

Finding Equity in Literature

*2020 - Collaborative Classroom Grant
Application*

Catherine Wetmore

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Application Form

***Teachers - Check out the new Collaborator feature tutorial:**

Collaborator Video Tutorial: (2 minutes)

Collaborator Written Tutorial:

Project Name*

Name of Project

Finding Equity in Literature

Amount Requested

Amount Requested

\$1,000.00

Grade Level

Please select the grade level most appropriate for the grant you are writing.

Middle School (6-8)

Primary Subject Area*

Please choose the primary subject area.

Language Arts

School

Please select your school.

Castle Rock Middle School

Applicants*

Please list the educators collaborating on this grant. Please upload the Collaborative Signature Page with your grant submission.

Catherine Wetmore

Collaborative Grant Signature Page*

Please upload the Collaborative Grant Signature Page listing all educators collaborating on the grant.

Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools.pdf

Number of Students Served

Please enter the number of students that will be served by this grant.

200

Project Cost

What is the amount you are applying for?

\$1,000.00

Statement of Need

Please describe the need for this project. For example, how will this project impact student learning?

Research shows that when readers encounter meaningful, culturally relevant material, they not only use critical thinking skills and engage with the material, but they also make deeper and more meaningful connections. The middle school ELA novel selections has been missing novels that focus on current, relatable issues such as social justice. In October 2020, three social justice novels were placed towards the curriculum team for approval, and I am delightful to hear that they have been approved: *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jaqueline Woodson, and *Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia Williams.

Due to current cutbacks, the school does not have the funds necessary to purchase classroom sets of these novels. These novels are planning to be incorporated into the ongoing ELA 7th and 8th grade curriculum. They are written by award winning African American authors, and these authors and novels have been recognized for a plethora of awards for their use of complex characters and plot to draw in young readers. These novels help young readers understand the dynamics of our communities and society in areas of equity and injustice. Currently, our curriculum does not have a focus on this genre of novels, and it is something our students need to be exposed to.

Below you will find a link to a wakelet that has many articles and author interviews about these novels.
<https://wakelet.com/wake/-dj7VtAQmJIOezD1dv6v1>

This project is needed in the ELA curriculum. It is designed to help students engage with current young adult literature that is well written, award winning, and meaningful. Students will find themselves challenged in making textual connections (text to self, world, and text) through the lens of an author and characters that face similar challenges: self journey through cultures, values, and tensions within local and global communities.

Primary Goal

Please describe the primary goal of the project and how it blends with School District 2 goals and curriculum.

The primary goal is to help elevate students in their understanding of character's choice based on their own values and morals through social justice novels. Just like characters, we as individuals are faced with life experiences that challenge our own values. Students will look at how complex characters change throughout a text (character development) based on their own individual experiences. These experiences include looking at relationships between characters, character responses to conflict, and even key moments within the plot (climax, dramatic situations, and resolutions). These fundamental literary terms are a focus within the ELA 6-

8 reading standards and are also a focus for School District 2. These novels help students learn and develop a deeper understanding of key ELA proficiency skills; this project also ties in to the top level of Blooms Taxonomy.

Collaborative Focus*

Please describe how your project will foster collaborative learning for students in the classroom. Please share an example of how teachers involved in this grant will be collaborating to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

This project has a focus on collaborative learning. The idea behind this is that students will be placed into groups (based on novel choice if doing multiple or groups for small work discussion) in order to gain a better understanding on the novel, the characters, and plot characteristics that impact the reading of the novel. Collaborative learning is enforced through classroom discussions, responses, and textual connection assignments. Students must find ways to engage in classroom discussions on social justice issues and bring forth relatable, relevant issues. Small group strategies are used to help elevate student's understanding of not only speaking about their own values but learning to respect the values of others. That is a large focus on social justice, but the skill building of listening and speaking are done best in small group settings.

Collaborative learning also takes place between teachers these novels will be shared with. My goal is for educators within my building to work collaboratively to create skill building and engaging units. These units will focus on how students will be challenged in understanding both details of plot, conflict, and character development. Educators must find relatable material to use with each of these novels and also find ways to create meaningful, engaging projects. The goal is to have students learn about social justice through the use of these novels and collaborative efforts to help build effective units with these novels are a primary focus.

