Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the
Association for Library
Service to Children

Winter 2022
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alsc
ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Practicing Defensive Librarianship
A Batchelder Boost
Representation of Rural Life

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STORYTELLER
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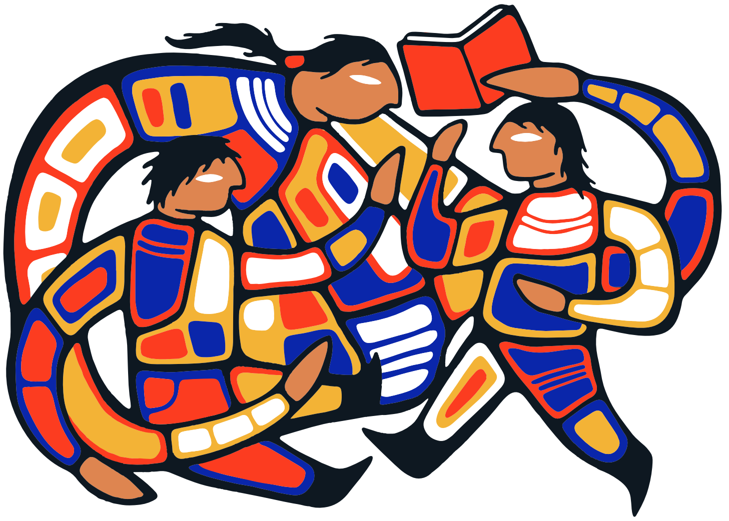

STORYTELLER
by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley
for iREAD® Summer Reading 2023

A special "thank you" to Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckly for allowing iREAD® to reproduce his painting "Storyteller" on T-shirts and hoodies in the 2023 iREAD® catalog. This graphic will not be included in the 2023 Resource Guide.

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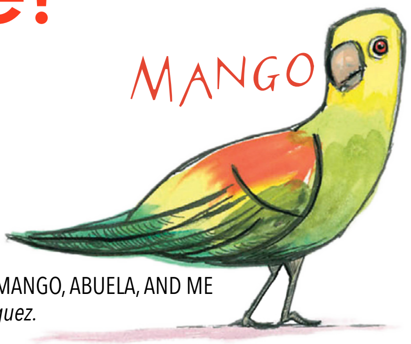

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Interior photo from *The Park Book* by Charlotte Zolotow, with illustrations by H. A. Rey, copyright 1944 (Harper & Row). Images from this book used with permission of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection at The University of Southern Mississippi.

Editor's Note

By Sharon Verbeten

I'm a people person. Even those of you who don't know me personally could probably intuit that from my Editor's Notes.

Meeting new people and greeting customers is my favorite part of being a librarian. And, sure, I get plenty of opportunity to do so at the library—but outreach is even more exciting for a gregarious soul like me. I'll share some of my favorite "people meeting" moments over the years.

- Standing in a bathroom line at an ALA Conference many years ago and saying hello to Kevin Henkes as he exited the men's room.
- Telling the bouncers at an invite-only event (also at an ALA Conference) to let the amazing Jon Scieszka—then the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature—in, and repeatedly singing his praises.
- The many fangirl moments I've had over the years meeting some of my favorite children's authors—Gennifer Choldenko, Christian Robinson, Jon Klassen.
- Viewing my idol Maurice Sendak—from not-too-afar—at several lectures and events.
- Sitting next to, and being silly with, author Henry Cole at a conference dinner.
- Wearing our library's mascot costume and riding on the bookmobile in a local parade.
- Having parents come up to me and tell me their child loves coming to the library to see Miss Sharon.
- Starting up a pen pal friendship with author Hayley Rocco.
- Meeting amazingly talented ALSC members throughout the years who have contributed to *CAL*.

Enjoy the photos below from some of the events I've enjoyed over the years. It really is a wonderful life! &

Children's Fiction

ZOOM! Miss Sharon, right, and Valley View Elementary Teacher Ann Brennenstuhl collaborated on a library/school family night that brought about 100 attendees to the Brown County (WI) Library. Special storytime guest was Zoom Squirrel from the beloved Mo Willems' Unlimited Squirrels books.

NO POLITICS HERE! In summer 2022, Miss Sharon was able to make one of her first post-pandemic outreach visits to a local park during its Independence Day celebrations. Here she was greeted by the very tall, very patriotic Uncle Sam himself!

Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the
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Service to Children

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Statement of Purpose

Children and Libraries is the official journal of ALSC, a division of the American Library Association. The journal primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with children, which showcases current scholarly research and practice in library service to children. It also serves as a vehicle for communication to the ALSC membership, spotlighting significant activities and initiatives of the Association. (From the journal's "Policies and Procedures" document adopted by the ALSC board, April 2004, revised, 2014.)

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President's Address

Celebrating Effective Practices

AMY KOESTER

In a conversation recently with members of the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), we discussed our associations, our members, and the work we do for our communities. We talked about how we share the great examples of programs and services that different members offer in their unique settings.

I immediately connected to the terminology that ACM uses—"effective practices." This is an intentional alternative to "best practices," which implies practices that have been formally evaluated in some way—rigorously tested, evidence-based practices that are "best" in their area.

"Effective practices," on the other hand, are those that produce excellent, consistent results in the contexts in which they are used. Even though effective practices may not be subject to research studies, and they may not be applicable to every setting and community, they are notably successful at delivering a particular value to a specific community.

I found this concept of effective practices to be really empowering because every single one of us has developed effective practices in our work. Best practices and evidence-based evaluation are, of course, vital parts of our work and profession. But so, too, are the everyday successes that every single library worker tries, tests, and shares with their colleagues.

Think of that colleague who seems to have a magic touch for outreach storytime, or the ways in which you approach reader's advisory that is a bit different from what you see others do, but always results in kids overjoyed with the books you help them find. These are effective practices—those tips, tricks, and processes that we all develop through our experience of serving our communities to the best of our abilities. We all have effective practices.

Best practices and evidence-based evaluation are, of course, vital parts of our work and profession. But so, too, are the everyday successes that every single library worker tries, tests, and shares with their colleagues.

That's what you've got in this issue of *Children and Libraries*—a collection of effective practices, shared by colleagues like you who have learned something that allows them to be really successful in their work, and they wanted to share with anyone else who could benefit. What a gift!

Because of the production schedule for this journal, I'm writing this welcome message shortly after returning from the 2022 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC—the first

***Amy Koester**, 2022–2023 president of ALSC, is the Learning Experiences Manager at Skokie (IL) Public Library.*

opportunity for ALSC members to gather in person to learn together since January 2020. While it is impossible to know what our future holds with regards to the pandemic, I can say that those few days were invigorating.

It felt like a "welcome back" to getting to share space with other library workers who serve children—a chance to once again hear about the exciting and effective practices of colleagues, in their own voices. I got to hear so many effective practices not only in program sessions, but in hallway conversations and over outdoor meals with old friends and new.

I am so grateful that the existence of great ALSC publications like this very journal means that we can all hear the voices of our colleagues no matter where we are and whether we can be physically together; we can hear their effective practices and be invigorated, curious, and inspired. And did you know that you can also access back issues of *Children and Libraries* online, so that you can read and return to the effective practices that are relevant to your work, whenever you want? (I find myself on the *CAL* site pretty frequently, as I often want to refer back to an article when I'm nowhere near my print copy!)

Whether you've been feeling like you're missing hearing the voices of your colleagues, or you're looking for some new-to-you effective practices to explore, now is a perfect time to bookmark the *Children and Libraries* page and to crack open this issue.

Alongside peer-reviewed research, the journal is filled with voices like yours, sharing the practices that make a difference in communities across the globe. I'm grateful to be a part of a profession that so highly values sharing our effective practices, and I look forward to exploring these and many more practices, from many more colleagues, as we continue to do this work together. We all have something to share! &

Out of Many, One

Practicing Defensive Librarianship

JAYNE WALTERS

Fifty-two books in Utah's Alpine School District. Forty-three books in Oklahoma. Thirty books in Kansas. Four hundred sixty five books in Pennsylvania's Central York School District; 204 books in Florida; 713 books in Texas, with 435 bans in North East Independent School District. Eight hundred books in Texas legislator Matt Krause's list of books for investigation. The list goes on, the numbers go up, almost all exclusively targeting books by and about people of color and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

While censorship has long been an issue for libraries, this past year has brought a record number of ban requests across the nation—more than fifteen hundred tracked by PEN America between July 2021 and March 2022. Libraries are also becoming sites for protest—against Drag Queen Story Times, appearances by BIPoC and queer authors, Rainbow Clubs for teens, and other inclusive programming.

With this culture war making libraries a battleground, librarians often become the first (and sometimes only) line of defense for all members of their community. It means embracing the belief that libraries are for *everyone*. One patron may be a vegan who abhors hunting; that doesn't mean removing hunting books. It means including books for the hunter and the vegan alike.

Author Holly Black has spoken at ALA and in interviews about censorship; her message is one we can all strive to achieve—not every book is for everyone, but there should be a book for everyone.

Defensive Librarianship means making sure there are books, tools, information, and resources for everyone. It's important to create an environment that explicitly welcomes the many, but also explicitly deters the few. We can all practice Defensive Librarianship—both alone, and in tandem.

Each library system needs a robust DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) committee, and a clear, straight-forward book challenge procedure. Take full advantage of both. Bring issues to your DEI committee to create appropriate, inclusive policy, and use those policies as a shield.

Defensive Librarians need not argue with people who complain about a program or title. They can listen, affirm they have heard the complaint, and refer the complainant to the system. Don't get drawn into arguments or debates about the worthiness of a title or program—let the system do its job.

Defensive Librarianship also lives in the stacks. Note that specific demographic sections—such as those labeled Black Interest or Queer Stories, are outdated and othering. Shelve

***Jayne Walters** (she/her) is a Board Member and the Director of Education for Indy Pride and the first openly transgender manager in the history of Indianapolis Public Library. Having worked in libraries for over forteen years, she helped create and is Chair of the LGBTQ+ Services Committee for IndyPL, she has spoken on LGBTQ+ issues for libraries, companies, and on the news, and is a contributing author in the book* Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in LIS *(Fall 2022).*

science fiction with science fiction regardless of authorship or protagonist; Octavia Butler belongs next to John Scalzi, period. Romance is romance, and Alice Oseman's Heartstopper series should sit quite comfortably next to *There's Something About Sweetie* by Sandyha Menon.

If you're in a location where protests or "observers" from various organizations are common, curate the audience for your programs to increase safety and success. For example, try limiting teen programming to teens only, asking for free sign-ups for events like Drag Queen Story Time, and always have a librarian present for a program in case of interruption. Do not be afraid to step in to direct question and answer sessions, or to cut off an antagonistic observer.

While some might think that inviting law enforcement to these programs is a way to help deter disruption, it's important to keep in mind that this could be off putting to marginalized groups and may deter people you want to welcome.

If you have a community that's likely to challenge Black Lives Matters or Pride Month displays, consider creating Award-Winners displays. You can feature all Stonewall or Pura Belpré or Coretta Scott King award-winners, so that the books are still celebrated—just in a way that is quantifiable by quality rather than identity. Make inclusive displays of genres and categories. Treat books by marginalized people the same way you treat mainstream books. Elevate the voices of smaller authors that are often overshadowed by popular favorites like James Patterson, Dav Pilkey, Mo Willems, Jeff Kinney, and others.

Do the marginalized people in your community know they're welcome in your library? It's easy to create a welcoming space with subtle touches. Inobtrusive stickers on monitors, small flags, a pronoun pin on your lanyard, even choices of colors can create an environment that feels safe to marginalized people.

