

KNOWLEDGE QUEST



WHY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT

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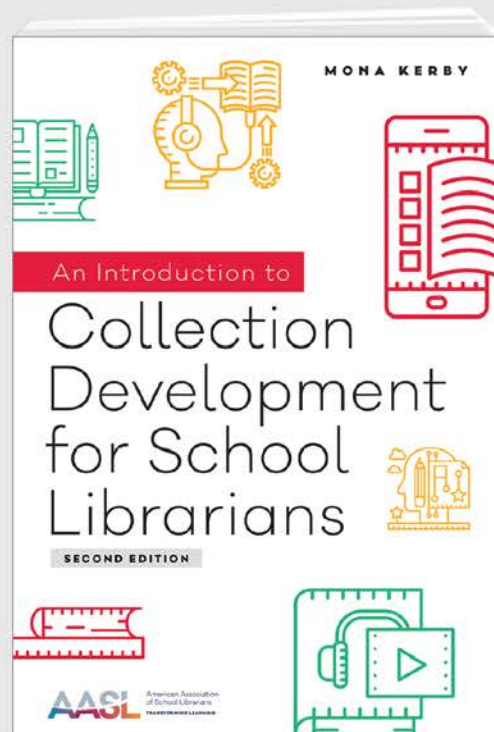
An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, Second Edition

MONA KERBY

Applying an informal and practical approach, Kerby provides librarians with the essential steps to effectively manage a vibrant school library collection. She argues that building a quality collection is no longer enough and offers strategies to ensure that learners actively engage with the materials. Supported by the *National School Library Standards* and ALA/AASL/CAEP standards for university preparation programs, this resource introduces the key components that influence collection development today, including

- › policies, practices, and selection sources to build, evaluate, and weed dynamic and diverse school library collections;
- › methods and examples for analyzing collection, curriculum, and community needs;
- › strategies for showcasing the school library collection to learners and stakeholders; and
- › charts, checklists, worksheets, discussion questions, and tips from practicing school librarians.

By focusing on the basics, readers can begin to reflect on and customize plans for action.



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An Interview with the Author

In this interview Mona Kerby, Professor at McDaniel College in Maryland, discusses her passion for helping school librarians improve their collections and how the *National School Library Standards* apply to this discipline. Visit www.alastore.ala.org/content/school-librarianship-and-collection-development-interview-mona-kerby.

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KQ

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School librarians are on the front lines of ensuring the safety of our learners when we choose books that represent people in our communities and the broader world.

Discernment and Censorship—The Collection Development Conundrum

Jennisen Lucas, 2021–2022 AASL President | jennisenlucas@park6.org

In the book *Our Enduring Values Revisited: Librarianship in an Ever-Changing World*, Michael Gorman writes that the job of librarians and archivists is to “preserve and disseminate the human record” (2015, 12). His words embolden me as a school librarian and humble me as a human being. What a great call to duty! Many of you will have heard me say this before because this quote is a huge part of my “why”: school librarians have a sacred duty to connect all people to the human record.

The more I think about that part of my why, the more I realize that this charge means that we must pay close attention to whose stories we are sharing and whose are left out. As we curate our collections, are we including stories about as many different ways of life as we can? Are we ensuring that everyone in our community is represented? Are we sharing stories about people who live outside of our immediate communities? One of my students recently pointed out that not including all stories causes us to “lose the nuance of society.”

When I first began my career as a school librarian, I worked in an elementary school in which 49 percent of the students were white, 49 percent were Black, and 2 percent were “other” (Hispanic, Russian, Middle Eastern, Native American, and Asian). There was a huge gap between the white students and everyone else in reading scores and engagement.

As we curate our collections, are we including stories about as many different ways of life as we can?

For my Master’s paper I looked at the collection I inherited. The school relied on a reading program for grading “free reading,” and I discovered that only 10 percent of our collection had corresponding tests in the program. I then looked at that 10 percent of the collection and discovered that only 10 percent of those books had Black main characters or authors. In effect this meant that, based on the way our learners were graded, only 1 percent of the books in the school library represented half of our student population. Our students couldn’t see themselves in the books they read, so they didn’t read (Lucas 2003).

I was able to use this data to acquire a \$10,000 grant to update our collection to be more representative. The reading interest went up almost immediately, although it still took a little while for scores to rise.

Now, almost twenty years later, as a nation, we are looking at the collections of school libraries. How do we discern what materials to purchase for our school libraries? How do we ensure that all learners have a chance to see themselves in a story? How do we ensure that our learners grow the empathy they need to understand others? These are complicated questions.

We need to represent children of all colors, nationalities, and creeds; children whose families are traditional, nuclear families with both male and female parents; children from divorced families; children who are adopted into their families; children who are raised by grandparents; children whose parents are same-gender couples; children whose lives are idyllic; children who have suffered trauma; and the list could go on and on and on. There are as many variations on this theme as there are students in our schools.

This is not new. What is new is the availability of these many stories. Twenty years ago it was much harder to find stories for children with LGBTQ characters, for instance. It was even harder to find books about Black children that did not invoke the Civil Rights Movement or slavery—Black Joy was still missing. Thankfully, we are moving forward, even if slowly.

Another thing that hasn't changed is funding shortages. With no budget for library books, I needed the grant to update my collection twenty years ago. In my current district, we do have a budget for library materials, but we all know that there will never be enough funding to buy everything we need or want for our shelves. The decisions become even more difficult when we consider the hidden needs of our learners. I know several people as adults who could have benefitted from books about sexual abuse when they were children, if there were any available. Children don't always have the words to explain the "secret" or "shameful" thing that happened only to them, and adults don't want to expose them to these things, so they don't know how to ask for help.

And, today, in an age when our society seems bent on keeping an old-fashioned, rose-colored view of the world for our children, guarding against self-censorship is exceedingly difficult. School librarians are on the front lines of ensuring the safety of our learners when we choose books that represent people in our communities and the broader world. There may be many topics about which we are hesitant to address

because we don't want to expose children "too soon" or we are concerned about the subject matter ourselves. There are topics about which we have strong opinions that feel "right" to us, and there are the topics we feel like we must still include to provide the opposing side. We must be open minded in our approaches without foregoing legitimacy of arguments. It is no wonder we are so tired.

I know this article does little to address the questions surrounding the choices we make in our collection. I don't pretend to know the answers, but I am sure that as you read this issue, you will gain perspective from our amazing colleagues that will help you find answers to your questions. I am looking forward to this issue for this reason!

I do want to ensure that you know that we all struggle with these questions. You are not alone. Working together, learning from each other, and asking these important questions are highlights of our professionalism, and school librarians are professionals.

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Sometimes we need to reaffirm that we have the tools, the know-how, and the expertise to maintain dynamic school libraries. Each one of us strives to create a welcoming environment through our actions and our collections.

Back to Basics on Collection Development

Jennifer Sturge | sturgej@calvertnet.k12.md.us

The pages of this issue of *Knowledge Quest* are filled with amazing, incredibly helpful, thoughtful, and practical information on collection development. School library collections have been under attack in Texas and elsewhere across the United States. The hashtag FReadom has trended on Twitter as school librarians promote the value of providing an inclusive and diverse collection for their students. And while this trend of book challenges is incredibly disheartening, when a district or school has a strong collection development policy and procedure and an up-to-date and relevant collection, challenges to a collection often fail. We must continue to promote inclusive and diverse collections—which is the heart of this issue.

This entire issue is part of a *KQ* series of issues that will focus on what the editorial board has nicknamed “back to basics.” Why back to the basics? It’s simple: sometimes we need to reaffirm that we have the tools, the know-how, and the expertise to maintain dynamic school libraries. Each one of us strives to create a welcoming environment through our actions and our collections.

In their feature “Why Collection Development Is Important,” the content experts for this issue, Liz Philippi and Becky Calzada, discuss that to be effective in our collection development we must first understand our “why” and we must always start with our standards.

In a powerful essay, both share how their experiences as members of the queer community have shaped their lives and how shining a positive light on LGBTQ+ books and authors can help students find the power to be themselves.

The best practices shared in this article will inspire, engage, and reaffirm your current school library practice.

Lauren Lynn and Casey Grenier pen a powerful article on the use of data, student voice, and auditing in their article “Revealing the Reality of Our Collections.” Together, they share how they approach collection development while engaging students to share what they would like to see in their school library collections. Lauren talks about how collection development is as much about purchasing new materials as it is about deselecting materials that no longer serve the community’s needs. Casey shares how she developed a spreadsheet and conducted a diversity audit of her picture books.

The school librarians also discuss the impact of the right book at the right time in the right student's hands, sharing inspiring stories.

She writes about how investing the time in handling each book opened her eyes to the surprising lack of diversity on the shelves. (She also shared with me how physically touching each book is time consuming, but is important to the process, even if her allergies went haywire from the dust!)

Rachel Altobelli and Nancy Jo Lambert provide us with the language school librarians need to engage with the school community to support our LGBTQ+ students and families in "LGBTQ-Inclusive Collections: School Librarian Self-Reflections and Collection Development Guide." They discuss the importance of LGBTQ+ books and authors that serve as windows and mirrors as well as provide vital information that students may not have access to elsewhere. In a powerful essay, both share how their experiences as members of the queer community have shaped their lives and how shining a positive light on LGBTQ+ books and authors can help students find the power to be themselves. With the challenges happening around the country surrounding books with LGBTQ+ themes and content, this article is timely. It's an important read for all school librarians. Most valuably to me, the authors address why LGBTQ+ collection development is essential at ALL levels of school library.

Manga are the books all students want, but we sometimes struggle to find books that are appropriate for our grade levels. Jillian Rudes shares the inside scoop on all things manga. When you finish reading this article, you will feel well versed in understanding the what, why, and how of manga. Jillian also provides guidance on selection, evaluation, and withstanding challenges to manga titles. The best part of this article was that I now feel like I have an opening to talk with students about manga—I was always too shy about my lack of knowledge before reading this. Thank you, Jillian!

Finally, this issue contains a Q&A with school librarians across the United States. Content experts Liz and Becky surveyed Jacob Gerding, Maegen Rose,

Suzanne Sannwald, and Nicole Cruz to get their views on their approaches to collection development and how they're preparing for book challenges. The school librarians also discuss the impact of the right book at the right time in the right student's hands, sharing inspiring stories. Each comes from a very different background, but the themes and ideas they share transcend geography and schoolhouse level—it is a testament to our profession.

Thank you to all the authors and the content experts for bringing us "back to the basics" of collection development. I finish up this column with this incredible quote from writer Carlos María Domínguez: "To build up a library is to create a life. It's never just a random collection of books" (n.d.). What we do is intentional, and our collections matter.

Works Cited:

"Carlos María Domínguez Quotes: Quotable Quote." n.d. Goodreads. <www.goodreads.com/quotes/130721-to-build-up-a-library-is-to-create-a-life> (accessed Dec. 11, 2021).

Jennifer Sturge (she/hers) is the specialist for School Libraries and Instructional Technology for Calvert County Public Schools in Prince Frederick, Maryland. She authored the "Think with the Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards" chapter in *Include* (ALA 2021) and coauthored the "Relationships" chapter in *Core Values in School Librarianship: Responding with Commitment and Courage* (ABC CLIO 2021). Jennifer was awarded the 2019 Ruth Toor Grant for Strong School Libraries, and her school district libraries received the 2021 National School Library of the Year Award. She is past-president for the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) and co-chair of the professional development committee for MASL. She is a member of AASL and serves on the Knowledge Quest Editorial Board.

Why COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT is important

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“Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” —James Baldwin (1962)

When a school librarian comes into a new space, collection development can seem to be an overwhelming and daunting task, especially when you see so many books in a space and reports to review, along with getting to know the school community the library will serve. As school librarians we know collection development is important, but is knowing this fact enough? There can be thousands of print and digital books in a school library to review and maintain. Whether you are a new or returning school librarian, knowing how collection development impacts students, teachers, and curriculum is the true “why” to taking on this critical component of school librarianship. Our learners are the reason for pushing ourselves to take on what can seem to be an enormous task.

Collection development impacts learners, teachers, and curriculum in so many ways. School librarians carefully select materials to compliment and support the curricular needs of the many content and ancillary areas taught in the various grade levels. The school library materials purchased offer teachers an opportunity to broaden and deepen the lessons and units taught. School library materials gathered by teachers for units are used to pique learners’ interests and expand their learning experiences. Learners also access the variety of fiction available for pleasure reading, a critical step in building life-long readers.

Now that we know “the why” what should be done next? To begin, “you must (1) know your standards, (2) know your learners, (3) know the curriculum, and (4) identify your selection criteria.” (Kerby 2019, 9). The AASL Standards has

collection development alignments with the Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage Shared Foundations. In each Shared Foundation, there are school library Domains and Alignments that address access to materials, reiterate the importance of providing materials for all learners in the school community, and emphasize maintaining a collection that “supports the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their communities” (AASL 2018, School Library II.B.I).

Standards Resources for Collection Development

Many states have their own school library standards that may include guidelines or requirements regarding collection development. In Texas the *School Library Program Standards* guide school librarians in building a strong, effective school library, including collection development recommendations. The Texas library standards and AASL Standards were written at the same time, and both are rooted in good library practice. The Texas standards can be helpful guidance to school librarians in reviewing and updating their collection development process.

The standards note that school library collections should provide materials that “support student inquiry and interests, are developmentally appropriate, culturally inclusive, and align with state and district learning standards” (Strand 2, Dimension I, Expectation I, 13), and that these materials should be a “carefully curated collection of current materials in a variety of formats.” In addition, the standards state, “the library encourages students to read a variety of literature for information and pleasure” (Strand 3, Dimension I, 20).

In the reading section, the standards state, “library materials (should) reflect diversity, student choice for leisure reading, and reading for information as well as the needs of the curriculum and state standards” (Strand 3, Dimension 3, 22). This is reflected in the expectation that review tools and authoritative sources are used when selecting materials for the campus library and is reiterated in the professional leadership section.

The Texas standards also include a “Collection Refresh Rate” of between 5 percent and 1 percent each year (Appendix 7, Dimension 6, 44), which means weeding outdated or worn items and replacing books when updating sections of the collection. The Texas standards recommend the collection be evaluated yearly for average copyright age, number of materials per student, and circulation data. Rubrics are provided for school librarians to evaluate and set goals for weeding and purchasing materials annually. They recommend updating the library collection development policy annually.

Once school library policies are evaluated and updated, school librarians should make sure administrators are informed of the updates and post them widely so that all stakeholders are aware of the school library’s policies.

Training Tools and Other Resources

Before a school librarian purchases material, it is vital to know current collection information. This can be achieved by running the catalog through collection analysis tools. **Collection analysis provides insight into weaknesses regarding collection age, quantity, and age of materials.** The school librarian should run several collection analysis reports to get an overall picture of the collection.

FIGURE 2.2

National School Library Standards: School Library Domains and Alignments for Collection Development

Shared Foundations	School Library Domains and Alignments
I. Inquire	B. CREATE: The school library enables generation of new knowledge by: • I.B.1. Providing experiences with and access to resources, information, ideas, and technology for all learners in the school community.
II. Include	A. THINK: The school library supports balanced perspectives through resources and learning opportunities by: • II.A.3. Providing a comprehensive variety of resources. B. CREATE: The school library represents all members and their place in a global learning community by: • II.B.1. Establishing and maintaining a collection of reading and information materials in formats that support the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their communities. C. SHARE: The school library facilitates opportunities to experience diverse ideas by: • II.C.2. Promoting the use of high-quality and high-interest literature in formats that reflect the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners and their communities. • II.C.3. Constructing a learning environment that fosters the sharing of a wide range of viewpoints and ideas. D. GROW: The school library builds empathy and equity within the global learning community by: • II.D.1. Ensuring that all learning needs are met through access to information and ideas located in a diverse collection of sufficient size for the learner population and supported by reliable hardware and software.
III. Collaborate	A. THINK: The school library facilitates opportunities to integrate collaborative and shared learning by: • III.A.2. Leading inquiry-based learning opportunities that enhance the information, media, visual, and technical literacies of all members of the school community.
IV. Curate	A. THINK: The school library provides problem-based learning experiences and environments by: • IV.A.2. Adopting a dynamic collection-development plan to ensure that adequate resources reflect current and in-depth knowledge. B. CREATE: The school library promotes selection of appropriate resources and tools for information use by: • IV.B.3. Employing a dynamic collection policy that includes selection and retention criteria for all materials within the collection. D. GROW: The school library engages the learning community in exploring resources by: • IV.D.2. Maintaining a collection of sufficient breadth and currency to be pertinent to the school's program of studies.
V. Explore	A. THINK: The school library supports learners' personal curiosity by: • V.A.2. Fostering opportunities for learners to demonstrate personal curiosity and creation of knowledge through engaging with a wide variety of resources and technology.
VI. Engage	D. GROW: The school library supports individual responsibility for information use by: • VI.D.2. Providing an engaging learning environment that supports innovative and ethical use of information and information technologies.