Collaborative focus will also continue through the use of the library to focus on diversity and finding culturally, diverse books through personal exploration.

Project Description

Briefly identify the major activities and materials involved in your project.

The major materials needed for this project are the novels: *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jaqueline Woodson, and *Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia Williams.

With this project, I hope to engage and motivate students to engage in reading, large and small group discussions, textual connections, and written responses. These novels are to be used every year going forward but as reading material evolves, just like our world and learning, so will the units. This project is being implemented this year in a small group setting in my Enriched English 8 class. This year, the project will begin with student choice. Students will be able to select one of the novels available. Then, they will engage in small group discussion. Group work will vary from character understanding, plot knowledge, and textual connections. While reading independently, students will be asked to maintain a reader response journal. This journal will focus on textual connections. Then, a post reading project will be conducted in which each group will create a public service announcement (PSA).

The learning goal from this project is to engage in rich conversations about what is happening within our communities, on the news, and how our awareness can shape our individual response. In essence, what can we learn from these novels and apply to our own individual lives? Then, how can we share what we have learned with others in our community? The community focus for this year is our classroom and potentially our school.

Professional Development

If your project includes professional development how will it improve student performance?

It does not require professional development; however, I would like to also expand these novels to the use of my team members. I will be encouraging all of them to read prior to teaching.

Project Timeline

When will you implement your project?

This project is being implemented this year for Enriched English 8. Novels are being provided through the use of our library borrowing system. However, it is a project that will continue to be a focus year after year. Depending on availability of novels, this project can be adapted for large group, small group, or individual work. Once novels are available, my goal is for the ELA team to create units that focus on key skills: making connections, developing theme, and understanding how characters develop based on their own values, beliefs, and how those values can be challenged within society.

Plan for Evaluation

How will you evaluate student outcomes for your project?

The learning goal from this project is to engage in rich conversations about what is happening within our communities, on the news, and how our awareness can shape our individual response. Students will be asked to conduct a PSA (public service announcement) after reading one of the three novels. Student outcomes include their ability to understand an author's point of view, their ability to articulate and share this information in a presentation, and their ability to engage in discussion (i.e. socratic seminars, small group responses). I also value student feedback. I also look forward to gathering data from my students on their perspectives on the novels. If they found them to be relevant to our lives, communities, and world, then I would find success in engaging my students in culturally relevant material.

There will also be small assignments evaluate reading comprehension skills, but these will be created upon expanding these novels into larger units.

Project Budget

Please explain how the funds from this grant will be spent to support your project goal. You can either type or upload a project budget to show how funds will be used. Please identify other funding sources if applicable.

Novel Prices.docx

The funds will go towards providing both classrooms sets and a teacher copy for each of the novels requested:

1. Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson (set of 30 at \$10.99)
2. Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds (set of 30 at \$11.99)
3. Genesis Begins Again by Alicia Williams (set of 30 at \$8.99)

Then, extra funds would go towards purchasing the new graphic novel that was just published of Long Way Down. The graphic version is not only great for compare and contrasting but also serves as a tool for those who are below reading benchmark. They are able to read the same novel. (\$19.99 each)

Supervisor Approval*

I have received approval from my supervisor to apply for this grant.

yes

Attachment 1

Please attach any photos, pages from catalogs, or other documents below. This is completely optional.

CulturallyResponsiveTeaching-Matters.pdf

Attachment 2

Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf

Attachment 3

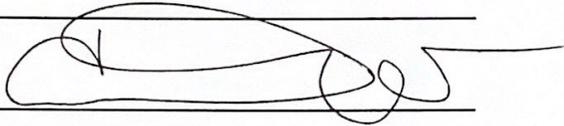
File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

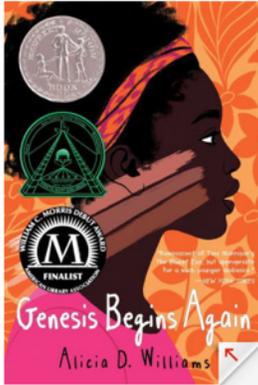
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- CulturallyResponsiveTeaching-Matters.pdf
- Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf

Education Foundation for Billings Public Schools
Collaborative Classroom Grant Application
Signature Page

Please list the individuals collaborating on this grant submission.

