

8-2021

## Providing High-Quality, Diverse Literature for Kindergarten Classrooms

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Providing High-Quality, Diverse Literature for Kindergarten Classrooms

by

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August 2021

Master's Project

Submitted to the College of Education

At Grand Valley State University

In partial fulfillment of the

Degree of Master of Education

## Abstract

There is a need to utilize more high-quality, diverse literature in kindergarten classrooms across the United States to ensure that students are being exposed to culturally relevant texts. The purpose of the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* is to provide educators with access to authentic, culturally relevant literature that can be shared with kindergarten students to help develop identity, awareness of other cultures, and appreciation of other cultures. The project is framed under the Reader Response Theory and the Critical Literacy Theory to examine how high-quality literature has a positive impact on student response to literature that reflects students own experiences. The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* provides educators a systematic approach to introducing diverse topics that can lead to rich conversations about marginalized populations and allows for students to share personal experiences. This project is intended for kindergarten classrooms as a platform to engage in dialogue around the diverse topics included in the kit.

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## **Chapter One: The Problem**

### **Problem Statement**

High-quality, diverse literature is not being utilized by teachers to reflect all students in a culturally relevant way. Crisp et al. (2016) found that for the last 75 years, the documentation of the problem of diversity in the classroom through literature has been largely ignored or dismissed, even though critics, librarians, and most importantly, authors and illustrators, have voiced their concern. This is not a new issue; however, it is an ongoing issue that has not gained much ground. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has provided yearly statistics since 1985 concerning the types of children's books published. According to the CCBC's statistics, for more than 20 years, the production of multicultural books has not risen to keep pace with the increase in the number of people who identify as other than white. In fact, Howlett and Young (2019) point out that "multicultural books have remained stagnant during those 20 years" (p. 41). When teachers do attempt to use diverse books as part of a lesson, they inadvertently favor white characters through a broader context (Schwartz, 2019). "Our students are radiant hues of brown, black, and beige, and they come from a range of cultural backgrounds, yet they are learning from literary resources that largely reflect whiteness" (Culhan, 2019, p. 509).

### **Importance and Rationale of Project**

All students deserve to be represented in the literature they read and listen to, especially in their classroom libraries. Multicultural literature benefits all students, even texts that represent someone other than oneself. According to the article, "Reading with a Writer's Eye: Why book choice matters", 82% of teachers in the United States are white while over half of the students in the United States identify as a color other than white. This disconnect needs to change. Rudine Sims Bishop, a

Professor Emerita of Education at Ohio State University, coined the phrase, “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors”, about the importance of multi-cultural books:

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 and 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. (Bishop, 1990, p. 1)

Books have the potential to affirm the multiple aspects of students’ identities along with entertaining, fostering a love of reading, and informing students. They also expose students to values, viewpoints, and historical legacies of others just like them (McNair, 2016). The lack of access and use of diverse literature in the classroom has significant and long reaching consequences. For instance, the depiction of African Americans as professionals is important for children to see and recognize (McNair, 2016). It shows that African Americans can be members of different social groups. Even children who are poor should be seen in books. These books can show positive and authentic ways for people to make contributions to their communities. These portrayals prepare students for the various roles they can have as children and then later, as adults, showcasing the many opportunities available.

Another long-term consequence is how books influence writing. The more students read, the better writers they become (Culham, 2019). There is inspiration for new writing in the writing we read, too. In fact, it is possible to teach writing through the books you have at your fingertips (Culham, 2019). Without opportunities to explore diverse literature, writing can be negatively impacted. The most significant problem associated with lack of diverse literature in classrooms is the perception generated



when only reading about one culture. Chimamanda Adichie's, *The Danger of a Single Story*, reminds us that "knowing only one story leads to the creation of assumptions and stereotypes" (Adichie, 2009, n.p.). When students are not exposed to diverse literature, they are limited in their understanding of other cultures and experiences.

Long term effects surrounding a lack of diverse literature can also lead to increased rates of student disengagement in the classroom and a "disconnect from teachers and peers" (Wanless & Crawford, 2016, p. 9). "There is an undeniable achievement gap separating black males and their peers" (Wood & Jocius, 2013, p. 661). More often than not, young black boys are given up on in the classroom and attention to their specific needs is ignored. Educators do not take into account their interests. Instead, the focus is placed on basic skills. "Academic institutions often fail to consider the whole child, and this creates a chasm between school and student that leads to young black boys falling through the cracks" (Wood & Jocius, 2013, p. 662). Often absent from the classroom is literature that engages black males and teachers lack the strategies to increase student engagement when they do introduce culturally relevant texts (Wood & Jocius, 2013). "Children's literature offers an engaging vehicle" (Wanless & Crawford, 2016, p. 9). for generating conversations about race and diversity. Positive representations of marginalized students "increases students' feelings of connectedness to the school community" (McGarry, 2013, p. 27). Students miss class and full days when they do not feel a connection to school which impacts their learning (McGarry, 2013). However, "when teachers provide children with reading materials that reflect their lives and experiences, children show academic progress and demonstrate positive attitudes towards reading" (Howlett & Young, 2019, p. 42).

This project aims to provide access to a collection of high-quality, diverse literature for kindergarten teachers to share with students for the purpose of engaging in conversations about marginalized students and offering opportunities for marginalized students to see themselves in literature. For many children, a classroom library will be the first experience to repeated exposures of

books and students will be looking for themselves and those they love, learning how to make sense of their lives and experiences, and the world (Crisp, et al. 2016). This project is a way to offer kindergarten teachers a compilation of literature for and about marginalized populations, organized and ready to introduce to classrooms, with very little advanced preparation from the teacher.

### **Background of Project**

According to Howlett and Young (2019), students need to have direct access to meaningful and relevant text and the classroom library is the optimal location. Historically, the problem of limited diverse literature in classrooms has stemmed from a few factors. When looking at international picture books, Baldwin (2018) found that five percent of children's books published each year were originally published in another country, and only one to two percent of children's books in the US market are translations. She went on to claim that publishing companies in the United States are cautious when it comes to publishing any literature that may appear too foreign or culturally obscure. Publishing companies hold to the belief that these diverse books will not appeal to Americans and therefore sales will be minimal. Other barriers to getting diverse literature published in the United States revolve around the cost connected with editing and translating books. The sizable cost factor of international books means that US publishers are not inclined to take on publishing global books (Baldwin, 2018). Other barriers include finding authentic, culturally relevant literature to meet the needs of our diverse learners.

Multicultural literature does not represent our students just because it is a piece of literature about diverse populations. Selecting culturally diverse literature requires the use of multiple and varied sources. Teachers must have a "personal awareness of the classroom demographics and ongoing collaboration with families and professionals to ensure that the selected literature reflects all children's cultures" (Howlett & Young, 2019, p. 43). There are many biases found in children's literature. The goal

is for culturally authentic children's books to lead readers to an accurate understanding of a group of people (Howlett & Young, 2019). Authenticity is an area where we can look to determine quality. Authenticity encompasses "stereotyping and tokenism, along with language and dialect" (Boyd, et al. 2015, p. 383). Any of these features should be cause for removal. The most common understanding of cultural authenticity is "the reader's sense of truth on how a specific cultural experience has been represented within a book" (Boyd, et al. 2015, p. 383). Beyond authentic literature, we must also look at cultural relevance. A multicultural book is not necessarily culturally relevant. "It must connect to students' cultures, lives, experiences, and language" (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, p. 743).

Another factor for the lack of diverse literature in the classroom comes from teachers themselves. Several reasons can be cited that show teachers contribute to the problem, although in some cases, not intentionally. Censorship plays a role in the limited number of diverse texts in classrooms. Teachers "do not believe updating the curriculum with diverse titles is worth the potential negative outcomes" (Stallworth, 2006, p. 484). Lack of support from administration when angry parents demand the removal of books is at the forefront of these negative outcomes. The problem is that educators do not feel they have autonomy in choosing literature, therefore, culturally relevant texts are not included in classroom content (Stallworth, 2006). The negative outcomes: angry parents, upset administration, confused students, and stressed teachers are enough to maintain the safer, status quo (Stallworth, 2006). Furthermore, the "perceived lack of knowledge in teaching works by authors of color" cited by teachers (Stallworth, 2006, p. 484) also contributes to lack of diverse literature in classrooms. Many educators tend to teach what is "familiar and safe" (Stallworth, 2006, p. 484), essentially the same material they themselves were taught. In addition, teachers admit to having very little knowledge about how to begin looking for literature outside the scope of their own perspectives (Stallworth, 2006).

Teachers reported time constraints as another barrier to inclusion of multicultural literature. Experienced teachers sighted limitations on instructional time causing them to veer away from new material because of the notion they would have to give up existing literature to include new selections (Stallworth, 2006). Limited knowledge of other cultures/experiences played a role in decisions to include diverse literature. Teachers acknowledged their “lack of expertise about multicultural literature” (Stallworth, 2006, p. 485) as the reason for not including the literature. Funding was yet another reason for not including multicultural literature. Some teachers noted they could only use existing class sets of books in their library. Others reported asking students to buy their own copy of a book (Stallworth, 2006).

Another theme that was prevalent was the notion of not being able to find texts appropriate to student interests, reading levels, needs, and background (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Educators cited the diverse student population within their classrooms as a factor. Classrooms made-up of “English language learners, special education students, average learners, and gifted learners” (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015, p. 260) reveals a complex melting pot of students where a single text might not always offer personal meaning to everyone. Each of these barriers played a role in why classroom libraires were not stocked with high-quality, diverse literature (Stallworth, 2006).

Other factors influence whether or not diverse literature is found in classroom libraries. A 2015 report by Horning, Lindgren, Schliesman, and Townsend found that of roughly 3,500 books received by the CCBC, only around 11% contained significant content, topics, characters, or themes about diverse populations (Howlett & Young, 2019). To be clear, high-quality, diverse literature or multicultural literature does not just refer to text selections representing race and cultural. Other researchers have found similar gaps across these and other cultural identities. They include religion, sexual identity, gender, socioeconomic status, class, developmental differences, and disabilities, although this is not an exhaustive list (Howlett & Young, 2019). Despite the obstacles surrounding international book

publishing in the United States, there are still ways for diverse literature to make its way to the classroom, especially international picture books.