National flag colors can also make your library more inviting—try including flags from the nationalities that make up your community in all your displays and in decoration. LGBTQIA+ people, especially teens, will pick up on different configurations of pride colors without signaling to a less accepting community. If you're unsure of who is in your community that might not be in your library, use SAVI (one of the country's first and largest online community information systems) to get an overview of your service area. I've heard librarians and managers say, "We don't have LGBTQIA+ patrons," and they're wrong. You might not know who they are, but they are there.

Acknowledging that people are not a monolith can be as simple as a construction paper flag on a Popsicle stick in your pen cup or a sticker on your water bottle. It can also be as simple as celebrating the many holidays around the world in December, not just Christmas and Hannukah. Even better; continue it throughout the year.

Actively involve your local community, to make sure milestones and celebrations for all people are equally valued. An especially popular way to introduce new cultures in your library is authentic food-centered programming. It's a way to bridge between people that's both entertaining and educational. If you feed them, they will come.

Defensive Librarianship means making sure there are books, tools, information, and resources for everyone. It's important to create an environment that explicitly welcomes the many, but also explicitly deters the few.

Of course, we must consider our books. Don't be scared off by the possibility that a book might be challenged. Budgets are tight, but buying a book that a queer teen will connect with and having it challenged is better than not having it on the shelf at all. Don't make it easy for oppressors. Make them have to fight to have it pulled.

Practice inclusive shelving, and don't sticker books with specific identities. This makes it difficult for some marginalized people to actually use them. Instead, curate current booklists of interest to different groups. Engage all the librarians in your branch; encourage them to create lists of special interest *to them*, as well as specific groups.

Each librarian should have a copy of each list, to help make recommendations even if it's out of their personal scope. And with these personalized lists, it should be easy to refer patrons to the librarian who knows the most about their interests—whatever those interests may be. If they feel comfortable doing it, add a tag at the bottom to help direct patrons to those librarians—"For more great recommendations like these, see Ms. Jayne."

Remember, you do not have to be tolerant of intolerance. The American Library Association rescinded 2018 changes to "Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*," which initially endorsed and included hate groups and hate speech as permissible and acceptable in public libraries.[1] The Council overwhelmingly voted to rescind this stance on the logic that libraries cannot make a community feel safe and welcome when people actively advocating against their safety and inclusion are permitted to share the same space. Defensive Librarians will take advantage of local library resources, but be unafraid to employ national and international resources when necessary.

Library board members often aren't librarians. Get to know the board and help educate them on the importance of inclusion and diversity in the stacks. Sometimes you might have to build your defense and that can encourage library advocates to run for board positions both in libraries and in schools, or even doing it yourself. Small and local elections can make or break a librarian's local support network when it comes to fighting censorship and systemic racism.

Despite how it might look and feel at times, you're not alone in this fight. You're part of something much bigger—an entire community of libraries across the world that you have access to at your fingertips. Chances are that someone, somewhere, has hit an obstacle, gotten pushback, felt backlash, or faced the same issue that you are trying to deal with. Reach out.

There are more ways to practice Defensive Librarianship—and it's a field wide open for new practices.

With a combination of structural integrity (DEI and book challenge protocols), community engagement, and inclusive practices, your library can be a place for everyone. Actively inviting marginalized people into a space that you've made safe and welcoming is what brings communities together.

Out of many, one—one community that contains, shares, and uplifts the many within it—let's make sure the library is a strong foundation for it all. &

Reference

1. "ALA Council Rescinds Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," press release, American Library Association, August 16, 2018, http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2018/08/ala-council-rescinds-meeting-rooms-interpretation-library-bill-rights.

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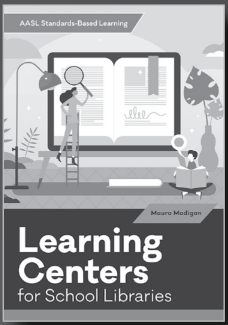
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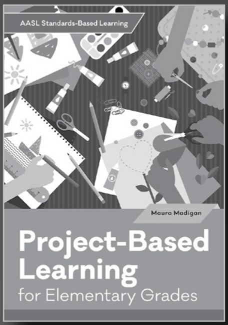
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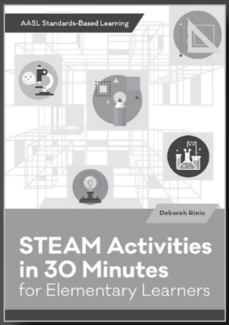
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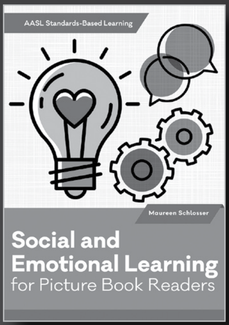
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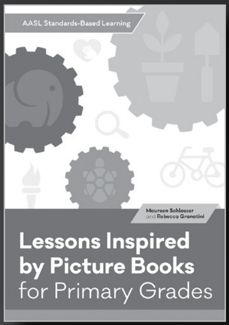
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Not Lost in Translation

Batchelder Gets Noticeable Boost This Year

SHARON VERBETEN

Sachiko Kashiwaba speaking at an Author's Talk presented by the Japan Information and Culture Center, Embassy of Japan. Photos courtesy and © Embassy of Japan in the USA

This year, ALSC's Batchelder Award got a bit of a boost—with not just the international author of the winning book, but many representatives all the way from Japan.

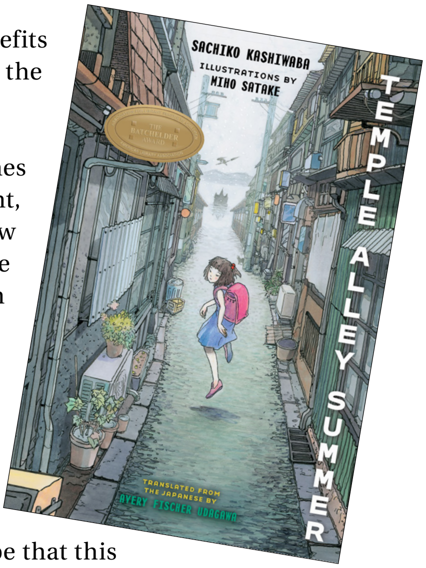
The 2022 Mildred L. Batchelder Award—given to an outstanding children's book originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States—was awarded to *Temple Alley Summer*. Originally published in Japanese as *Kimyōji Yokochō no Natsu*, the book was written by Sachiko Kashiwaba, illustrated by Miho Satake, translated by Avery Fischer Udagawa and published by Yonder: Restless Books for Young Readers. This is Yonder's first Batchelder Award Book, having previously been awarded an honor title.

Kashiwaba travelled from Japan to attend the awards ceremony June 27, 2022, during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC. A representative from the Japanese Embassy also was in attendance, as well as representatives from the Japanese publisher who first published the book eleven years ago. The Japan Information and Culture Center (JICC) even hosted an event (https://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/events/conversation-kashiwaba.html).

Paula Holmes, co-chair for ALSC 2023 President's Program and a member of the ALSC Budget Committee, speaks highly of the award. She commented online, "This is *the* award I await with anxious anticipation. I hope that this year's Batchelder having five honor books and one award winner, which hasn't happened since it was first awarded in 1968, will provide a core collection and serve as an introduction to the fabulous work that these translators and publishers are doing. This ultimately benefits children's librarians and the families they serve."

"The Batchelder Award comes as such an encouragement, not least because fellow WorldKidLit fans pay close attention and have gotten in touch," said translator Avery Fischer Udagawa.

"This is such a wonderful community. I am thrilled that the award is receiving coverage in Japan, as well as in the US, and I hope that this will help Sachiko Kashiwaba's story make its way to more young readers."


SACHIKO KASHIWABA
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIHO SATAKE
TEMPLE ALLEY SUMMER
TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY AVERY FISCHER UDAGAWA

To read the acceptance speech, visit https://alair.ala.org/bitstream/handle/11213/18267/yonder-2022-batchelder.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.

***Sharon Verbeten** is Youth Services Manager at Manitowoc (WI) Public Library; this is her twentieth year as editor of* Children and Libraries.

A Chat with the Publisher

Alison Gore, editor at Restless Books, discusses the excitement of this year's Batchelder Award.

Has Restless Books/Yonder won any other Batchelder Awards?

Our young adult title *Run for Your Life* by Silvana Gandolfi, translated from the Italian by Lynne Sharon Schwartz, was a 2019 Batchelder Honor Book. It was just the third book in our Yonder imprint of international books for young readers.

What do you think of the new ALSC rule that books must name the translators on the cover or title page to be accepted for submission?

We're so thrilled! The #namethetranslator movement has really gained some serious traction and attention this year, so it's great to see ALSC formalize their stance and make this a requirement for future Batchelder submissions. It's an important example to set for other awards, and we hope this change will encourage other literary organizations to make similar updates to their award guidelines. Restless has always credited translators on the covers of our books in translation, as translators are co-creators and artists, and we think it's essential to honor their work. Huge thanks to the supporters of international literature, translators, and advocates who worked to make this change.

Some thoughts on winning the Batchelder and what it does to the profile of a company like Restless?

Winning the Batchelder is such an incredible honor. We started Yonder, our children's imprint, only five years ago in 2017, so to receive this kind of recognition at an early stage in our imprint's life is a huge achievement. We were so grateful to have both Sachiko Kashiwaba and Avery Fischer Udagawa attend the ALSC ceremony. The Batchelder has introduced *Temple Alley Summer* to an even wider readership, boosted sales, and generated new media interest. We're thrilled to be publishing a follow-up from Sachiko Kashiwaba, *The House of the Lost on the Cape*, also translated by Avery Fischer Udagawa, next summer.

Acknowledging Translators

Books submitted for the Mildred L. Batchelder Award must now visibly acknowledge their translators.

In January 2022, the Board of Directors of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), voted to revise the submission criteria for the award to add requirements regarding credit to translators. The new language requires that "the translator(s)' name(s) shall appear, at minimum, on the title page along with the author(s)' name(s), and ideally the translator(s)' name(s) shall appear on the cover along with the author(s)' name(s) as well."

The Batchelder Award, established in 1966, is awarded to a US publisher for a children's book considered to be the most outstanding of those books originating in a country other than the United States and in a language other than English and subsequently translated into English for publication in the US.

In addition to the criteria change, effective with the 2023 Batchelder Award conferral, certificates will be presented to translators of Batchelder Award and Honor Books to acknowledge their exemplary work.

The member-driven recommendation for the criteria change was developed through consultation with publishers of translated titles, ALSC members, and others in the translation community.

Lucia Gonzalez, immediate past president of ALSC, says the intent was to "make a vital commitment to acknowledging translators. This decision attests to the importance of literary translations as a creative art that requires skill and a strong sensibility to language, writing, and the reading experience of children. The success of a translated title for children depends heavily on the merit of its translation," she says.

Emerging Leaders: Welcoming Students to ALSC

Hyunjin Han and Ashley Bressingham

The American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leaders (EL) program enables newer library workers from across the country to participate in problem-solving work groups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA structure, and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity. As a part of the program, participants work in groups on a research project and display the result of their work during the ALA Annual Conference.

Four members of the 2022 EL class—Megan Jackson, Hyunjin Han, Ashley Bressingham, and Ewa Wojciechowska, also known as Team K, worked on *Welcoming and Engaging Students in ALSC and Children's Services* (see infographic).

Early in 2022, participants met virtually during LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience (LLX). From January to June 2022, the EL program featured group workshops as well as webinars and a team project.

The project was an exciting challenge, and through collaboration, each member found their strength very quickly as well as communicated easily and efficiently. By the end of the program, we had both gained lifelong supporters and recommendations for how ALSC can better support their student populations. &

Project Proposal

Make recommendations regarding how ALSC can better support their student populations in order for the associations to reimagine existing student engagement efforts and resources to build student recruitment.