Printed Name	Signature
Catherine Wetmore	





 Add to Wishlist

Genesis Begins Again

by Alicia D. Williams

★★★★★ 4.5 (4)

Paperback (Reprint)

\$8.99



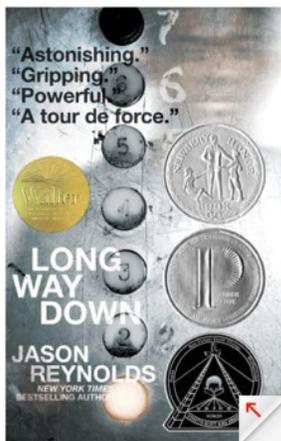
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Long Way Down

by Jason Reynolds

★★★★★ 4.7 (18)

Paperback (Reprint)

\$10.99 ~~from \$11.99~~ | Save 8%



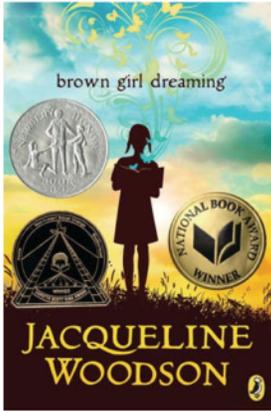
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Brown Girl Dreaming

by Jacqueline Woodson

★★★★★ 4.7 (24)

Paperback (Reprint)

\$9.89 ~~\$10.99~~ | Save 10%

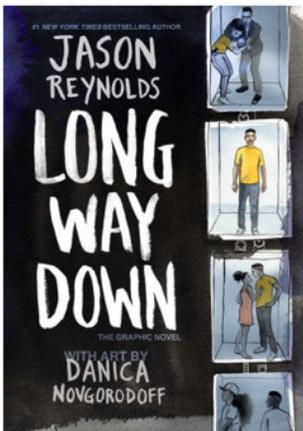
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Long Way Down: The Graphic Novel

by Jason Reynolds, Danica Novgorodoff (Illustrator)

★★★★★ 4.8 (11)

Hardcover

\$16.99 ~~\$19.99~~ | Save 15%

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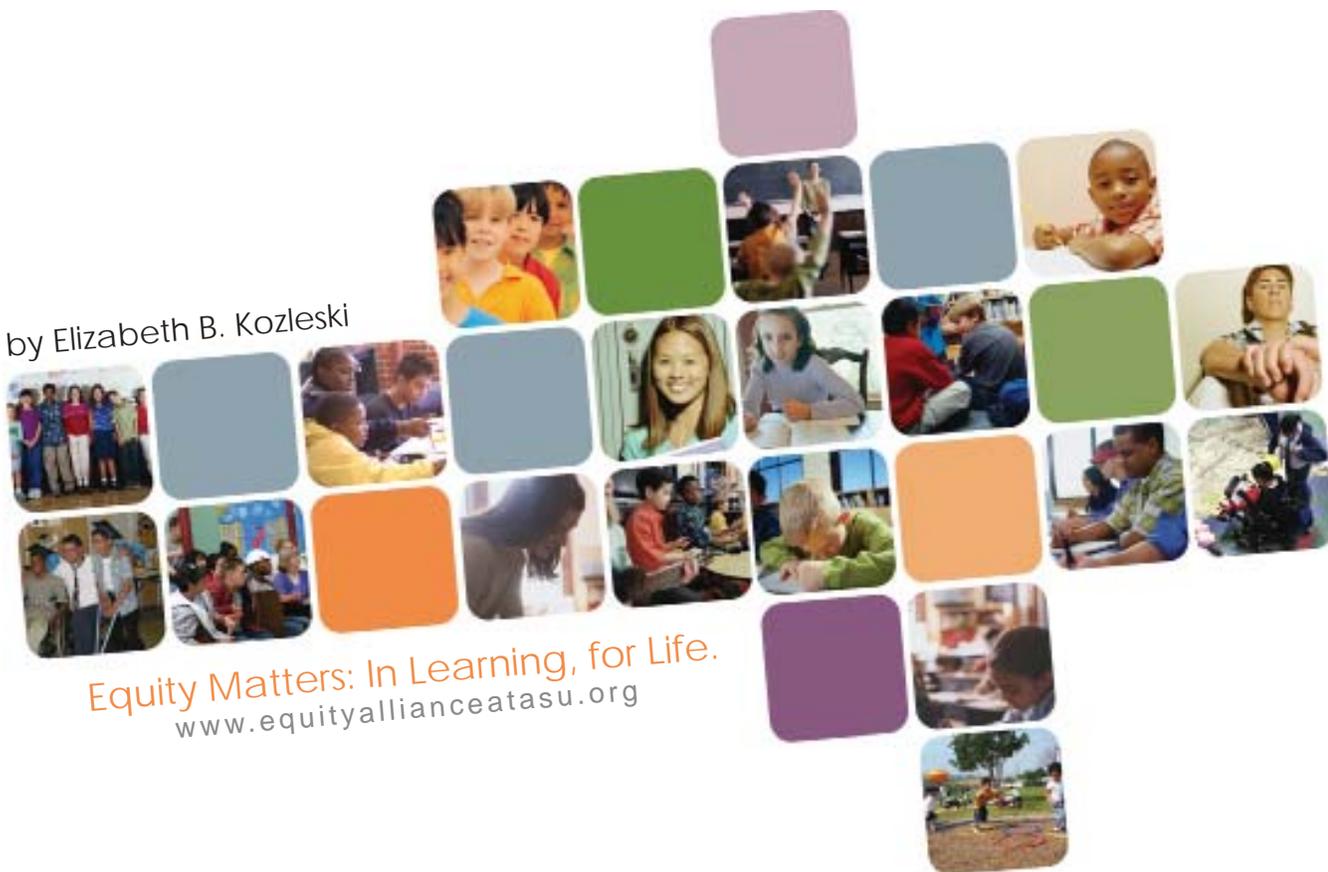
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Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!