Source: Excerpted from the AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, standards.aasl.org, © 2018 American Library Association.

IF YOUR CAMPUS IS NOT DIVERSE IT'S EVEN MORE IMPERATIVE TO PURCHASE DIVERSE MATERIALS SO THAT LEARNERS CAN BE PROVIDED A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN.

The collection should include formats such as print, audio, e-book, and graphic versions of materials. In addition, relevancy, diversity, equity, age appropriateness, and variety should be considered. Any outdated materials or books with negative stereotypes should be weeded. Notes should be taken on topics, genres, and Dewey sections that are missing from the collection to seek out materials for possible inclusion.

Knowing which professional review sources can be used and the number of professional review sources required are proactive ways to determine whether purchases are a fit for your elementary, middle, or high school libraries. School librarians should consider book reviews supplied by *Kirkus Reviews*, *BookList*, *School Library Journal*, *The Horn Book*, and *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*; these should be considered primary review sources as they are created by experienced librarians in the field.

There are also many secondary reviews sources, such as Classroom

Bookaday, Nerdy Book Club, and more, that can also be employed to keep abreast of the new materials published as well as internet sources such as GoodReads, blogs, and social media mavens who regularly share book reviews.

Gathering Suggestions from Your Community

Engaging your community to solicit feedback is imperative in the collection development process. These include, but are not limited to, learners, teachers, administrators, and community members. Collecting wish lists can be done in a variety of fun, creative ways. Setting up a Google Form allows users to submit requests; a URL short link or QR code offers opportunities for easy access for learners to submit requests for new materials around the school library. These same links and codes can also be included in school print or digital newsletters. Also, don't underestimate the importance of just-in-time conversations; these personal interactions can lead to additional suggestions for library purchases.

Creating a student advisory group is another way of garnering collection suggestions. Student and student/parent book clubs are additional sources for suggestions. Advertising

collection recommendation tools at parent gatherings increases visibility and often brings additional input for a school library collection.

Another resource are publisher and vendor reviews. Many book vendors and publishers share book reviews and positive book blurbs from other authors and readers online and on the back of the book cover.

Award lists are additional collection development sources librarians can use for purchases. See table 1 for a list of American Library Association-sponsored awards and recommendations.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Finally, we specifically want to address equity, diversity, and inclusion. For our purposes, we refer to the following We Need Diverse Book definition of diversity as it encompasses what we feel supports the needs of all learners and school communities:

We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities*, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDED YEARLY LISTS	
Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC)	Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)
Mildred L. Batchelder	Alex Awards
Pura Belpré Award	Edwards Awards
Randolph Caldecott Award	Morris Award
Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal	Nonfiction Award
Randolph Newbery Award	Printz Award
Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production	
Robert F. Sibert Award	

Table 1. American Library Association-sponsored awards for collection development consideration.



**We subscribe to a broad definition of disability, which includes but is not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, chronic conditions, and mental illnesses (this may also include addiction). Furthermore, we subscribe to a social model of disability, which presents disability as created by barriers in the social environment, due to lack of equal access, stereotyping, and other forms of marginalization. (n.d.)*

The definition above challenges us to consider the make-up of the students we serve to intentionally purchase books highlighting representation. If your campus is not diverse it's even more imperative to purchase diverse materials so that learners can be provided a global perspective of the world they live in. The books you purchase will offer learners opportunities to broaden and expand their understanding of the world, preparing readers for the global society they will be living in.

Diverse literature also broadens our understanding of cultures, ways of life, and the lives of others. While nonfiction selections can provide historical context, reading fiction selections that include characters with different abilities, cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds help build empathy and help readers change their understanding of those differences.

If we want our school library spaces to be welcoming, inclusive, and diverse, we must make a commitment to do our own personal learning around equity, diversity, and inclusion and be courageous in implementing the important takeaways from this learning. Every learner deserves our commitment to intentionally purchase materials that reflect our school community and the world outside this community.

Final Thoughts

Each school librarian's collection development journey is unique, but

the foundational tools mentioned here will give the librarian a solid place to start. The most important thing to remember is that every collection and campus is unique. To fully support a campus, the school librarian must know both the collection and campus community well. This takes time, which means forming a two-to four-year plan to document needs and intentionally plan for purchases. Along with reflecting and referencing your plan yearly, it's important to check for any curriculum updates and changing needs of your school community.

Collection development work is never completed; it's an ongoing process that continues due to new books being released, curriculum being updated, and the learning needs of readers changing. The constant throughout this process is the school librarian. AASL supports the position that "reading is the core of personal and academic competency" (AASL 2018, 13). This responsibility is one that requires a school librarian's leadership, focus, and persistence; the impacts of all this work will ensure a collection that reflects readers' interests while also supporting the academic needs of the school—a true win-win for everyone.



Becky Calzada (she/her/hers) is the library services coordinator for the Leander Independent School District in Leander,

Texas. She coauthored the 2021 Knowledge Quest blog post "Censorship in Texas: #FREedom Campaign Inception, Reflection, and Highlights" and the 2020 American Libraries article "Reset and Reconnect: Adapting and Advocating amid the Pandemic." She is a member of AASL and serves as a Director-at-Large on the AASL Board of Directors.



Liz Philippi (she/her/hers) is the school program coordinator for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in Austin,

Texas. She was a Texas Association of School Librarians Councilor and is a participant in the TALL Texan Leadership Institute and a member of the Texas School Library Standards committee. Liz was a committee member for the TLA Conference Program and served as chair of the Texas Association of School Library Administrators. Liz is a member of AASL and was co-chair of the 2021 AASL National Conference Committee. She's also a member of ALA and is an ALA Councilor-at-Large. She is serving on the ALA Sustainability Committee, the ALA Digital Content Working Group, the ALA Ken Haycock Award Committee, and ALA Ernie Dimattia Award Committee.

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Reflecting Our Students and Our World in Our School Library Collections

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As we set out to write this article on collection development and diversity audits, we wanted to really think about why it's important to understand how and why we develop our collections and the factors that go into curating a collection that is relevant, appropriate, and purposeful. In the current climate, our choices in our collections are being questioned by parents, administrators, and others. We need to remind ourselves that to become a credentialed school librarian, we earned a certificate, a degree, and have specialized training. We work within a collection development policy as outlined by our districts. We choose books to support curriculum, our learners, and our learning standards. In light of the current rise in challenges, evaluating, weeding, and auditing our collections for diversity are non-negotiable.

In her book *Collection Development for School Librarians* Mona Kerby gently reminds us that our learners need access to quality materials, but all too often they are met with shelves of dusty, outdated books with inaccurate information and too little representation—and that we can and we must do better (2019). Here we will share collection development strategies that have worked for us, why student voice is essential when developing your collection, and how a diversity audit can assist you in creating a more-inclusive library collection.

But first, let us revisit the definition of collection development and the Library Bill of Rights.

Library Bill of Rights Meets Collection Development

To be sure we are all on the same page as we get started, we wanted to define collection development and go back to the basics. Collection development is the act of selecting and weeding materials for the school library. Districts should have

policies and procedures in place for collection development that school librarians follow when making selections for their library.

The interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights for school libraries states:

School librarians cooperate with other individuals in building collections of resources that meet the needs as well as the developmental and maturity levels of students. These collections provide resources that support the mission of the school district and are consistent with its philosophy, goals, and objectives. Resources in school library collections are an integral component of the curriculum and represent diverse points of view on both current and historical issues. These resources include materials that support the intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests, and recreational needs of students. (American Library Association 2014)

We interpret the Library Bill of Rights as saying that our collections need to include materials that meet the needs of our entire school community—not just the needs of a few or a vocal majority. Additionally, the Library Bill of Rights is stating that our collections need to be kept up to date, weeded, and relevant.

Student Ownership and Collection Development

Student voice is important in collection development. During my library orientation for students, I (Lauren) ask them what books they would like to see in the library. After giving students a moment to brainstorm I give students a fun-shaped sticky note and have them jot down any titles, genres, subjects, or authors they would like

me to consider when creating my book orders for the year. Students then post the sticky note on a piece of chart paper large enough to capture dozens of ideas. (This activity could also be done electronically in a Padlet format but having the concrete objects in front of me is powerful for ordering.) Students really enjoy the activity because it provides them with an opportunity to be a stakeholder in



In the current climate, our choices in our collections are being questioned by parents, administrators, and others. We need to remind ourselves that to become a credentialed school librarian, we earned a certificate, a degree, and have specialized training.

the school library and the collection. The AASL Standards state that we need to provide and foster opportunities for students to “demonstrate personal curiosity” (2018, School Library V.8.2). By asking students for their input, we are giving them a sense of ownership and pride in their school library.

Just as student input is important for ordering books, it can also be helpful for deselecting books. Provide your students with an

opportunity to give their opinions before deselecting certain books. Students can take time to examine the cover, read the summary and a bit of the first chapter, and fill out a brief evaluation of the book. Again, giving students a voice and choice helps them realize that they are important stakeholders in our school libraries. Allowing students to be a part of the process can also help when/if the school librarian is questioned about the deselection of a book or series. It will speak volumes if you have concrete evaluations from students that can show why a book or series should be weeded from the collection and will usually silence the naysayers.

Weed It and Weep!

A wise librarian once said, “If the shelves are packed with books, it tells your administration that you do not need much of a budget”—which is usually the furthest thing from the truth. In our school district, we are encouraged to continuously weed, and our supervisor will assist us with weeding if we want it. As you are putting books away, scan the shelves. Some books will jump out at you and let you know that it is time for them to go. The telltale signs are usually frayed spines, faded covers, or damaged pages. Other titles will need to be physically pulled from the shelves and examined. Is the cover faded, do the characters/content look out of date? If so, time for a refresh. A beloved title can get a second life by ordering a new and updated version.

There are two methods that work well for weeding and keeping your collection up to date: the CREW method and the FRESH method. The CREW method was developed by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in 2012 and builds on the original work by Joseph P. Segal and Belinda Boon. It utilizes the MUSTIE acronym:



The six Shared Foundations in the AASL Standards create the opportunity for school librarians to curate and include books by diverse authors and to provide the opportunity for students to explore an inclusive library collection.

M = Misleading—factually inaccurate

U = Ugly—worn beyond mending or rebinding

S = Superseded—by a new edition of/or by a much better book on the subject

T = Trivial—of no discernible literary or scientific merit

I = Irrelevant to the needs and interests of the library’s community

E = Elsewhere—the material is easily obtainable from another library, database, or electronic resource

Jennifer LaGarde coined the FRESH method, which is a great way of making sure that your collection fosters a love of reading, reflects a diverse population, has an equitable global view, supports the curriculum and is high quality (2013).

When to Weed

In my school library I was able to do a major purge during my annual inventory. Since I had to physically scan each book on the shelf, it was a great time to examine titles for wear, relevance, and currency using the CREW and FRESH methods. At the end of an inventory session I had piles of books that I had deselected for various reasons but most of the titles were simply outdated and unappealing. Many school librarians like to solicit help for the annual inventory process as it is time consuming, but this will cut down on how much you can weed since you will not physically be touching every book.

Some school librarians prefer to weed throughout the year, a shelf here and a shelf there. Either method works and it really is a matter of personal preference. There are many resources available to assist with weeding and the deselection process. The sidebar on page 21 shares some great resources for getting started.

Diversity Audits

As we think about developing our collections by the selection and the deselection of titles, we also need to focus on the diversity of our collection. Promoting the beauty of diversity is such a core part of who I am as a school librarian (Casey), and yet my portion of this article has been difficult for me to write. In the current political and social climate, I sometimes feel discouraged and disheartened. It seems like every time I see a political commercial, log in to Twitter, or even tune in to my own local board of education meetings, there are people willfully misrepresenting the mission and purpose of the school library.

With so much misinformation circulating on social media, such animosity toward schools, libraries, and authors, working to create a library collection of “mirrors and

windows” (Bishop 1990) can feel overwhelming. You may feel like the support needed to make changes is not there for you. Being a school librarian right now can feel isolating, confusing, and even terrifying. However, I would argue that the current atmosphere only increases the urgency to analyze and update so that we can be sure that they are inclusive, appropriate, and timely for our students.

The six Shared Foundations in the AASL Standards create the opportunity for school librarians to curate and include books by diverse authors and to provide the opportunity for students to explore an inclusive library collection. The two foundations that deal directly with creating an inclusive school library collection are Include and Curate; however, all

six include language that allows for school librarians to build a collection based on windows and mirrors.

Include: An effective school library includes diverse and inclusive resources, programs, and services that meet the needs of all learners; represents various points of view on current and historical issues; and provides support across a wide range of interest areas with opportunities for learners to recognize themselves (AASL 2018, 54).

Curate: The effective school library includes a professionally curated collection of resources selected based on their authority, currency, relevance, scope, and relationship to other items in the collection. Using this selection model, users of the school library are encouraged to examine the authority and bias of authors or producers of information when curating resources for personal and academic use (AASL 2018, 55).

Data Driven

By auditing your collection you can collect valuable data that will inform your decision making regarding additions and deletions to your collection. Audits also provide a rationale for advocating for funding for your school library.

I began my diversity audit in the fall of 2019. I'd been inspired by a team of librarians from New York's Pittsford Schools who presented at the AASL National Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. After attending their session I realized that this was a project that was important and would be extremely rewarding and manageable with the right preparation. I had become our school librarian in 2016, and much of our collection was outdated. As Lauren mentioned above, I inherited

Average Year	Publication Year	2001	2009	1993	1987	2009	2000	1993	2004	2011	2008	1999	1993	1998	1994	1992	2001
1997. 618182	Title	More Parts	Wiggle and Waggle	Green Wilma	No Jumping on the Bed	I'm a Turkey!	Beaver Pond Moose Pond	Rockabye Crocodile	Mr. Maxwells Mouse	I Had a Favorite Dress	The Moon Over Star	River	Peeping Beauty	Pigs on the Ball	Pigs will be Pigs	Old Black Fly	Castles, Caves & Honey
TOTALS	Author	Arnold	C. Arnold	Arnold	Arnold	Arnosky	Arnosky	Aruego	Asch	Ashburn	Aston	Atwell	Auch	Axelrod	Axelrod	Ayles worth	Ashman
1	Own Voices																
7	African American/African									1	1						
0	East Asian/South Asian																
2	Latino/Hispanic																
0	Middle Eastern																
0	Native Nation																
1	Refugee/New Immigrant																
30	White	1		1	1												1
3	Unknown Race																
0	Multiracial																
38	Man/Boy	1	1		1				1				1	1	1	1	1
23	Woman/Girl			1				1		1	1		1	1	1		1
0	Not classified by Gender																
0	LGBTQ																
0	Non-traditional family																
1	Socio Economic Diversity																
1	Disabilities																
1	Neurological Challenges/ Mental Health																
16	All Animal Characters		1			1	1		1				1	1	1	1	1

Figure 1. Diversity audit spreadsheet.

a library where the shelves were bursting with books, but many were old, worn, and irrelevant. I knew I needed to do something, but I just wasn't sure where to start. I felt paralyzed by the enormity of the task. I spent some time exploring resources on diversity audits (see the list of resources on page 21). I also talked with members of our school library team in the district. After considering carefully how I wanted to begin, I decided to start with my picture book collection.