Research Process

Group members became familiar with ALSC's existing resources and member engagement opportunities, including the ALSC Mentoring Program and the Core Competencies for Librarians Serving Children.

Group members researched student engagement strategies within state library associations in Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Hawaii, and Washington.

Group members compared research findings to create cohesive recommendations and strategies by which ALSC and ALA could reimagine existing student engagement efforts and resources to build student recruitment within both associations.

Read the full paper here:

Recommendations

01

Virtual & In-Person Meetups

Creating spaces for connection is vital for encouraging student engagement. ALSC should utilize its online platforms more frequently for student engagement, and consider regional in-person meetups.

02

Webinar & Professional Development Opportunities

ALSC should consider adding to their offerings webinars that focus specifically on career building within libraries, and offer discounted webinars so that students are more likely to attend them.

03

Mentorship Programs

ALSC should consider adding a more informal type of mentorship program, or modify their existing offerings to be more inviting to students looking for more casual connections rather than a year long commitment.

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PEER-REVIEWED

People Like Me in Places Like Mine

Authentic Representation in Rural Picturebooks

JAMES EREKSON, SUZETTE YOUNGS, CHRISTINE KYSER, AND LU BENKE

Librarians serve children in specific locations. As they seek to fulfill the Association for Library Service to Children's (ALSC) promise to help "children make cross-cultural connections and develop skills necessary to function in a culturally pluralistic society,"[1] they must consider a book's authenticity and specific geography.[2]

Young readers in rural places experience different challenges from those in urban and suburban settings as do rural librarians experience different collection development demands than do those in urban and suburban settings, especially when rural stereotypes dominate in children's books. Because rural identities are tied to each child's place, daily rural life may feel different on the coast than on the prairie, or in mountains, woods, wetlands, and deserts.[3] Only 9 percent of the rural US workforce is in agriculture,[4] with 91 percent having livelihoods in service, tourism, government, education, manufacturing, mining, health care, and energy. Yet much children's literature continues to present settings where family farming dominates the rural economy, neglecting the diversity of rural work.[5]

A rural child with a diverse cultural background, socioeconomic status, color, gender, language, ethnicity, ability, or religion is likely to experience compounded alienation when picturebooks not only exclude them visually, but also repeat stereotypes that compose a rural version of the "single story."[6] The single story in rural media, including picturebooks, is a two-sided coin. On one side, the remoteness of rural areas is often presented as backward and dangerous in movies and television. On the other side, isolation creates perfect situations for the idyllic and leisurely retreat. This latter side we found most often in our evaluation of children's picturebooks. Both sides of the coin are *urbanormative*, where conventions for representing rural life emerge from outsider points of view.[7]

The urban and suburban schema for rurality appears to set expectations for children's literature representations. Although authors and illustrators of rural picturebooks may have various experiences with rural life, when people write for children they tend to turn to the familiar, conventional, and traditional. Authentic mirrors for rural readers would mean books where today's diverse young rural readers could pick up

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a book and see people who look like them, in places like their own homes. Or, because there is no single rural identity, they, along with suburban and urban children, may find authentic windows into other types of rural communities.

Even picturebooks with potential to act as mirrors and windows and books that make specific moves to break stereotypes may still play up rural nostalgia and isolation and contribute to a single story. We found only a few books, including *Flood*, *On a Magical Do-Nothing Day,* and *The Old Truck*, that presented specific material imagery that would help readers identify the book in today's world. Yet despite the lack of overt visual images of modernity, realistic rural books may act as mirrors for rural children in other ways, such as through characters' agency, realistic conflicts with the rural setting, exploration of the rural space, and breaking up isolation through connectedness.

How Authentic Representation Might Look

Our critical content analysis began when our research team searched widely for picturebooks with variations of rural settings.[8] Starting with over two hundred books, we narrowed to thirty-eight, first identifying recent titles between 2010 and 2020, with contemporary realistic fiction as the focal genre for representation of diverse identities.[9] We eliminated books with anthropomorphized animal characters (even when they clearly symbolized human children), those without story arcs (many rural picturebooks are odes to nature), and those where rural settings were not integral to the story. With the set of titles reduced, we had in hand a set of books with enough rurality and realism to potentially represent rural life authentically.[10] When analyzing the prevalence of stereotypes, out of the thirty-eight books, sixteen titles rose to the top for efforts to rewrite the single story by departing from *some* stereotypes.

The thirty-eight titles in the bibliography represent a good starting place for recognizing recent realistic rural picturebooks. The critical principles we used to further narrow to sixteen titles featured (starred in the bibliography) may help librarians evaluate rural picturebooks for acquisition to determine which books might be added to the collection as potential mirrors for children in rural communities and authentic windows for urban and suburban children. Further, librarians who showcase rural living in displays may gain a better sense for how to select and foreground titles that work against a single story of rurality. Finally, in readers' advisory situations, these ideas may help librarians point out which *aspects* of books already in the collection provide authentic representations of people who live in rural places.

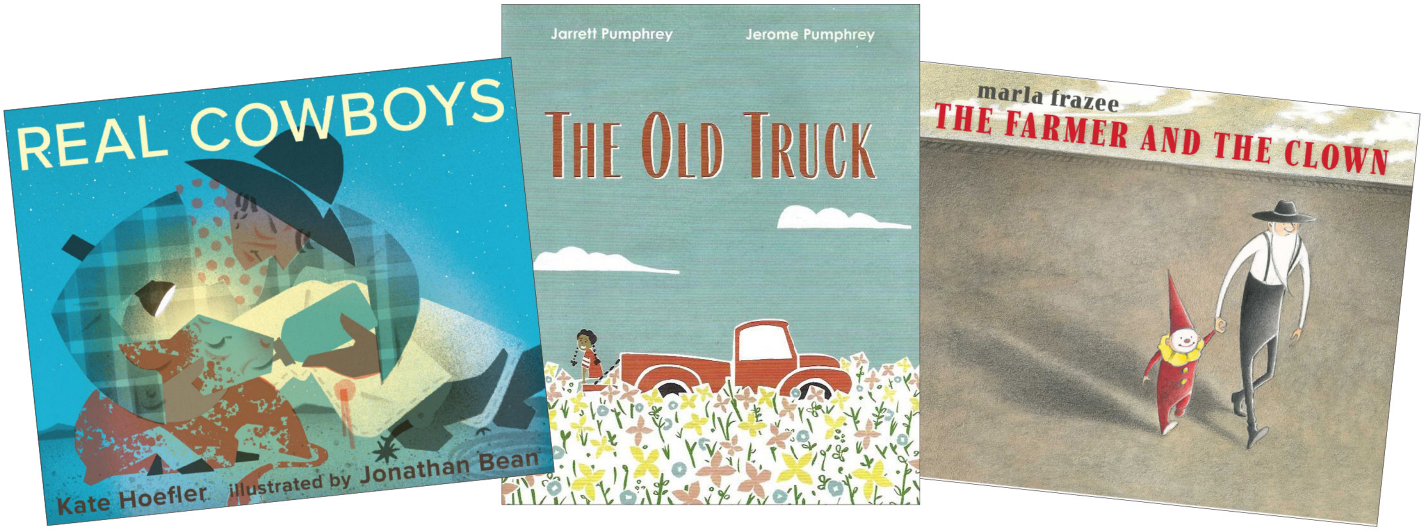
Principles for Evaluating Authenticity

We do not reject existing rural representations as false.[11] Instead we recognize the too-frequent repetition of idyllic rural stereotypes eats away at an inclusive realism.[12] Echoing calls for representation from diverse readers who want to see "people like me" in the books they read, rural children are more likely to feel seen when books have settings *in places like mine*. Rural settings, stories, and characters need to be presented realistically for rural children to feel invited into the world of literature. And when looking at rural spaces from outside windows, children should see through glass that brings realistic dimension and depth to rural life.

No single book can encompass all possibilities for authentic representations. People and places are too diverse and individual for any one author or illustrator to capture an all-encompassing rural narrative. Yet adult readers can help children become critical readers and realize authentic rural depictions as they read and view across a themed yet multifaceted selection of books from within a larger collection of rural picturebooks. Librarians also have an important opportunity to "chaperone" young readers by both leading them to these books, and pointing out to them the mirrors and windows, the visual and verbal signs of authenticity and stereotype. Consider the following principles as guidelines for evaluating rural picturebooks.

- Rural settings should relate closely to events and problems in the story, including characters who identify with the setting, which in turn enables and constrains character agency.[13]
- Stereotypes of isolated, nostalgic, idyllic rural life can be helpfully disrupted when authors and illustrators depict the following:
    - connectedness through roads, maps, communication, and inclusively wide panoramas, rather than isolation[14]
    - modern living, rather than the nostalgic rural pasts of adult memory[15]
    - complex work, interests, and problems, rather than the simple tranquility of a generic rural idyll[16]
    - specific rural settings rather than the repeated trope of the small family farm
    - authentic work and activity rather than the leisurely day trip to the country.
- Person-centered representations should inhabit a rural setting, where diverse main characters have agency to make decisions and confront problems, including people of color, diversely-gendered or ungendered people, and differently-abled people—with diverse home lives. They would avoid stereotypical roles for women, token ensemble characters, and victimized minorities.[17]

Although we would not expect any single book to reach all ideals for authentic rural representation, few rural children can see themselves mirrored in the stereotypical image of the male farmer with straw-hat and bib-overalls, farming



a generic crop, while keeping an ark of farm animals in an old red barn. Publishers, editors, authors, and illustrators should consider rural realism when making decisions about book projects that can reach a more diverse rural readership. Librarians can be part of a call for rural authenticity to a publishing industry which has made great strides in recent decades responding to other niche markets for diverse books. Because we analyzed each picturebook for its potential to disrupt the single story, we celebrate and elaborate on four titles that make steps forward as potential mirrors and windows, even when they have missed other opportunities.

Picturebooks Foregrounding Authentic Representations

Carmela Full of Wishes by Matt de la Peña was a touchstone text in our study.[18] This recent story is set in a small rural town, with a narrative conflict and complicated life for Carmela and her family. In a migrant strawberry farming town in coastal California, Carmela is now old enough to accompany her brother into town. As they venture away from home, moving through a variety of rural town settings, Carmela finds a dandelion. She considers what wishes to make when blowing away the fluff. Each wish is set apart visually in the Mexican *papel picado* tradition of folded and cut paper. Her wishes emphasize a complex life: for her mother to be able to sleep in a comfortable hotel like the one she works in, to be reunited with the father she is separated from by his immigration status.

Carmela's rural setting is not stereotypically isolated, but rather well-connected, crisscrossed with town roads, dirt paths, and sidewalks in words and pictures. Paths connect the home to diverse town streets and buildings and to working fields and open spaces outside town. Yet there is an antique feel to Christian Robinson's illustration style, with the material culture in the images and words offering few clues that this family lives in the twenty-first century.

The work life and economy represented are diverse, including agriculture but not focused on it alone. The setting gives a sense of everydayness, dwelling first on the necessity of today's work despite the troubling equity issues Carmela's wishes convey. She makes known what she sees missing in life, showing agency she hopes to exercise. However, when Carmela loses the dandelion and her wishes, agency and power are downplayed. Her brother solves the problem, leading her to a tranquil seaside dandelion field "full of wishes." Despite the lost opportunity for a strong female character solving problems, this book represents Carmela's emerging sense of identity in a complex, connected, and diverse rural space.

Real Cowboys by Kate Hoefler offers a slice-of-life look at the difficult work of a cattle drive across a wide Western landscape, with days spent riding horses, directing dogs, tending cattle, and setting up camp.[19] Although we struggled to categorize this book as realistic fiction (with no central main character, and a very simple story arc) its progress from beginning to end of a cattle drive provided enough of a narrative for us to separate it from books that were solely celebrations of natural space or purely informational text. Further, it was one of the only books which considered agricultural work beyond the stereotypical family farm—ranching, with its diverse workers, is rarely represented in rural children's books. Despite this book being on the borders of our genre categories, the realism it offers made it important to consider.