by Elizabeth B. Kozleski



Equity Matters: In Learning, for Life.
www.equityallianceatasu.org

What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

In 2000, Professor Geneva Gay wrote that culturally responsive teaching connects students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know. By embracing the sociocultural realities and histories of students through what is taught and

how, culturally responsive teachers negotiate classrooms cultures with their students that reflect the communities where students develop and grow. This is no small matter because it requires that teachers transcend their own cultural biases and preferences to establish and develop patterns for learning and communicating that engage and

sustain student participation and achievement.

Part of the tradition of teaching is that teachers have the role of shepherding the next generation through a set of passages so that they can attain adulthood with a full complement of the knowledge, skills, and

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Culturally Responsive Teaching ...continued

dispositions necessary to be contributing citizens. When the cultural heritages and assumptions about what is valued, expected, and taught compete with other compelling realities, teachers take on a facilitator role while they relinquish their status as knowledge brokers. Becoming culturally responsive means that teachers as well as students have to negotiate new standards and norms that acknowledge the differences and the similarities among and between individuals and groups.

Teachers play a critical role in mediating the social and academic curriculum. While acknowledging what students already know, they connect it to frameworks and models for thinking and organizing knowledge that are embedded within disciplines such as literacy, mathematics, social studies, and the sciences. Culturally responsive teachers realize that mastering academic knowledge involves understanding that content maps can provide multiple avenues to understand and access information. History offers a particular example. U.S. students might study the expansion of the American West through the eyes of the pioneers and the politicians who supported the westward expansion. Yet, that same time frame could be studied through the perspectives of indigenous peoples who experienced a cataclysmic end to their ways of living that forced them off the lands that had belonged to their ancestors for centuries. Considering how to approach curriculum and incorporating multiple paradigms in the ways that curriculum are presented and experienced is an important part of culturally responsive teaching.

Equally important is the way that instruction is facilitated. When classrooms are organized into communities that are designed to encourage academic and cultural excellence, students learn to facilitate their own learning as well as that of their fellow students. This kind of classroom requires careful planning and explicit teaching around social interactions so that students learn to assume leadership for learning, feel comfortable exploring differences of opinion, and accept that they may need help from their classmates in order to be successful. Along the way, students learn to see the classroom and their interactions from more than one perspective so that they can identify potential difficulties that come from assumptions of privilege, the distribution of power (who gets to make the rules), and the assessment of performance and competence.