First, I paused to think about what categories of people I expected and wanted to see in my collection. I listed male, female, and unspecified gender. I listed White/European, African American/African, Indigenous, Latinx, East Asian/South Asian, Middle Eastern, mixed race, and unknown race. I listed refugees/new immigrants, LGBTQ, non-traditional families, economic diversity, physical/learning differences, and mental health. As you can see my audit included race, but it wasn't all about race. I was hoping

I enjoyed reading each of the books and getting to know them. I also found that putting my hands on every book as part of the process made it possible to weed titles that were not beneficial to our collection.

that my audit would allow me to see the full picture of the people and stories represented in my picture book collection.

After I started the audit I went back and added a category for animal characters, as there were so many books that fit this designation. I felt that it would be important for data comparison. I put all these categories into an Excel spreadsheet, then added a space for notes at the bottom. I printed about twenty copies of the table and put them on a clipboard. Then I got to work. I did find that

there were some books that just didn't fit in any one category, and I had to use my judgment as I worked through my audit.

In a fixed-schedule elementary school library, it isn't easy to find quiet time to focus on books and collecting data. In every tiny break, every planning period, any time when I did not have students or when my students were busy and working, I pulled out that clipboard. I started with my picture books with author last name beginning with the letter "A" and went in alphabetical order, listing the title, author, and date of publication. And, yes, I then read each book! As I read, I made a tally mark in each category that was represented in a significant way on my spreadsheet. One book could, and often did, fit into several categories.

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As I went across my spreadsheet it was not unusual to see multiple categories checked off on one book. I didn't include minor supporting characters or characters seen in illustrations but who are not part of the story. When I reached a good stopping point, I'd add my data into my online spreadsheet. I used Excel equations to have the data automatically tabulated, including the average publication year and number of entries for each category.

Honestly, conducting a diversity audit is a long process. I'm not finished, and I've realized that I may never be. However, I feel that conducting the diversity audit allowed me to get to know my collection in a way that I hadn't been able to do before. I enjoyed reading each of the books and getting to know them. I also found that putting my hands on every book as part of the process made it possible to weed titles that were not beneficial to our collection.

The data that I've collected so far has been illuminating. It has shown me that my collection, despite a lot of weeding and many purchases, still needs a lot of help. I have been working slowly to build a collection that is more representative of people and places. It is hard work, but so valuable and worth the time it has

Picture Books- Author's Last Name Begin with A

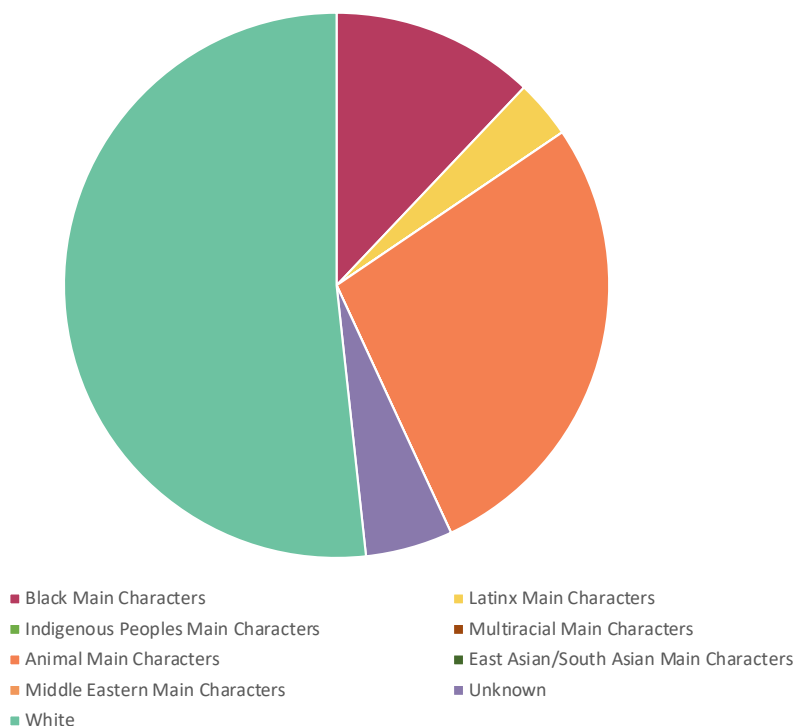


Figure 2. Graphical representation of race in partial picture book audit.

taken. The graphic above shows what I found in just the first part of my audit of the picture book collection. Figure 2 represents authors with the last name beginning with A.

Additionally, I had thirty-eight books with male characters, twenty-three books with female characters, and zero books with unknown

gender. I had zero books with LGBTQ characters, zero with non-traditional families, one book with socioeconomic diversity, one book with a character with disabilities, and one book that featured mental or neurological health challenges. Frankly, this small snapshot lit a fire inside my belly. My students *need* a better collection that is more rep-



representative. My students deserve a better collection that is more representative.

More Questions Than Answers

As I continue on this journey, questions that sit at the forefront of my mind and drive my need to continue with my collection development and auditing my collection are:

- How can I expect students to feel welcome and appreciated in my school library and school if they don't see anyone who looks like them in our books?
- How can I expect my students to feel that they are part of a community when they don't see a family like theirs or anyone dealing with their struggles?
- How can I say that my mission is to inspire my students to grow and

Auditing our collections allows us to see the reality of what we have put in front of our students and to make decisions about the materials in our collection that will enable our school community to see themselves and others and develop a love of reading for the rest of their lives.

embrace discovery when they don't have access to books that tell the stories of people who come from different backgrounds?

- How will my students develop empathy when I've never challenged them to step outside of their comfort zones?

When you know better, you do better. This audit was the true beginning of my knowing better about my collection development. Right now, we are in a moment that can inspire fear and a reluctance to push forward. We need to see this moment for what it is: a challenge to do better for our students. Yes, it is hard and

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time consuming. Yes, there may be challenges and confrontations. We are here to support, welcome, and educate our students. Our school library collections need to help us achieve that mission.

Having a collection development process in place is incredibly important. It allows the school librarian to know that they are creating collections that are inclusive, outstanding, and appropriate for the school community. Auditing our collections allows us to see the reality of what we have put in front of our students and to make decisions about the materials in our collection that will enable our school community to see themselves and others and develop a love of reading for the rest of their lives.

Resources for Weeding and Deselection

American Library Association's "Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, and Academic Libraries": <www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit/weeding>

Baltimore County Library Media Wiki: <<https://bcpslis.pbworks.com/w/page/108383320/Maintaining%20a%20High%20Quality%20School%20Library%20Collection>>

The New York City Public School System Libguide: <<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/librarianguidebook/weeding>>

"To Weed or Not to Weed" by Colleen Lee: <<https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/to-weed-or-not-to-weed-2/>>

Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom 6 (3) (Summer).

Resources for Diversity Audits

"Diversity Considerations in YA: Doing a Diversity Audit": <www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/files/2017/11/Diversity-Audit-Outline-2017-with-Sources.pdf>

"Diversity Audit 101": <www.slj.com/?detailStory=diversity-auditing-101-how-to-evaluate-collection>

The New York City Public School Libraries Libguide: <<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/librarianguidebook/diversity>>

Knowledge Quest Diversity Audit Blog Posts: <<https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/tag/diversity-audit/>> *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom 6 (3) (Summer).*



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Casey Grenier (she/her) is the school librarian at Beach Elementary School in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland. She

was named the 2021 Beach Elementary Teacher of the Year. She is a member of the Maryland Association of School Librarians and is currently serving on the Black-Eye Susan Picture Book Award Committee. She is a member of AASL. She can be found on Twitter @casey_grenier.

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LGBTQ-Inclusive Collections

School Librarian Self-Reflections and Collection Development Guide

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As we write this and prepare to close out 2021 we can't help but reflect on the year of anti-LGBTQ state legislation and attacks on the Queer community, especially transgender identities (Ronan 2021; ACLU 2021). At a time when much of the country assumes LGBTQ+ people have achieved full equality due to same-sex marriage being legalized (Gallup 2021), many do not realize that discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is still entirely legal in many states. In Texas, where Nancy Jo lives, a landlord could legally decide not to rent to a gay couple. In both South Dakota and Missouri, school districts are prohibited from specifically protecting LGBTQ students. (For a comprehensive overview of anti-LGBTQ state laws, visit the "State Maps" page from the Human Rights Campaign at www.hrc.org/resources/state-maps.)

When the Supreme Court struck down state laws banning same-sex marriage, it created precedence for same-sex marriage to be legal in all fifty states. However, since then there's been a distinct rise in national anti-LGBTQ+ groups coordinating with anti-equality state lawmakers to wage an unprecedented war on the rights of the LGBTQ+ community (Ronan 2021).

Schools and school libraries have become a battleground within this national conflict, often leading to Queer lit for kids and teens being targeted. The American Library Association saw a steep increase in book challenges in 2021. Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, said, "Social media is amplifying local challenges and they're going viral, but we've also been observing a number of organizations activating local members to go to school board meetings and challenge books. We're seeing what appears to be a campaign

to remove books, particularly books dealing with LGBTQ+ themes and books dealing with racism" (Flood 2021).

These attacks on the LGBTQ+ community may make some school librarians hesitant to purchase Queer stories and information. We agreed to write this article because we want school librarians to lean into curiosity instead of judgment and learn about LGBTQ+ identities to help them overcome their own biases and fear. We hope this article will help school librarians move forward confidently in creating an LGBTQ+-inclusive collection and create Queer-inclusive school library programming and spaces. We hope that knowing more about the terms, concepts, and identities used and represented in LGBTQ+ books will help you select, understand, promote, and—if necessary—defend these vitally important resources.

Ideally, we have procedural directives and policies to guide our response to book challenges (and if your school or district does not have such a procedural directive, we highly recommend working to create one!). However, for school librarians and school district library supervisors who are also members of the LGBTQ+ community, book challenges and other attacks on the Queer community can feel unsettling or painful.

Rachel: I am a school district library supervisor who identifies as a lesbian. I am out both personally and professionally, but because I work at the district level, it isn't likely that parents will object to me having my job. This gives me a level of safety and security school-based educators who are members of the LGBTQ+ community often don't have. However, part of my job is responding to book challenges or, more often, the questions that come from parents or administra-

tors that—fortunately—don't become formal challenges. It's hard to listen to some of the questions sometimes, especially when they come from colleagues, but all of us, as school librarians, have to balance bringing our full selves to work with following our procedures and policies and working to create school library collections that are expansive and comprehensive.

Nancy Jo: I am a school librarian who identifies as bisexual. I am out at school, professionally, and in my community with family and friends. I am currently under attack by people in my local community who don't think I should be stating my sexual orientation or working with students. I am also the employee monitor for our campus Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), and I have been questioned about doing that work by people who think that is inappropriate for a myriad of reasons. I came out to help normalize my identity and others like me and because it is more important to me that LGBTQ+ students and educators see that you can not only survive being Queer, but that you can thrive.

Identities

We want our school libraries to celebrate and honor the identities of all our students, but what about the identities we may or may not know about? Depending on your school, your students, and your community, you may have many students already secure in their LGBTQ+ identities, or you may have no students who are openly LGBTQ+ yet. Whichever community you serve, it can be tempting to decide that LGBTQ+ representation isn't needed, especially now, when LGBTQ+ books are frequently in the news.

There are school librarians, particularly elementary school librarians, who say they don't know any LGBTQ+ kids or they don't have

any LGBTQ+ kids at their school. Data—and our life experiences—tell us there are LGBTQ+ kids and families in every school and in every community. “Gallup’s latest update on lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identification finds 5.6% of U.S. adults identifying as LGBT. The current estimate is up from 4.5% in Gallup’s previous update based on 2017 data” (Jones 2021). That same poll estimates that one in six adult members of Generation Z (those aged 18 to 23 in 2020) identify as LGBT. LGBT identification is increasing as younger generations are more likely to consider themselves to be something other than heterosexual or cisgender (Jones 2021).

Before we go further, we’re going to list some terms so readers have a basic understanding of the terms *sex*, *gender identity*, *gender expression*, *attraction*, and *sexual orientation*. It is helpful for school librarians to know these terms when selecting LGBTQ+ materials.

Sex (sometimes called biological sex, anatomical sex, or physical sex): Comprised of things like genitals, chromosomes, hormones, body hair, and more. A person’s sex does not determine their gender.

Gender identity: Your psychological sense of self. Who you, in your head, know yourself to be based on how much you align (or don’t align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.

Gender expression: The ways you present gender through your actions, clothing, demeanor, and more. Your outward-facing self and how that’s interpreted by others based on gender norms.

Sexual orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. The scientifically accurate term for an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/

or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual (straight) orientations. Avoid the offensive term “sexual preference,” which is used to suggest that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is voluntary and therefore “curable.” People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all.

Attraction: Like sex, attraction isn’t really a component of gender. However, we often conflate sexual orientation with gender, or categorize the attraction we experience in gendered ways.

In addition to these terms, you may be wondering what exactly all the letters in LGBTQ stand for and what they mean. As school librarians, we know the power (and when we are not careful, the pain) of words and labels and categories. There are several good online resources for educators, including Welcoming Schools from the Human Rights Campaign, which provides definitions for both adults and older students:

- “Definitions to Help Understand Gender and Sexual Orientation” (Adults and Older Students): <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions-gender-sexual-orientation>
- “Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students”: <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions-lgbtq-elementary-school>

If you’re up for more reading, check out the “GLSEN Safe Space Kit”: www.glsen.org/activity/glsen-safe-space-kit-solidarity-lgbtq-youth. In addition to a glossary of terms at the end, the kit provides good information for educators about bias, allyship,

and concrete ways to support LGBTQ+ students.

If, on the other hand, you were hoping for a quick rundown, LGBTQ+ stands for:

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Queer or Questioning (and be mindful when using Queer. For many members, of the LGBTQ+ community, the term has been reclaimed and we embrace and use the word, but for others the word remains potentially hurtful and harmful)

In addition, sometimes you’ll see LGBTQIA+; the additional letters stand for:

- Intersex
- Asexual/Aromantic (Ace)

In all cases, the + is added to include identities not specifically listed. The way LGBTQ+ identities are labeled and defined is fluid and evolving, and students and other young people often lead the way. As much as your LGBTQ+ colleagues try to keep up with evolving terminology, there will be times when students are ahead of us, because they are sharing ideas rapidly on TikTok, and we are Googling “what is TikTok.”

For an even more complete list of terms and resources visit EduPride-Alliance’s “The ABC’s of LGBTQ+” webpage: www.edupridealliance.org/resources/terminology.

Hypersexualization and Stereotypes

The Queer community has long endured slurs, inaccurate or ill-conceived stereotypes, and hyper-

sexualization that at best comes out through microaggressions or inappropriate questions and at worst leads to accusations of pornography and pedophilia.

For example, young people—and sometimes not so young people—still use “gay” to mean something that is lame, uncool, or somehow bad. LGBTQ+ students might hear this comment dozens of times a day. As adults we both have been asked questions by coworkers that were incredibly inappropriate and which presumed sexual activity on our part that was highly inaccurate. We will not list specific examples here, but students experience the same kind of questions, but often, due to youth and inexperience, with even less sensitivity on the part of the asker.

In education, we say we are here for all students, but LGBTQ+ students often do not feel seen or valued by their teachers. They often do not have the opportunity to see their identity represented in their curriculums, on classroom walls, or in assigned texts. We regularly fail to

acknowledge the implicit biases that we all harbor. These biases negatively influence our LGBTQ colleagues’ and students’ feelings of inclusion and safety. The Trevor Project found that LGBTQ+ youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth. LGBTQ+ youth are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth (2021). Suicide is not caused because of an LGBTQ+ identity, but rather by how the world reacts to that identity.

According to a Human Rights Campaign LGBTQ Teen Survey, only 26 percent of LGBTQ+ respondents age 13 to 18 say they always feel safe in their school classrooms, and just five percent say all of their teachers and school staff are supportive of LGBTQ+ people (2018).

As educators, we work with students and colleagues every day who represent every facet of the human condition, including diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and

gender expressions, and we must ensure their voices are heard in our collections.