The journey in this book is realistically integrated with the setting, where the team is challenged with severe weather, grueling work, loneliness, and loss. Yet words and images express fulfillment in hard work as they overcome challenges and then share stories and camaraderie around the campfire. Conflict is central to this narrative, and even though no specific characters are foregrounded, each page illustrates roles specific cowboys fulfill with agency and identity. *Real Cowboys* also highlights relationships among the workers, their harmonious lives, and their deep connection to the natural world. The cover depicts a nurturing cowboy caring for a calf in the night with a flashlight.

Rural children who work with livestock might be mirrored in characters who care about horses, cattle, dogs, and fellow ranchers. The work is inclusive of women and children and people of color whose daily life is shaped by the rural setting. A single image shows a family car with modern looking lines, locating the book in a current time and breaking up the stereotype of isolation. At the end of the book, power lines and a few lone light bulbs suggest a wilderness connected at its edges to a larger society.

We emphasize that signs of modernity in all the books we considered were always located in subtle details, such as the ear tags on the cattle in this book, but not in an overarching illustration style or in widely present visual and verbal signs. We focused on subtle details readers might miss in casual browsing and reading. But these details were noteworthy by comparison to other rural books examined, where there were *no words or visuals* to help readers locate the setting in the current decade.

Small signs of modern everyday life became important as we examined images, because their erasure was often so complete as to make a 2010s book with a rural setting indistinguishable from historical fiction from the 1910s. Although we wished there were more rural picturebooks that looked and felt unmistakably like "today," we had to hunt for peripheral details in images and words for signs of the current century.

For a book that de-romanticizes rurality by its constant emphasis on the hard labor and conflicts in moving animals across the land, *Real Cowboys* also plays to the romantic image of a naturalistic pastoral life. It presents a generalized image with no strong main character to exercise agency in solving complicated story problems. Although it features elements that break up the single story, the book brings in other stereotypical elements that build it back up. Again, because many rural stereotypes are based in truth and are often valued by members of the rural community, we did not hope to find books free from *all* idyllic and romanticized settings but rather to see writers and illustrators like Kate Hoefler and Jonathan Bean contribute elements of authentic representation beyond the stereotypical or conventional.

Sonya's Chickens by Phoebe Wahl is an emotional journey. When her father leaves three chickens in her care, young Sonya maternally declares, "I'll be your mama."[20] The biracial family makes improvements to the chicken coop on their picturesque family farm. Sonya cares deeply for her three chickens as they grow, thanking them for sharing back when egg laying begins. Late one evening, Sonya hears a loud noise and discovers one of her children/chickens is missing. Stark reality hits when Sonya realizes the hen's fate was a hungry fox. Her father reframes the event so she can empathize with a wild animal which must also feed its family.

After making a grave for the lost chicken, she returns to caring for the others and a new chick is born. Although Wahl represents realities of both the realistic work and heartbreaks of farm life, she still portrays the isolated family farm as the principal form of rural life, with no visual or verbal connections to the outside world or to a diverse local community.

Our examination of words and pictures for evidence of modern life involved an implicit hope that modern material culture would signify not only life in current times, but also break up the stereotype of isolation with images of connectedness such as modern roads, vehicles, or mobile phones. Illustrations in this book include one road and an iconic old red farm truck. As in *Carmela*, we saw the emerging agency of a girl character sublimated by a father who tells her how to think and feel about the story's central problem.[21] Still, this book works against idyllic rural stereotypes by providing a character who knows hard work, and who faces a difficult story problem involving wild predators and livestock. Rural space in *Sonya's Chickens* is not tranquil, simple, or leisurely and thus helps break up the single story.

Flood, a wordless picturebook by Alvaro Villa, quickly pulls readers in with vibrant illustrations of a riverside farmhouse.[22] As clouds roll in, we see a nuclear family, with father boarding windows, son and daughter lounging on the floor playing video games, and mother reading a magazine. Clouds darken, intensity builds, and the family now looks with trepidation at the weather on their flat screen television. After stacking a perimeter of sandbags, the family packs their belongings and heads to a city hotel for refuge. The storm tears through and when they return home, the water has ebbed to reveal destruction. With help from friends they rebuild, even making improvements. In the final pages, the parents sit on a hill, while the son and daughter play, and the sun sets on their new home.

This is one of the few books with a contemporary vehicle and modern technology (a television with a game console), clearly placing rural people in modern times. The car trip, the night in the city, and the television each represent connectedness between rural and urban spaces rather than isolation and separation. Although Villa provides a realistic vision of nature's force in a rural area, the ease and speed of rebuilding the home diminishes the complicated choices people face when devastating natural disasters ruin homes and neighborhoods (such as Rodman Philbrick's *Zane and the Hurricane*, 2014).

Although no book perfectly dismantles the single story, realistic fiction titles like those we have emphasized above represent positive strides in creating authentic rural mirrors and windows. For example, few of the sixteen featured books play up the stereotype of the rural retreat, where life is tranquil, simple, and easy. The characters are not mere visitors, but rather people who live daily life in a rural place. Many of the books emphasize hard work showing characters exercising agency in the face of difficult problems. And in many of these titles the natural world is not merely an idyllic outdoor playground but rather integral to story conflict and character decisions.

Although these books may not be likely candidates for a fast-paced preschool storytime, it is easy to imagine a parent or caregiver choosing *Flood* or *Real Cowboys* from a display, appreciating the arresting artwork, for sharing with a child at home; or to imagine a caregiver sitting with a child in front of picturebook shelves studying illustrations of *Sonya's Chickens* because of a child's interest in raising chickens.

When searching for books to act as potential mirrors and windows, we found few child characters in current books involved in truly contemporary living, with the material culture of the settings being largely antique and nostalgic. Lack of mobile phone use, texting, internet interactions was noticeably absent from almost all books. Few images showed modern work equipment, recent-model trucks and cars, ATVs, or other recreational or work vehicles. (*My Papi Has a Motorcycle* by Isabel Quintero and *The Old Truck* by Jerome and Jarrett Pumphrey were refreshing exceptions.) Because these signs of modern life are subtle, they require a critical eye.

Carrying this critical reading further, *none of the more than two hundred books* we reviewed represented diverse gender identities or differently-abled people. Each book in its own way, despite beautiful aesthetic presentation and specific efforts to break stereotypes, contributed partly to a rural single story, whether through isolation, nostalgia, or lack of inclusive characters.

Implications for Libraries and Librarians

What application does a critical analysis have in the library? Chaperoning a child's approach to a curated set of books is different in a library than in a classroom or home. Guiding readers in a library is more likely going to be about collections decisions, shelving and display, and being prepared for readers' advisory situations involving rural books. In examining rural books for collections decisions, it is vital to seek integral rural settings that are neither isolated and disconnected, nor quiet, leisurely, and free from problems, nor overly nostalgic, lacking imagery of contemporary life. Likewise, librarians who know how to recognize and point to specific authentic details can offer readers authentic windows and mirrors that help them read against the single rural story.

When children's librarians identify a need for more coverage of a topic, such as rural life, they typically start by assessing current resources, inventorying collections to discover what current books are available, creating user-friendly lists for teachers and parents searching for topical titles, and inserting useful links on webpages to help patrons navigate the collection. They correct deficiencies by scrounging for more books through reviews and well-vetted lists and incorporating topics like rural life into new culturally responsive programming.

This kind of work can be harder in a rural library where collections may be more limited by space and funds. Yet the need to correct the paucity of authentic books on rural life is even greater for rural libraries, with an immediate community need for authentic rural mirrors. Rural librarians in collections work and in readers' advisory should be on the lookout for authentic rural mirrors for local children, helping them see representations of more than stock settings and characters. Our experience in searching for rural settings was that for each publication year, there were no more than a dozen new notable books with rural settings. Where possible, rural librarians should collect as many well-reviewed books with rural settings as possible each year, and then evaluate these acquisitions for authenticity in rural representation.

Critical reviews of stereotypes that help rural librarians find mirrors are equally vital for urban and suburban librarians who look to provide authentic *windows* onto diversity. Those who review children's books must consider rural stereotypes and the danger of a single rural story as they consider each year's new rural books. This may be the most difficult call we make, since so many of the stereotypes we found in rural picturebooks were surrounded by such attractive writing, illustration, and graphic design. Without critical principles, the art of many of these books would make it easy for reviewers to look past the single story.

Urban and suburban libraries are already likely to have single-story rural books in the collection. These should be identified, not for the purpose of culling, but rather to provide balance to upcoming collections decisions. Displays in urban and suburban libraries should emphasize authentic titles in curated displays of rural books. Libraries in recent years have helped patrons this way by providing lists and displays featuring a variety of diversity issues, such as race and gender. The same can be done with diverse rural literature.

To provide sufficient books with authentic insights into rural life, the library's service area must be researched:

- What demographic data best describes rural experiences of your library's users?
- How does it differ from the national realities of rural life?
- Although informational books in the collection may represent a more authentic modern rural space, how well do contemporary fiction picturebooks in the collection parallel this realism?

Addressing concerns about authentic representations of rural life includes training library staff to understand the importance of moving past the single story in books that unfairly stereotype rural life or, at best, represent only a slice of the diversity in a community, providing mirrors where few young readers might see themselves. As staff provide readers' advisory to parents wanting books for their children about rural communities, they are ideally positioned to point out the role of the visual narrative–the details in settings that can show so much more than stereotypical understandings of rural life.

Locating authentic books within your collection is also an issue of accessibility. Consider adding convenient subject

Children's Literature Bibliography

Our selected thirty-eight contemporary realistic fiction titles with integral rural settings; those faring best in critical analysis are marked with an asterisk.

*Acheson, Allison. *A Little House in a Big Place.* Illus. by Valeriane LeBlond. Kids Can Press, 2019. 32p.

*Alemagna, Beatrice. *On a Magical Do-Nothing Day.* Illus. by the author. Trans. by Jill Davis. HarperCollins, 2017. 48p.

Bean, Jonathan. *Building Our House*. Illus. by the author. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2013. 48p.

Clements, Andrew. *Because Your Mommy Loves You.* Illus. by R.W. Alley. Clarion, 2015. 32p.

Cowley, Joy. *Song of the River.* Illus. by Kimberly Andrews. Gecko Press, 2019. 32p.

Croza, Laurel. *From There to Here.* Illus. by Matt James. Groundwood, 2014. 36p.

*Croza, Laurel. *I Know Here.* Illus. by Matt James. Groundwood, 2013. 40p.

Davidson, Leslie. *In the Red Canoe*. Illus. by Laura Bifano. Orca, 2020. 32p.

*de la Peña, Matt. *Carmela Full of Wishes*. Illus. by Christian Robinson. G. P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2018. 36p.

Dowd, Dineo. *Adventure Day.* Illus. by Cecil Gocotano. Self-published, paper, 2017. 26p.

Doyle, Eugenie. *Sleep Tight Farm*. Illus. by Becca Stadtlander. Chronicle, 2016. 36p.

*Farrell, Alison. *The Hike.* Illus. by the author. Chronicle, 2019. 56p.

*Fogliano, Julie. *A House That Once Was.* Illus. by Lane Smith. Two Hoots, 2018. 40p.

Formento, Alison. *These Bees Count!* Illus. by Sarah Snow. Albert Whitman, 2012. 32p.

Frazee, Marla. *The Farmer and the Circus.* Illus. by the author. Beach Lane, 2021. 32p.

*Frazee, Marla. *The Farmer and the Clown*. Illus. by the author. Beach Lane, 2014. 32p.