Key Terms

Curriculum: An educational term that describes the range of courses from which students choose what subject matters to study, and a sequence of study that includes specific approaches to teaching, learner roles, products, and behaviors, and the assessments used to guide and evaluate learning.

Indigenous Peoples: Defines individuals and groups of individuals whose culture and language existed prior to the current government and dominant culture of a territory or nation. Indigenous peoples, like American Indians, have maintained at least in part their distinct linguistic, cultural, and social organizational features. As a result, they are distinct to some degree from the surrounding populations and dominant culture of the current nation/state.

Mediation: Refers to the process of adjusting and balancing between two potentially confusing or competing ideas, programs, viewpoints, or perspectives.

Nondominant Culture: In classrooms, organizations, and communities, there are multiple cultures present with distinct rules for social interaction. Therefore cultures can be either dominant, the “norm” in a given context, or non dominant.

Paradigm: A way of thinking about and examining the world as well as a way of developing knowledge that is built on a set of theories, laws, and generalizations.

Power: The capacity to influence achieving specific outcomes or goals for a group or an individual. Power is defined through interpersonal relationships and transactions.

Privilege: The idea that an individual or group of individuals might experience unearned and un-asked for rights and statuses that are unavailable to other groups or individuals.

Sociocultural: Refers to the social and cultural aspects of human interaction and participation.

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Why Should Culturally Responsive Teaching Be the Norm?

The achievement gap in the US often separates groups of students by drawing differences between White, middle class students and their peers who may be American Indian, African-American, Asian American and/or Latino/a. There are many harmful effects of looking at performance in terms of gaps particularly because the gaps that are noticed privilege some kinds of knowledge over others. While the path to college is based on banking particular kinds of knowledge and using it to demonstrate competence, we cannot forget that practical and indigenous ways of knowing offer great insight and have ecological and social significance.

Culturally responsive teaching helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from non-dominant cultures in demonstrating their proficiencies in language usage, grammar, mathematical knowledge and other tools they use to navigate their everyday lives. Further, by understanding the features of this knowledge, students from non-dominant cultures can learn how to translate the logical structures of their knowledge and map them onto the school curriculum.

By bringing alternative ways of knowing and communicating into schools, the curriculum as well as the students benefit. Culturally responsive teaching creates these bridges and in doing so, offers the possibility for transformational knowledge that leads to socially responsible action.

What are Non-Examples of Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Colorblind Motivational Models: Many classroom management approaches suggest a set of processes to follow to establish and maintain order in the classroom. Because these approaches assume that children have had similar histories and cultural modeling, approaches to behavior management can be color and culture blind. For instance, one approach may take the

form of reminding students what the rules are in direct (i.e., Please take your seats now) or indirect (I heard the bell. Let's see who remembers what to do) comments. When students fail to respond, teachers are told to warn students by telling them what to do and what the consequences of non compliance are. In step three, teachers give out infraction slips, and then, in step four, are sent to the office. Even when teachers invest time in teaching the rules before they put these kinds of systems in place, the rigidity of the system makes it difficult for students who need many experiences to be able to predict what may be expected and then act accordingly. And, because of the nature of the system and individual psychological and cultural patterns, the very system itself can create resistance and avoidance.

Another model that lacks cultural responsiveness reminds teachers to "catch students being good." Teachers are asked to acknowledge and reinforce students who are following classroom norms and rules. Often, a token economy is used so that students can collect "being good" tokens through the day, week, month, or quarter and cash them in periodically for high preference activities that the students themselves may have identified. For instance, students could get time in the library to work independently, opportunities to check out and use DVDs on key topics, go out to lunch with a favorite teacher, get to be at the front of the recess line, or any other assorted activities intended to be rewards. The system itself can create lots of cognitive dissonance for students who are confused about why adults would spend time setting up these kinds of reward structures when they are more familiar with approaches that teach through example, modeling, and story. It could be that students familiar with other approaches to living in a civil community assume that the systems are for other students. All kinds of misinterpretations can occur with little conversation. And, students may act on their own assumptions and appear to teachers as if they are being oppositional or defiant.