Queer Lit in School Libraries

LGBTQ stories are becoming more prevalent in both kid and YA lit. Historically, LGBTQ+ characters and themes have been underrepresented in mainstream publishing due to arguments that LGBTQ+ content is “niche” and not commercially viable or necessary. Censorship of Queer stories has also played a big part in their underrepresentation in kid and YA lit (Hachette Book Group 2021). Children’s books featuring LGBTQ+ characters are often described as being about sex even when they are about cartoon animals who stand several feet away from each other at all times. Because of the way LGBTQ+ characters and stories have been portrayed in our society, we may have inaccurate ideas about LGBTQ+ books and materials. We’re school librarians, though, so we know we can do better than accept the unvetted opinions floating around us.



People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all.

We want to be clear that books about LGBTQ+ characters and our history can have a profound effect on young readers by increasing LGBTQ+ visibility in school libraries. Not only can Queer stories educate and inform young readers who may not be part of the LGBTQ community, but those stories can help Queer readers envision a path in life that they may not have thought possible (Hachette Book Group 2021). If we had seen ourselves represented in books, as children and teens, we might have saved significantly on therapy bills later in life. More seriously, we might have felt less alone and less like something was wrong with us. (There was nothing wrong with us, but children often come up with such explanations when they feel like they don't fit the world's expectations of humanity.) We want our Queer students to see that they can not only survive growing up Queer, but they can thrive.

Rudine Sims Bishop said it best when she noted:

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...

When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that

we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human. (1990, 3)

We also recognize that human nature creates built-in biases that we all struggle to recognize and overcome. Many people have biases about the LGBTQ+ community that are slowly built over time by society, media, religious beliefs, and a general lack of understanding. We hope that as educators and school librarians you will learn how to recognize your own biases regarding the LGBTQ+ community and then learn how to think differently.

LGBTQ-Inclusive Collection Development Practices

Good collection development is broad, comprehensive, and inclusive, and we have always included stories that are and are not visibly represented in our communities. Schools in landlocked cities still buy books about the ocean, after

We need more stories where Queer characters are simply living Queer and engaging in action, fantastical adventures, mystery and crime, and experiencing authentic romance. When school library collections are inclusive of all identities, we send a powerful message to our school communities.

all. In our fight for equality, the Queer community has been fighting to be seen and valued for our full and authentic selves. Everyone's identity is multifaceted and complex. As school librarians, we try to reflect that complexity in our school libraries through books and information that offer many perspectives. Those stories represent the complexity of the human experience, and there is no end to that tale.

When we look at the AASL Standards Framework for Learners, the assumption of inclusive collection development is woven throughout. "Learners gather information appropriate to the task by: Collecting information representing diverse perspectives" (IV.C.2), to "Learners demonstrate empathy and equity in knowledge building within the global learning community by: Demonstrating interest in other perspectives during learning activities" (II.D.2) (AASL 2018). Without a robust, interesting, and authentic collection, how will learners have

access to sufficient information to allow them to gather information or demonstrate interest? LGBTQ+ perspectives have not always been represented in school libraries, classrooms, or curriculums, but LGBTQ+ *people* have always existed. We have always been there, in classrooms and libraries and communities, living lives, having stories, and participating in history.

Inclusive collection development belongs at all levels. There are excellent books at every level, fiction and nonfiction, that offer authentic representation of LGBTQ+ identities.

For book suggestions, check out resources like ALA's Rainbow Book List: <<https://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbow-books/>>. Make a point of adding the Stonewall Award and Honor winners each year that are appropriate for your grade or age level: <www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall/honored>.

School librarians need to guard against the practice of soft-censorship or self-censorship. This is

where we opt to, either consciously or unconsciously, not purchase a book or resource because of our own biased thinking or views or because we fear a challenge or controversy around us having that book in our school library. All students are afforded the right to access to information by the First Amendment. In addition, there is legal precedent that prohibits school boards and administrators from pulling a book or resource from a library simply because they disagree with the content, perspectives, or topics covered in it (Island Trees 1982).

Of course, as we add titles, we also weed, and LGBTQ+ books are no exception. Great strides have been made in recent years, so you may want to consider weeding:

- Older fiction titles that focus on the straight, cisgender friends, and family members of LGBTQ+ characters, where LGBTQ+ identities are presented as problems or issues to overcome... by those straight, cisgender friends, and family members;



- Nonfiction titles written before recent legal advances (for example, if books talk about gay marriage not being legal in the United States, they no longer contain current information!);
- Outdated books on AIDS, HIV, or other STIs (your school or district may have policies about how often these books need to be updated).

All of these areas are still necessary—we need fiction and nonfiction and books about sexual health—but the more recent titles are a vast improvement, and students benefit when current titles are added and outdated titles are removed. Increasingly, we *can* find titles where LGBTQ+ identities are not only represented but celebrated, although intersectional representation remains harder to find.

Beyond simple representation, we need to collect a wide variety of stories. Many LGBTQ+ stories center around coming out or the Queer character learning to accept their identity. Be careful the coming out story doesn't become the single story given to LGBTQ+ characters in your collection as that isn't the only story we want our students to read. We need more stories where Queer characters are simply living Queer and engaging in action, fantastical adventures, mystery and crime, and experiencing authentic romance.

When school library collections are inclusive of all identities, we send a powerful message to our school communities. Your school library almost certainly serves LGBTQ+ students, parents, and teachers, and the representation on your shelves and your displays and digital collections sends a powerful message.

Depending on your collection development, your school library may say, with every book on its shelves, that all are welcome. Alternatively, your school library may say that LGBTQ+ identities—and therefore students, teachers, and parents—don't really have a place in your community.

Students are paying attention, and they notice, and it matters. According to the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, "just under half of students (48.9%) reported that they could find information about LGBTQ-related issues in their school library." GLSEN lists this as one of their key findings because school libraries have the potential to give LGBTQ+ youth an incredible lifeline. Just one book—one story, one moment of recognition, one indication that maybe it's going to be okay—can change, or save, a life.



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one moment of recognition,
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Especially in our current times, when school libraries and our collections seem to be in the news frequently, fundamentally inclusive collection development is essential. When we internalize the idea of inclusive collection development being simply a part of collection development, adding, promoting, and—if necessary—defending LGBTQ+ books becomes a given, rather than an extra.

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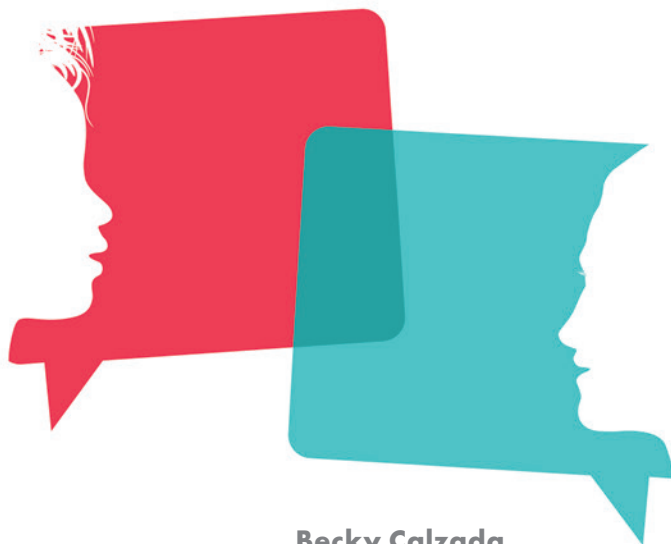
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Additional Resources

- AASL's "Defending Intellectual Freedom" webpage: <<https://standards.aasl.org/project/lgbtq>>
- ALA's "Fight Censorship" webpage: <www.ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship>
- "Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth – A Free Online Professional Development Curriculum": <<https://ready.web.unc.edu/>>

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT ANSWERS FROM THE FIELD



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For this *Knowledge Quest* issue on collection development, we wanted to ask school librarians and school library supervisors across the country how each approached their collection work, how they prepared for challenges, and how they considered equity, diversity, and inclusion in their school library practice. We also asked each to share a special story on the impact their collection development work had on learners. We hope you glean invaluable insights from what each shared.

Background information about our respondents:

NICOLE H. CRUZ has been a school librarian for twenty-three years; she is the Sharyland ISD Lead Librarian where she serves two high school campuses, Sharyland High School and Sharyland Advanced Academic Academy in Mission, Texas.

JACOB GERDING is in his eighth year as a school librarian. He is currently working at Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School in Newburg, Maryland.

MAEGEN ROSE is in her eighth year as a school librarian. She is currently a middle school librarian at a PK to grade 12 independent school in Westchester County, New York.

SUZANNE SANNWALD is in her eighth year as the school librarian at West Hills High School in Santee, California, a small suburban city in San Diego's East County.

How do you approach collection development?

JACOB GERDING: I have always believed that the school library is the one place in the building that stands as a tribute to the voices and choices made by students and staff. I frequently provide students with interest inventories as well as formal surveys where they can explicitly tell me what sorts of titles, authors, and genres they would like to see in the school library. I am a firm believer that we improve literacy outcomes with our elementary school students when we provide them with a variety of materials they want to read. I also survey staff annually, as well as keep an active Microsoft Word document that they can add titles, authors, and topics to that will support their instruction. I keep a pad of paper right at my circulation desk so if a teacher or student asks about a title we do not have, I write it down so that it can be considered for purchase. Additionally, as I weed a section I pay careful attention to areas of need and make them part of my purchasing strategy. Once I know what the needs are, I use our district selection policy and ensure that each book has at least two positive reviews, is grade-level appropriate, and offers an unbiased examination of the issues. Stunning pictures and visually appealing covers are always a plus! A collection must be responsive to the needs and interests of the community that it serves, which is why I hope in the near future to create a student advisory committee that will help me to even more closely discern the needs of our students and have a more direct voice in purchasing decisions.

I keep a pad of paper right at my circulation desk so if a teacher or student asks about a title we do not have, I write it down so that it can be considered for purchase.

MAEGEN ROSE: I approach collection development very intentionally. In addition to purchasing books that support the curriculum, award-winning books, popular series, books by established authors, and accepting student and faculty requests, I carefully select books that reflect the rich diversity of our global community.

SUZANNE SANNWALD: While I have managed to increase my collection budget somewhat, and I have also secured some grants along the way, I have a fairly meager amount of money for collection development. As a result I am very strategic and purposeful with every purchase that I make. First of all, I prioritize requests from my community, always trying to honor those. At the same time, I look at gaps within the collection and try to proactively select high-quality materials that I believe are curricularly or personally relevant even though they are not yet being requested. My hope—and I have found this substantiated through experience—is that students will discover and connect with these items serendipitously even if they have not identified them specifically on their own. Finally, I am always thinking about the balance between digital and print resources, and I purposefully purchase print books to complement rather than duplicate what students will likely access online via the web and online databases.

NICOLE CRUZ: Collection development is multi-faceted. There are many strategies that school librarians employ. For me it is a process that starts with collection analysis. Most vendors provide free collection analysis services. School librarians are teachers; as teachers, they are very familiar with state curriculum guidelines and objectives for all content areas. If they are new to the field of librarianship, they can always find state essential curriculum guidelines at the agency website dedicated to providing educators with this information. School librarians can gain much from grade-level and department collaborations. School librarians attend these meetings to see specific areas of focus or weaknesses. This is another way school librarians can wisely invest school funds to complement instruction. As the lead librarian I encourage librarians to bookmark state-specific websites like the Texas Education Agency and TSLAC Texas State Library Archives Commission, host of the Texas State Library Standards, and AASL's *National School Library Standards*. I also send weekly update e-mails to all district librarians with focus-of-the-week strategies.

Another strategy is to survey stakeholders, including students, staff, and community members. Based

Each student and staff member should have choices to appeal to learners' values and sense of identity. Even more importantly it is critical to have viewpoints that differ from our specific insights.

If a parent has objections to the content in a book their child selects that is otherwise developmentally appropriate, it is a discussion that parents must have with their child. This is a discussion that I have had with parents a few times before, and they are generally very supportive and understanding.

on recommendations from stakeholders, school librarians can then locate reviewed, state-recommended reading lists that are age appropriate, award-winning literature, and highly reviewed books. If a book is recommended by a learner, school librarians can find favorable reviews to support purchasing the book. I provide links to forms and surveys on my library website or through Remind messages and Google Classrooms for learner recommendations.

Diversity is an important factor to consider when curating a collection. Also seeking books that will appeal to the student body—variety of cultures, backgrounds, ethnicity, and other markers like political viewpoints—is another. Each student and staff member should have choices to appeal to learners' values and sense of identity. Even more importantly it is critical to have viewpoints that differ from our specific insights.

How do you prepare yourself for challenges?

GERDING: This is clearly something that I am focusing on this year more than I have in the past. While I have not had any formal challenges, I do keep my district library team alerted

to any concerns that are expressed about a book or a database so that we can be proactive as a team in case an issue does arise. Of course, hearing a concern does not automatically equate to a challenge being filed, but it is a good time to make sure that the book or database being questioned was selected in accordance with the selection policy in place at the district level. At the same time it is important to state that I do not restrict the books that my students check out. At my very core I believe students have a right to read developmentally appropriate books about topics that interest them. If a parent has objections to the content in a book their child selects that is otherwise developmentally appropriate, it is a discussion that parents must have with their child. This is a discussion that I have had with parents a few times before, and they are generally very supportive and understanding. Parents are allowed to have views and opinions, but they should not be able to impose their views and opinions on everyone else's children.

ROSE: First, having a strong collection development policy is key. Second, being intentional in collection development is to be thoughtful about why books are added to the school library. It doesn't matter if the school librarian selected it, a student or faculty member requested it, or

if it was donated. Every book is thoroughly considered before being placed in the appropriate school library. My school is fortunate to have three spaces—a lower school library, a middle/upper school library, and a middle school learning commons—that house a decent size collection of titles. Knowing the collection well and ensuring that titles are housed in the most developmentally appropriate library is the best preparation.

SANNWALD: The idea of facing challenges makes me anxious, but I have been mentally preparing myself for this possibility so that I am equipped with words to use and actions to take should this happen. At a most basic level I am actively having conversations with students when I get a sense that they are suspiciously regarding specific books or the collection at large. For instance, this is the first year that I have noticed students inspecting the shelves, taking photos, and even telling me that they are “conducting an audit of the political bias of the collection.” In these instances I have directly asked them to share what it is that they’re looking for and to please let me know what they think about what they find. I have also encouraged students to let me know if there are any books that they want to read but do not see in our collection since I always love getting and filling student requests.

On another occasion a student commented that they were surprised that the library would have a particular manga series since they

At a most basic level I am actively having conversations with students when I get a sense that they are suspiciously regarding specific books or the collection at large.

thought it would be considered too inappropriate. With that student I asked what they considered inappropriate about it for a couple of reasons. First, it’s always possible that I am not aware of specific content since it is impossible for me to read every single book in the collection. Second, while I may consider books as acceptable for the collection since there may be other students who want to read them, I like to get to know students individually so that I can tailor my recommendations for them based on their particular likes and dislikes. I also talked about intellectual freedom and the beauty of how school libraries allow students the opportunity to choose what they read or don’t read. I expressed my trust in the student and their own self-knowledge, how I hope they will always honor their intuition, and how I appreciate them talking to me about their concerns.

Beyond these day-to-day conversations, I have been reviewing board policies that are in place, reading advice online from other school library practitioners and intellectual freedom experts, and talking with colleagues so that we know from the start that we are part of a supportive community, that we are not alone.

What advice would you give school librarians regarding the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in collection development?

CRUZ: Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to a library collection. The entire premise and reason why libraries exist to begin with is to level the playing field. Every patron deserves access to resources that speak to them, that reflect their feelings, virtues, ideas, culture, gender identity, and sense of worth. Books teach us empathy and compassion. It is the duty of a professionally trained school librarian to reach all students no matter their socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, religious, or gender identities. Every human has value. It is time to value all. We do this by making sure our collection has information for all. It is up to the learner to select their books, but that is not a matter of choice when a variety of books are not found in the collection. Diversity is important so that people who have different views can be informed and have a better understanding of the opposite point of view. When we don’t have a diverse collection, the status quo remains as do the stereo-

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types and misconceptions of ideas. In order to encourage understanding, acceptance, and tolerance it is critical to have a diverse collection representing all viewpoints. It does not necessarily mean that people will change their minds or viewpoints, but they may be better equipped to appreciate someone else's values. When our society as a whole is able to be open-minded and foster acceptance for those who differ from us, that makes our entire world a better place.