When multicultural literature is selected, we look at the factors that influence those selections. “A text’s accessibility and availability greatly influences what teachers choose” (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015, p. 250). Another key factor in text selection centered around a teacher’s familiarity with the text and the knowledge they had about the text. Rounding out the top 3 factors was how well it aligned to the curriculum or instructional goals set forth (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Teachers took into consideration the appeal a book held with students as one of the last factors. Overall, 55% of teachers indicated that cultural significance played a role in their text selection (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to create a mentor text framework aligned to the kindergarten Common Core State Standards in reading of literature and informational text. Within this framework would be fiction and non-fiction choices for teachers to pull from when teaching lessons. The mentor texts included will be drawn from high-quality, diverse pieces of literature that meet the multicultural needs of students. This is not limited to race. It will encompass other cultural identities such as gender, disability, religion, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, class, and developmental differences. The literature selected will be relevant to kindergarten students, matched to the standards, and chosen using guidelines from articles on the topic.

The project is unique because it will be a ready-made, comprehensive toolbox of diverse literature texts, hand selected for relevance to the reading standard, relevant to student populations, and issues facing students. One barrier to inclusion of multicultural texts in the classroom comes from teachers themselves. Lack of knowledge about other cultures and a hesitancy to discuss topics outside the scope of their understanding and comfort can be a limitation that prevents diverse literature from

entering the classroom. With this project, teachers will have ample time to assess the literature and develop a better understanding of the cultural perspective of each book. If needed, teachers will have the opportunity to research the book topics and critically evaluate the information in the text. By providing a list of high-quality literature resources, the teacher can focus on the content of the book and teaching the lesson, without the worry of how and where to find a multicultural text.

This project will put multicultural texts in the hands of teachers and therefore in the hands of students. It is a step towards addressing one barrier to the limited amount of high-quality, diverse texts available in classrooms. Howlett and Young (2019) call attention to the fact that the number of children who are non-Caucasian continues to increase in the United States. Startlingly, the number of books published by or about people of color is not keeping pace with this increase; in fact, the numbers stayed the same or decreased. Educational equity should be a top priority for students across the world. It is critical that students see themselves through literature on a regular basis and this is best suited to be done in our classrooms and school libraries.

### **Project Objectives**

A collection of distinguished, diverse literature will be compiled so:

- Educators have access to culturally-relevant texts
- Educators can use diverse texts with their student population
- Educators can offer a selection of diverse materials for validating students' identities

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Multicultural literature* - written work that offers teachers and students realistic reflections of society, history, education, and schools. It is the social, emotional, and cultural experiences of marginalized groups of people, intertwined with race, ethnicity, culture, language, physical and mental disabilities,

socioeconomic status, dialect differences, religion, various family structures, sexual and gender identity, and age (Boyd et al. 2015).

*Book bonding* - text-to-self transactions that allow students to learn about multicultural characters, in detail, by identifying with them and bonding with them by reading and listening to their stories to learn about different ways of life involving how they act, play, eat, and live (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013).

*Culturally relevant* - literature that aligns with a student's background knowledge and experience, providing for construction of meaning to take place.

*International picture books* - refers to books that reflect one or more of the following features:

1. Originally written in a language other than English and subsequently translated
2. Originally written in English in a nation other than the United States
3. Originally published outside the United States but made their way into the US in their original format (Baldwin 2018).

### **Scope and Limitations**

This project focuses specifically on providing a high-quality, diverse literature resource guide aligned to the kindergarten Common Core State Standards in the strands of reading literature and informational text. Teachers of all grade levels from early childhood to secondary education, administrators, social workers, psychologists, and anyone who works directly with students would benefit from this resource, however it is intended for use at the kindergarten level. Kindergarten is the first school experience for many students, so the aim is to set an example at the early stages of learning by incorporating diverse literature in the curriculum and by extension, getting relevant pieces of multicultural texts in the hands of students.

The project does not look to provide a high-quality, diverse literature guide for grades other than kindergarten (although the texts selected may inadvertently be appropriate for other grade levels) and it is not intended to provide a guide outside the literature and informational strands in reading. It will, however, offer a starting point for kindergarten teachers to be able to have a guide of important text choices to be used in conjunction with teaching kindergarten literature and informational standards.

The overall success of this project will be dependent on several factors. Kindergarten teachers must make the decision to use the resource guide in their classrooms as a primary way of purposefully incorporating multicultural literature. Teachers must also buy-in to the fact that even though a guide listing literature books is in place; they must be intentional about planning and securing the text for the lesson. In addition, it would be advantageous to the entire class if the book were owned by the teacher or if several copies were purchased so they could be placed in the class library for students to read. Factors that could potentially hinder the success of the project are teachers' own beliefs and attitudes about multicultural literature, lack of funds or access to the books listed in the guide, and lack of knowledge surrounding the reading standards for kindergarten in a way that would limit a teacher's understanding of how to use the text suitably.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Introduction

“The literary diet of young readers” is lacking in high-quality, multicultural choices in the classroom due to issues with access, relevance, and awareness of the need to represent all diverse populations (Boyd et al., 2015, p. 378). “Children’s books are powerful learning tools for helping young children” develop awareness and understanding of those who might differ from them in the way they look, talk, and behave (Koss, 2015, p. 32). Classroom settings with a plethora of diverse books offer an opportunity for young learners to “identify with their own cultures and also the cultures of others” (Koss, 2015, p. 32). In addition, when diverse books are made available to students, it opens up the possibility of having discussions about diversity. Boyd et al. (2015) found that:

In terms of literature, themes centered on race, ethnicity, culture, and languages are commonly considered important characteristics of diversity. Culturally diverse literature is expanding to include other aspects such as disabilities, religions, dialect, family structures, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. All of these characteristics are not separate from race, ethnicity, culture, and language; rather they are intertwined. (p. 379)

This project aims to provide access to high-quality, diverse literature, as well as offer ways to use the text within a classroom discussion for the purpose of validating student identities. The literature review will focus on the importance of including high-quality, diverse literature within the classroom setting for early learners. It begins by exploring the theory and rationale behind the use of multicultural literature in the classroom and the positive effects it has on student populations. The literature review then aims a spotlight on awareness and appreciation of other cultures, access and representation of cultures, and the importance of reader identity through literature. The chapter closes with the

summary, which restates the most relevant points from the literature review and the conclusion, which outlines the information culled from the literature and how it directs the project.

### **Theory and Rationale**

Multicultural literature has a long history of being disregarded as a critical component in literacy (Baldwin, 2018). According to Baldwin (2018), broader society is now filled with a rich diverse group of people, ideas, and cultures. In more intimate areas, like classrooms, neighborhoods, digital communities, and workplaces, we also see diversity. As the distances between culturally diverse populations shrink, children should not be limited by a lack of knowledge and understanding of cultures beyond their own. Choosing culturally relevant texts to use in the classroom is vital to helping students make connections to their self and their past experiences. Koss (2015) reminds us that books that children read and interact with have huge impacts on self-awareness and self-identity. The text in the book is not the only thing to consider. Illustrations also tell a story and can affect students' notions of self and belonging. "Seeing self is critical, but not seeing self is even more critical because children may feel marginalized" (Koss, 2015, p. 32). As the world continues to grow more diverse, educators must make changes to their curriculums and classroom libraries. The lens must be broadened to encompass all cultures. Thus, this project draws on the following theories: Critical Literacy and Reader Response Theory.

#### **Critical Lenses: Critical literacy**

During the reading process, readers are seen as an integral participant, therefore making critical literacy an important form of communication during the reading transaction. (Norris et al., 2012). Within this theory, participants are encouraged to seek out and ask questions they may have, go beyond the text, and explore the connection that exist between authors and readers (Norris et al., 2012).

Furthermore, it allows for examination of issues of power and encourages reflection, change and action (Norris et al., 2012). The relationship between critical literacy and multicultural texts is bound by the idea that each text is embedded with a purpose; no text is neutral. Readers are able to think beyond the text by reading from a critical perspective (Norris, et al., 2012). Readers are then able to better understand issues and ask themselves why the author wrote about a particular topic or why they included some information on the topic, but excluded other information (Norris et al., 2012).

Critical literacy has a connection to teacher selected texts. Critical literacy encourages educators to examine the selection of texts in their own classrooms for representation of gender, cultural experiences, whose voice is reflected in the text, publication date, and how the books were selected (Creighton, 1997). Critical literacy allows students to go beyond the text and understand personal impacts. Text meaning is viewed as a social construction that requires understanding of literacy as a tool for social action (Norris et al., 2012). Critical literacy helps teachers and students critique an author's perspective on a particular topic, delve into why an author choose a specific audience for their writing, and look for elements of inclusion or bias (Creighton, 1997). Using a Critical Literacy Theory lens, educators are encouraged to expose assumptions made while reading text, discuss those assumptions, and work to assist students in reading their own world (Creighton, 1997).

Critical Literacy Theory holds several beliefs about the reading process. While the teacher facilitates, it is the reader who brings to the text their knowledge of the topic and deconstructs the information read (Creighton, 1997). Knowing this, having relevant literature in the classroom that represents a diverse population is essential for students' learning. Using multicultural literature and coupling it with student's prior knowledge about the world around them facilitates opportunities to engage in different types of literature and think critically about it (Howlett & Young, 2019).

Another belief, which extends from the one above, is the notion that a text offers multiple meanings and multiple truths, depending on one's perspective (Creighton, 1997). Teachers must involve their students in discourse and support them in constructing critical literacy skills. The goal is to help students examine the text from several different viewpoints (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). A text might be a merger of ideas that mix and clash together, requiring students to seek out bias and apply their meaning of the text (Creighton, 1997). Teachers can create an environment where students are encouraged to draw connections among the text and respond to those connections in various ways, helping them navigate their thoughts and ideologies since many meanings can be derived from a text (Creighton, 1997).

Voice is a belief about the reading process through Critical Literacy Theory. A student's voice refers to their cultural history and the experiences that have shaped them (Creighton, 1997). Using their history and experiences, students are able to share their voice and make known their role as active contributors in the world (Creighton, 1997). Furthermore, being able to retell a text using one's own words shows a student's ability to use an individual voice (Creighton, 1997). Diverse literature in the classroom supports voice by offering students culturally relevant texts that reflect their history and experiences, and by offering texts outside their own experiences. To keep pace with the increase that the United States has seen in diversity, a child's education should also keep pace (Koss, 201). Critical Literacy Theory opens the door for "students' and teachers' work with text to go far beyond reading a passage" (Creighton, 1997, p. 442).

### **Reader Response Theory**

Reader Response Theory, developed by Louise Rosenblatt, is a transaction between the reader and the text (Davis, 1992), using the reader's personal experiences and perspectives, rather than focusing on the author's intent. "It acknowledges the entire context of the reader—her culture, her past

experiences, her cognitive ability” (Davis, 1992, p. 71). High-quality, diverse literature in classrooms is essential for students to interact through Reader Response Theory. Students need to make connections to the literature and that cannot happen unless the literature is a reflection of the culture; there is an emphasis on the background of the reader that plays a role in the transaction (Davis, 1992). Reader Response Theory also emphasizes the importance of the reading on future experiences of the reader. In terms of the text, students’ backgrounds play two roles. A student’s background can enhance their transaction with the text, but at the same time, it can also restrict their transaction with the text (Davis, 1992). Students may lack experience reading texts expected of them, but the culture and background they can bring to the reading experience is invaluable (Davis, 1992).