Culturally Responsive Behavior Management Systems

Viewing behavioral systems from a culturally responsive perspective means asking questions about what rules are being set, by whom, and for what purpose. Making sure that students are developing internal systems that guide their judgments about creating and sustaining inclusive communities is at least as important as policing student behavior. Students need mental models that help them manage their own emotions, control impulses, look at issues from other people's perspectives, and clarify their own interests. As they engage in developing these processes, students construct their own identities and roles within their communities.

Students and families need to be involved in setting behavioral and community norms for their schools so that expectations in schools build on and extend the positive and community oriented values and beliefs of community leaders and families. Teachers and other educators may be surprised about the kinds of standards that communities set for themselves and expect from schools and have to be willing to negotiate those norms that may or may not reflect the dominant, middle class standards that many teachers uncritically apply in their classrooms





What Are Key Features Of Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Communicate high expectations. Make sure that you let each student know that you expect them to engage, perform, and achieve at high level, rather than making excuses in your own mind for some students who don't participate at optimal levels at times.

Actively engage your students in learning. Coach your students to question, consult original material, connect content to their own lives, write to learn, read broadly, build models, test hypotheses, and make time to build relationships with them so that the disappointments that come from trying and not quite succeeding don't cause them to quit learning.

Facilitate learning. Build students' capacity to handle new material, solve complex problems, and develop new skills by scaffolding their learning from what they already know through a series of increasingly complex experiences that shift the locus of control from the teacher to the learner.

Understand the assets and capabilities that students' families bring to their parenting. Understand the cultures represented in your classroom by getting to know your students. Visit the neighborhoods where they live. Listen to them talk about their lives. Understand what and whom they care about. Consistently engage in real conversation and dialogue with your students. For example, if you have English language learners in your class, go to lunch with them.



Try to understand their reality by actively listening to them and the sense that they are making of the curriculum. Use small group, personalized instruction to help students develop their academic language skills.

Anchor your curriculum in the everyday lives of your students. Connect their knowledge and skills to content knowledge. Spend time on helping students learn the content. Use real life, authentic texts. Engage students in inquiry about things that matter to them.

Select participation structures for learning that reflect students' ways of knowing and doing. Put yourself in situations where you're not dominant, where you're a noticeable minority or in a group where you don't know the norms and unspoken rules. Recognize what that feels like and sit with the discomfort. Ask yourself these questions: What did I do to make myself more comfortable? What did I do to be effective or survive in that situation? What did others do that either helped or hindered my effectiveness? What would have helped me in that situation? Use the answers to these questions help you to structure how you include students.

Share control of the classroom with your students. Challenge yourself to see yourself in the opposite situation of which you identify. For example, if you see yourself in the non-dominant culture as a woman, in which situations can you see yourself as the dominant culture? Stretch yourself to expand your own self-definition. To help you see life from a different perspective, consciously read books or watch movies about groups other than your own. In addition, explore your own privileges and the impact those have on the organization and the people in it.

Engage in reflective thinking and writing. Teachers must reflect on their actions and interactions as they try to discern the personal motivations that govern their behaviors. Understanding the factors that contribute to certain behaviors (e.g., racism, ethnocentrism) is the first step toward changing these behaviors. This process is facilitated by autobiographical and reflective writing, usually in a journal.

Read More



Explore personal and family histories. Teachers need to explore their early experiences and familial events that have contributed to their understanding of themselves as racial or nonracial beings. As part of this process, teachers can conduct informal interviews of family members (e.g., parents, grandparents) about their beliefs and experiences regarding different groups in society. The information shared can enlighten teachers about the roots of their own views. When teachers come to terms with the historical shaping of their own values, they can better relate to their colleagues and students who bring different histories and expectations.

Acknowledge membership in different groups. Teachers must recognize and acknowledge their affiliation with various groups in society, and the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to each group. For example, for White female teachers, membership in the White middle-class group affords certain privileges in society; at the same time being a female presents many challenges in a male-dominated world. Moreover, teachers need to assess how belonging to one group influences how one relates to and views other groups.

