following while watching: Why did Ruth Bader Ginsburg think Pauli was remarkable? It is important to discuss the term *legacy* here with students. As this source demonstrates, Pauli's work influenced Ruth Bader Ginsburg's work as a lawyer and Supreme Court justice. Students can make connections to the podcast used previously, as it demonstrates how Thurgood Marshall was also influenced by her work.

### Supporting Question Three

The third supporting question asks, How did Pauli work with others to push for "America to be what she says she is"? To answer this question, have students engage in a gallery walk using four primary sources—three photographs and one document—with captions posted around the room (see Pullout for references for sources). Each source hints at Pauli's connection to four different organizations or causes. The first shows her with Ralph Abernathy, who served on the advisory committee for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which she cofounded in 1942. The second photograph shows her with Lyda Moor Merrick, an advocate for African American libraries and for the visually impaired. From this image, students can realize how Pauli networked and knew other advocates, inferring that she supported their causes too. In the third photograph, Pauli can be seen sitting with other women in the National Organization for Women (NOW), an organization she cofounded. Lastly, the fourth primary source is a list of committee members, including herself, appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the Committee on Civil and Political Rights. In her memoir, Pauli states the purpose of the committee was to "review and make recommendations on differences in legal treatment of men and women."<sup>16</sup> By the end, have students discuss their answers to the supporting question using evidence from all primary sources.

### Finishing the Inquiry

In the third phase of planning—finishing the inquiry—we focused on how to build student curiosity and promote taking informed action. First, to "hook" students we asked them to consider whether all U.S. citizens had the rights promised to them and followed this up by listening to an interview with Pauli from an oral history project in 1976. The audio clip features Pauli explaining her activism as a "kind of patriotism," and why, despite the many obstacles she faced, she loves America. It reframes patriotism and citizenship to include acts of questioning, resistance, and forms of criticism that extend well beyond passive notions of these concepts that elementary students are often taught. Using this audio clip to begin the inquiry invites students into this learning experience by building curiosity about what America promised and if it made good on its promise.



Next, our focus turned to taking informed action. Swan, Grant, and Lee refer to this element of planning as “cre-scendoing” the intellectual pursuits from the inquiry into opportunities for civic action.<sup>17</sup> This final element, built into the IDM, will ensure that you plan for and teach students civic action, fulfilling the purpose of the social studies curriculum as defined by NCSS.<sup>18</sup> We suggest revisiting Pauli’s interview. Students can use the Oral History Analysis Tool to analyze her words and add to their interpretations from the beginning of the inquiry. In pairs, we suggest having students investigate and research an issue within their community and present this to their peers. Next, the class could determine one issue to investigate collectively and decide on one form of action they are able to take. Students can choose a form of action from the examples in Pauli’s life, such as writing letters to leaders and policymakers, writing short essays or poetry that can be published in a school or class newsletter, volunteering (with family members or caregivers), or bringing awareness to an issue through forms of media. Giving students options would not only appeal to their natural interests and abilities but also increase engagement and motivation, making this piece of the inquiry accessible to all students.

## Conclusion

Pauli’s story should not be included within the elementary curriculum; her story is already there. It has been excluded—forcibly hidden—in the *curricular certainties* of both the Civil and Women’s Rights Movement that you teach to elementary students. Therefore, it is time to reveal Pauli’s story to elementary students. A story that complicates notions of continuity and change—an important historical thinking concept for elementary students. A story that grapples with complex forms of civic engagement—an often-ignored concept in elementary social studies. A story that portrays a more diverse citizenry that will affirm all students’ place in our democratic society. A story that, if told through inquiry, which the National Council for the Social Studies recommends when teaching LGBTQ+ histories,<sup>19</sup> will do more than just increase elementary students’ knowledge of LGBTQ+ people, but “change the underlying story we tell about the United States.”<sup>20</sup> ■

## Notes

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2. Summer Melody Pennell, “Queer Theory/Pedagogy and Social Justice Education,” in *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education*, ed. Rosemary Papa (New York: Springer, 2020), 2291–2311.
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5. Swan, Lee, and Grant, *Inquiry Design Model*, 130.
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8. Social Studies Academic Standards, Colorado Department of Education, [www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/statestandards](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/statestandards).
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10. Rosita Stevens-Holsey and Terry Catasús Jennings, *Pauli Murray: The Life of a Pioneering Feminist & Civil Rights Activist*, illus. Ashanti Fortson (New York: Yellow Jacket, 2022).
11. Deborah Nelson Linck, *Pauli Murray: Shouting for the Rights of All People*, illus. Angela Corbin (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2022).
12. Pauli Murray Timeline, Pauli Murray Center, [www.paulimurraycenter.com/murray-timeline](http://www.paulimurraycenter.com/murray-timeline).
13. Oral History Analysis Tool, Colorado Department of Education, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/psssets>.
14. “Episode 2: Laying Down the Law,” in *Pauli the Podcast*, hosted and produced by Leoneda Inge, 1:36–4:19, [www.wunc.org/race-demographics/2021-02-05/pauli-the-podcast](http://www.wunc.org/race-demographics/2021-02-05/pauli-the-podcast).
15. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, interview by Margo Guernsey and Llewellyn Smith, “RBG Wanted People To Know More About One Of Her Legal Heroes,” *TIME*, recorded in 2017, YouTube video, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rv838WxQaeQ&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rv838WxQaeQ&t=5s).
16. Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: Memoir of an American Pilgrimage*, with an introduction by Patricia Bell-Scott (New York: Liveright, 2018), 452.
17. Swan, Lee, and Grant, *Inquiry Design Model*.
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