SANNWALD: As a school librarian, I try to both embrace and promote the professionalism that I offer to my community while modeling humility at the same time. When I aim to develop the collection for my school community with equity, diversity, and inclusion in mind, this means not only relying on the research that I do on my own independently, but constantly working to draw upon the expertise and experience of others. What does this look like in practice? It means observing and listening to others—I learn a lot by just getting to be in the background of learner conversations. It requires actively soliciting input from others, demonstrating curiosity about their interests and asking them questions, which they're usually excited to answer. And it means always realizing that I am necessarily limited by what I know and what I have experienced. As a result, I purposefully seek out what I am missing or overlooking out of my own ignorance. There is an

endless amount to learn and room to improve!

ROSE: Equity, diversity, and inclusion have to be central to collection development. It is our job to not just share a love of reading with our students, but to expose them to the most diverse and inclusive literature available.

Share a story of a book you added to your collection that had a meaningful impact on a student.

GERDING: One book I have added to my collection that has really impacted learners this year is *Doodleville* by Chad Sell. I ordered three copies of it, and I still have a hard time keeping the books on the shelves. Sometimes, I must hide them and put them out on a different day so that other learners have a chance to read it. Usually, learners in the same class will check the books out and read them together. I think the fact that it is a graphic novel with a focus on fantasy piques the interest of my learners, but I feel like there is another layer. The diverse characters in the book are truly dynamic, and learners feel a powerful connection to them

because they are so relatable. Sometimes a learner will identify a character and say that the character is "just like me." *Doodleville* truly appeals to a broad cross section of elementary learners just seeking a book with characters they can relate to either personally or as part of a larger community.

ROSE: I could share a few stories about how adding a particular book to the library had a meaningful impact on a student. However, what I've found more revealing and meaningful (especially during the pandemic) hasn't been so much about any specific title, but about the impact of learners feeling seen and heard when I've honored their book requests. Sometimes, I e-mail to thank them for the suggestion and let them know the title is now available in the library. If it's a book I know they wanted to read, I check it out to them and place it in their locker. It's been rewarding to have new and stronger relationships grow from this practice.

SANNWALD: One book that comes to my mind is *I Am J* by Cris Beam, especially since this is a story about a transgender teen and there have been so many recent challenges of books with LGBTQ+ content. The way that I discovered this book made an impact is also meaningful to me. I did not have a student tell me directly that it made a difference. Instead, I found out

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when I read the book myself and noticed marginalia, hand-drawn and -written evidence of a student's heartfelt reading experience (<bit.ly/iamj-marginalia>). It was a reminder to me that we may not always have students explicitly share which book has made a difference. We may not always know the true impact that our choices and actions are having.

CRUZ: One of the most impactful titles I recently read was *The 57 Bus* by Dashka Slater. This book impacted many students as we read it together to prepare for a Battle of the Books competition. *The 57 Bus* details a real hate crime that took place in Oakland, California. It also helps educate the audience about gender identity. One student who read the book, stated, "Mrs. Cruz, I never realized how ignorant I was about the subject of transgender, agender, bisexual, and nonbinary people. I am so grateful to have read this book. I can be a better person now that I have more of an understanding for people who are different from me. By reading the book, I'm not only less ignorant, but I can be more compassionate when I meet people like Sasha."



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She coauthored the 2021 Knowledge Quest blog post "Censorship in Texas: #FREedom Campaign Inception, Reflection, and Highlights" and the 2020 American Libraries article "Reset and Reconnect: Adapting and Advocating amid the Pandemic." She is a member of AASL and serves as a Director-at-Large on the AASL Board of Directors.



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A SCHOOL LIBRARIAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH MANGA COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

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The demand for manga is at an all-time high! Yet, many school librarians fear collecting manga because of the misconceptions that surround this format. As the Japanese culture and manga librarian for the New York City Department of Education, I am here to demystify manga, to inform you about the literary value of manga, to help you build your manga collection, and to provide you with tips for handling manga challenges.

What Is Manga?

Manga (pronounced mahn-gah) are comics originally published in Japan. They are read right to left and are often published in black and white. Manga is sold in *tankobons* (individual volumes) so that readers can access multiple chapters of a series in one book. These multiple chapters usually first appear in installments in Japanese magazines so publishers can test the waters and see if the manga series is worth continuing. Manga series can have multiple *tankobons*, and since both space and budgets in school libraries are limited, it is essential school librarians consider this while building their collections.

Manga is often created to target a specific demographic of readers.

Shojo (young girl) is manga that targets a female readership ages 10+. *Shojo* manga often focuses on interpersonal connections and building relationships. It guides readers through an understanding of mutual love, trust, respect, and friendship. Romance is a key theme in *shojo* manga and ranges from innocent childhood crushes to more-complex teenage love triangles. *Shojo* manga also focuses on personal growth and allows readers to partake in self-exploration so that they may find self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-empowerment. Exploring identities is also another key theme in *shojo* manga, including sexual

identity, gender roles, and other issues that female readers face.

Shonen (young boy) is manga that targets a male readership ages 10+. *Shonen* manga often focuses on themes of heroism and bravery that align with the hero's journey. Characters in *shonen* manga face a call to action, embark on an adventure from the known to the unknown, face tests and dangerous obstacles, and then hopefully return home having achieved their goal and gained wisdom or power. Characters change on this journey; they come of age, mature, and learn something that enriches them and others. Characters in *shonen* manga can take this journey alone, or they can be joined by a team of comrades that support them. *Shonen* manga teaches readers that life is about growing, learning, and persevering.

Manga Literacy

Readers should have access to manga in their school libraries because of the epic and emotional storytelling, the breathtaking and unique artwork that depicts the thoughts and emotions of characters, the transformative and relatable stories about humanity, and the endless amounts of character types, plots, conflicts, and genres. There really is something for everyone in manga!

It is essential that school librarians accept manga as real reading; doing so allows readers to personally invest and engage in the act of reading manga, which can lead to a lifelong love of reading. Adults who frown upon students reading manga may negatively impact their motivation to continue to read. Manga not only engages a community of readers, it can also create new readers, especially younger, reluctant, and/or struggling readers. Manga increases reading engagement and can allow readers to feel confident about their reading and discussing what they

It is essential that school librarians accept manga as real reading; doing so allows readers to personally invest and engage in the act of reading manga, which can lead to a lifelong love of reading.

have read. Manga readers are the most dedicated and voracious readers. They read more because there are multiple volumes in a series, and they read consistently because manga connects to their personal stories.

Reading manga supports all types of learners and allows readers to develop a specific set of skills, especially when it comes to the uniqueness of the format.

Manga allows readers to build visual literacy skills, which includes understanding and interpreting the reading direction, frames, bubbles, visual clues, and Japanese Visual Language. This language is the visual vocabulary and the visual representation of a character's emotions and thoughts. This visual information gives readers context clues so that they can decode and infer character motivation, conflict, and resolve.

Manga stories are complex and allow readers to engage in an analysis of literary devices such as plot, theme, symbolism, foreshadowing, conflict, and character development (through emotions, thoughts, words, and actions), which allows for a higher level of critical thinking.

Manga also helps readers develop verbal literacy and communication skills, especially since there is not an overwhelming amount of text on a page like prose. As such, readers can build their vocabulary and comprehension skills by pairing the visuals and the text to make inferences and interpret meaning.

Manga offers readers an opportunity to reflect on the storyline and characters, as well as the art style of the *mangaka* (manga artist). Readers can focus on the format and the style of manga, which includes panel (size and design), shading, tone, patterns, textures, imagery, and the relationship between the text and the art. Not only can readers enhance their art

appreciation skills, but they also can enhance their art technique skills by engaging in lessons about the manga art style.

Age-appropriate manga can also be a support system for the social-emotional development of readers. Manga can often reflect the lives of readers and their lived personal experiences, which can help them find self-acceptance, as well as build empathy and interpersonal skills. Many titles focus on issues like friendships, dating, and sex, as well as bullying, anxiety, and overcoming obstacles.

Manga also provides readers with the opportunity to become culturally literate. Manga is often a lens into Japanese culture where readers can learn about school life, food and cooking, religion, history, fashion,

holidays and celebrations, music, sports, and more.

Manga Programming

In many ways, manga is a common language that unites students from all different backgrounds. It is also a means for socialization that provides opportunities for students to have positive interactions with their peers. The fandom surrounding manga helps to build a sense of community within a school library. Students can build relationships based on common interests in manga. It is developmentally appropriate for students to want to belong to a group and feel safe within that group. Students have also stated that manga allows them to make new friends and feel less stressed.

Here are some tips for supporting manga programming in your school library:

Create a lunch club. Support students as they read and discuss manga together during lunch.

Establish an afterschool club. Provide an opportunity for students to read and discuss manga, watch and discuss anime, create and critique art, and explore Japanese culture.

Create a Google Classroom. Facilitate a space where students can chat about and provide manga and anime recommendations to their peers.

Establish a manga advisory board. Organize a committee of students that help to build and maintain the manga collection.

Hold a library con. Have a comic convention in your school library where students can host manga-themed events like trivia competitions, movie viewings, and artist workshops.



**AGE-APPROPRIATE
MANGA CAN ALSO
BE A SUPPORT
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OF READERS.**

Host other special events. Host events with other clubs within the school. For example: an event with the Gender-Sexuality Alliance where you explore LGBTQ+ representation in manga and anime.

Connect with a university. Contact a professor at a university to see if they are able to provide a presentation virtually or in person on Japanese culture and/or manga.

Partner with community organizations. Find a local organization that can provide workshops. For example, Resobox, a Japanese cultural center in Queens, New York City, offers workshops for students that include manga drawing and animation, Japanese ink painting and calligraphy, Japanese language, Japanese cooking and sushi making.

Organize field trips. Take students to Kinokuniya, the Japanese bookstore (<<https://usa.kinokuniya.com>>), to explore manga and chat with booksellers.

Attend a con. Bring students to a comic convention like New York Comic Con or Anime NYC to attend panels and visit Artist Alley.

Plan international travel. Schedule a trip with EF Tours (<www.ef-tour.com>) to Japan so that students can authentically experience Japanese culture firsthand.

Apply for grants. AASL offers the Inspire Special Event Grant and the Inspire Collection Development Grant annually, which can provide funding for manga events and/or manga collection development.

In a school library, it is important that students have access to a safe space that appreciates and respects reading, exploration, community, and student voice.

Manga Collection Development

There are hundreds of manga titles that can be purchased for school libraries. Here are some suggestions for building a manga collection in your school library.

Suggested Manga for Elementary School

- *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*
- *Cardcaptor Sakura*
- *Chi's Sweet Home*
- *Cowa!*
- *Hikaru no Go*
- *Howl's Moving Castle*
- *Kiki's Delivery Service*
- *My Neighbor Seki*
- *My Neighbor Totoro*
- *Nicola Traveling Around the Demon's World*
- *Penguin & House*
- *Pokemon Adventures*
- *Spirited Away*
- *Splatoon*
- *The Legend of Zelda*
- *Witch Hat Atelier*
- *Wonder Cat: Kyuu-chan*
- *Yotsuba&!*
- *Yokai Watch*
- *Yuzu the Pet Vet*

Suggested Manga for Middle School

- *Anonymous Noise*
- *Bleach*
- *Cells at Work*
- *Demon Slayer*
- *Dr Stone*
- *Fairy Tail*
- *Fullmetal Alchemist*
- *Haikyu!!*
- *Kakuriyo: Bed and Breakfast for Spirits*
- *Komi Can't Communicate*
- *Laid-Back Camp*

- *Love in Focus*
- *My Hero Academia*
- *Naruto*
- *One Piece*
- *One-Punch Man*
- *Sailor Moon*
- *Snow White with the Red Hair*
- *The Ancient Magus' Bride*
- *The Girl from the Other Side*
- *Toilet-Bound Hanako-kun*
- *Yona of the Dawn*
- *Your Lie in April*

Suggested Manga for High School

- *A Sign of Affection*
- *A Silent Voice*
- *Attack on Titan*
- *Bloom into You*
- *Blue Flag*
- *Boys Run the Riot*
- *Death Note*
- *Fruits Basket*
- *Heaven's Design Team*
- *Horimiya*
- *Jujutsu Kaisen*
- *Orange*
- *Our Dreams at Dusk*
- *Ouran High School Host Club*
- *Spy x Family*
- *The Case Study of Vanitas*
- *The Golden Sheep*
- *The Promised Neverland*
- *The Way of the Househusband*
- *To Your Eternity*
- *Tokyo Ghoul*
- *Tokyo Revengers*
- *Your Name*

View the suggested manga book list on Anime Planet at <bit.ly/KQmanga>.

Manga Challenges

Because manga is visual it is usually the target of challenges. Challenge-

ers are often concerned about the language, violence, and/or sexuality within a text due to misconceptions surrounding manga. Challengers are also often concerned that manga lacks literary merit.

Here are some tips for preventing a manga challenge in your school library.

- **Know your school community.** Consider grade levels and/or ages of the readers, their interests, their maturity levels, and the school and library mission statements. Be mindful in your selection of titles that are the best fit for your readers.
- **Create a collection development policy.** Why do you include manga in your collection? Include some of the literacy benefits of manga.
- **Outline your guidelines for selecting manga.** Do you use certain publisher ratings, professional review sites, or selection criteria? Do you use student recommendations? Define the criteria that you use for selecting manga.
- **Know your manga collection.** Be prepared to defend your selections. Create a spreadsheet that includes titles, age ratings, and themes of the manga in your collection.

When manga is challenged, the challenger usually requests the removal of a title from the school library collection. Here are some tips for preparing for a manga challenge in your school library.

- **Have a documented process for handling a manga challenge.** School librarians should create a form for those wanting to challenge manga. The form should include the challenger's contact information and the title and author of the manga being challenged. School librarians should also request the challenger

read the manga and detail their concerns on the form.

- **Have a documented process for the reconsideration of a manga title.** Prepare to organize a committee that consists of the school librarian, an educator, an administrator, and the challenger. Schedule a committee meeting, draw up possible solutions, and create a written response of the action taken.

Open communication is key when handling a manga challenge. Use this opportunity as a teachable moment to inform the challenger about manga.

Here are some tips for handling a manga challenge in your school library.

- **If a challenger states that manga is "not real reading":** Discuss the traditions, history, format, style, conventions, and literary merit of manga.
- **If a challenger is concerned about the "fanservice" in manga:** Discuss how Japan and the United States have very different taboos about sexual content and nudity.
- **If a challenger is worried that manga is "inappropriate":** Discuss that manga is a safe space for readers of all ages to explore culture, identity, and ideas.

As a school librarian, this is your opportunity to reduce barriers to access and advocate for and speak up for your students' right to read. Share how manga supports readers in their self-discovery, how it allows them to see their story and to find answers to questions that they might have. Remind the challenger that the manga titles in your collection went through a selection process to determine whether they were age appropriate and developmentally appropriate for your readers.



Open communication is key when handling a manga challenge. Use this opportunity as a teachable moment to inform the challenger about manga.

Like many books, manga provides readers with an opportunity to see their stories being told and the stories of others within their communities. Ensuring that readers have access to a variety of manga titles allows readers to learn about all types of people and relationships, which can help reduce bias and build tolerance, and allow readers to become culturally responsive. Ensuring that manga is in all school libraries is also an issue of equity. Students deserve to read manga. By avoiding building a manga collection in your school library, you are barring access to their right to read, which is protected by the First Amendment.

Manga Professional Development

In 2021 I founded Manga in Libraries, a series of one-hour webinars that provide free professional development for school librarians, public librarians, and educators all over the world.