French, Vivian. *Hello, Horse.* Illus. by Catherine Rayner. Candlewick, 2018. 40p.

*Geisert, Arthur. *Thunderstorm.* Illus. by the author. Enchanted Lion, 2014. 32p.

Harbridge, Paul. *When the Moon Comes.* Illus. by Matt James. Tundra Books, 2017. 40p.

Havill, Juanita. *Call the Horse Lucky.* Illus. by Nancy Lane. Gryphon Press, 2010. 24p.

*Hoefler, Kate. *Real Cowboys*. Illus. by Jonathan Bean. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. 32p.

Kloepper, Madeline. *The Not-So Great Outdoors.* Illus. by the author. Tundra Books, 2019. 40p.

Ko, Hannah. *Billy's Camping Trip.* Illus. by Chiara Fiorentino. Rourke Educational Media, 2017. 24p.

*Kooser, Ted. *House Held Up by Trees.* Illus. by Jon Klassen. Candlewick, 2012. 32p.

Lee, Anne. *When You Are Camping*. Illus. by the author. CreateSpace, 2012. 32p.

Lindstrom, Carole. *We Are Water Protectors.* Illus. by Michaela Goade. Roaring Brook, 2020. 40p.

MacLachlan, Patricia. *The Hundred Year Barn.* Illus. by Kenard Pak. Katherine Tegen Books, 2019. 48p.

Messner, Kate. *Over and Under the Snow.* Illus. by Christopher Silas Neal. Chronicle, 2014. 44p.

*Pavón, Mar. *A Very, Very Noisy Tractor.* Illus. by Nívola Uyá. Trans. by Jon Brokenbrow. Madrid, SP: Cuento de Luz, 2013. 28p.

*Pumphrey, Jerome. *The Old Truck.* Illus. by Jarrett Pumphrey. Norton, 2020. 48p.

*Quintero, Isabel. *My Papi Has a Motorcycle.* Illus. by Zeke Peña. Penguin Random House, 2019. 40p.

Rockwell, Anne. *Hiking Day.* Illus. by Lizzy Rockwell. Aladdin, 2018. 32p.

*Schwartz, Joanne. *Pinny in Fall.* Illus. by Isabelle Malenfant. Groundwood, 2018. 32p.

Stead, Philip C. *Lenny and Lucy.* Illus. by Erin Stead. Roaring Brook, 2015. 40p.

Taylor, Sean, Alex Morss. *Winter Sleep: A Hibernation Story.* Illus. by Cinyee Chiu. Quarto, paper, 2019. 32p.

*Villa, Alvaro F. *Flood.* Illus. by the author. Capstone, 2014. 32p.

*Wahl, Phoebe. *Sonya's Chickens*. Illus. by the author. Tundra Books, 2015. 32p.

Woodward, Caroline. *Singing Away the Dark.* Illus. by Julie Morstad. Simply Read Books, 2017. 44p.

or community tags to item records in the Integrated Library System (ILS) to increase likelihood of their discovery.

We expect many readers of this article will quickly think of titles that are exceptions to what we have outlined above. This is exactly the point. If a category of diverse representation is to become realized, the people most familiar with books should be at the forefront of curating the collection, displaying and promoting strong titles, and featuring books in programming that can help children critically read and view settings in picture books. Again, the book reviewers among us are essential to increasing awareness of authentic rural picture books, while those who purchase books have a responsibility to press publishers for more titles that do better with rural life. Our current situation emphasizes that we as book people seem to be behind in making rural representation a thing, and that books already doing well at challenging cultural and historical norms need to be noticed and gathered. For example, rural librarians might approach resources like the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, asking them to include rurality as a category of diverse children's literature.

As a final step to ensure authentic representation of rural life in future picturebooks, children's librarians can collaborate with other professionals to create an award celebrating authentic mirrors and windows in the rural titles published each year. Awards such as the American Indian Youth Literature Award, Rainbow Award for LGBTQ literature,[23] and Schneider Family Book Award for portrayal of disability experiences serve as persuasive messages to publishers to pay attention to diverse representation and provide a vetted source for quality books.[24]

Although the Whippoorwill Award provides a strong celebration of rural young adult literature, currently it does not review picturebooks or middle-grade novels. Could this existing awards group develop a committee to include books for younger readers? Perhaps the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) or the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services could serve as likely sponsoring groups for a rural picturebooks award.

As the editor of this journal stated when celebrating increased diversity in recent book awards, "Diversity is much more than honoring those doing the work. It's about fostering the work in itself."[25] An award focused on authentic rural picturebooks would be a welcome stimulation of diversity in children's literature, providing a nuanced window to the child who rarely leaves the neighborhood sidewalks or a mirror to the child who wonders how their wide-open spaces fit in among the bus stops on Market Street or escalators at the department store. &

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Anyone Can Be a Researcher

The Library of Congress and Civic Engagement

NAOMI COQUILLON

In 2021, a national network of scholars, classroom educators, practitioners, and students published “Educating for American Democracy” (EAD), a report and roadmap designed to provide resources for teaching history and civics.

The EAD argued that “our civic strength requires excellent civic and history education to repair the foundations of our democratic republic . . . *many organizations outside schools* play important roles in educating young people for constitutional democracy” (emphasis added).[1]

At the same time, the Library of Congress (LOC) was embarking on an ambitious new plan to revamp its visitor experience for young audiences. As we did, we asked ourselves, how can this institution make a difference in the most important issues of the day? What need would this new space address? How could we play a role in the important work to educate for American democracy, to prepare children for the future using the stories of the past?

The LOC is a research library but also a multifaceted entity whose collections and services represent a cycle of creativity—from manuscripts to published works. When visitors come to the Thomas Jefferson Building, they look down into the Main Reading Room and see research in action.

Behind the scenes, staff of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) at the Library produce thousands of annual reports that are objective, nonpartisan, and evidence-based in response to queries from Congressional members and staff. Research is at the heart of all we do. Could research skills be at the heart of this new space too?

Our project team within the LOC’s Center for Learning, Literacy, and Engagement, with the support of colleagues from around the Library, set about identifying the steps and processes of research undertaken here. For example, upon receiving a question from a Congressional member or staffer, CRS staffers clarify the need then “present, explain and justify any critical assumptions; investigate and recheck data anomalies; use primary resources whenever available; double-check all statements of fact; and document and vet all sources” before developing an analysis that undergoes a multilayered review process before publication.[2]

The Library’s Teaching with Primary Sources program recommends that students observe a primary source first, then reflect on those observations and identify questions that arise from those first two steps—then compare items and ideas to consider multiple perspectives. Teaching with Primary Sources partner organization National History Day describes the research process as identifying a research question, consulting secondary and then primary sources, considering reliability, relevance, and perspective of the courses, and constructing an argument.

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From these models, the project team developed a series of common research steps to apply in our new visitor space—

- be curious and ask questions;
- explore and discover sources;
- evaluate and reflect on those sources;
- question assumptions;
- compare items and consider perspectives; and
- use, apply, and share ideas.

And, these actions are cyclical—when comparing ideas or considering perspectives, researchers generate new questions that encourage them to explore and discover new information that they then must evaluate anew.

In 2011, the Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools published a report titled *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools.* The report defines civic skills as including "speaking, listening, collaboration, community organizing, public advocacy, and the ability to gather and process information" and argues that, "civic skills are strongly linked to actual participation."[3]

Those civic skills of information literacy are central skills of research, too. The Association of College and Research Libraries' "Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education" identifies "research as inquiry" as one of six frames. Key skills within it include the ability to

- monitor gathered information and assess for gaps or weaknesses;
- organize information in meaningful ways;
- synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources; and
- [and] draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information."[4]

These are similar in scope to the ability to "gather and process information" identified as a key civic skill. The 2021 report "What the Research Says: History and Civics Education," published from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) emphasizes the importance of information literacy within the framework of civic education. The report noted that, "in order for students to understand the problems of our democracy with clarity and rigor, both access to information and the skills to analyze and interpret it are critical."[5]

To begin the development of our new learning space, our project team worked with Slover Linett Audience Research and Bluecadet on a months-long research effort of our own. We interviewed staff, community stakeholders, and families with and without experience with the Library to better understand the LOC's value to them and the potential of a family space in an archival research institution. We discovered that our internal idea of what makes a researcher and what the public imagines that to mean are not aligned. Visiting families often thought of the LOC as a place for "researchers," but from their perspective, researchers were a special group that didn't include them.

We discovered that our internal idea of what makes a researcher and what the public imagines that to mean are not aligned. Visiting families often thought of the LOC as a place for "researchers," but from their perspective, researchers were a special group that didn't include them.

We heard from one family that, "If you're a researcher you're interested, but if you're Joe Shmoh, you don't even know what's going on there." Another noted that, "I know very little about it as an institution. It's a research library for Congress right?"

Local families weren't even sure they could use the space. As one parent said, "I've been to the Library of Congress twice on a tour with my work. We haven't gone there as a family. I just don't think of it as a kid's place. It's so grand. . . . It never occurred to me to use it." Yet our staff have a more expansive view of "research" and "researchers." As one colleague noted, "Anybody who has a question is a researcher."

Working with Skolnick Architecture + Design to develop the final design, we decided that this new space—currently known by its location in the Thomas Jefferson building, the Southwest Corridor—will model the ideas and actions that are at the core of the LOC—curiosity and the ways in which it drives research.

It will be a place where curiosity is valued, research is modeled, and community is celebrated. It will aim to demystify research and help visitors understand it as an essential part of their lives. Our goal is to introduce young people to the information-seeking skills and behaviors that will empower them for the future, to improve the civic skills that lead to civic engagement.

To achieve our goals for the Southwest Corridor, we have put questions at the heart of the experience. With a youth advisory council of children ages eight to thirteen from fifteen states across the country, we workshopped ideas for this new space. In April 2022, we put our ideas to the test, developing a set of research quests based on research questions of children (such as "What was the Ghost Army?" and "How have kids changed the law?") and adults ("What was life like for kids in World War II?"). Family visitors to the Thomas Jefferson Building were invited to select a question, explore related primary sources, and reflect on them together—in all, fifty-eight families reviewed the materials and provided feedback.

In addition to these sample quests, children will also be able to ask their own questions as they conduct open-ended exploration that is scaffolded with queries and prompts for close looking, comparison, and conversation. They can learn the stories of researchers and explore both where research has led others but also share the new questions they have developed as a result of their experience.

The results of our spring prototype are encouraging—in response to the question, "What was life like for kids in World War II?," which explored Japanese American incarceration, visiting children responded, "I'm interested in this topic because the war in Ukraine is happening and it feels relevant," and that "I didn't even know kids were so effected [*sic*] in WW2. I'm wondering how people who experienced the event feel now."

Such an opportunity to build empathy and consider the perspectives of others speaks to an essential idea within the EAD report. That is, that we should teach diverse perspectives to "develop skills to consider others' perspectives, to understand how the world may look to our fellow citizens and civic participants . . . [and] to build knowledge that anchors complete understanding of how history's many players intersected and interacted in the course of human events." It also suggests this model may be effective in addressing the EAD's recommendation to use inquiry in order to help students "cultivate empathy across differences and inquisitiveness to ask difficult questions."[6]

Research does not exist for its own purpose—it is used by lawmakers, by artists, by authors, by scientists and sociologists, playwrights, and genealogists to feed their curiosity, to fuel creativity, and to make change. Researchers do not work and exist in a vacuum; they work in collaboration and in conversation with others. By following the path of a researcher to explore topics in American and world history and the creative processes of artists and writers and scientists, the space will model for young people the critical skills of primary source analysis and will allow them to consider the outcomes of research that use the past to shape the future.