Reader Response Theory requires educators to seek out those texts that our students can find a connection to and ensure access to these texts by placing them in classroom libraries (Davis, 1992). Educators then need to take it one step further and find ways to motivate students to read literature so that they can explore ways to transfer their background knowledge to the text they are reading (Davis, 1992). Teachers need to offer students reading opportunities that allow them to transact with the text, rather than asking them to answer questions that prove they read the text and can name story elements (Davis, 1992).

Two types of reading evolve from Reader Response Theory: efferent and aesthetic (Davis, 1992). Efferent reading is taking information from the text and aesthetic reading is how students experience the literature (Davis, 1992). Most classrooms attend to efferent reading, which essentially asks students to take away the meaning of the text. This is done by asking questions about what is happening in the text and relying wholly on text-based answers. In this type of reading situation, most of the power is given to the text, therefore giving little credence to just how critical the reading experience is (Davis,

1992). This “disempowerment of students” is caused from the repeated task of asking students to “take information away” from the text (Davis, 1992, p. 74).

Reader Response Theory coupled with diverse literature choices provides educators the opportunity to focus on aesthetic reading and allow students to bring meaning to the text (Davis, 1992). Reader Response Theory and inclusion of diverse texts in the classroom both function to provide opportunities for marginalized students to see themselves in the literature. Encouraging students to read more aesthetically offers students the ability to share their understanding of the text, not take it away (Davis, 1992). In this type of situation, students are better able to develop an awareness about the reading process and overall experience of reading (Davis, 1992). As a result of their stance of bringing meaning to the text, students are validating themselves as the readers they are. (Davis, 1992).

Louise Rosenblatt’s Reader Response Theory demonstrates how marginalized students respond to culturally relevant texts.

Students should see themselves in the books: today’s young person in today’s world riding skateboards, squabbling with siblings, wondering about science, taking walks in the park, using technology, and every other aspect of daily life that has long populated stories and ideas based on the dominant white culture. (Culham, 2019, p. 511)

It must possess qualities applicable to the learner. It is not enough to simply place a diverse text in a classroom library. It must be meaningful, purposeful, and intentional.

## Review of Literature

Research synthesized in this section outlines six areas of importance: culturally relevant pedagogy, reader identity, awareness and appreciation of literature, authentic literature, access to culturally relevant text, and text selection.

### Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy is, according to Kibler and Chapman (2018):

the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students' culture but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge (p. 742)

"Critical literacy is a way of understanding and engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy in classrooms" (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, 742). When used in conjunction with culturally relevant texts, culturally relevant pedagogy is powerful. Without diverse literature, student populations miss the opportunity to use books to better understand themselves through critical literacy and to unearth biases.

The idea is for students to become investigators, not passive listeners. Within the classroom, students are afforded the opportunity to use the space to navigate social situations through the use of language to explore subjects central to their lives. (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Culturally relevant pedagogy necessitates critical literacy. Educators need to create learning scenarios that reflect the cultural diversity of their classrooms. This combination will offer students situations of empowerment through intellectual, emotional, and social learning (Norris et al., 2012). The acknowledgement of

differences among diverse students opens up the possibility for students to find a link between the school curriculum and their lives (Norris et al., 2012).

Critical Literacy and culturally relevant pedagogy work together to address the need for diverse students to find opportunities “to construct meaning because they can draw from their background knowledge to make predications and inferences” (Kibler & Chapman, 2018, p. 741). When reading stories of cultural relevance, students had increased comprehension and improved reading gains along with a more positive self-identity (Kibler & Chapman, 2018).

**Reader Identity.** Reader identity refers to the values, practices, and beliefs of a culture and the sense of self that is related to literacy and reading (Gentile & Zawilinski, 2013). “The use of culturally relevant texts anchors students’ identities, experiences and norms in ways that improve their literacy outcomes” (Sharma & Christ, 2017, p. 296). Students’ identities as readers are a central component of the ideological model. This model views reading as a complex social practice that encompasses the teaching and application of skills and strategies that aid in reading comprehension (Hall, 2012). Understanding how students define themselves, and what experiences have shaped their identities, allows teachers to better understand and respond to students’ interactions with texts (Hall, 2012). “Reading instruction is grounded in the lives of the students and the histories, ideas, questions, and identities they bring with them” (Hall, 2012, p. 243). Multicultural texts act as a vehicle for reading identity by providing students with culturally relevant literature.

Students’ understandings of who they are as readers contribute to the decisions they make about reading. “Literacy and culture have a reciprocal relationship at the level of the individual and that a person’s identification with a particular ethnic or cultural group is connected to his perception of literacy” (McCarthy, 2001, p. 125). Learning and literacy is facilitated by cultural identity, however, literacy will eventually alter an individual’s identity (McCarthy, 2001). To strengthen reader identity,



educators need to utilize literature about diverse cultural populations that spotlights their experiences (McCarthy, 2001). This practice will allow students to feel pride in their own identities and heritages and lead to exploration of issues of social justice, and let go of stereotypes (McCarthy, 2001). Supporting reader identity can be complex. When discussing language, questions about identity are essential. The challenging task is finding ways to allow various heritages to have a voice (Creighton, 1997).

Chimamanda Adichie (2009) reminds us that reader identity is very important and that what we read can impact our perceptions of literature. For Adichie, she believed that her own stories had to be about things that she could not identify with because that was the only literature she had been exposed to. "If children never see themselves in books, they receive the subtle messages that they are not important enough to appear in books and that books are not for them" (Boyd et al., 2015, p. 378). Through literature, students can construct a bond that pays tribute to their own stories and gives validation to their experiences (Baldwin, 2018). Educators should make it a priority to ensure children are hearing and reading stories about their own population of people, in the same type of situations (Norris et al., 2012). These opportunities allow students to build their own identities and appreciate their uniqueness. When we are purposeful and intentional with our book selections, we open doors for students to see aspects of their own identities reflected back to them (Baldwin, 2018)

**Awareness and Appreciation of Other Cultures.** Having an awareness of other cultures not only makes for a well-rounded student, it also fosters inclusion, allows for exploration of other lives, and provides a picture of the differences among cultural groups. We do not simply develop cultural awareness on our own; it is taught (Baldwin, 2018). To teach students about other cultures, resources are needed. One of those resources is diverse literature. Students in kindergarten find their first real

exposure to literature and therefore it only makes sense that students can see, read, and hear stories that are about them.

Picture books provide a delightful introduction to multicultural literature. Baldwin (2018) used theoretical research to show the advantages of using international picture books with early childhood students. Students can obtain information about the world and themselves as active members during early childhood, an ideal time to support student growth using international picture books (Baldwin, 2018). International picture books are a powerful instrument for teachers to nurture children's development of intercultural knowledge and awareness using a meaningful approach. We want students to learn about the stories that others have, as well as the experiences they have had. Furthermore, Baldwin (2018) found that international picture books could be used in the same manner as US published children's literature in the classroom. Merging international picture books into the current curriculum in a very deliberate way in areas such as author studies, read alouds, and paired text selections, offers valuable opportunities for learning. Used in these ways, international picture books lend themselves to creating meaningful conversations about diversity, which helps further validate and broaden perspectives.

Book choice matters and students with diverse backgrounds are not the only ones who benefit from multicultural literature. "Barriers to new relationships and understandings can be breached with classrooms full of texts that celebrate and honor ways of living and loving different from students' own" (Culham, 2019, p. 509). Children's literature is utilized in the classroom in many different capacities. Early learners experience what it means and looks like to have reading options, choice, and a mix of literary representations, many for the first time (Crisp et al., 2016). Individual classrooms and school libraries should reflect multiple beliefs since our classrooms are occupied by students who are diverse (Boyd et al., 2015).

Having an awareness and appreciation for other cultures has an impact on students. “Showing children that we see and value all aspects of them—including attributes related to race and culture—is a critical step” (Wanless & Crawford, 2016, p. 9) in helping students feel welcome and connected to the classroom. This creates a feeling of trust that plays a role in students’ ability to engage freely in exploration and learning. Wanless and Crawford (2016) focused on race related teaching practices (RRTP) to help educators approach race in the classroom. These practices focused on using children’s literature to welcome conversations about diversity. “Books can be windows that enable young readers to gain new cultural perspectives by peering into other’s worlds” (Wanless & Crawford, 2016, p. 10). There is a need for books that help all students understand the diverse world we inhabit and our place as a member of a group and the connections we can make to other humans (Bishop, 2015). Building personal classroom libraries that are inclusive and encompass changing student demographics is one way of helping students acquire cultural awareness (Howlett & Young, 2019).

Like international picture books, multicultural literature, specifically picture books, have a role in the classroom. International picture books are published in other countries besides the US and are written about those respective countries. Multicultural picture books are similar in that they represent groups that have been marginalized based on race, gender, culture, ethnicity, and various other identities. In combination, both international picture books and multicultural picture books are vital to classrooms because they represent cultures that are essentially unknown to learners, especially young learners. Creating an appreciation of other cultures then, requires multicultural picture books to have a place in classrooms.

“For decades, children’s books in school libraries and classrooms have overwhelmingly featured white faces; students of color are less likely to see books with characters that look like them or share their cultural background” (Schwartz, 2019, p. 1). Klefstad and Martinez (2013) found, through

theoretical research, that book bonding is one method of promoting awareness and appreciation. The idea of book bonding is to use multicultural picture books that students can find text-to-self-connections through. As students listen to stories, they establish a relationship to something from the story. This cannot be done if classrooms are not integrating diverse literature with current literature to represent all learners. Book bonding permits students to intimately get to know characters and their lifestyles and bond with them (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013). Listening to their stories can draw students in and make them feel like they are a part of the story. This helps them form a bond with the characters and their experiences because they take on the character's role, leading to an awareness and appreciation of their culture. Once you are aware of some of the situations other races and cultures have been exposed to, it makes it more difficult to treat them unkindly (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013).

Klefstad and Martinez (2013) used four multicultural picture books to observe the effects of book bonding on kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students. The authors provided the multicultural picture books to the current classroom teachers to read aloud with. Each multicultural text was selected with key components in mind: simple language and grade level appropriateness, representation of another culture, topic and the ability for students to bond with the characters, and those that encouraged appreciation. With each read aloud, the cultural focus was identified, and the main character was introduced. The read aloud was done interactively, building in pauses to point out customs or activities students might not understand. Afterward, teachers asked pointed questions to encourage students to think deeply about the characters and their experiences. Through discussions, students were able to articulate customs that were new to them, use Venn diagrams to compare the characters' way of life, and illustrate something they had learned about the character (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013). Overall, book bonding using multicultural picture books endorsed student appreciation. Children expressed positive ideas and views about diverse people.