For the Manga in Libraries webinars, I have collaborated with an interdisciplinary and diverse group of experts from the field. These experts include, but are not limited to, public librarians, academic

librarians, school librarians, library workers, professors, educators, podcasters, YouTubers, journalists, publishers, editors, and more. The webinars also connect librarians and educators with Kodansha, Viz Media, and Yen Press, the largest publishers of manga in the country.

Topics for the webinar series include basic ideas like the importance of manga, the literary value of manga, building a manga collection, selecting age-appropriate manga, and hosting manga programming to more complex ideas like reducing bias, building tolerance, challenges and censorship, sexuality and fanservice, inclusion and diversity, and social-emotional learning.

To continue your professional development, check out these Manga in Libraries webinars and book lists:

“Why Manga?”: Experts discuss the importance of including manga in the collection, suggestions for purchasing, resources for collection development, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar1>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook1>

“Representation of Girls and Women in Manga”: Experts discuss the social context of gender expectations in Japan, sexuality and fanservice in manga, titles with positive representation, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar2>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook2>

“Manga and Anime Programming”: Experts discuss building a library culture, hosting manga and anime programming, popular manga and anime series, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar3>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook3>

“Defending the Collection”: Experts discuss manga challenges and censorship, tips for collection development, titles worth defending, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar4>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook4>

“Supporting All Learners”: Experts discuss the literary value of manga, supporting the needs of all learners, titles for book clubs, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar5>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook5>

“Spooky & Scary Manga”: Experts discuss spooky and scary myths and legends, why readers like to be scared, titles for collection development, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar6>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook6>

“The LGBTQ+ Community”: Experts discuss the LGBTQ+ community in Japan, creating safe spaces and programs, titles for collection development, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar7>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook7>

“Social-Emotional Learning”: Experts discuss how manga can support the social-emotional development of teens, finding community, titles for collection development, and more.

Watch the webinar on YouTube:
<bit.ly/MILwebinar8>

View the book list on Anime Planet:
<bit.ly/MILbook8>

Visit <MangaInLibraries.com> to stay up to date! Manga in Libraries is sponsored by the New York City School Librarians’ Association and the American Library Association’s Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table. To learn more follow Jillian Rudes on Twitter @jr librarian and follow the hashtag #ReadManga!

ALA Resources to Fight Censorship

To learn more about how to respond to book challenges and fight censorship, check out ALA’s “Fight Censorship” page at <www.ala.org/advocacy/fight-censorship>



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She’s the Japanese culture and manga librarian for the New York City Department of Education and founded the Manga in Libraries webinar series (<mangainlibraries.com>). She was awarded the 2020 AASL Collaborative School Library Award. Jillian authored the article “The Zine Project” in the November/December 2020 issue of Knowledge Quest. She is president of the New York City School Librarians Association. She’s also a member of AASL and served as co-chair of the 2021 AASL National Conference Committee. She’s also a co-chair for the ALA Program Jury, committee associate for the ALA Annual Conference Committee, and a member of the GNCRT Online Program Planning Committee.

AASL APRIL IS SCHOOL LIBRARY MONTH

www.ala.org/aasl/slm



THANK YOU FOR

Transforming Learning!



American Association
of School Librarians
TRANSFORMING LEARNING

For more information on School Library Month, plus activities and resources to help you celebrate the many ways school libraries support learners as they think, create, share, and grow, visit WWW.ALA.ORG/AASL/SLM.

Whatever you need—research, scholarly articles, or webinars—
the AASL Learning Library has it ALL.



Collection Development

Browse these resources
and more at

www.ala.org/aasl/all/collections

READ

A Content Analysis of District School Library Selection Policies in the United States

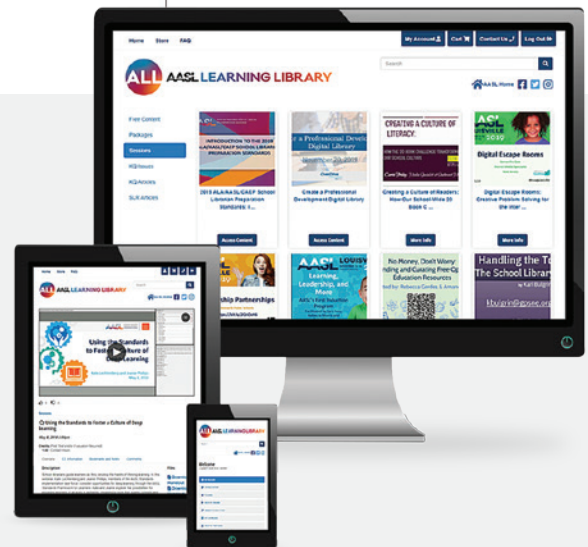
An investigation into district-level selection policies uncovers a need for school librarians to advocate for revision of policies to keep them current and provide effective guidance for collection selection.

Incorporating Mindfulness in the School Library Three Ways

Through collections, space design, and mindful practice, school librarians ensure learners find a safe haven in the school library.

Databases, Collection Development, and Student Learning

An overview of the merit of including database purchases in collection development budget. The article also offers information on how databases are utilized for classroom, student, and faculty.



Leading a School Library as My Authentic Self: How My Identity Transformed the School Library Culture

Adrienne Almeida details her student-centered approach to reinvigorating the school library through small policy changes and collection development decisions.

WATCH

We Need (Neuro)Diverse Books

One in 6 children have been diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental condition. Learn how school librarians can update collections to better represent this diverse group.

Dual Language Libraries: Philosophy, Collection & Instruction

Creating and maintaining collections that serve learners is a unique challenge for dual language librarians. Discover resources and ideas for integrating language, literacy, and library instruction.

Inclusive Collections: A Frank Conversation about Diversity in Library Resources

Auditing the school library is vital to ensure the collection is inclusive. Learn how to evaluate a collection using a diversity audit and how to examine biases and soft censorship practices.

The Power of Manga + Anime in our Libraries

Dive into various aspects of manga and anime—from basic definitions and genres to collection development and readers' advisory to working with learners to start your own manga/anime club.

Manage ALL your learning on
your time and at *your* pace.

VISIT **ALL.AASL.ORG**

My Journey toward Equity- Minded School Librarianship

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As an elementary school librarian, I believe an essential objective of the school library is providing a welcoming space that serves my patrons. Through almost eight years of librarianship, my idea of a welcoming space has evolved. As a white woman, I drew from my own linguistic, cultural, and racial frames of reference as I began my career. I believe this is where I have been for a majority of my fifteen years in education, while activists have been working, collaborating, and making change. I could have stayed fixed in those perspectives and remained satisfied with the status quo.

Following the murder of George Floyd, my journey toward equity-minded school librarianship became more focused and energized as I increasingly dedicated my attention to the work of educators and activists of color. I took part in book studies, attended webinars, and engaged in conversations about white supremacy, racism, and other forms of bias, but I knew that this work only gained meaning through action. I worked to develop a critical eye to all aspects the school library, including the books in our collection, programming, library displays, language used, the physical space, and more.

In this article, I share what I have learned and ways I have applied this to my school library to create more-equitable experiences for my students, staff, and community. I hope sharing my story provides motivation or ideas for other school librarians to start or continue their own journeys toward equity-minded librarianship.

Guides on My Equity Journey

All journeys have a starting point. My journey to reevaluate the work I do in the school library largely started when I read Ibram X. Kendi's 2019 book *How to Be an Antiracist*. Kendi says, "there is no neutrality in the racism struggle...One either allows racial

inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist.' " (2019, 9). Kendi's description of assimilationist racism opened my eyes to see that all my school library signs were in English and my collection largely told stories of only dominant groups (2019, 29). The "good news" of this realization was that the racist and antiracist identities are not fixed; they can be changed through the decisions we make daily (Kendi 2019, 10). I had changes to make.

The questions I develop are aimed to push me and students beyond diverse representation in books to also consider issues present in the theme and stories for that month.

While Kendi's book set me on the path to reevaluate many aspects of the school library, I hoped to find a clearer connection between these anti-bias and antiracist concepts and my school library. I needed other scholars and experts to deepen my understanding.

I next turned to the work of Rudine Sims Bishop to inform decisions in the school library. Her windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors metaphor highlights the fact that a student's reading experience is a crucial part of the school library's function by providing materials that represent "all the children from all the cultures" and resources that might "help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes toward difference" (1990). In addition, Gloria Ladson-Bill-

ings's tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy emphasized the importance of academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness for Black students and other students from historically minoritized groups (1995, 160).

I applied these tenets in my school library by asking questions such as: What resources do I choose to highlight and why? Am I encouraging my students to critically examine the resources and concepts we cover? Do I spend time learning from our communities and connecting with them in ways that affirm cultural characteristics? Both Sims Bishop and Ladson-Billings helped me understand the ways that the characteristics of dominant groups are normalized and standardized in schools and libraries.

Django Paris argued for a culturally sustaining pedagogy that "has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers." The way Paris describes the need for a pluralistic society to embrace and encourage "both the many and one to remain vibrant" inspired me to recognize that our commonalities and differences are both assets that can bring us together (Paris 2012, 95).

Beyond the literature, I attended workshops and webinars with educators, librarians, and experts on anti-bias work that further informed my practices. In a webinar aimed at school leaders, educator and scholar Dr. Terri N. Watson outlined five Cs she believes are a school's responsibility: care, courage, critical reflection, commitment, and community (2020). Critical reflection, care, and community have been common themes in many resources I have examined, but the courage and commitment especially spoke to me as an educator and school librarian. These values

pushed me to try new things, rethink programming and services, and hold myself accountable to the work.

In the webinar “Talking to Kids about Racism” with Dr. Kira Banks’s Raising Equity organization, educators and activists Britt Hawthorne and Tiffany Jewell helped me realize that I needed to continue to confront my own biases to transform my school library (Banks 2020). They also emphasized the importance of evaluating resources to identify the ways whiteness is normalized and centered in schools and society.

*Each week’s book choices
during the month-long theme
help my school community
see diverse experiences and
explore ways to connect
with fellow students
and our community.*

Robin Porter outlined critical topics for evaluating classroom content in the #EdEquityVA webinar “Culturally Responsive and Culturally Relevant Remote Instruction.” These topics included types of female characters, whether problems faced by characters were resolved by “intervention of the dominant culture,” or if characters were displayed in inauthentic, stereotypical ways (#EdEquityVA 2020).

This critical examination of resources was also emphasized in a webinar with Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen, who encouraged attendees to examine a character’s visual portrayal and problematic images and ones to celebrate (Dahlen 2021). A *School Library Journal* webinar led

by Donalyn Miller, Autumn Allen, and Erin Entrada Kelly stressed the importance of examining your bookshelves. As Allen put it, “be critical and think about what is normalized in the messages that we’re sending” with our book collections (2021).

Lastly, Juliana Urtubey, a contributor to the Antiracist Educator Spring Web Series, suggested viewing students as “linguistically gifted” who speak more than one language (2021). This shift in the language I use can help to sustain students’ identities and cultures, instead of framing language through an English-only lens.

So many in education and beyond have provided research and expertise on the goal of creating more-equitable spaces and experiences for our students. This work helped me see the next steps I could take—from learning to doing.

My Actions

I put the knowledge and understanding I learned into action in a few distinct ways, including library monthly themes and updates to my collection, library signage, and professional development.

Each month I identify a library theme consisting of four components: an overall theme, “thinking about my thinking” questions, books, and related activities. The questions I develop are aimed to push me and students beyond diverse representation in books to also consider issues present in the theme and stories for that month. During our “Create Change” theme in November, some questions used to guide us were: How can I use my voice to create change? Can I speak up?

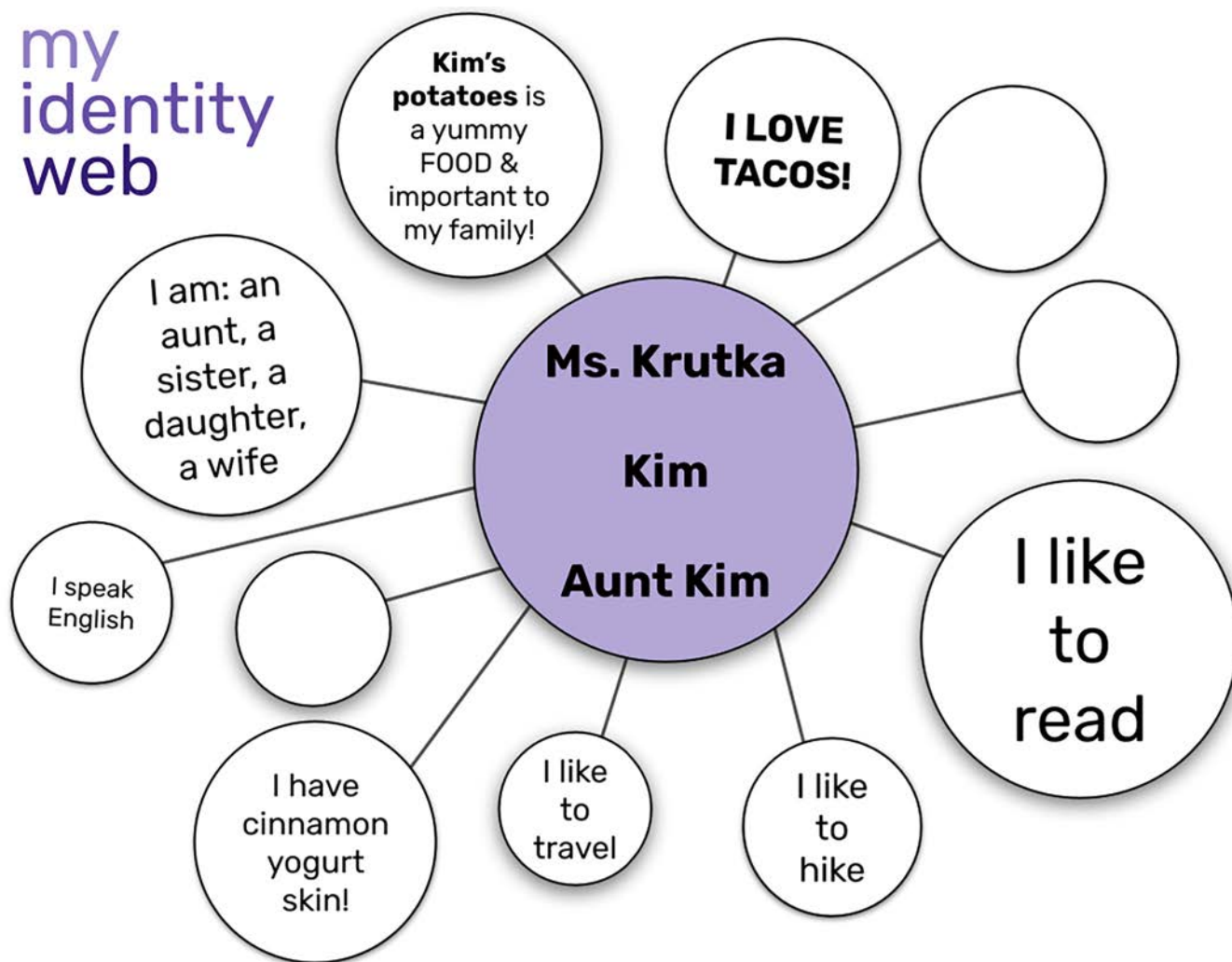
I purposefully choose themes that help students think about their own identity and culture and affirm and celebrate different identities

and cultures. Examples of themes include: “Who Am I? Who Will I Be?,” “Celebrate!,” “Your Name Is a Song,” and “Taking Action!” The “Your Name Is a Song” theme was inspired by the book with the same title written by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow and illustrated by Luisa Uribe. Reading this book and discussing its themes encouraged students to consider whose names and identities are normalized and their own thinking around these issues.

In each month’s theme I contemplate ways to bring in who my students are as well as how they can think about themselves, other students, and the larger society. During the month with the “Who Am I? Who Will I Be?” theme, I included read-alouds that encouraged students to think about different aspects of their identity, such as their names (*The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi and *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal), places where they have lived and language(s) they speak (*The Arabic Quilt* by Aya Khalil, illustrated by Anait Semirdzhyan), food as part of family and community traditions (*Fry Bread: A Native-American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard, illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal), and their own physical characteristics (*Honeysmoke* by Monique Fields, illustrated by Yesenia Moises).