This institution, a research library that is also an arm of the United States Congress, is in the unique position to provide an experience that will model civic skills and skills of research. But, all cultural institutions that celebrate research and seek to promote civic engagement would be mindful to consider how fostering these skills can serve young people and the nation.

By modeling the process of research, we hope to prepare youth for the future by arming them with civic and research skills of information-seeking, primary source analysis, collaboration, and perspective-taking. If research skills are civic skills and civic skills lead to civic engagement then institutions like the LOC that can bring those ideas together have the potential to help young users change the world. &

Note: Key members of the project team include, from the Library of Congress: Shari Werb, Director of the Center of Learning, Literacy and Engagement; David Mandel, Director of the Center for Exhibits and Interpretation; Alli Hartley-Kong, Educational Programs Specialist; Carroll Johnson-Welch, Senior Exhibit Director; and from Skolnick Architecture + Design: Katie Ahern, Senior Manager, Content and Visitor Experience Design; Scott Briggs, Associate Principal; and Vonn Weisenberger, Intermediate Designer. To contact the project team, email learn@loc.gov.

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Couples who Collaborate

Chana and Larry Stiefel

MARY-KATE SABLESKI

Chana and Larry Stiefel are new to publishing as a couple but bring with them a wealth of diverse experiences. Chana has written and published more than thirty books for children. She writes both fiction and nonfiction, ranging in topics from avocadoes to zombies. Recently, *Let Liberty Rise* (2021) was named a Bank Street Best Book for Children (ages 5–9) and received a starred review in *School Library Journal*. Her forthcoming book, *The Tower of Life: How Yaffa Eliach Rebuilt her Town in Stories and Photographs* (2022) is a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection, and received a starred review from *School Library Journal.*

Larry is a pediatrician; the new book *Mendel's Hanukkah Mess Up* (2022) is his first book for children and first collaboration with his wife. In the story, Mendel is always messing up. So, no one is more surprised than he, when the rabbi asks him to drive the Mitzvah Mobile through the streets of New York and invite everyone to the Hanukkah Bash. What if he messes up again? But as Mendel begins to spread the joy of the holiday, he learns that mistakes can happen and sometimes the results can be miraculous. This engaging couple live, and laugh (a lot), near New York City.

Q: How did you two meet?

Chana: On a blind date. Larry was a resident in pediatrics, and I was working as an editor for Scholastic. I was writing for children, and he was taking care of children. Now we have four children and we're publishing our first children's book together! We've been married for twenty-nine years.

Q: Where did you get the idea for *Mendel's Hanukkah Mess Up*?

Larry: I used to write a blog of funny Jewish stories called *The Maggid of Bergenfield* (a "maggid" is a storyteller from the old country in Europe, and Bergenfield is the New Jersey town where Larry grew up), and the stories were about the Bible and Jewish holidays. I would write one each week for many years. They were geared towards older kids and adults.

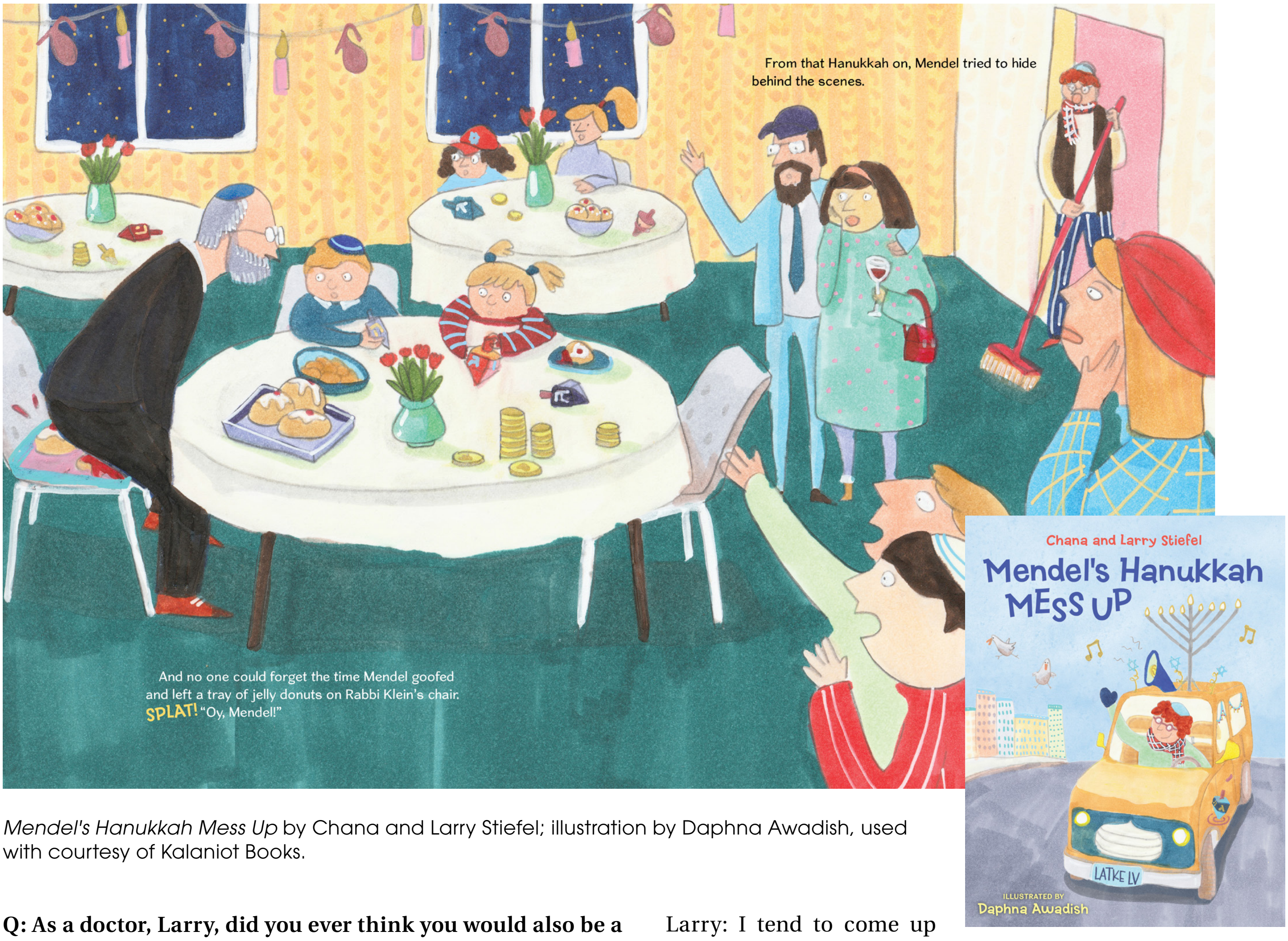
Chana: Then our local Jewish newspaper printed them in a weekly column.

Larry: One time when Chana was away for Hanukkah, I decided to write a different story for each of the eight nights. *Mendel's Hanukkah Mess Up* came from one of those stories.

We always said we would try to make into a children's book. One time, we went on a long walk, and we composed the arc of the story while we walked.

Chana: Something about this story just said to me, this could be a book. Not every short story can play out that way, but I really liked the characters and the storyline.

***Mary-Kate Sableski** is an Associate Professor at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, where she teaches children's literature and literacy methods courses. She is a current member of the Schneider Family Book Award Committee.*


From that Hanukkah on, Mendel tried to hide behind the scenes.
And no one could forget the time Mendel goofed and left a tray of jelly donuts on Rabbi Klein's chair.
SPLAT! "Oy, Mendel!"
Chana and Larry Stiefel
Mendel's Hanukkah Mess Up
LATKE LV
Illustrated by Daphna Awadish

Mendel's Hanukkah Mess Up by Chana and Larry Stiefel; illustration by Daphna Awadish, used with courtesy of Kalaniot Books.

Q: As a doctor, Larry, did you ever think you would also be a published children's author?

Larry: Well, I was an English literature major in college. I've written two unpublished novels which are currently holding a door open in our house.

Chana: It's amazing to me that he was able to write a short story every week and publish those in a newspaper while working as a pediatrician. And . . . he's really funny. During quarantine, he started a Facebook group called Larry Stiefel's Coronavirus Quarantine Joke of the Day. People would look forward to seeing the new joke he posted each day for 150 days. We play off each other's humor when we write, and we are a little critical of each other's writing, sometimes, but I think it benefits our work.

Everything I write, I share with Larry, and it goes both ways. He has a very good critical eye and is so supportive. You need a good support group to do this work, and when you have a spouse or a partner who's so supportive it just makes the process so much better. Larry also puts my books in every examining room; he sells more books than any publicist.

Q: Can you talk about your process as a couple?

Larry: I tend to come up with a lot of crazy ideas, and Chana very calmly reels me in.

She sees the potential in what's out there to know what would work and what wouldn't.

Q: How did you work through the editing process for this book?

Chana: We really go back and forth in a very fluid way as we work. We have a lot of fun with the process. I shared the story with my writer's critique groups and got some feedback to share with Larry.

Larry: The original wording of the story was very different by the time we submitted the book. I'm just so pleased that the story is going to come to light. We talked it out together, so when I saw it on paper, I felt it was our baby, not just hers or mine. Even in the illustrations, Chana had a much better eye than I did for noticing details that were important. I usually came to realize she was right.

Chana: Did you hear that? He said I was right!

Q: How have your children reacted to your writing?

Chana: I have four copies of every one of my books for my kids to hopefully take with them someday when they have their own families. To me, that's what it's about. I want to share my books with the world, of course, but it's also very personal for me. And our kids are so supportive. They come to all of my book events and cheer me on.

Larry: One of Chana's first books was *Daddy Depot* (2017), which is based on the fact that our daughter Maya was very frustrated with me, and she and Chana made up a story where they return me to the Daddy store.

Chana: The idea for *Daddy Depot* sent me on the path of writing fiction. It took eight years from idea to publication.

Other Selected Books by Chana Stiefel

Stiefel, Chana. *The Tower of Life: How Yaffah Eliach Rebuilt her Town in Stories and Photographs*. Illus. by Susan Gal. Scholastic, 2022. 40p.

Stiefel, Chana. *Let Liberty Rise*. Illus. by Chuck Groenink. Scholastic, 2021. 40p.

Stiefel, Chana. *Daddy Depot*. Illus. by Andy Snair. Feiwel and Friends, 2017. 40p.

Q: What is it like to share your work with children, other than your own?

Larry: It is so much fun to walk into the examining room at work and see kids reading the book.

We are hoping that we can have a reading at my practice in the waiting room where we can gather kids who have known me for many years to come and hear the book. It's very exciting for me, and it just naturally flows into what I do for a living anyway.

Chana: We love interacting with kids. Larry comes to all my readings, so it will be fun to have him at the front of the room with me for this book. I just have so many memories of my mom reading my favorite picture book, *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey to me over and over again, and the impact it had on me, so much so that I wanted to become a writer. I like to share that with kids through my books.

Q: How do you see your book contributing to increased diversity in children's publishing?

Chana: Jewish books aren't necessarily thought of when you think of diverse books, but they should be. Jews are a minority in this country—we're less than 2% of the population in America.

It would be great to see Jewish books on diverse lists, to be more inclusive of Jewish characters. There was a great discussion I saw on a group recently that emphasized having casual Jewish references or illustrations, to include a child with a kippah on his head or a girl wearing a Jewish star, or if there's a street scene, include a Kosher bakery, or a synagogue, or other ways of including Jewish culture. It builds empathy and understanding. Children will see that we're more alike than different, and we have a lot of things in common. Also, Jewish authors are increasingly representing the diversity within Jewish culture in books, that we are not all of Eastern European descent. Jewish people can be of all backgrounds and orientations.

Q: What advice do you have for other couples who might be interested in collaborating?