**Authentic Literature.** It is true that culturally relevant texts promote a love of reading among diverse learners, but they also impact all learners. Kibler and Chapman (2018) used theoretical research to provide tips on how to identify and use culturally relevant, multicultural literature that is authentic. As stated previously, having multicultural literature in the classroom library is important, but teachers must go beyond that to ensure the literature authentic and culturally relevant to readers. That is to say, the reader must bond with the content in such a way that a connection is made through the experiences in the story that the character shares. Keep in mind, Koss (2015) used empirical research and descriptive content analysis of contemporary 2012 children's picture books. Part of that research found that 90% of authors and 83% of illustrators were predominantly people who are white. This reinforces the concern that books used in classrooms are not authentic nor are they culturally relevant to students because there just are not enough multicultural authors and illustrators who can write about authentic experiences. Books written and illustrated by people who are white cannot possibly represent authentic multicultural literature because their experiences are not multicultural.

Shiohita (n.d.) recommends several ways to determine if a book is authentic and culturally relevant. Check for general accuracy by checking the information about the topic to make sure it is current and correct. Shy away from literature that uses stereotypes or applies behaviors to an entire group. Confirm the setting is accurate and not a stereotype. Watch out for books that emphasize different languages in the story where there are groups that speak standard English and then those who do not. Beware of epithets that may be insulting. Be careful of illustrations that may not accurately reflect the culture. Finally, be cognizant of an author's perspective.

**Access to Culturally Relevant Text.** Teachers face challenges in obtaining culturally relevant, high-quality literature for their classrooms. Multicultural literature is certainly limited, however, there are ways and even guidelines to finding multicultural texts for young classrooms. McNair (2016)

suggests the first thing we do is look at our own classroom libraries. Instead of having a section for Black History Month, we need to take care that we have diverse literature available all year long. This starting point gives teachers an overview of their diverse literature needs and an idea of the types of literature they should be locating if they aim to represent a variety of cultures and experiences.

Although multicultural literature is not as abundant as it should be, for various reasons, we still must find ways to secure literature for our classrooms that is culturally relevant. McNair (2016) draws attention to noteworthy books that can be found through race-based awards, which supplies books written by people of color and about people of color. Such awards are the Coretta Scott King Book Award, which is given to African American authors and illustrators of children's literature and young adult literature that represents African American culture and history, the Pura Belpre Award honors Latino and Latina children's and youth writers and illustrators that represent Latino culture, the Asian Pacific American Award for Literature, which honors work that reflects Asian Pacific heritages, and the American Indian Youth Literature Award, which honors writers and illustrators by and about Native Americans (American Library Association, 1996).

Worth noting is that these awards were initially created because of the lack of recognition among diverse writers and authors in literature. In fact, according to McNair (2016), the most prestigious awards in literature have been dominated by authors who are white and illustrators, case in point, the Newbery Medal has only been awarded to four books by African Americans since 1922. By creating race-based awards, it brings much needed attention to multicultural literature that normally goes unnoticed, and therefore, unused in classrooms. In addition, students can see diverse authors and illustrators as professionals, opening a view of what can be, instead of seeing diverse people reflected as a more devalued group in society.

**Text Selection.** To foster culturally relevant text selection in your classroom, you must develop an understanding of your students and allow for conversations to take place so that you can identify which books are culturally relevant to students. Once you have an idea of what students find culturally relevant, begin by looking for multicultural lists at the elementary level online or at local libraries (Kibler & Chapman, 2018). Use rubrics that have guidelines for cultural relevance, so your selections are purposeful. Another idea that Kibler and Chapman (2018) suggest is utilizing students by providing a log for them to keep track of relevant literature they have read so you can use the list to build your classroom library. Diverse learners have book selections from their own cultures they already love and connect with, so direct student input is a valuable resource. McNair (2016) recommends locating and subscribing to magazines that review books of noteworthy titles. The reviews will be considerate of race, religion, genre, and other factors which will aid in the selection of culturally relevant texts of high-quality for students. These reviews generally provide direct links to access the materials for purchase.

A high-quality library is vital to creating a diverse classroom. As Stallworth et al. (2006) found in their research, implementing multicultural literature selections offer students a means of helping build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience:

A classroom community should afford all of its members the opportunity to be respected for their own unique set of differences as well as encourage them to develop a respect and appreciation for those whose cultural and ethnic backgrounds are different from their own. (p. 478)

Davis (1992) found that educators reported curriculum challenges when it came to text selection for whole class reading. Finding the right match for all students was difficult and resulted in limited engagement. The research found that building the curriculum around culturally relevant texts (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015) was most successful. "Making inquiry the center of our instructional approach makes

content matter to students by generating a real purpose for content and students' personal connections to that curricular material" (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015, p. 266).

Howlett and Young (2019) crafted six Multicultural Principles to use as a foundation for teasing out biases for the purpose of creating classroom libraries in a culturally responsive manner. They found that libraries infused with quality diverse literature (Howlett & Young, 2019) presented children with a variety of opportunities to engage in the literature. Teachers have a responsibility to ensure their classroom libraries reflect the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. An important element of any classroom is the classroom library, in which the library offers children choice when making book selections for reading enjoyment (Wood & Jocius, 2013). To build a diverse, well stocked library of literature, educators need to find texts students can relate to as well as inspire them to read books in ways they can incorporate their cultural background into the stories (Davis, 1992.)

In addition to employing inclusive and meaningful curriculum, there is also a need for diversified classroom libraries with literature that offers students access to multicultural books that have accurate representations of marginalized populations. McGarry (2013) looked at specific groups of diverse populations. He found that LGBT students were not represented in a positive light in the sex education curriculum. He believed that adding information about LGBT was not enough. Schools needed to take it one step further and include positive representations making curriculum inclusive of marginalized students:

If we believe that adolescence is the time when young people try to make sense of who they are, and if we believe that providing positive role models for students during this period of self-discovery is an important action that schools can take to support their students, then we also must believe that lesson plans throughout the curriculum should include positive representations of LGBT people. (McGarry, 2013, p. 27)



## Summary

Marginalized students are not seeing themselves reflected in the literature they are exposed to in classroom libraries across the United States in part because of accessibility issues, lack of knowledge about relevance to students, and an underappreciation of, and awareness of, other cultures. This has led to populations of students being misrepresented, excluded, and left to find their identities in literature that does not reflect diversity.

“Multicultural literature brings awareness and appreciation among differences in cultural groups and offers teachers and students a more realistic reflection of society, history, education, and schools in the United States” (Boyd et al., 2015, p. 379). Educators have an obligation to incorporate multicultural literature that is culturally relevant to students by making sure that classroom libraries are infused with books that represent the lives and experiences of diverse learners (Crisp et al., 2016). Educating teachers on how to identify and locate culturally relevant literature supports the use of multicultural text in the classroom.

Access to literature that is deemed culturally relevant to student populations will ensure students of various cultures are engaging in books that allow them to make connections and go beyond the text to better understand the world they live in. As we know, students who come from diverse backgrounds do not exclusively benefit from diversifying classroom libraries; all students benefit. Books provide not just a mirror of our own experiences, diverse or not, but also offer a window into other’s lives (Culham, 2019). This window into other lives is where we benefit the most by opening the window up and exploring beyond our current culture. “Readers must also have access to books that act as windows—opportunities to move beyond personal experiences and to observe the experiences, cultures, and traditions of others” (Baldwin, 2018, p. 75).

This project was created with a view through the lenses of two theories: Critical Literacy Theory and Reader Response Theory. Critical literacy is a way for readers to examine the text using their own knowledge and personal understandings (Creighton, 1997). It offers students and educators the ability to seek out biases in literature. Students are asked to critically examine text and information so they can better understand how power plays a role in their formation and how power can play a role in changing them (Creighton, 1997). It is an attempt to reveal underlying assumptions in literature and openly discuss them. Critical Literacy Theory challenges teachers in their choice and presentation of literature to students. It brings together students and teachers so they can engage in dialogue that bridges their lives and the text together (Norris, et al., 2012).

Reader Response Theory “is a school of thought about the act of reading which is reader-centered” (Davis, 1992, p. 71). Reader response theorists believe that meaning is developed within the reader in response to a text, creating a transaction between the two, rather than an interaction (Davis, 1992). Culturally relevant literature becomes essential for diverse populations to transact with the text and develop deeper meaning from the literature. This theory holds importance to the claim that high-quality literature is not prevalent in classrooms today. A personal connection is difficult to develop with literature that is not representative of diverse populations. Louise Rosenblatt, who first introduced Reader Response Theory, placed a focus on the role that a reader’s background plays during the transaction of reading (Davis, 1992). Readers recall and connect to prior experiences in an attempt to make meaning of what they are reading. Lack of accessibility to culturally relevant literature makes this transaction more complicated if multicultural literature is not present and available for consumption.

Marginalized students need to see themselves reflected in the literature found in classrooms across the United States. The project that is being created, a collection of high-quality, diverse literature representing various groups, will work towards that goal. Introducing multicultural education as part of

teacher education programs is one way to manage issues related to growth in diversity (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013). The benefits of inclusive literature are vast, and it is the onus of educators to break barriers and use their influence to build multicultural classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Students from marginalized groups are not being represented in the classroom as they should be, which lends itself to a lack of reader identity, lack of awareness and appreciation of other cultures, and confusion about what is culturally relevant to student populations and how to access literature. As a result, marginalized student populations are not being represented in the classroom. “Seeing self is critical, but not seeing self is even more critical because children may feel marginalized” (Koss, 2015, p. 32). Multicultural literature looks at groups that have been ignored in the past and this project aims to shed light on these situations and open the door to conversations so that student can better understand the world around them. Because our schools are filled with culturally diverse learners, we need to continue to advocate for multicultural literature to find its place in classrooms. “Educators will need to make special efforts to seek out and use quality books that include diverse characters and situations” (Koss, 2015, p. 39).

A project description will follow in Chapter 3, providing an overview of the framework for creating a collection of high-quality, diverse literature for use with kindergarten students. A complete list of the literature within the collection will be detailed. The collection of literature will be organized by various groups of marginalized populations: adoption, race, language, disabilities, religion, embracing you, feelings, and bullying. Discussion questions aligned with the Common Core State Standards in reading will be included with each title to help facilitate rich conversation around the marginalized group and topic being addressed. Book titles, discussion prompts, topics, and standards will be made

available in the Appendix as a guide for educators who seek to utilize them. An introduction for the purpose and use of the collection will also be included in the Appendix.