Learn about the history and experiences of diverse groups. It is important that teachers learn about the lives and experiences of other groups in order to understand how different historical experiences have shaped attitudes and perspectives of various groups. Further, by learning about other groups, teachers begin to see differences between their own values and those of other groups. To learn about the histories of diverse groups, particularly from their perspectives, teachers can read literature written by those particular groups as well as personally interact with members of those groups.

Visit students' families and communities. It is important that teachers get to know their students' families and communities by actually going into the students' home environments. This allows teachers to relate to their students as more than just "bodies" in the classroom but also as social and cultural beings connected to a complex social and cultural network. Moreover, by becoming familiar with students' home lives, teachers gain insight into the influences on the students' attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, teachers can use the families and communities as resources (e.g., classroom helpers or speakers) that will contribute to the educational growth of the students.

Visit or read about successful teachers in diverse settings. Teachers need to learn about successful approaches to educating children from diverse backgrounds. By actually visiting classrooms of successful teachers of children from diverse backgrounds and/or reading authentic accounts of such success, teachers can gain exemplary models for developing their own skills.

Develop an appreciation of diversity. To be effective in a diverse classroom, teachers must have an appreciation of diversity. They must view difference as the "norm" in society and reject notions that any one group is more competent than another. This entails developing respect for differences, and the willingness to teach from this perspective. Moreover, there must be an acknowledgment that the teachers' views of the world are not the only views.

Participate in reforming the institution. The educational system has historically fostered the achievement of one segment of the school population by establishing culturally biased standards and values. The monocultural values of schools have promoted biases in curriculum development and instructional practices that have been detrimental to the achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers need to participate in reforming the educational system so that it becomes inclusive. As the direct link between the institution and the students, teachers are in a pivotal position to facilitate change. By continuing a traditional "conform-or-fail" approach to instruction, teachers perpetuate a monocultural institution. By questioning traditional policies and practices, and by becoming culturally responsive in instruction, teachers work toward changing the institution.





Where Can I Go to Get More Information?

Visit these three websites to get more information about becoming culturally responsive. For a small booklet on becoming culturally responsive, visit the NIUSI-*LeadScape* project at http://www.urbanschools.org/pdf/cultural.identity.LETTER.pdf?v_document_name=Cultural%20Identity%20and%20Teaching. To engage colleagues in learning more about culturally responsive literacy, check out this module produced by NCCRESt on culturally responsive literacy: http://www.nccrest.org/professional/culturally_responsive_literacy.html. To learn more about current issues in education that relate to culturally responsive education, subscribe to our Equity Matters newsletter <http://www.equityallianceatlasu.org/ea/equity-matters-newsletter>.

Disclaimer

The contents of this *What Matters* were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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Reading Is
Fundamental

MULTICULTURAL LITERACY:

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors

Johannes Gutenberg invented the moveable-type printing press in the mid-1400s.

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.

For many years, nonwhite readers have too frequently found the search futile. This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication, in the Saturday Review, of Nancy Larrick's landmark article, "The All-White World of Children's Books." "Across the country," she stated in that piece, "6,340,000 nonwhite children are learning to read and to understand the American way of life in books which either omit them entirely or scarcely mention them." A quarter of a century later, census data indicate that about 30% of the school population are members of so-called minority groups—Latinos, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans—and where will they find their mirrors?

A former colleague at the University of Massachusetts, Sonia Nieto, found that in the decade between 1972 and 1982, an average of only five and half books a year were published about Puerto Ricans. Perusal of my shelves of review books and new and recent publishers' catalogs indicate that if we were to examine the past eight years, the numbers are likely to be the same—if not lower. Stories about contemporary Mexican-Americans are few and far between. Isabel Schon's recent bibliography in the Journal of Youth Services (Winter, 1989) lists a total of nineteen books about Hispanics, fifteen nonfiction and four books of folk stories and legends. Contemporary Asians and contemporary Native Americans do not fare much better. The largest number of books about so-called minority groups is about Afro-Americans. In the quarter century since the Larrick article, the numbers of books about Afro-Americans has increased considerably, despite a major decrease of such books in the early and mid-1980s.

When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. Our classrooms need to be places where all the children from all the cultures that make up the salad bowl of American society can find their mirrors.