Throughout this identity month, I worked on an identity web to model critical reflection. Initially I learned about the identity web from the Equity Institute put on by The Reading and Writing Project at the Teachers College. To create an identity web, a person starts with their name in the center and adds other identity markers to the web, such as languages spoken, religious affiliations, skin color, and hobbies. I added to my web each week, encouraging students and teachers

my identity web



throughout the school to do the same by posting a digital template on our monthly theme website. Additional related resources or activities were available throughout the month, such as the “Sesame Street Beautiful Skin” song and a coloring sheet with “colors of the world” crayons for students to draw and color their own family. My thinking questions for this theme included: What are the things that make me who I am? How can I appreciate and celebrate those who are the same and those who are different from me? Do I have any ideas about who I want to be?

During our “Taking Action!” month, teachers and students looked at several people who have worked to

make just change in the world. Some books and characters were historical, such as Georgia Gilmore in *Pies from Nowhere* by Dee Romito and illustrated by Laura Freeman. We also looked at current activists, such as Malala Yousafzai in *Malala’s Magic Pencil*, illustrated by Kerascoët, or *Our House Is on Fire* by Jeanette Winter highlighting the work of Greta Thunberg. I asked students to consider how they can make a difference in our school, our neighborhood, and our world.

Kendi’s charge to evaluate actions one by one helps me bring a critical eye to the decisions that go into each month’s theme (2019). I am encouraged to think beyond the

This change in the school library valued students as linguistically gifted who spoke multiple languages, as well as encouraged a broader appreciation for language diversity.

aspects of culture and identity that are often at the surface and find space to celebrate students for who they are. Each week's book choices during the month-long theme help my school community see diverse experiences and explore ways to connect with fellow students and our community. With these monthly themes, I guide my students to consider how, individually and as a community, they can push back against oppressive beliefs that infer the superiority of dominant cultures. I also ask them to consider how we can take action to confront inequities in our school, neighborhood, and the world.

Next, I had to rethink a core function of school librarians: collection development. I am in the process of conducting a diversity audit of the books in my school library to evaluate what is present in my collection and flag problematic titles that need to be considered for weeding. I rely heavily on the expert insights from Dr. Dehlan (2021) and Miller, Allen, and Kelly (2021). There are also many online resources that provide book lists such as We Need Diverse Books (<<https://diversebooks.org>>) and Social Justice Books (<<https://socialjusticebooks.org>>). Guided by the words of Paris (2011) and Sims Bishop (1990) I seek out books that sustain students' languages and cultures and provide windows into a breadth of experiences and characters.

I also am deliberate in book displays, book talks, and read-alouds. For instance, I have introduced two library awards each month, one for a picture book and one for a fiction book. When I examine the collection and what books I want to read, award, and share with my school community, I ask myself how it supports my goals for a more-equi-

table school library for my students. Will it offer them a mirror or window? Do they represent diverse ways of being in authentic ways? Do critical authors believe it is an authentic representation? Additionally in the conversations I have with students and faculty about books, I encourage appreciation and curiosity about things instead of using language that *others* an experience that might be different from that of the reader.

In the past, the signs in my school library have always been in English

only. While my school has a majority of monolingual, English speakers, I have learned strategies for celebrating my multilingual students and their families (Ladson-Billings 1995; Paris 2012). I worked with the emergent bilingual teacher in my school to help create library signs that reflected the languages of all my students and families on our campus.

I accomplished this task by creating a spreadsheet of the seven languages and common library signs I needed. I used an online translator to translate



my fifteen library signs into each language. Our emergent bilingual teacher then e-mailed the parents of students who spoke those languages, asking if they would check my translations. Each of these parents promptly responded with suggested changes, and I had library phrases ready for seven languages! This change in the school library valued students as linguistically gifted who spoke multiple languages, as well as encouraged a broader appreciation for language diversity (Antiracist 2021). Students who speak these languages noticed immediately, with one expressing a desire to learn a third language! This is just a small step in creating a more language-inclusive library.

Finally, an important part of creating a more-equitable school library is my own continued development in anti-bias and antiracist work. As a leader, I have pushed for staff development on my campus and in my district. I created a staff webpage with anti-bias and antiracist resources, started campus and district book clubs, provided opportunities for campus-wide professional development such as Heinemann's Professional Development webinar featuring anti-bias, antiracist educational leader Liz Kleinrock, and established district and regional affinity groups for other librarians doing this work. Through these groups I have been able to reflect and develop ideas with other librarians directly related to elementary school libraries.

Hawthorne and Jewell remind me of the importance of this internal work (Banks 2020), and Dr. Terri N. Watson's five Cs offered me signposts for change (2020). Transforming my library requires an ongoing commitment.

Conclusion

Creating a more-equitable school library space is not easy. I am fortunate to learn from the work that educators, scholars, and experts have been doing for years. Education often seems to involve new trends and initiatives, but the work to create more-equitable spaces must be the lens through which we see all other work. Which read-aloud will I choose? What books do I choose for my school library? What questions am I asking of myself and of my students? What message does the school library space I create for my

students and staff send? The work is never done, but I have started my journey toward an equitable school library. I must stay committed because this work is essential to being the school librarian and creating the school library all my students deserve.



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STOKING THE READING FLAME WITH PERSONALIZED BOOK BASKETS

Melissa Williams

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"This is how I show my students that I love them—by putting books in their hands, by noticing what they are about, and finding books that tell them, 'I know. I know. I know how it is. I know who you are, and even though we may never speak of it, read this book, and know that I understand you.' " (Miller 2014, 173).

When I was new to my current school and to my role as a middle-school librarian, I read *The Book Whisperer* by Donalyn Miller and *Reading in the Wild* by Miller, Susan Kelley, and Teri S. Lesesne and was inspired to model much of my school library around Donalyn Miller's practices. One of Miller's easily actionable ideas for helping students learn their reading preferences and choose a book in *Reading in the Wild* is creating preview stacks (2014). She begins by asking students about their preferred genres and gathering information about what they are looking for in their next book. She then draws on her collection knowledge to gather five to ten books for students to preview. Students are under no obligation to choose from the pile but can freely decide what to keep and what to set aside.

Inspired by this program, I had the idea of creating personalized book

baskets for students, informed by a simple questionnaire. I wanted to launch this new service for several reasons:

- I wanted to help struggling readers find titles that would ignite enthusiasm for reading.
- I wanted to encourage students to try genres and diverse authors that they might not normally choose, broadening their reading horizons.
- I hoped that the process would allow me to get to know students on a deeper level and that the baskets would communicate my understanding and support of students as individuals.

In addition, it couldn't help but be fun for students to receive a customized book basket.

It is easy to replicate this program, and I blogged about this concept on the *Nerdy Book Club* blog (Williams 2021). In this article, I share my process and tips in detail. Since school libraries continue to deal with the impact of COVID-19 and since there are circumstances in which virtual baskets are preferable to print versions, I offer ideas for how to create and share virtual book baskets.

How It Works

With a working knowledge of your collection, putting together individualized book baskets is easy. It begins with a simple index card; however, you could also design a brief online form if you'd prefer. I have used a Google Form in the past but decided I preferred the simplicity of the index card. Handing any interested student a card, I ask them to write their name and grade along the top and information about themselves, including:

- Favorite books and authors
- Favorite genres
- If they have any genres, books, or authors they definitely do not like

I also suggest that they list:

- Favorite movies
- Favorite hobbies
- Things they especially like learning about and doing, both in and out of school

I advise, "If there are certain subjects you definitely are not interested in, you can tell me about those too." I tell them, "The more you can tell me specifically about yourself, the better your book basket is likely to be!"



Once I have students' completed index cards, I grab plastic book bins and fill them with both fiction and nonfiction titles, usually between 10 and 15 books, that I think students will enjoy based on the information they supplied. I include titles I feel certain they will gravitate to as well as genres and titles that they might not think to try but that I have a hunch they might like based on their index card responses. I stick their index card out of the top of a book in their basket so the students and I can clearly see their names and identify who the basket belongs to.

No-Pressure Basket Browsing

After I fill a student's basket and deliver it to them, I reassure them that they are under no pressure to take the books in their basket. Just as Miller tells her students when she hands them a preview stack, I make it clear that I have no expectation that they must love all the books I choose. The basket is offered completely as a gift: take or leave what they will.

When I have a "ready buyer" on a title, they take precedence. My experience is that if a student hasn't plucked out a book from a basket in two or three weeks, chances are slim that they will come looking for it later.

Students can hold onto the books in their basket for a week or two. After that point, the books may be reshelfed to free up baskets, or I might need to hand the books along to others who want them. In fact, if I have a student who ardently wants a book that's in someone else's basket, even though the basket was only created a few days before, I will check that book out to that student on the spot. The basket contains enough other pleasures to keep the basket owner reading for a

while. When I have a "ready buyer" on a title, they take precedence. My experience is that if a student hasn't plucked out a book from a basket in two or three weeks, chances are slim that they will come looking for it later. I explain to the students that this is my process.



Students choose the books they would like to leave in their baskets for future consideration, which books they want to check out on the spot, and which books do not interest them. These books will be reshelfed and put back into circulation. I don't think I have ever made a basket for a student where they didn't walk away without at least two books that they want to read.

Know Your Population and Plan Your Timing

When I first introduced the option of book baskets, I learned that I needed to stagger my book basket rollout. I made the mistake of introducing the new system simultaneously to the fifth and sixth grades, and nearly every student in both grades wanted one and was eager for their basket to be completed immediately. It was not long before I ran out of baskets. Timing considerations matter more with students in younger grades. I find that requests from older middle-school students are more sporadic and easy to manage.

When launching your own book basket service, consider the age, independence, and enthusiasm levels of your patrons when deciding the population you want to launch the service to. Older patrons tend to be more inclined to wait patiently for their baskets. Immediacy is the order of the day with younger students.



If your school has a large population, the thought of managing this kind of program might seem impossible. There are several options for making a book basket program work with a large student body. First, you won't know what the demand will be until you try it. You could begin a trial run, telling only one class

When launching your own book basket service, consider the age, independence, and enthusiasm levels of your patrons when deciding the population you want to launch the service to.

about the program and seeing how many requests you receive from that class. If you only receive a few basket requests, you can begin to spread the word.

Another option is to offer book baskets on a case-by-case basis, suggesting baskets to students you interact with individually who are struggling to determine what to read next. You can offer the baskets to students about whom teachers and parents have expressed concern in terms of their level of reading engagement. You could create a schedule in which you advertise book baskets to only certain portions of your population at particular times of the year. This is similar to what I do in choosing to announce book baskets to one grade at a time.

Other Considerations for Book Baskets

Before embarking on a similar program, you'll want to consider the time and labor involved and have a plan for who will reshelve the books that students do not select. I would not be able to offer this option to students if it were not for my faithful volunteers. My volunteers are willing to reshelve the books that students set aside. Their willingness to do this allows me to continue this program

without an excessive pile-up of discarded books from baskets.

In addition, if you want to roll out a book basket initiative, you will have to make peace with the fact that you may not be able to find books in your collection. Many a day I have to dig through a basket because I suspect I put a book in Aiden's basket that Maya now requests, and Aiden has left the book in his basket.

Student, Parent, and Teacher Responses

During the early years of this program, I noticed a student showed typical reading avoidance behavior, trying hard to distract himself and his peers during reading time because he didn't identify as a reader. I pulled together a basket full of humorous and slightly mischievous books—books he wouldn't expect me to pick out—and delivered them in a basket with the reminder that he was under no pressure to take them. I saw him smile for the first time in a while, and he went on to choose many titles from his basket. He often reported back that he liked the selections in his basket. I have seen this scenario repeatedly play out, with reluctant readers admitting that there are titles in their baskets that fit their interests and opening themselves up to give the books a try.

The feedback I have received from parents attests to the power of the baskets. A parent approached me during the first year of book basket commissions to tell me how her son hated reading, but he came home from school the previous week elated. She relayed that her fifth-grader had exclaimed, "Ms. Williams gave me a book basket full of books picked out especially for me!" She beamed, "It was like it was Christmas to him!" Her son found a book in that basket that changed his attitude toward reading for the remainder of his middle-school career. He realized

that it wasn't reading he objected to but rather the particular books he had encountered up to that point. He just hadn't found his perfect fit yet.

When parents contact the school to express concern that their child is not reading enough, I create a basket and will often e-mail a list of some of the titles (or a photograph of the titles) to the parents for their reference. Parents are grateful to see what books fit their child's reading preferences so that they can steer their child in those directions and can purchase similar books for gifts.

When parents contact the school to express concern that their child is not reading enough, I create a basket and will often e-mail a list of some of the titles (or a photograph of the titles) to the parents for their reference.

Book baskets also make a strong back-to-school night presentation, particularly when I have two or three pre-made baskets on display to show parents, explaining my process. Many times parents indicate that they would like a book basket for themselves.

Book baskets are also a wonderful tool for collaborating and problem-solving with classroom teachers. Teachers request that I make personalized book baskets when they have students who are not engrossed in their books during silent sustained reading or who have difficulty choosing or committing to independent reading books. Sometimes I make book baskets for teachers so they can experience the pleasure of a personalized book basket and can see firsthand how the process works.

Book Baskets in the Time of COVID and Beyond: Going Virtual

As we returned to campus in the fall of 2020, I thought book baskets would not be an option. During the 2020–2021 school year, students

were not allowed to browse books since any books that were touched needed to be quarantined.

Sometime in September, the topic of book baskets came up during a sixth-grade library period, and I explained with regret that baskets would not be possible. A student declared, "You should make virtual book baskets!" At this I paused and asked, "Really? You would still like a basket if I sent it as a virtual list of book recommendations?" "Sure!" students eagerly responded. And so I developed virtual book baskets.

It's worth noting that a virtual basket does not require the reshelving of books and the basket can exist for far longer than a physical basket.

If your library uses Follett's Destiny Library Manager for its management software, you can create a personalized "Collection" within Destiny for each requesting student. You simply select titles for the student within Destiny and add them to the collection, sharing the link for the collection by e-mail with the student, teacher, or parent. Within each collection, the books you select will display with their book covers and descriptions, making it easy for students to decide which books in their baskets are the right fit for them. You can give the collection a title such as "Isha's Virtual Book Basket!" and choose an individual color scheme and cover photo for each collection.

If your library management software does not support this kind of collection making, you might consider using a free content curation service, such as Pearltrees, to create collections where you can save book covers and descriptions and reviews of recommended books for each student. Pearltrees allows you to save web content, such as a



Goodreads book description page or a publishing house blurb, for a book within a Pearltrees "Collection." You can then share that collection as a single link, allowing students to view the covers, descriptions, and reviews like a "playlist," which is a more compelling and interactive option for students than viewing a text-only list of titles or links. It is likely that you have your own favorite content curation software that you favor, and so consider how you might use it to create virtual book baskets.

*Hand the students their books
in a basket, and it's like you're
giving them a very personal
and thoughtful present.*

Maximum Impact and Joy

When considering whether to offer something involving as much time and labor as these baskets, it is natural to wonder whether the same response and benefits are achievable by offering students printed recommended reading lists or simply handing them a preview stack of books. Many reading promotion strategies work well in getting students to make a book selection. I have run various reading promotion initiatives such as speed book dating, genre personality quizzes, blind-date-with-a-book celebrations, and more, largely modeled after the work of Leigh Collazo (Mrs. Reader-pants online) and other librarians I follow. Each one has been joyful and beneficial. However, while the other reading programs are appreciated and have been met with some success, there is something truly magical about the baskets. Hand the students their books in a basket, and it's like you're giving them a very personal and thoughtful present.

The baskets have their own power. Something about the encapsulation of books make these book recommendations feel gift-like. I wonder if the same effect would be achieved with a book bag. Perhaps it is the fact that a basket is less expected and is attached to celebratory connotations such as picnic baskets and holiday gift baskets. I can't explain it, but I certainly have felt joy at witnessing the magical response of students to their baskets.