## Chapter Three: Project Description

### Introduction

Awareness and appreciation of diverse literature, along with access to culturally relevant text, are two factors that often are not supported in classrooms across the United States, despite the widespread research conducted over the past five decades showing the significance that classroom libraries play in early elementary settings (Crisp et al., 2016). “When teachers provide children with reading material that reflects their lives and experiences, children show academic progress and demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading (Howlett & Young, 2019, p. 42). Regardless, the disparities in the content of books remains. Diverse literature simply is not being represented in classrooms to keep pace with the growing number of multicultural learners in the United States. Therefore, students are not able to see themselves reflected in literature and the implications are damaging to our early elementary students. Boyd et al., (2015) refers to the lack of diverse literature in classrooms and says that students shape their vision of the world and of themselves, in part, via the books they read. What, then, does it suggest when students cannot find any books that are relevant to them? This negative undertone sends the message they are not important enough to have their culture seen in books and therefore, reading is not for them. Teachers want students to read and this sends the opposite message.

We see teachers attempting to use multicultural literature in the classroom, but it is not always relevant to students. As Koss’ (2015) research showed, multicultural characters were often seen in the background of picture books and viewed as support for the characters who were primarily white, giving teachers the impression that these books are culturally relevant, when in fact, they are lacking in relevancy to students. The target of this project is to cultivate inclusion of multicultural and diverse literature by providing a framework from which to draw from. The following sections will describe the

components of the project, the project evaluation, a plan for implementation, and the project conclusions.

### **Project Components**

The components that make up this project include an introduction about the purpose of the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* (Appendix A), a foreword about how to use the kit in a school setting (Appendix B), and a list of summarized texts by month (Appendix C). A framework which entails the title, author, book cover, kindergarten common core state standards, format, book summary, focused topic(s), purpose for reading, discussion questions, and goal will follow, broken down by month (Appendix D).

The framework (Appendix D) will be organized by months of the academic year from September to May. Each month will focus on a diverse topic. For each month, ten book selections will be listed individually on a single page and include a title, author, book cover photo, summary of the book, link to access the book, focused topic, purpose for reading, common core standard, fiction/non-fiction notation, questions for a lively discussion, and goal. Overall, the kit will contain 90 diverse book titles (Appendix C) appropriate for kindergarten students. Educators will be able to select the topics and formats best suited to the range of learners in their classroom, acknowledging that student populations and ability levels can be fluid. The kit will contain two physical books for each month to help educators launch without delay. Because of the growing number of new diverse and multicultural books being published, this kit will also be formatted in a digital version to allow for new titles to be added. For this project, I will be working with the digital version. A kit comprised of an introduction (Appendix A), how to use section (Appendix B), list of 90 summarized texts by month (Appendix C), and framework (Appendix D) will be included in the Appendices.

Many of the titles in the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* are picture books, since they are best suited for kindergarten students. The text selection for each month was based on the topic and each selected text

was read to ensure that it aligned with the topic. The texts used in this kit were chosen based on recommendations from websites supporting diverse literature and from well-known authors of diverse literature. Those sites include an independent book publishing company, Lee and Low ([www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com)), which focuses on diversity and the popular We Need Diverse Books ([www.diversebooks.org](http://www.diversebooks.org)), a non-profit organization created to promote diversity in literature.

Educators can use this kit to systematically introduce topics and use texts to formulate discussions throughout the year by following the sequence of months or this kit can be used piecemeal to meet the needs of a classroom population. Which titles and topics used is entirely up to the educator, as is the frequency of reading titles from this kit. Discussion questions can be altered, changed, or deleted per the discretion of the classroom teacher since they know their students best and can make an informed decision about how to move the conversation forward on topics.

### **Project Evaluation**

The effectiveness of the project will be ascertained by providing a questionnaire (Appendix E) to participating teachers. The questionnaire will include questions relating to use of the framework, teachers comfort level teaching diverse topics, text level and fit, format, cultural relevance, access, quality of literature, and diverse populations. Comments will also be collected from educators about the kit. The questionnaire will be sent electronically, and results will be anonymously collected. The results will be reviewed and analyzed to better understand the effectiveness the project had on student populations and educators. Success will be predicated on whether the questionnaire results indicate an increased level of student understanding of diverse cultures, positive feedback from teachers on the relevance of the framework within their teaching curriculum, and feedback on whether the kit resolved issues of book access.

The questionnaire will be the primary component for evaluating the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit*. Comments included in the questionnaire will be noted as well. Completed questionnaire's will be printed and collected in a file to use for reference when reworking the framework, making additions, or deletions.

### **Project Conclusions**

Even though research shows the disparities among race, religion, socioeconomic status, class, gender, disabilities, and sexual identity, our classroom libraries hold limited culturally relevant texts for our diverse student populations (Crisp, et al, 2016). The lack of diverse literature in our classrooms limits the mirrors and windows that we see. "Researchers are generally concerned with the number of texts available in classrooms, the degree to which texts are made available to children, and the time associated with accessibility" (Crisp, et al, 2016, p. 31). It is not enough to have diverse books in the classroom. "Reading them and sharing our enthusiasm with students is essential so they will seek out these books in the libraries" (McNair, 2016, p. 381). A diverse collection of books in a classroom library "can support all students in finding titles that they can read and connect with on some level while affirming their own cultural identities" and hopefully this will lead to important positive insights about others (McNair, 2016, p. 381).

There are books that challenge "dominant discourses and normative representations", but we need to do more (Crisp, et al, 2016, p. 29). The world that is portrayed in children's books is largely white, upper middle class, heterosexual, nondisabled, English-speaking, and male (Crisp, et al, 2016). Although these books do cover different worlds, they do not go beyond the mainstream. Diversity is more than ethnicity and we need more books representing all diverse populations. Children's books are "powerful learning tools and affect their conceptualization of self and belonging" (Koss, 2015, p. 32).



Promoting the cultures of all children can enhance children's positive attitudes and educators can do this through books. "Multicultural children's picture books carry children into other worlds where they can experience the character's lives, feelings, and challenges" (Klefstad & Martinez, 2013, p. 75). Educators must be thoughtful about students and their communities, seeking to include differences of opinion in conversations about literature instead of avoiding them (Boyd, et al, 2015).

The expectation of the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* is to incorporate multicultural education into the classroom to address the growth in diversity. My hope is that it will create an awareness and appreciation of multicultural literature, offer access to high-quality, diverse literature to educators, generate a better understanding of how to select culturally relevant literature to meet the needs of a diverse classroom, and foster conversation about diverse populations at an early age. This kit has the potential to bring together classrooms to build a community of learning and acceptance. Students are very impressionable, so building diversity into the curriculum at the earliest school opportunity is one way to reach students, foster inclusivity, and begin building a foundation where culturally relevant literature is the norm, not the exception.

Various research indicates that exposure to diverse literature influences how students see themselves and the world around them. To assist students in developing a deeper understanding of cultural differences, it is critical that teachers find ways to include multicultural literature in classroom libraries and find ways to authentically use that literature to teach students about the society that they live in and the world around them. This kit attempts to offer the opportunity to do just that.

### **Plan for Implementation**

The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* is intended to be utilized by kindergarten teachers to ensure inclusion of diverse topics within the current curriculum with alignment to the common core state standards. Other grade levels may use this kit as a means for introducing diversity in their classrooms. In

this sense, educators can simply use the resources as read alouds without attaching the standards for learning. The participants included in the project will be kindergarten teachers and their respective students. The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* will be made available to kindergarten teachers in my building through a digital file that will be shared on our school common share file. A hardcopy will also be given to the kindergarten team along with an opportunity to meet for a presentation on how to use the resource. This will be done prior to the start of school. In addition, the *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* will be presented to the building Literacy Coach to share with other building Literacy Coaches in the district in an attempt to offer the resource with all kindergarten teachers in the district. The project framework will be available to teachers in August to implement at the start of the year and use throughout the school year until all standards in reading have been taught.

The kit is broken down by month and assigned a topic for each month. During each month, ten pieces of literature are available to use with students, either whole group or in small groups. The kit is intended to provide teachers with a selection of books to choose from during each month of the year on a diverse topic. Although the pace of the kit is set by month, teachers can accommodate their own schedules by reading more or less than a months' worth of books. They can also choose topics out of the monthly sequence to meet the needs of their student population. The general idea of the kit is to offer it as a ready to implement, very low prep resource so that educators will be more inclined to utilize it with students. The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* is made to generate rich conversations about diversity with students. Educators can supplement additional resources for activities as they see fit. Because it is also aligned to the common core state standards, educators can use the books and conversations as part of their curriculum.

Once the questionnaires are collected and the data evaluated, I will analyze the responses. The results will be shared with stakeholders in the district. The collected data will be used to further develop

the framework. Those outcomes will inform whether or not additional grade level kits will be effective in creating conversations around diversity and connecting learning to the state standards.

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## Appendix A

### Diverse Story Kinder Kit Introduction



## Diverse Story Kinder Kit Introduction

The purpose of this kit is to offer kindergarten teachers an easy to use, ready-made resource that can be utilized in the classroom on its own or as part of the classroom curriculum. Due to the rising number of diverse students entering our school systems, educators are tasked with providing opportunities for children to see themselves reflected in the literature. With kindergarten being one of the first school experiences of many students, this kit allows educators to dive into themes about diversity and helps students navigate challenging topics in a safe environment. There are barriers that prevent teachers from providing these opportunities including access to diverse literature, lack of knowledge about how to select culturally relevant texts, time constraints, lack of knowledge about diverse populations, lack of funds to create libraries that foster diversity, and so on. Regardless of the barriers teachers encounter, we must still do our part to make sure that our classrooms cultivate an atmosphere of inclusivity and our classroom libraries support multicultural populations through high-quality, diverse literature.

This kit seeks to put into the hands of teachers, a variety of diverse literature, in multiple formats, with topics relevant to students across the United States who are looking to validate their own identities through everyday literature. Over the course of a school year, this kit narrows down topics by month, making it easy for educators to have rich conversations about specific issues that are relevant to the lives of students. Teachers will discover a selection of literature that can be used as a springboard to launch conversations that might otherwise prove difficult to talk about. With the texts in this kit, educators will be able to introduce topics about bullying, disabilities, race, acceptance, religion, feelings, embracing cultures, language, and adoption. The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* is made to facilitate conversation and learning.

## Appendix B

### How to use the Diverse Story Kinder Kit

## How to use the Diverse Story Kinder Kit

The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* was created to use as part of the kindergarten curriculum. The kit contains a framework that provides the title, author, summary of the story, topic for discussion, purpose for reading, common core state standard(s), format, questions to lead discussion, discussion points to focus on, and a classroom goal. Because each title is aligned with the reading standards, it can be used as part of the classroom curriculum to enhance student learning, build upon current topics, or as a stand-alone lesson.

