Amplifying Our Voice: Leading Boldly for Our Students, Our Professions, and Our Union

Talking About Color: Facilitating Conversations Using Literature
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NEA Leadership Competency
LEADING OUR PROFESSION

• NEA Leadership Competency progression level
  -Level 1: Foundational

• NEA Leadership Competency themes
  • Supports professional excellence and builds capacity for continual improvement and learning to ensure the success of all students
NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority:

- amplify the voices of all educators,
- support our members’ professional growth,
- and promote social justice for our students, communities and our nation;

-Racial Justice in Education
The pedagogy we use in our classrooms are part of the conditions that impact our profession and learning of all students, particularly when using a race equity lens.
NEA Strategic Goal and Organizational Priority: Advance Racial Justice in Education
Session Outcomes

Develop awareness of range and types of books inclusive of POC

Evaluate books critically for representation, themes, and message

Discuss strategies and approaches for using inclusive books in the classroom
• When I was in elementary school the book I remember reading that I could identify with was...

• In middle school a story we read in class that reminded me of my upbringing was...

• While in high school I learned more about the history of my culture with books/stories like ...
BOOKS!

List your go to books....
Who are our heroes?

Circle the titles with a protagonist who is of color.

Star the ones with a protagonist who is female.
Diversity in Children’s Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds:
Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children’s
Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

- 0.9% American Indians/First Nations
- 2.4% Latinx
- 3.3% Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans
- 7.6% African/African Americans
- 12.5% Animals, Trucks, etc.
- 73.3% White

* About a quarter of the total children’s books published in 2015
  were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human
  characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.
Representation up to 30% in 2017!

Authorship up to 7%

(Cooperative Children’s Book Center)
What do you look like?
What do your students look like?
What do your administrators look like?

DOES IT MATTER?
Who is in your room?

dq.cde.ca.gov
“We live in a diverse world... It’s much safer to teach what we’ve always taught and to stick with the old canon... [But] Not only do kids of color need to see themselves represented in story so do kids of the dominant culture need to see a broader swath of the world we live in - It’s good for everyone.”  

-Jennifer Buehler
Representation
What physical attributes do you see?
- skin color,
- hair type or styles,
- clothing

The Color of Us, Karen Katz
celebration
awareness
understanding
empathy

Read the remarkable true stories of five young refugees.
Do these characters look like me?
Act like me?
Live like me?

What do stories teach us about identity?
Storyline:

Does the color of the characters have anything to do with the plot?
Does representation move beyond Heroes and Holidays?
Characters are people, NOT food commodities

(Doesn’t everyone have almond shaped eyes?)

Cocoa and coffee are still made with slave labor
Consider this:

Whiteness is default neutral; Color is named

Written accents

 Appropriation

Stereotypes

the “Supercrip”

Mighty Whites
The case for Casual Diversity
What are the common human elements?
She was a samurai leading troops to battle with her mighty war fan. Natsumi flung her arms wide.

"YAAANHHH!"
"Not so fast, Natsumi!" scolded Grandmother when they went to the park.

"Not so hard, Natsumi!" warned Father when she practiced her ninja moves.

"Not so loud, Natsumi!" called Mother every time her daughter shut a door.
Can you relate?
What is the historical or social context?

Are there current connections?
What would you do?

resourcefulness
resilience
community
hope
PROMPTS AND ACTIVITIES

What messages, emotions, ideas do you have?
Create a Word Cloud.

What changed? Why?

Write an alternate ending.

Has anything like this happened to you?

Does this remind you of another book?

What would be fair? What would be just?

Make a poll.