Children from dominant social groups have always found their mirrors in books, but they, too, have suffered from the lack of availability of books about others. They need the books as windows onto reality, not just on imaginary worlds. They need books that will help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in, and their place as a member of just one group, as well as their connections to all other humans. In this country, where racism is still one of the major unresolved social problems, books may be one of the few places where children who are socially isolated and insulated from the larger world may meet people unlike themselves. If they see only reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world—a dangerous ethnocentrism.

Consider some of the possibilities. From reading, for example, children can become aware of some of the many variations in the way English is spoken in this country, and the richness those variations add to the language. Take Belva Jean Copenhagen, who tells us in Sandra Dutton's *Tales of Belva Jean Copenhagen* (Atheneum, 1989): "I thought I would put one of these (a preface) onto my books because I seen one in a couple of other books of stories. It's where the author tells the reader what to look out for and where she got the ideas for she's written up." Belva Jean tells her own stories in her own voice, which echoes the rhythms, the grammar, and the color of many of the people who inhabit the Appalachian Mountain region. In her afterword, Belva Jean states: "Now I could have told you these stories in Standard English, but I'm not on TV, and this ain't a formal occasion. This was just me rambling on about times I've had and people I've knowed, and things we've did together..."

In one of my old favorites, Lucille Clifton's *My Brother Fine With Me* (Holt, 1975; now out of print, but available in many libraries), Johnetta's narration reflects an informal Black vernacular: "Me and Baggy the only child. I was the only child till he come being born. Everything was all right, me and Mama and Daddy doing fine till Mama come spreading out like a pancake and Aunt Winnie who don't even like children come to watch me for a while and Mama go off and come back here with Baggy. I was mad for a long time and I ain't all that glad now, but I don't let on."

Both those voices are authentic, and their authenticity makes the characters believable and identifies them as members of a particular social group. Changing their voices to Standard English would take away a large part of their distinctiveness.

Books can also introduce readers to the history and traditions that are important to any one cultural group, and which invite comparisons to their own. One of the 1989 Caldecott Honor Books, Patricia McKissack's *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney (Knopf, 1988), is the fictionalized story of how her grandparents got together as teenagers, by dancing a cakewalk as if they were "dancing with the Wind!" It also introduces readers to a bit of history of the cakewalk, a dance introduced by slaves and rooted in Afro-American culture.

Folk tales, too, help to keep alive the traditions and values that are important to social groups. Laurence Yep's *The Rainbow People* (Harper & Row, 1989) is a collection of stories told by Chinese immigrants, starting with those who arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century who were unable to bring their families to America, and lived their lives as bachelors. In his introduction, Yep states that the stories express the "loneliness, anger, fear, and love that were part of the Chinese-American experience."

Recently, a spate of Afro-American stories have been published, beginning with Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly* (Knopf, 1985), and followed by the retellings of the Brer Rabbit stories illustrated by Barry Moser and published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: *Jump!* (1986), *Jump Again!* (1987), and *Jump on Over!* (1989). Julius Lester has also published two collections of his retellings of the Brer Rabbit stories in *The Tales of Uncle Remus* (Dial, 1987) and *More Tales of Uncle Remus* (Dial, 1988). Many of the animal stories reflect the hopes and dreams, and some of the reality of the lives of people who were in many ways powerless over the plantation owners who thought of them as so much property. It is easy to understand how Brer Rabbit, the trickster figure who, small though he was, managed to outsmart animals much larger and more powerful than he, became a favorite of people who saw in him something of themselves. The stories have appeal to all children, for what child has not felt small and powerless in an adult world?

Those of us who are children's literature enthusiasts tend to be somewhat idealistic, believing that some book, some story, some poem can speak to each individual child, and that if we have the time and resources, we can find that book and help to change that child's life, if only for a brief time, and only for a tiny bit. On the other hand, we are realistic enough to know that literature, no matter how powerful, has its limits. It won't take the homeless off our streets; it won't feed the starving of the world; it won't stop people from attacking each other because of our racial differences; it won't stamp out the scourge of drugs. It could, however, help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference. When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human.

Source: By Rudine Sims Bishop, The Ohio State University. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" originally appeared in *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*. Vo. 6, no. 3. Summer 1990.