### Teaching By Standards

For use with existing curriculum, educators can use the kit in the order that they are teaching the standards to align with the current skill being taught. Teachers can select the appropriate texts that best fits their needs based upon the standard. Teachers will then be able to use the text to meet the standard being taught, along with opening up discussion about a diverse topic.

### Teaching By Month

To use with the calendar year, educators can begin with September and begin introducing a diverse topic each month to study. Since there are ten literature options to choose from, teachers will be able to make choices that fit the needs of their students, work with time constraints, and incorporate reading opportunities at a suitable pace. Standards are aligned with each book, so curriculum needs can still be met with this approach.

### Teaching For Community Building

Teachers using the kit as a classroom community building activity, can choose to apply the standards, or not. For these purposes, teachers can simply use the kit in a piecemeal fashion, choosing

books relevant to your needs. This can be done as a read aloud activity to generate conversation about the topic learned in the book. Various book formats will also give you variety if you are looking to provide students with exposure to fiction and non-fiction texts. If you want to extend student understanding, incorporate activities and team building exercises for your students from your existing materials.

### **Teaching For Diverse Themes**

This kit can also be used to promote monthly themes centered around diversity within a classroom. Teachers can engage in conversations with students about diverse topics and build student empathy and understanding. Diversity can be celebrated through shared student experiences, show and tell centered around students' diverse experiences, or even a celebration of cultures focusing on multicultural food or clothing. Opportunities exist for teachers to go beyond the classroom and create a school-wide, monthly theme situated around diversity. Many of the books included in the kit are stories that impact children of all ages.

The *Diverse Story Kinder Kit* was designed with versatility in mind. Whether you are looking to build diversity into your existing curriculum or want to celebrate diversity outside the scope of the state standards, this kit can help you meet your goals. With multicultural text options on nine different diverse topics, this kit will guide you through introducing and discussing diversity with your students.

## Appendix C

### List of Books by Month & Summaries

## List of Books by Month/Topic & Summaries

### September--Acceptance

*Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match* by Monica Brown, illustrated by Sara Palacios. A story about a little girl who doesn't match with her peers in any of the things that she does. Other people find it hard to accept her, but she is just fine with her choices.

*Sparkle Boy* by Leslea Newman, illustrated by Maria Mola. A little boy loves to play with toys, but when he wants to wear sparkly, shimmery, and glittery things like his sister, Jessie, she isn't sure it is ok for a boy. She learns a lesson about being yourself.

*Uniquely Me* by Trace Wilson, illustrated by Trace Wilson & Ana Pueyo. A little boy learns that just because he is missing a limb and looks different from other people, doesn't mean that he should not accept himself for his uniqueness.

*My Brother Charlie* by Holly Robinson Peete & Ryan Elizabeth Peete, illustrated by Shane W. Evans. Told from the perspective of Callie, the twin sister to Charlie, we learn what its like to be the sibling of an autistic brother. They are the same in some ways, different in others. Some days are good, and some days it is hard to be Charlie's sister.

*What I Like About Me! Teacher Edition: A Book Celebrating Differences* by Allia Zobel Nolan, illustrated by Miki Sakamoto. A book celebrating the many differences we have including braces, glasses, and eyebrows. It teaches children to value their differences and builds self-esteem.

*Princess Hair* by Sharee Miller, illustrated by Sharee Miller. This book celebrates the many different black hair styles and lets us know that any black hair style is princess hair.

*Tan to Tamarind: Poems About the Color Brown* by Malathi Michelle Iyengar, illustrated by Jamel Akib. A book of poetry that showcases the many shades of brown, letting us know that brown is a valuable color. The book represents many different cultures through poetry.

*When Aiden Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff, illustrated by Kaylani Juanita. Born as a girl, Aiden realizes that parts of his life are not a good fit for him. His parents help him to make things right in his life. Aiden then learns he is going to be a brother. He wants to make things right for his new sibling, but learns that “right” means different things to different people.

*Jacob’s New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman & Ian Hoffman, illustrated by Chris Case. Jacob wants to wear a dress to school—even though boys don’t wear dresses—and he has to find a way to convince his parents to let him do it.

*I Don’t Want to Be a Frog* by Dev Petty, illustrated by Mike Boldt. Frog wants to be anything but a frog. In this funny book, frog gets to be the hero and figure out that being a frog has its advantages.

### **October—Embracing You**

*Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora, illustrated by John Parra. A young boy celebrates the many things in his life that he is thankful for by embracing the little pleasures that make life great.

*Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel. A young girl observes the different ways her family wears the hijab. The different women in her life represent the different ways to embrace their Muslim culture through the unique way they wear the hijab.

*Areli Is a Dreamer: A True Story* by Areli Morales, by Areli Morales, illustrated by Luisa Uribe. Areli’s family moves from Mexico to New York. Things are much different than Mexico. Areli understands that she can embrace her new world and become a New Yorker, even if she is not an American citizen.

*Danbi Leads the School Parade* by Anna Kim, illustrated by Anna Kim. Danbi comes from South Korea to America and is nervous about her new surroundings. She just “can’t get anything” right in America. Using her imagination, she learns to embrace her new surroundings and opens her world to others.

*Freedom Soup* by Tami Charles, illustrated by Jacqueline Alcantara. Ti Gran is teaching Belle all about her culture by showing her how to make a special Haitian soup. Belle learns about the history of the soup, her family, and Haiti, embracing and celebrating her culture.

*Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts, illustrated by Noah Z. Jones. Jeremy wants a pair of shoes that everyone has, but his family cannot afford a “want”. Jeremy comes to see that embracing the things we do have—warm boots and a grandma—are more important than the things we want.

*Happy Dreamer* by Peter H. Reynolds, illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds. A story about the importance of dreaming and embracing all the different dreams we might have and the different ways we might dream: quiet, loud, colorful.

*The Bad Seed* by Jory John, illustrated by Pete Oswald. In this story, we meet a bad seed who makes poor choices. He decides to make some changes in his life, but learns to embrace who he is.

### **November—Feelings**

*Enemy Pie* by Derek Munson, illustrated by Tara Calahan King. A little boy is feeling left out when Jeremy, the new kid moves in and starts playing with his best friend. The boy makes Jeremy his enemy and dad comes up with a way to help get rid of Jeremy: Enemy Pie. The problem is that once the boy puts his plan in motion, he finds that he is feeling different emotions about trying to get rid of Jeremy.



*Sunday Shopping* by Sally Derby, illustrated by Shadra Strickland. Evie and Grandma spend Sunday nights together and use their imagination to celebrate the love for their family.

*B is for Breathe: The ABC's of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings* by Dr. Melissa Munro Boyd, illustrated by Dr. Melissa Munro Boyd. From A to Z, this book offers strategies for coping and expressing their feelings in appropriate ways.

*Moony Luna* by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez. Luna is not sure about going to school. With encouragement from her parents, she finds the courage to go, only to discover that once there, she is afraid. She meets a group of kids who help her feel that school is the right place for her.

*In Daddy's Arms I Am Tall: African Americans Celebrating Fathers* by Javaka Steptoe, illustrated by Paula S. Barragan. A collection of poetry honoring the strong bond between African American fathers and their children.

*Love to Mama: A Tribute to Mothers* by Pat Mora, illustrated by Paula S. Barragan. A collection of poetry written by Latino poets to celebrate their bonds with their mothers and grandmothers. It showcases the powerful bond of love among women in the Latino culture.

*Calling the Water Drum* by Latisha Redding, illustrated by Aaron Boyd. Henri and his parents leave Haiti to go to New York City. His parents pass away on the trip over, and overcome with grief, Henri is no longer able to speak. His uncle helps him use drumming as a link to his past and as a way to navigate his emotions.

*My Cold Plum Lemon Pie Bluesy Mood* by Tameka Fryer Brown, illustrated by Shane W. Evans. Using colors as a link to Jamie's moods, children will learn how to identify and describe their feelings in a unique way.

*Lizzy's Ups and Downs: Not an Ordinary School Day* by Jessica Harper, illustrated by Lindsay Harper duPont. Lizzy retells her school day to mom using all of the emotions she encountered throughout a single day. The different ups and downs she felt are shared through rhyming.

*The Great Big Book of Feeling* by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Ros Asquith. An entire entourage of feelings are explored in this book, while reminding us that we feel better when we share our feelings with others.

### **December—Bullying**

*Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis. Chloe chooses to turn away from the new girl, Maya, at school when she attempts to befriend her. Each time Maya asks to play with Chloe and her friends, she is told no. Chloe's teacher gives a lesson on kindness that strikes a nerve but when Chloe tries to make it right with Maya, she learns Maya has moved away and loses her chance to make amends.

*Hey, Little Ant* by Phillip Hoose and Hannah Hoose, illustrated by Debbie Tilley. Told from two different perspectives, the ant and the boy, this story is about a bully (from the ant's perspective) whose getting ready to squish an ant when the ant begins a conversation with the boy. The boy listens as the ant tries to convince him to spare his life.

*Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell, illustrated by David Catrow. Molly Lou Melon looks different from the other kids at her new school, but grandma gives her words of encouragement that help her keep her cool as the school bully tries to bring her down. Molly Lou maintains her integrity and teaches the bully a lesson about self-confidence.

*The Juice Box Bully: Empowering Kids to Stand Up for Others* by Bob Sornson, illustrated by Maria Dismondy. Pete, a new student, has a hard time fitting in because he is a bully. Pete picks on Ruby, and her two friends join forces to remind both of them that being a bully is unacceptable and reacting to a bully in a negative way is also unacceptable. In this story, children learn how to react in a positive way to bullies.

*The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig, illustrated by Patrice Barton. Brian is an invisible boy. Nobody notices him or includes him in anything they do. A new boy arrives, Justin, and he sees Brian just fine. They team up on a project and Brian begins to be seen.

*The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade* by Justin Roberts, illustrated by Christina Robinson. Sally is the smallest girl in her grade, but that does not stop her from being observant. She notices everything going on, including all the bullying. One day, she has enough and speaks up about the unkind acts she sees.

*Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun: Having the Courage To Be Who You Are* by Maria Dismondy, illustrated by Kimberly Shaw-Peterson. Lucy eats spaghetti on a hot dog bun for lunch at school, the way her Papa makes it for her. Ralph makes fun of her lunch and of her hair. When Ralph is in need of help, Lucy decides to do the right thing and help him. Her kindness teaches Ralph a lesson about bullying and being true to yourself.