Larry: To make the project work, feature the parts that each of you are good at, play to your strengths, and have fun doing it. This never would have worked if we didn't have fun doing this. We enjoyed working together and used that to our advantage.

Chana: It was definitely a joyful process. Write from your heart. &

A Grandin Scheme

Learning Empathy, Teaching Concepts

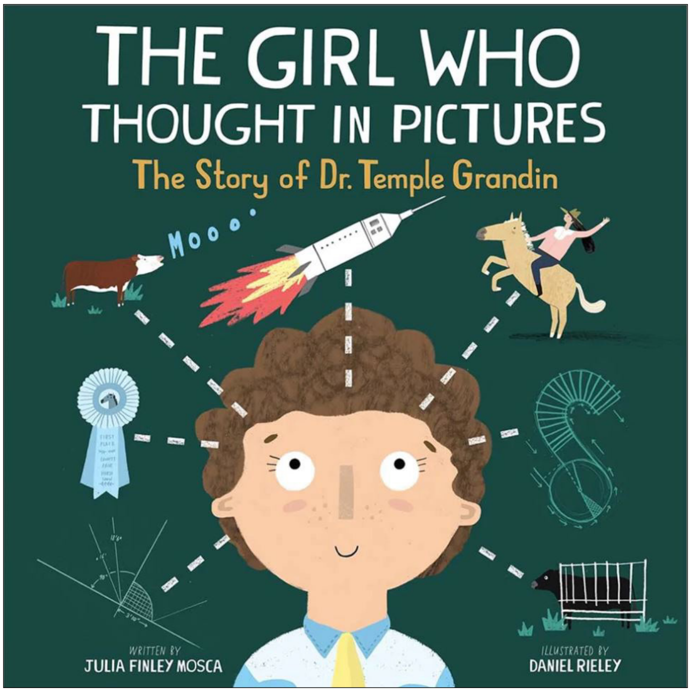
ALLISON MATTHEWS

Mention therapy dogs and children are most likely excitedly familiar with the cute and common four-legged helpers. Perhaps some have heard of or even participated in equine therapy. Therapy cows though—or stranger still—therapy *for* the cows? Unlikely. Yet, it is a real thing!

In Bell Fork (NC) Elementary's book promotion, which can be used as a stand-alone activity or as a component of a larger library program, students learn about renowned animal scientist Temple Grandin, who credits her autism for giving her the ability to approach problems differently.

Through discussion of Julia Finley Mosca's *The Girl who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin*, children learn how Grandin's empathy, perspective, and ingenuity led to the development of more effective and humane agricultural equipment.[1]

Decades after her first agricultural breakthrough and multiple successful TED Talks later, Grandin is now equally recognized for her work as a woman in STEM and as an advocate for autism awareness. While her contributions across disciplines are widespread, one unifying thread of her work is empathy.[2] Throughout the following activity, which can be adapted to suit physical or virtual audiences *(I have tried!)* young readers are invited to think empathetically about those with disabilities and generate thoughtful solutions to unique problems they observe in the world around them.


THE GIRL WHO THOUGHT IN PICTURES
The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin
Mooo
WRITTEN BY
JULIA FINLEY MOSCA
ILLUSTRATED BY
DANIEL RIELEY

Set the Stage

Regardless of age, with a virtual or physical audience, emerging research strengthens the argument that kinesthetic engagement is an important factor of quality.[3] Kinesthetic engagement may include providing physical responses to prompts, moving around the space, drawing or any activity which requires children to physically participate in their learning. Whatever the method of movement, findings show that kinesthetic activities increase motivation, improve cognitive functioning, and deepen student learning.[4] To take advantage of these benefits, students are invited to provide physical responses throughout the activity.

Once the stage has been physically set for the students (preparing the reading area, ensuring ample space to move around, etc.), it is time to set the stage *mentally*. This program was originally prepared for and delivered to a group of elementary Girl Scouts working towards an animal caretaking badge. As such, their prior knowledge was activated via a series of questions regarding their recent trip to a farm. While your students may not have visited any farms recently, most participants may be, in some way, familiar with farms, cows, and caring for animals. It is also likely that even the youngest

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Taking it Further

Interested in extending this reading program? Here are some supplemental ideas.

- Incorporate engineering by inviting students to construct models of their inventions
- Share one of Temple Grandin's TED Talks:
  - "Educating Different Kinds of Minds," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqntS1YRRO4
  - "The World Needs All Kinds of Minds," https://www.ted.com/talks/temple_grandin_the_world_needs_all_kinds_of_minds?language=en
- Promote autism awareness
  - Temple Grandin on autism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qPFAT4p8Lc
- Share similar titles with neurodivergent characters and themes
  - Beaty, Andrea. *Aaron Slater, Illustrator.* Illus. by David Roberts. Abram, 2022, 40p.
  - Robinson, Holly, et al. *My Brother Charlie.* Illus. by Shane W. Evans. Scholastic, 2010, 40p.
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  - Stone, Kaiya. *Everything Is Going to Be K.O.: An Illustrated Memoir of Living with Specific Learning Difficulties.* Illus. by the author. Head of Zeus, 2020, 288p.
  - Welton, Jude, and Jane Telford. *Can I Tell You about Autism?: A Guide for Friends, Family and Professionals.* Illus. by Jane Telford. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014, 64p.

of audience members will be able to recall feelings of both loneliness and frustration. However, it is appropriate for the given group to spend a minute or two prompting participants to discuss these themes. Activating this prior knowledge and cuing for the emotional content of the story builds connections between past and present learning, hooks readers' attention, and sets the foundation for information to come.[5]

Lastly, introduce the book, telling audiences that Grandin is a scientist who was able to help people and animals in new ways because she thought about problems *differently*. Unfortunately, she almost was not able to share her ideas because she communicated *differently* too.

Emotional Charades

"Yahoo! Yes! Yes! Yes!" I shout, "This is so awesome!"

Feel free to adapt and make this introduction your own, but whatever emotion you choose, lean into the feeling! Your performance will set the stage for their upcoming participation. Children may be confused by the sudden outburst for a brief moment, but there should be no confusion about the emotion being presented.

"How would you guess I feel? Why do you think that?" I ask.

After students give their responses, I compliment their emotional observations and follow up with another challenge.

"You all did excellent using word clues to figure out how I was feeling, but sometimes, people have a tough time using words to express their ideas. Thankfully, there are other ways to communicate! This time, using just your face I prompt, 'Can you communicate to me that you feel . . .'" (any simple message such as angry, sad, tired, saying goodbye, etc., will do). Students next "act out" the given prompts. Some students may need more time to grow comfortable with this, but the low stakes and group setting should increase participation.

Once the group has briefly demonstrated a number of actions, call them back. Complimenting the group, I say, "Wow! What actors! OK, I will make it more challenging."

"Still using only your body—no words at all—how could you communicate . . ." (this time choose something more complex such as, "The pink socks are itchy and the blue socks are missing, what can I wear?" or "The movie was very confusing because I fell asleep in the middle and missed a lot of the story").

"That is much more difficult right? How did it feel to not be able to use language?" I ask.

Students may have a range of responses, but when conducting this activity in groups, frustration was common—and that was the goal. By experiencing this themselves, students can better empathize with the frustration Grandin feels at various points throughout the book. Before finally introducing the story, I remind the children that just because they could not use words did not mean that they did not have or understand big, important thoughts and feelings.

"Try to remember how that frustration felt," I may prompt. "In the story I have for you, you will hear about a smart young girl whose ideas changed the world once people were able to hear them."

Read the Book Aloud

While reading the picture book aloud, take time to draw children's attention to the multiple text features and descriptive illustrations. Many illustrations depict Grandin's contemplation of how and what animals around her might be thinking. These scenes, for example, are an excellent opportunity to comment on empathy and perspective. As with any story, model literacy strategies such as thinking aloud, clarifying vocabulary, and checking for understanding of the author's message.

Begin by bringing the group's attention back to pages with visualizations of Grandin's picture thoughts and discuss the detail in the illustrations of her thoughts. For example, point out the close-up illustration of a cattle ramp's cross-hatching, which shows how the texture provides grip, making it easier for cows to walk without slipping. This page is one of several which demonstrate how Grandin was able to identify and solve a problem which was invisible to others.

To close the read aloud, reiterate the main idea of the story, which is that growing up Grandin experienced the world in ways that were different from most other people, but that her ability to think differently led to new inventions. Some closing discussion prompts may include:

- Did you enjoy the book?
- Was Temple smart even though she thought differently than others? Why do you think that?
- Do you think the author wrote this book to make fun of farmers?
- Do you think the author wrote this book to teach a lesson? What lesson?

After the story and discussion have concluded and students have provided their initial responses either to a neighbor or to the group, it is time for them to start thinking like Grandin; this is when the children's work begins.

Picture Problem Solving

Next comes the most exciting part of the program—the children's ideas. Invite students to identify problems in their own worlds and generate creative solutions.

Depending on the size, age, and ability of the group, it may be helpful to generate some ideas for problems as a whole group prior to individual work time. While some children will readily think of problems and be able to illustrate ways to solve them, others may benefit from more structured support and a narrower topic of focus. For these children, it may be helpful to limit their focus to topics such as

- the library and/or school;
- transportation;
- cooking/food;
- cleaning;
- the environment;
- animals;
- the last thing that bothered them; and
- anything that interests them.

Lastly, whether the activity concludes after one session or continues throughout multiple days, children should have the opportunity to share their ideas and creations. Provide time for participants to discuss the problems they perceived and share their ideas and illustrations on how it can be improved. I cannot predict what they may invent, but I can promise that their creativity will surprise and inspire. &

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PEER-REVIEWED

Understanding the Benefits and Challenges of School Integration

Contributions from Children's Literature

JONATHAN W. LATHEY

As a nation, we are currently experiencing a moment of racial reckoning, where issues of racial injustice, diversity, and educational inequality are debated. Literature offers a documentary source of evidence that informs the historical record. Children's literature reveals our conceptions of social class, race, and the role of education in a given historical period. Scholars like Amanda Gailey at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln study changes in how Blacks are represented in children's literature. Historically, children's literature has avoided or neglected representations of Blacks, except as literary stereotypes.[1]

Recent novels by Vince Vawter, Matt de la Peña, Jerry Craft, and Colson Whitehead present issues and preoccupations of Black protagonists. Vawter's *Paperboy* was a Newbery Honor winner in 2014.[2] De la Peña's *The Last Stop on Market Street* and Craft's *New Kid* won the Newbery Medal in 2016 and 2020, respectively.[3] And although Whitehead's 2009 novel *Sag Harbor*—part memoir— is an adult book, it is included to show how a Black protagonist in his early teenage years comes to view the contradictions of race in our society.[4]

Vawter's novel *Paperboy*, set in Memphis, Tennessee in 1959, shows the harsh social realities that faced Blacks in a segregated society. The protagonist is an 11-year-old boy named Victor Vollmer who, like the author, speaks with a stutter. Known also as Little Man, Victor has a warm and trusting relationship with Mam, the Vollmer's Black housekeeper. Victor takes over his friend Arthur's paper route for the summer, where he is forced to speak to strangers.

That summer, Victor becomes acutely aware that Memphis has rules that apply only to Blacks. Why does Mam sit at the back of the bus, when they take public transportation? When they visited the Overton Park Zoo, Victor wonders why Mam is allowed free admission only one afternoon a week. And why will she probably not be allowed to have her photograph taken with him at the zoo? He asks Mam what she thinks about this unfair treatment.

"Rules is rules. Don't mean they don't need changing but best to abide by them till they is."[5]

Mam is more than a housekeeper who follows the social conventions of the day. Mam is a forceful character in her own right. She is sustained by her Christian belief, which is reinforced by her love of gospel music. When she saw an older boy at the zoo taunting a giraffe, one of God's creatures, she intervenes. The boy calls her the N-word.

