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# President's Message...

by **Theresa Hasenauer, MRA President 2019-2020**

According to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, “accomplished teachers value diversity and appreciate the many facets of diversity students bring to the classroom, including language background, culture, ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, body image, household income, religious affiliation, family configuration, sexual orientation, physical or psychological exceptionalities, and literacy experience” (2016, p. 25). This statement is meant to simultaneously call attention to the changing demographics of students in many areas of the country, including Michigan, and educators' unwavering commitment to the education of the students in our classrooms. But as our student population has changed, have we? In this era of accountability, educators' jobs are complex and multilayered. Yet, we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that deliberate and purposeful planning of lessons around diversity can help educators move toward effectively delivering equitable instruction for all students.



**Theresa Hasenauer**

Who are the students in your schools? Your classrooms? Writing for the International Literacy Association blog, Hsiao-Chin Kuo stated, “[the] National Center for Education Statistics projects that by 2023 the percentage of White students in public school enrollment will decrease to less than half, whereas Hispanics are projected to constitute 30% and Asian/Pacific Islanders 5% of the enrollment” (Kuo, 2015, p. 1). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2016), 9.6% of K-12 students are English language learners, with many more that speak a language other English at home that are not included in this number. Gates (2015) states that between 2 million and 3.7 million children under age 18 have an LGBTQ parent, and approximately 200,000 of them are being raised by a same-sex couple (p. 1). All of our students need to know that they are seen, but also need to see themselves and their identities represented in the books they read. If you don't know where to start in your classroom, try building your classroom library around books that represent your students. But that's not enough. We also need to be sure that we build libraries in which students can see those who are different from them, windows into worlds they may not otherwise be able to access. Organizations such as the International Literacy Association have lists of book recommendations, if you need a place to start. Many blogs, including those written by Dr. Debbie Reese (<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/?m=1>), Dr. Laura Jimenez (<https://booktoss.blog/>), and Edith Campbell (<https://crazyquiltedi.blog/me-2-0/>) also post reviews on books and hints for finding books that highlight the diversity in our state and country, as well as tips for thinking critically about books that may misrepresent some of these groups. Start reading and reviewing books, on your own and with your students, and share that information with other educators.

It is important to start conversations around diversity. Most of our classrooms are already made up of students from diverse backgrounds and of diverse abilities, but those that do not are just as in need of access to books representing diverse groups of people, if not more so. Plan deliberate literacy lessons around engaging students in discussions about listening and learning from different perspectives. Together we can strive to bring awareness to all of our unique and amazing backgrounds!

Theresa Hasenauer Ed.S, Michigan Reading Association President

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