*I Walk with Vanessa: A Story about a Simple Act of Kindness* by Kerascoet, illustrated by Kerascoet. A wordless picture book that features Vanessa, a young girl who is bullied by another boy while

she walks home from school. Witnessed by the other neighborhood kids, one girl decides to do something about it. She enlists the help of the other students and they begin walking with Vanessa.

*Lili Macaroni* by Nicole Testa, illustrated by Annie Boulanger. Lili has qualities and attributes that are passed down from her family—red hair, freckles, blue eyes—but the kids at school tease her. She finds a way to let them know how hurtful it is and they begin to stand with Lili.

*Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Kevin Henkes. A little mouse named Chrysanthemum loves her name. When she goes to school for the first time, her classmates tease her because her name is so long and because it's also the name of a flower. Chrysanthemum begins to dislike her name until a beloved teacher steps in and turns the situation around.

### **January—Language**

*Poems in the Attic* by Nikki Grimes, illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon. A story about a girl who discovers her mother's poems in the attic. The poems, written by her mother, tell the story of her experiences as she moved around the United States. The little girl then decides to write her own collection of poems for someone else to find.

*The Day Saida Arrived* by Susana Gomez Redondo, illustrated by Sonja Wimmer. Saida arrives from Morocco only speaking Arabic. She is befriended by a girl at school and the two decide to teach each other their language. They form a bond and lasting friendship through the experience of learning.

*Paletero Man* by Lucky Diaz, illustrated by Micah Player. This is a story about a little boy who is chasing after the Paletero man, Jose. With a mix of Spanish words and English words, this bilingual book is a nice start to sharing words in Spanish with students.

*Mama the Alien* by Rene Colato Lainez, illustrated by Laura Lacamara. Sofia sees her mama's Resident Alien Card and concludes that her mother must be an alien from outer space. She begins researching aliens and learns that in English, alien can mean something else besides being from another planet, it can mean being from another country.

*We Laugh Alike: A Story That's Part Spanish, Part English, And A Whole Lot of Fun* by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand, illustrated by Alyssa Bermudez. Six children are playing at the park. One group speak Spanish and the other group speak English. They work together to communicate in other ways besides using their voice.

*Quinito, Day and Night* by Ina Cumpiano, illustrated by Jose Ramirez. This story follows Quinito, whose life is full of opposites. The story introduces readers to the concept of opposites using both Spanish and English.

*Gracias, Thanks* by Pat Mora, illustrated by John Parra. A book that outlines a boy's thanks for the many things in his life. Each page is written in both Spanish and English.

*Grandpa Across the Ocean* by Hyewon Yum, illustrated by Hyewon Yum. A little boy travels to Korea to visit his grandpa. Once there, he finds that he cannot understand anything that grandpa says. They find different ways to communicate and form a lasting bond.

*Accordionly: Abuelo and Opa Make Music* by Michael Genhart, illustrated by Priscilla Burris. Abuelo and Opa both visit their grandson at the same time. Neither speaks the others language, but their grandson finds a way for them to communicate through music.

*I'll Believe You When...Unbelievable Idioms from Around the World* by Susan Schubert, illustrated by Raquel Bonita. A collection of idioms in ten different languages from around the world that will delight children of all ages.

## February—Race

*Black All Around* by Patricia Hubbell, illustrated by Don Tate. A celebration of the color black using seemingly unrelated objects that show how a young black girl how special the color is.

*Where Are You From?* By Yamile Saied Mendez, illustrated by Jamie Kim. A little girl is asked where she's really from. Without an answer, she turns to her Abuelo and learns they many different places she is from.

*Sweet Potato Pie* by Kathleen D. Lindsey, illustrated by Charlotte Riley-Webb. An African American family is devastated by a drought. The only remaining crop is sweet potatoes. Mama comes up with a plan to sell sweet potato pies at the Harvest Celebration to earn money to pay their loan. The family works together to get ready for the celebration.

*The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis. Separated by a fence that segregates the African American side of town from the white side of town, two girls, one black and one white, strike up a friendship.

*Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong, illustrated by Vashti Harrison. Everyone in Sulwe's family has darker skin than her. She wants to look like her family and tries many different ways to make her skin lighter. She discovers that she is beautiful just the way she is.

*Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Caroline Binch. Grace wants to play the lead in the school play, Peter Pan. Her classmates are quick to point out that Peter Pan was a boy and he wasn't black, like Grace. With encouragement from her wise grandmother, Grace learns she can be anything she wants.

*The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi, illustrated by Yangsook Choi. Unhei has just moved to America from Korea. Nobody can pronounce her name correctly, so she decides to pick an American name that her classmates will know. The name jar is used to collect ideas from her classmates but Unhei soon learns that her name is special and important.

*Nana Akua Goes to School* by Tricia Elam Walker, illustrated by April Harrison. Zura brings her grandmother to school for grandparent's day. In addition to having different color skin from the other grandparents, she also has tribal markings on her face. Zura is nervous about how her classmates might react, but grandma has a way to make everyone feel special.

*Lulu the One and Only* by Lynnette Mawhinney, illustrated by Jenny Poh. Lulu, a biracial girl, keeps being asked the same question, what are you? Lulu wants people to know who she is matters more than whether or not she is white or black.

*Chocolate Me!* By Taye Digges, illustrated by Shane W. Evans. A little boy is teased because his skin is darker and his hair is curlier, than the other kids. His mother helps him see how beautiful his skin is.

### **March—Adoption**

*Adoption is for Always* by Linda Walvoord Girard, illustrated by Linda Walvoord Girard. Five-year-old Celia begins having angry emotions after she learns what the word adoption means. Her parents answer her questions and help her understand the meaning of family.

*All Bears Need Love* by Tanya Valentine, illustrated by Tanya Valentine. Baby Brown Bear arrives at the

city zoo frightened and alone. Mama Polar Bear steps in and promises to be his mother, despite the protests of the other animals. Everyone comes to understand that families don't come in one size and color.

*The Best Single Mom in the World: How I Was Adopted* by Mary Zisk, illustrated by Mary Zisk. A little girl shares the story of how she was adopted by a single woman, who became her mom.

*The Coffee Can Kid* by Jan M. Czech, illustrated by Maurie J. Manning. Annie's father recounts the story of how she was adopted. A coffee can holds treasures from her adoption and helps tell the tale. Annie also learns that her adoptive mother will always have a place in her heart.

*Let's Talk About it: Adoption* by Fred Rogers, illustrated by Jim Judkis. Mr. Rogers offers children the opportunity to discuss adoption by explaining the need to be part of a family. It shows the many different ways a family can be structured and encourages communication on the topic.

*The Little Green Goose* by Adele Sansone, illustrated by Alan Marks. This book is about a male goose who wishes to be a parent, but cannot convince the hens to give him an egg. He finds an egg, takes it home, and out hatches a green scaled chick. The other animals point out his differences, so he goes off in search of his "real" father. Without any luck, he soon realizes who his father is and returns home to the goose.

*A Mother for Choco* by Keiko Kasza, illustrated by Keiko Kasza. Chico wished he has a mother so he goes off in search of someone who looks like him, without luck. When Mrs. Bear does things a mommy would do, he starts to see her in a new light. She takes him home to be his mommy and meets the rest of his new family, who look nothing alike.



*The Red Blanket* by Eliza Thomas, illustrated by Joe Cepeda. A woman adopts a little girl from China. The new mom cannot get the baby to stop crying, until remembers she brought a red blanket from home. She wraps the baby in the red blanket and she suddenly stops crying. The blanket represents comfort and the little carries the blanket with her for years.

*The Story I'll Tell* by Nancy Tupper Ling, illustrated by Jessica Lanan. A young child asks his mother to tell him the story of how he came to be part of the family. The mother considers all the magical ways she might tell how he came to be with them, then realizes the true story is magical on its own.

*Rosie's Family: An Adoption Story* by Lori Rosove, illustrated by Heather Burrill. Rosie the beagle was adopted by schnauzers. She feels different from her family and begins asking questions about her adoption.

#### **April—Disabilities**

*Lucy's Umbrella* by Sara Madden, illustrated by Sara Madden. Lucy has vitiligo. She compares the beauty of patterns she finds in nature to the beauty in the patterns on her skin.

*Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille* by Jen Bryant, illustrated by Boris Kulikov. At five years old, Louis Braille lost his sight. He is determined to be like everyone else, but there are no books for him, so he invents his own alphabet.

*A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* by Jen Bryant, illustrated by Melissa Sweet. As a child, Horace loved to draw. When he went to war, he continued to draw until he was shot in the arm. Unable to use his arm, he focused on rehabilitating his arm until he was able to paint again.

*I Talk Like a River* by Jordan Scott, illustrated by Sydney Smith. A little boy who stutters feels alone when he cannot communicate the way he wants. His dad takes him to the river to show him how his speech and the water are very much alike, helping his son to cope.

*The Remember Balloons* by Jessie Oliveros, illustrated by Dana Wulfekotte. In this story, each balloon is filled with a memory for Grandpa because as he gets older, he is forgetting the things that has happened in his life. His grandson, James, shares his balloons when Grandpa lets go of his.

*Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* by Laurie Ann Thompson, illustrated by Sean Qualls. A boy from Ghana, with only one leg, sets out to prove that disabilities do not define a person. At 21, he bicycles almost 400 miles to prove to the people of his country that people with disabilities are valuable.

*Different is Awesome!* By Ryan Haack, illustrated by Wes Molebash. A little boy brings his older brother for show and tell. Born with only one hand, the boy shows the class that he can do anything they can do, just different. The class discovers that our differences are what makes us unique.

*Looking Out for Sarah* by Glenna Lang, illustrated by Glenna Lang. Sarah, a blind musician and teacher, along with her guide dog, Perry, show children all the things they've accomplished together.

*Pirate of Kindergarten* by George Ella Lyon, illustrated by Lynne Avril. Ginny sees everything in double. When a trip to the eye doctor confirms this, an eye patch over one eye fixes Ginny's problem. She shows her classmates that she can do all the things they do, even if she only has the use of one eye.

*We'll Paint the Octopus Red*, by Stephanie Stuve-Boden, illustrated by Pam Devito. Emma is awaiting the

arrival of a new sibling, but when Dad tells her that new brother has Down Syndrome, Emma worries that he will not be able to do all the fun things she has planned for them.

### **May—Religion**

*Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story* by Reem Faruqi, illustrated by Lea Lyon. Lailah is able to fast during the month of Ramadan now that she has turned ten. She worries how she will explain it all to her teacher and classmates when she gets some advice from the librarian.

*Festival of Colors* by Kabir Sehgal and Surishtha Sehgal, illustrated by Vashti Harrison. Siblings Minto and Chintoo are working together to gather flowers for the Indian Festival of Colors called Holi.