My basket service is the only program I run every year because it is the most-requested service and I believe it to be the most effective. Of all the initiatives I have undertaken as a school librarian, this is the one that continuously pays big dividends. The book basket program has supercharged my understanding of my students' individual interests and reading profiles, has helped me get to know my collection inside and out, and has built a rapport with students, teachers, and parents. What's more, the students and I have full-on fun with the process. They love telling me about themselves: their likes and dislikes and commis-



sioning me to design these "baskets of wonder," as they are sometimes affectionately termed.

I delight in reading what the students share about themselves and communicating that I see, understand, and love them by gifting them with these very personalized book baskets. Is it time intensive and labor intensive? Sure. But you will never regret investing in your students and their reading lives in this way. No matter how many baskets I make, in person or virtual, I find the experience richly rewarding. I cannot imagine doing this library life without this service. I hope that you, too, will discover the magic of the baskets.

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Melissa Williams is a middle school and grade-9 librarian at Berwick Academy, an independent PK-12 school in southern

Maine. She is the director of her school's Poet in Residence program and for several years was coordinator for Berwick Academy's Writing Center. Melissa has reviewed books for *School Library Journal*, blogged for Nerdy Book Club, and co-hosted a conference for the New England Association of Independent School Libraries in 2018.

2022 AASL ELECTION

PRESIDENT CANDIDATE STATEMENTS



COURTNEY PENTLAND

As someone who has worked with school librarians at the district, state, and national levels, I *know* we are stronger together. Many school librarians work in isolation, but we are not alone. We must connect with our colleagues at the state and national level to support and lift each other up. Our individual experiences can fuel combined knowledge that propels advocacy, so we can collectively grow our profession. Strong connections between school librarians across the country are key for widespread change to happen. We know many are facing similar difficulties with reduced staffing and challenges to

intellectual freedom. United, I believe we can build upon previous initiatives that connected us more with administrators and each other. If elected, I plan to continue to build connections between the states so we can truly be stronger together. I will advocate at the national level to ensure that every student has access to a properly staffed and adequately funded school library that includes materials that reflect our local, national, and global communities. If elected, I promise to work hard, ask thoughtful questions, and collaborate widely in support of all school librarians, their students, and school communities.



JENNIFER STURGE

My love affair with libraries began when I was 7 years old and I won a bookmark contest at the local public library for my logo: "All for one, All for free, Libraries!" I often think about this statement because our school libraries are places where *all* students and *all* members of our school community can feel free and feel a sense of belonging.

I came into leadership through the Lilead Project, who taught me to embrace my natural leadership style of ensuring that those around me have what they need to be successful. I translated this into several roles with AASL:

working on the editorial board of *Knowledge Quest*, chairing the committee for the "Instructional Role of the School Librarian" position statement, acting as chair of the Supervisor Section of AASL, and co-chairing the programming committee for the 2021 national conference.

As president-elect of AASL, I will work to be a voice of advocacy for school libraries and for the role of the school librarian in a child's education. Every child deserves a school librarian, and I will do my absolute best to ensure the members of AASL have what they need to feel seen, heard, and successful.

AASL BALLOT

For additional information on these candidates, visit
<www.ala.org/aasl/elections>.

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How School Librarians Can Partner with K–12 School District Leadership to Support School Libraries

Melanie Lewis Croft

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When I was hired for my first full-time school librarian position at a high school, I was tasked with providing leadership to all the school district's library personnel since the school district did not employ a full-time district library supervisor. This proved to be a challenging task. I always felt like something was falling through the cracks as I juggled to manage the needs of each of the school libraries while running my own with only a part-time paraprofessional to assist me.

Unfortunately, I found my experience was not uncommon. As I got to know the school library personnel in my state, I learned that schools tended to employ only one school library staff member per school site (either a certified school librarian or a classified paraprofessional) or just one district library supervisor to serve the entire school district. This motivated me to explore why this was the case.

While completing my dissertation research with school districts that employed school librarians, I found none employed full-time district-level leadership for their school librarians. Only one of the six district administrators I interviewed had extensive knowledge and experience working with school librarians, yet that administra-

tor had little time to work with the librarian due to other administrative responsibilities. Most of the administrators I interviewed either had little knowledge of school librarians and/or didn't know how to help them (Lewis 2018; 2019). At the conclusion of my study several administrators requested guidance in how to support their school librarians.

As a follow-up to my dissertation research I implemented a study to explore how to equip district leaders to support their school librarians in the absence of an official district library supervisor. I collected data during the fall of 2020 at a PreK–12 public school district consisting of approximately 15,000 students. The district employed twenty-three building-level school librarians but no full-time library support staff (library clerks) and no official full-time district-level school library supervisor. Four district-level administrative personnel and seven building-level school librarians agreed to participate in a series of interviews, focus groups, and observations (Lewis 2021).

The results revealed several issues of concern:

- School librarians are generally functioning as building/resource managers. During the COVID pandemic their primary role

consisted of serving as IT support to teachers and students.

- The lack of full-time library clerks prevents school librarians from serving as instructional leaders.
- There is a lack of clear expectations and alignment to current school library standards at the district level.
- District leaders tend to provide school librarians with training on digital programs (to assist others with navigation) rather than professional learning designed to advance student achievement through the school library.
- There is a lack of consistent, positive working relationships between school librarians and site principals. (Croft 2021; Lewis 2021)

Most of the administrators I interviewed either had little knowledge of school librarians and/or didn't know how to help them.

Although these findings are not generalizable beyond this study, they do raise concerns for the broader school library field. The preferred solution is to employ a full-time district library supervisor and full-time library clerks in each school library. However, school budgets often are not able to support this, and alternative solutions must be considered.

Implications for Practice

If school librarians without full-time district library supervisors encounter these issues within their school districts, there are several steps they can take to help their district leaders address them. First, assume that district leaders have limited knowledge of school librarians and potentially few positive experiences with school librarians. Assume also that most district leaders tasked with overseeing school librarians are interested in learning how to support them, do not know where to start, and would appreciate some expert guidance. Administrators are more likely to respond positively to requests when they are aligned to district and school site improvement plans and make a clear connection to improving student achievement.

Second, school librarians should locate and review the following documents within their school districts:

- Board policy/regulation for school libraries
- School librarian job description
- Evaluation process for school librarians
- District and school site improvement plans

Administrators are more likely to respond positively to requests when they are aligned to district and school site improvement plans and make a clear connection to improving student achievement.

Examine the degree to which the documents are aligned to current school library and literacy standards. Note whether the school librarian is specifically included in the literacy, technology, and curriculum and instruction initiatives in the improvement plans. Make a list of suggested revisions—administrators greatly appreciate it when potential solutions are proposed (it makes their jobs much easier!).

Third, think about what your greatest needs are for specific professional learning. Investigate options and determine how these might align with the district and school improvement plans. Do you need or want more time for your district's school librarians to collaborate with one another? If yes, think about how to organize this. Would you like to meet monthly? For how long? A few hours or a full day? Will you need substitutes to cover libraries while school librarians meet? Are there online professional learning sources that would benefit your school librarian population? If yes, curate and maintain a list of these sources. Do you feel it would be helpful to belong to professional organizations such as your state's school library organization, AASL, the International Society for Technology in Education, or the International Literacy Organization? If yes, create a wish list that identifies and prioritizes your preferred organizations and the costs associated with membership,

attending conferences, and participating in other professional learning activities. Do any of your local colleges or universities offer school librarian preparation programs? If so, contact their faculty to inquire about potential professional learning opportunities. Would you find it helpful to attend professional learning provided for teachers within your school district? If yes, identify those times of the year and specific events with which you would like to engage.

Fourth, make one or a series of appointments to meet with the district leadership responsible for overseeing school librarians. Make it your goal to address the following during your meeting(s):

- Review the district's documents related to school libraries, share your suggestions, and offer to work with leadership to revise each document and educate site administrators about the district's expectations for school librarians.
- Examine the current learning environment and available resources. Discuss the district's priorities for school librarians within this context. Offer to work with leadership to revise expectations accordingly.
- Inquire as to whether funding and support is available to cover the professional learning wish list. Offer to work with leadership to plan specific professional learning opportunities throughout the school year.

Finally, work on cultivating a positive relationship with your site administrators. I previously addressed this topic at length in a previous *Knowledge Quest* article titled "Advocating for the School Library through Relationships" (Lewis 2020). One of the most impactful practices you can develop is to invite your administrators to spend time in your school library on a regular basis. The more opportunities they have to see exemplary school librarians in action, the more likely they will provide support to advance student achievement through the school library.

My research has indicated that school leaders clearly need a starting point on their journey to learning about the school library. With time and careful planning, school librarians can partner with these leaders to provide the knowledge and experience they need to build effective school libraries.

One of the most impactful practices you can develop is to invite your administrators to spend time in your school library on a regular basis.

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It's easy to tell kids, "Work hard, and you can do anything you put your mind to." But for many kids, if you don't see it, why believe it?

Representation Matters

Chris Singleton

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Back in 2015 my mother and eight others were murdered in a racially motivated mass shooting at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina. That was a dark day. In just minutes, my best friend—my greatest support and inspiration—was gone. Mom was the one who believed in me, the one who taught me that I was “beautifully and wonderfully made” just the way I was. It was that love and belief that encouraged me to chase an impossible dream.

All my life, I told my mom that I wanted to play centerfield in the MLB one day. But most of the players on TV were white, and on the occasion I saw someone with a darker complexion, I was usually disheartened to learn they were from Cuba or the Dominican Republic. In this sea of teams and players, where was I? Was there a place for me?

Then I saw Andrew McCutchen.

He was running balls down in centerfield for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He looked like me. He came from humble beginnings like me. He even played the same position as me. My morale and dreams soared. For years I would call myself his biggest fan, and while I knew there were other players in the MLB that I could have followed like Bryce Harper or Mike Trout, there was something about the dark complexion, welcoming smile, and love of the game that drew me to Andrew—and let me dare to imagine *myself* on the field one day.

I played baseball in high school and college, which is where I was when Mom was killed. After some time playing minor league baseball, I was eventually drafted by the Chicago Cubs. I'd finally done what felt so impossible all those years earlier—and I knew I needed to give it all up.

Because after Mom's death, it became clear that baseball wasn't my calling.

Ending racism was.

So I found a voice. I became a speaker and an author. Over the last six years, I've criss-crossed the U.S. hundreds of times to share my family's story. I've spoken to teams, corporations, and more than 100,000 students. Every time, my message is the same: Love your neighbor.

While I'm on the road I often hear well-intentioned people say things like: “More Black kids should just do what you've done, Chris.” Or “Why don't more people think like you?” At first, this would aggravate me. “They've got no idea what these kids are going through,” I would immediately think. But the fact remained that for many Black kids, the obstacles in their lives simply felt insurmountable. The more I thought

*Just think what the pages
of a book can show a child.
There are picture books with
kids of color engineering
bridges, discovering lost
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and running for president.*

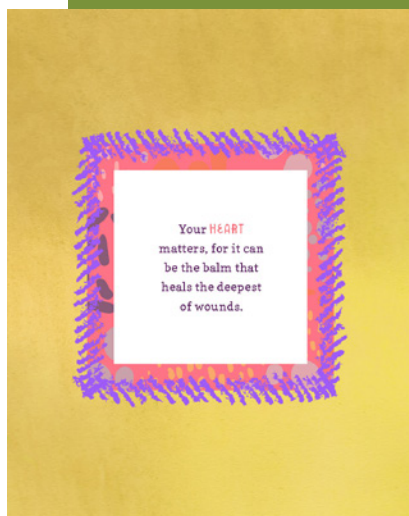
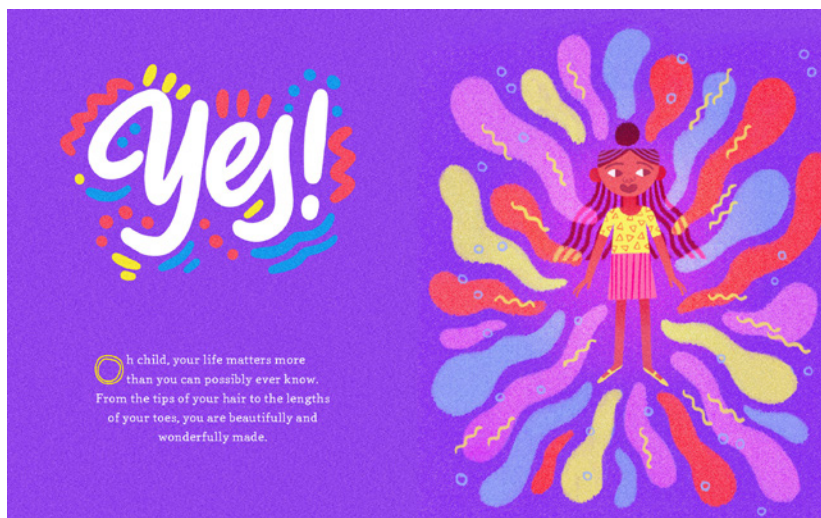
about it and the more I pondered my own life, the more I settled on an important truth: Black kids needed more Andrew McCutchens.

Which brings us to children's books.

There's so much power in *seeing* someone that looks like you who is doing something significant. After all, it's easy to tell kids, "Work hard, and you can do anything you put your mind to." That sounds nice, but for many kids, if you don't see it, why believe it?

It's for precisely this reason that children's literature can be one of our most powerful tools in encouraging the rising generation. Just think what the pages of a book can *show* a child. There are picture books with kids of color engineering bridges, discovering lost species, exploring space, and running for president. Board books teaching love, justice, and acceptance. Nonfiction titles exploring the shared history of a nation longing for healing. Biographies of real-life Andrew McCutchens of art, science, music, and more: real people who showed that impossible *can* be possible.

These and a growing number of tales readily accessible in libraries all over the nation are beginning to tell a story different from the one



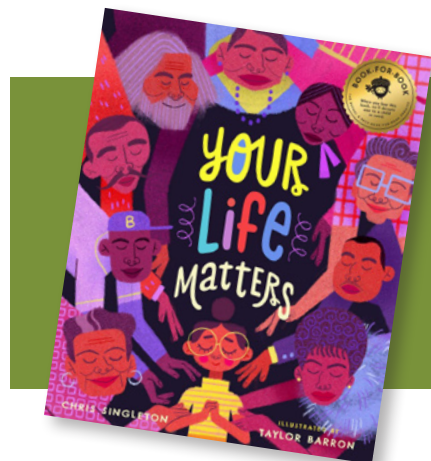
I grew up with. They are reminding kids of all colors that they matter! And they are celebrating the trails left behind by those who fought the fight to blaze them.

In my second children's book, *Your Life Matters*, those pioneering trailblazers are at the heart of the very story. As each page reminds children that their eyes, hands, minds, and hearts matter, the illustrations reveal heroes who can guide the way. And in my third book, *Baseball Around the World*, I use my love of baseball to show how people of all nations, cultures, and races have found common ground in a shared, beloved sport.

These books are just two new voices in what is building into a deafening chorus of affirmation and love for our most vulnerable kids. It is an awesome moment! But we can't let it die. To all teachers and librarians who are working to inspire and help, thank you for your efforts. May God bless you and the children you tirelessly work for. And to our nation's authors, illustrators, and publishers, may you never, ever underestimate the power of a child seeing him or herself in the pages of a book. What happens next depends on it.

These and a growing number of tales readily accessible in libraries all over the nation are beginning to tell a story different from the one I grew up with. They are reminding kids of all colors that they matter!

Chris Singleton is an inspirational speaker and former professional baseball player who travels the country as a student achievement specialist. Chris has spoken to over thousands students and teachers across the nation and has helped thousands of students and teachers overcome hardships and excel in the classroom. Chris's speech on overcoming hate with love has been seen or shared millions of times and has gotten him featured on *Lifetime*, *ESPN* "E:60," *USA Today*, *CNN*, and *Fox News*. Chris is a proud father of his son, CJ, and a proud husband to his high school sweetheart, Mariana.



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