What questions do you still have?
transformative prompts:

• What can we do in our individual lives to make sure others are treated with respect and dignity, and not based on stereotypes and prejudice?
• What can we do as a class or as a school to make sure our community is welcoming of people from different backgrounds — different races, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, gender and sexual orientations?
• And what about as city, state, nation or world? What can we do to make a difference in promoting equality and understanding across divides and in the face of intolerance?
The Youngest Marcher  Audrey Faye Hendricks was confident and bold and brave as can be. Through her we see the remarkable and inspiring story of one child’s role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Red, A Crayon’s Story  A crayon is told that it is red but it doesn’t perform like a red crayon. It finds happiness when it can be color it was always meant to be.
Joelitos Big Decision  Joelito didn’t understand why a missing backpack was so important until he learned about the low wages paid to his friends parents. Joelito chooses to stand in protest and skip his delicious hamburger tradition.

Separate Is Never Equal  Based on actual events that ended segregated schools in California, this case helped Brown v Board of Education ten years later end segregation nation wide.
“The Mendez children will need to register at Hoover School, the Mexican school.”


“Mexican children go to the Mexican school,” the woman insisted.

Sylvia looked down at her hands, her skin the color of dark caramel, and then she looked at Alice’s hands, which reminded her more of a dulce de leche, “milk candy” - lighter, creamier, paler than her own.
Books
Grade 5-6

One Crazy Summer  Three young sisters are sent for the summer to the mother that left them behind. The girls have to find their own breakfast and lunch, served by the Black Panthers.

Ms Marvel  Graphic novel featuring an American-Pakistani. Having feet in both worlds she battles with self identity and saving the world.
“My sisters and I became expert colored counters…. For instance, it was easy to count the number of words the Negro engineer on Mission Impossible spoke as well as the black POW on Hogan’s Heros. Sometimes the black POW didn’t have any words to say, so we scored him a “1” for being there. We counted how many times Lieutenant Uhuru hailed the frequency on Star Trek. We’d even take turns being her…”

“We didn’t just count the shows. We counted the commercials as well. We’d run into the TV room in time to catch the commercials with colored people using deodorant, shaving cream, and wash powder.”
Homeless Bird  A family without enough money for food arranges for their thirteen year old girl to marry. She journeys through India and grows strong through the conflicts she encounters. Her compelling strength shines through the pages.

When The Moon Was Ours  Transgender, lesbian, issues, also middle eastern character, and Hispanic character -- magical realism, really beautiful book.
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Junior is a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future in his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-shite farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.
3rd Grader: “I like the story because my grandma does the same thing!”

**Testimonials**

Teacher: “I was able to bring my love of history into the classroom and be more creative with the curriculum. I didn’t worry about the standards, I just knew I was doing good rigorous teaching that pushed my students to question everything.”

4th Grader: “I’m going to miss Target Time. It was like you were teaching us about books and history at the same time.”

5th Grader: “I like these books because I can see myself. I know they said happened is real because it happens to me.”

Parent: “As a parent I want my child to be exposed to different cultures and I like that it makes him think of the world and the diversity in it.”
Resources

Angel’s Multicultural Books
Teaching Tolerance Reading Diversity Checklist
How to Chose Outstanding Multicultural Books
Edutopia
EdChange
Zinn Education Project
A Mighty Girl

25 Mini Films for Exploring Race, Bias, and Identity
But wait....

.... in 2016, Black, Latinx, and Native authors combined wrote just 6% of new children’s books published. In other words, while the number of books with diverse content increases, the majority of those books are still written by white authors.
Why are we still giving preference to white authors telling diverse stories rather than authors of color/Native authors?

Why are POC and Native authors and illustrators still so underrepresented?

What efforts (if any) are publishers making to diversify the creators they work with?
Talking About Color: Facilitating Conversations Through Literature

LOP225
This session will explore how two classroom teachers are using literature as a frame for discussions, empowering student to use their voice and stories, and embedding social justice into the curriculum.
Presenter(s): Angela Der Ramos, Monica Guevara Rice
Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

• Outcome #1 Develop awareness of range and types of inclusive books
• Outcome #2 Evaluate books critically for representation, themes, and message
• Outcome #3 Discuss strategies and approaches for using inclusive books in the classroom
Closing

• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session by using the NEA Summit Mobile App! (Allow at least 5 minutes at the end of the session.)

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment

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Facilitating Conversations Through Literature  LOP225