*Hanukkah Bear* by Eric A. Kimmel, illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka. On the first night of Hanukkah, Bubba Brayna makes latkes and the smell entices a bear from his hibernation. Mistaken for the rabbi, Bubba Brayna invites the bear in and suddenly all the latkes are gone when the rest of the guests arrive for dinner.

*Fridays are Special* by Chris Barash, illustrated by Melissa Iwai. A family prepares for the special day of the week, Friday, by baking challah, cooking dinner, and greeting family for Shabbat.

*The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad & S.K. Ali, illustrated by Hatem Aly. Faizah is excited for the first day of school because it is also the first day her sister gets to wear her hijab. Faith leads these strong characters through some hurtful words.

*Chik Chat Shabbat* by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker. Goldie becomes ill on the Friday before Shabbat and is not able to make her Cholent. When her neighbors learn this, they all pitch in and bring a dish that represents an ingredient in Cholent.

*Everyone Prays: Celebrating Faith Around the World* by Rabiah York Lumbard, illustrated by Alireza Sadeghian. A book that celebrates the many different ways that people pray.

*Deep in the Sahara* by Kelly Cunnane, illustrated by Hoda Hadadi. Lalla lives in Mauritania, a Muslim country. She wants to wear the malafa, like her mom and sister, but learns its not about beauty, but about faith.

*Maybe God is Like That Too* by Jennifer Grant, illustrated by Benjamin Schipper. A little boy asks his grandma where God is in their city. He soon comes to realize, with grandma's help, God is everywhere.

*Hats of Faith* by Medeia Cohan, illustrated by Sarah Walsh. This book showcases the shared custom of religious head coverings.

## Appendix D

### Framework by Month

## September Literature

**Topic**—Acceptance of other cultures

**Title**—Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match

**Author**—Monica Brown

**Illustrator:** Sara Palacios

**Summary**—A little girl is told by others that all the things she does and says do not match. Marisol is just fine with her choices, until a boy says she couldn't match if she tried. She takes this as a challenge and finds that when she tries to match the other kids, she does not feel good about herself. Marisol finds that being mismatched is just perfect for her.

**Purpose**—To remind students that we all have unique ways of seeing and doing things.

**CCSS**—SL.K.2, SL.K.6, RL.K.2, RL.K.3

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

Who is the main character in this story?

What is the setting of the story?

What problem does she have?

How does she attempt to solve the problem?

What makes Marisol happy?

**Classroom Goal**—To feel good about the way you look even if it's different from others.

**Link to Text**-- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzl\\_ynrAgIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzl_ynrAgIQ)

## October Literature

**Topic**—Embracing You

**Title**—The Bad Seed

**Author**—Jory John

**Illustrator:** Pete Oswald

**Summary**—A bad seed talks about all of the bad things he does. He explains that he wasn't always bad, until he was left all alone. One day, he decides that he doesn't want to be bad anymore. He does his best to make better choices. Even though he still makes mistakes, he feels much better about himself.

**Purpose**—To remind students that we are not perfect and sometimes we make mistakes.

**CCSS**—SL.K.2, SL.K.6, RL.K.1, RL.K.4

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

How does the bad seed describe himself?

How did he become "bad?"

Is there another way to describe him besides using the words "being bad"?

What change does he decide to make?

Is this change successful?

**Classroom Goal**—To recognize when we make mistakes and try to make better choices next time.

**Link to Text**-- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqsGoiz-ufg>

## November Literature

**Topic**— Feelings

**Title**—Enemy Pie

**Author**—Derek Munson

**Illustrator:** Tara Calahan King

**Summary**—A little boy feels hurt when the new kid, Jeremy, laughs after striking him out in baseball and leaves him out of a trampoline party. Making him enemy number one, the boy decides to use his dad’s secret recipe, enemy pie, to get rid of Jeremy for good. The only catch is that the boy must spend the day with his enemy. Soon, the boy begins to have a change of heart and struggles with his feelings toward his “enemy”.

**Purpose**—To remind students to get to know their peers before making judgements about them.

**CCSS**—RL.K.1, RL.K.2, RL.K.3, RL.K.4

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

What is the problem that the little boy has? How do you think he feels?

What solution does dad come up with? What does “enemy” mean?

Dad’s job is to make enemy pie. What is the little boy’s job? How does he feel about his job?

When does the little boy start to change his mind about Jeremy Ross?

What does the little boy say to stop Jeremy from eating the pie?

Is Jeremy a friend or an enemy at the end of the story?

**Classroom Goal**—Make friends, not enemies, by giving everyone a chance

**Link to Text**— [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_I9NgXKtC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_I9NgXKtC8)

Created by Tamara Powell, 2021



## December Literature

**Topic**— Bullying

**Title**—Each Kindness

**Author**—Jacqueline Woodson

**Illustrator:** E.B. Lewis

**Summary**—A new student, Maya, arrives at Chloe’s school. When Maya attempts to make friends with her and the other kids in her class, they all ignore her and refuse to play with her. Each day, Maya attempts to play with her classmates, but they tease her and turn away. One day, Maya doesn’t show up at school. The teacher gives a lesson on kindness, but Chloe can’t think of anything kind she had done. When Chloe learns that Maya has moved away, she begins to regret her actions.

**Purpose**—To show students that our actions can affect other people and we don’t always get a second chance to make things right.

**CCSS**—RL.K.2, RL.K.7

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

Who is the author of this story? Who is the illustrator?

What happens at the beginning of the story? Middle? End?

How does the author teach us a lesson about kindness? What example does she use in the story?

How does the illustrator show us what kind acts can do? Which pictures does she use to show us?

If Maya returned to school, what might Chloe do?

**Classroom Goal**—Be aware of what you say and do and how it might make others feel

**Link to Text**— <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlNgYno4W14>

Created by Tamara Powell, 2021

## January Literature

**Topic**— Language

**Title**—The Day Saida Arrived

**Author**—Susana Gomez Redondo

**Illustrator:** Sonja Wimmer

**Summary**—Saida arrives from Morocco unable to speak English. A little girl befriends her, in hopes of finding her words for her so she can speak. Together, they establish a relationship and are able to communicate with one another, even though they speak different languages.

**Purpose**—To show students that even though we might not speak the same language, we can find ways to communicate and build relationships with others who are different from us.

**CCSS**—RL.K.7

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

How do the girls communicate with one another?

Why is the little girl looking for Saida's words?

How does the illustrator use pictures to help us understand the story?

Have you ever met someone who speaks another language? How did you communicate?

What are ways they we can communicate without using our voices?

**Classroom Goal**—Recognize that students might speak a different language than your own

**Link to Text**— [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=410614886730592&ref=watch\\_permalink](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=410614886730592&ref=watch_permalink)

## February Literature

**Topic**— Race

**Title**—Sulwe

**Author**—Lupita Nyong'o

**Illustrator:** Vashti Harrison

**Summary**—Sulwe has skin much darker than the members of her family. She is teased at school and begins looking for ways to lighten her skin. A prayer to God goes unanswered and her mother does her best to console Sulwe, explaining real beauty is how you see yourself. Sulwe is visited by a star and learns just how special her dark skin really is.

**Purpose**—To introduce the topic of race by discussing how each student's skin is a different shade.

**CCSS**—RL.K.1. RL.K.3

**Format**—Fiction picture book

### Questions for Discussion--

Who is the main character in this story?

What has her feeling sad?

What is the setting of the story?

What problem is Sulwe trying to resolve? How does she try to fix it?

What lesson does Sulwe learn from the star?

**Classroom Goal**—Recognize that we are all beautiful, regardless of the color of our skin

**Link to Text**-- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vujbTOuzg2Q>

**March Literature****Topic**—Adoption**Title**—The Little Green Goose**Author**—Adele Sansone**Illustrator:** Alan Marks

**Summary**—Mr. Goose wants to be a father, but none of the hens will give him an egg, so he goes into the forest to look for an egg. He finds one, hatches it, and out comes a green-skinned chick who looks nothing like his goose father. The chick goes in search of his real mother but realizes that his goose father is the one who loves him and takes care of him, no matter what he looks like.

**Purpose**—To introduce students to the idea of adoption

**CCSS**—RL.K.1, RL.K.2, RL.K.3, RL.K.10**Format**—Fiction picture book**Questions for Discussion--**

What does the goose wish for? Who does he ask?

Where does the goose get his egg?

How does he care for the egg? What are some ways he cares for his baby?

Why does the baby chick go off to look for his real mother?

What does he discover?

**Classroom Goal**—Understand that our parents don't always look like us and they don't have too

**Link to Text**— <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G4PiGz7KXE>

## April Literature

**Topic**—Disabilities

**Title**—I Talk Like A River

**Author**—Jordan Scott

**Illustrator:** Sydney Smith

**Summary**—When a boy who stutters is unable to communicate the way he would like, he begins to feel isolated and alone. His father takes him to the river to hear how words flow like water on their way to a

**Purpose**—To introduce students to the topic of speech delays and how some students might struggle to say the words they want to say, leaving them frustrated and fearful of speaking aloud in class.

**CCSS**—RL.K.5, RL.K.6, RL.K.7,

**Format**—Fiction picture book (elements of poetry)

### Questions for Discussion--

This picture book shares how a boy feels about his “bad speech”. How does the text (words) match the pictures?

Who is the author of this story? How does the author use words to help us understand the boy’s speech?

Who is the illustrator of this story? How does the illustrator use pictures to help us understand the boy’s speech?

On the page before the last, what moment does this picture show us? What is the boy doing here?

**Classroom Goal**—To foster compassion and tolerance among students who might struggle to speak clearly.

**Link to Text**-- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAoiRX\\_ez1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAoiRX_ez1Y)

Created by Tamara Powell, 2021

### May Literature

**Topic**— Religion

**Title**—Lailah’s Lunch

**Author**—Reem Faruqi

**Illustrator:** Lea Lyon

**Summary**—Lailah has turned ten and is now able to fast during the month of Ramadan, just like the rest of her family back in the Middle East. Mrs. Carman, the librarian, helps her to explain the religious tradition to her teacher and classmates in Atlanta, where she now lives.

**Purpose**—To introduce to students one of the different religious traditions they might observe their classmates practicing in school.

**CCSS**—RL.K.1, RL.K.4, RL.K.10

**Format**—Fiction picture book

#### Questions for Discussion--

What do you think “sehri time” means?

What does “fasting” mean?

After Lailah reads the note her mom sent to school, how does she feel? What is she worried about?

How does Lailah communicate with her teacher about missing lunch and fasting?

What is Ramadan? What is Iftar?

Do you think it would be difficult to fast? Tell me more?

**Classroom Goal**—To remind students that their classmates celebrate differently but each tradition is special and important.

**Link to Text**— [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjZ\\_EpecEkk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjZ_EpecEkk)