"He said it under his breath but we both heard it. I don't know if I could ever say the word because it started with a hard N sound.

S-s-s-s-Sorry he said that.

Names is all it is. Don't mean nothing."[6]

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Winner of the Michael L. Printz Award
American Born Chinese
Gene Luen Yang
Sag Harbor
A Novel
Colson Whitehead
Author of John Henry Days and The Intuitionist
Last Stop on Market Street
Words by Matt de la Peña
Pictures by Christian Robinson
Paperboy
vince vawter

Later that summer, Mam and Victor take a bus into a Black neighborhood to retrieve things stolen from Victor's room. Mam knows the thief, a junk dealer she remembers from her childhood in Mississippi. There is a fight in a juke joint not far from Beale Street, where the thief is hit in the head with a bottle and stabbed with a knife. Wounds are stitched up, and no one calls the police. "Mam explained how her people cleaned up their own messes and didn't depend on white people and their police."[7]

In *Paperboy* we see the contrasting realities of the Black and the White cultural experience. Mam must learn and adhere to a set of rules when she works as a housekeeper for the Vollmer family. She has acquired a different set of rules that apply when she is with her people. The idea of a dual focus —which characterizes the Black experience—is evident in *Paperboy* and in other works we shall consider. It is important to know that early in the twentieth century W. E. B. DuBois, the Black sociologist, referred to a similar phenomenon as double consciousness (see below).

By contrast, young Victor, nurtured by Mam and with the benefit of an array of cultural resources, achieves—from his intense experience handling the paper route— a moment of personal growth. There is no dual focus. Rather, Victor comes to see the world through a larger lens. He is in tune with American culture, which includes his love of baseball, America's pastime. He plays catch with his father. Victor is a Little League pitcher respected for his hard fastball. He admires Ryne Duran, the Yankee pitcher, and he has his baseball card.

This essay explores the idea that Black and white children benefit in different ways from an integrated school experience. An early example of successful racial integration in the classroom comes from W E B DuBois, who would become a respected Black sociologist. As a boy DuBois had been the only Black student in his small, integrated public school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. This was in the late nineteenth century. "He was climbing the educational ladder, and the promise was that it would be his way out: here he could succeed based not on color or wealth but on an objective measure of his talents."[8]

DuBois wrote about what he called double consciousness, which refers to the African American experience of an inner conflict associated with feelings of uncertainty about one's status in a society with economic and racial inequalities. Social scientists study this inner conflict in research on stereotype threat, a psychological construct which describes feelings of uncertainty that one is perceived as worthy.

In our view both Black and white students benefit from an integrated school setting. However, at the outset the Black student has the added challenge of overcoming a sense of stereotype threat, which is a sensitivity to being judged in terms of a stereotype or preconception, rather than as an individual.[9]

Early Awareness of Racial Inequality

Sensitivity to racial inequality is a powerful theme in literature for children. Consider, for example, *Last Stop on Market Street,* a picture book by Matt de la Peña, that places the reader in the midst of urban poverty. In this 2016 Newbery Medal winner, a young African American boy and his grandmother take a bus to a soup kitchen, where they will serve food to the needy. Along the route the grandmother directs the boy's attention to the beauty in the world. But the perceptive young protagonist asks: "How come it's always so dirty over here?" Attention is drawn to the decay by verse: "Crumbling sidewalks and broken-down doors, graffiti-tagged windows and boarded-up stores."[10]

How aware are African American children of racial differences and stereotypes in our culture? The late Kenneth Clark, a Black social psychologist, conducted an experiment that showed that Black children, when asked to choose, tended to prefer white dolls over Black dolls. This evidence reinforced the legal arguments used to overturn the “separate but equal” doctrine in the 1954 landmark Brown v Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court.[11] However, despite such rulings—and after the academic attainment associated with the almost fifteen years of mandated integration—our public schools are now re-segregated, which some critics liken to a system of apartheid.[12]

In the past, children’s literature often neglected people of color or, worse, depicted them in racist stereotypical terms. For example, *The Story of Doctor Dolittle* (1920) by Hugh Lofting showed Prince Bumpo, the Africa King’s son, with exaggerated lips and nose and naked, reading a book of fairy-stories to himself. “After a while the King’s son laid the book down and sighed a weary sigh. ‘If I were only a *white prince!’* said he, with a dreamy, faraway look in his eyes.”[13] At that point Dolittle’s parrot Polynesia is able to trick Bumpo into believing that he could be turned into the whitest prince. *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle,* Lofting’s sequel, won the Newbery Medal for best children’s literature in 1923.

One hundred years later, we still struggle with racist attitudes in America. However, we are now informed by psychological research that examines processes that shape our self-identity and our sense of belonging. We know that from an early age children are aware of racial differences and racial inequality.[14]

From the perspective of stereotype threat, we read in juxtaposition novels by Gene Luen Yang (2006), Jerry Craft (2019), and Colson Whitehead (2009). Protagonists Jin Wang, Jordan Banks, and Benji Cooper had to cope with racial issues which they encountered in an integrated school environment. *American Born Chinese*, a graphic novel by Yang, won the 2007 Michael L. Printz Award. Yang is a former National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, representing a program established by the Library of Congress in 2008.

As Yang’s novel shows, racial insensitivity extends beyond the Black experience.

In *American Born Chinese* we see teachers consistently mispronouncing names of Asian students, which is an example of race-based stereotype threat. When Jin Wang arrives in his new elementary school the third grade teacher Mrs. Greeder introduces him to his classmates. “Class, I’d like us all to give a warm Mayflower Elementary welcome to your new friend and classmate Jing Jang.” Jin quietly corrected her saying his name, Jin Wang.

“He and his family recently moved to our neighborhood all the way from China.” Jin again corrected her telling the class he had moved from San Francisco. “The only other Asian in my class was Suzy Nakamura . . . and rumors swirled that Jin and Suzy would have an arranged marriage when she turned thirteen.”[15]

In the spring of fifth grade the classroom teacher introduced a new student, an Asian who would become Jin’s friend. “Class, I’d like us all to give a big Mayflower Elementary welcome to your new friend and classmate Chei-Chen Chun!”

“Wei-Chen Sun,” said the new student.[16]

The graphic novel format allows the author to show the emotional reactions of protagonists—to allow the reader to visualize social interactions. In *New Kid,* also a graphic novel, we find Jordan Banks, an African American twelve-year-old from the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, beginning his first year at Riverdale Academy Day, a private school, which enrolls a mostly wealthy and mostly white student body.

Jordan becomes friends with Andrew Ellis, who goes by the name Drew, an African- American boy who lives in the Bronx with his grandmother. Ms. Rawle, the homeroom teacher, mistakenly calls Drew by the wrong name. Drew has to correct her on two or three different occasions. “I’m sorry, Drew. Deandre is one of my former students. He was a real handful.”[17]

Drew becomes the quarterback of the football team. But he confides to Jordan that he feels socially isolated at Riverdale Academy Day. “It’s just that I’ve been here two months and people still don’t really talk to me. I get lots of high fives and ‘good game, bro’ but it doesn’t really get past that.”[18] Add to this perception the impression that everyone stares at him whenever the class discusses civil rights or slavery or financial aid. Drew adds: “I even get stared at when we talk about minority partnerships in business.”[19] His grandmother suggested he accept these realities, “in order to become successful one day.”[20] Jordan and Drew wonder why the school seems to make things tough for them: “We don’t dress weird. We don’t use a lot of slang they can’t understand. We’re not aggressive.”[21]

Jordan makes a conscious effort to fit in. Each morning he has to use public transportation to get to school. His tips for taking the bus include looking tough when riding in Washington Heights, taking off the hood in Inwood, removing his shades and acting relaxed in the Kingsbridge neighborhood, and appearing non-threatening when arriving in Riverdale. “I don’t even like to draw ‘cause people might think I’m going to use my markers to ‘tag the bus.’”[22]

In the course of the school year Jordan, who has benefited from finding new friends both Black and white, is able to move beyond a preoccupation with stereotype threat. He is recognized by Ms. Slate, the visual arts teacher, as an art student of promise. He wants to be an artist but he initially resists her suggestion to explore the world of abstract art. Ms. Slate admires his first attempt at abstract painting, which she suggested reflected who he was. "It's like beneath this calm exterior lies this storm. It's so you, Jordan!"[23] She saw in the colors a reflection of the inner turmoil that Jordan felt as he coped with the frustration of racial stereotyping and at the same time was seeking acceptance and a way to belong.

Jordan has the support of his parents, who encourage his best effort. After a parent conference the parents have a conversation with Jordan. His mother is quite direct in her endorsement of integrated education for her son. "The point is, in order to be successful in corporate America, you have to know how to play the game."[24]

At some level Jordan is affected by this striver mentality. His favorite class is biology where Mr. Roche, the teacher, had the students sit around a large table. Jordan is impressed. "We all sit around a big conference table. It feels like I'm at an important board meeting. I'm definitely Bruce Wayne."[25] Bruce Wayne, an alias for the Batman comic book character, is a wealthy industrialist.

Responding to Stereotype Threat: Alternative Remedies

What might be the sequel to New Kid? What kind of insights, lessons, and experience does Jordan Banks, age 12, need if he is to thrive going forward. How might his perception of the world evolve?

Consider Colson Whitehead's novel *Sag Harbor* (2009). The novel is set in 1985 in Sag Harbor, a well-to-do Black enclave in the Hamptons, where Benji Cooper, a fifteen-year-old African American and his twin brother, spend the summer. They have attended private schools in Manhattan for their entire educational career. Like Jordan, Benji has a parent who is adamant in his conviction about the benefits of integrated schooling for his children.

Like Jordan, Benji has to cope with racial stereotyping at school. He recalls his experience at a Bar Mitzvah. "I was used to being the only Black kid in the room . . . there was something instructive about being the only Black kid at a bar mitzvah. Every bar or bat mitzvah should have at least one Black kid with a yarmulke hovering on his Afro—it's a nice visual joke, let's just get that out of the way, but more important it trains the kid in question to determine when people in the corner of his eye are talking about him and when they are not, a useful skill in later life when sorting out bona-fide persecution from perceived persecution, the this-is-actually-happening from the mere paranoid manifestation."[26]

Early on, his father instructs Benji how he is to respond to race-based stereotyping. Benji was in fourth grade when one day the other students began discussing their suntans acquired while on vacation. A new student observed to the others that the color of Benji's skin did not come off, referring to his skin color. "The other kids looked at one another, and what do fourth graders know about things, I don't know, but they knew wrongness when it happened right in front of them and Andy Stern who was my friend said, 'Shut up Tony Reece' and shoved his shoulder."[27]

Benji wants to forget the incident, but at home his father would teach him a hard lesson. "Your mother said some boy called you a nigger at school today." The father asked why Benji had not hit the boy, suggesting he was afraid of retaliation. The father strikes his son in the face. "Can he hit you harder than this?' he asked, and he swatted me again, harder."[28] The father expects his son to hit back against racial insults, if he is to achieve justice in a white world. "The world's not going to protect you. That's what I'm trying to teach you."[29]

In 1985 Benji is growing up. He wants to make sense of a complicated world. He wears clothes from Brooks Brothers. He listens to popular music; he hangs out with his friends; and he works at an ice cream shop to earn spending money. His twin brother works at a Burger King. Benji and his friends talk about what parts of white culture they find acceptable. One year Izod polo shirts were in; one year they were out. They are Black kids whose family could afford private schools for their children. How do you reconcile this paradox—privilege with being Black? "It could mess with your head sometimes, if you were the susceptible sort."[30]

Benji Cooper is both witty and thoughtful. In early adolescence he considers himself to be a dork—and his immediate wish is to outgrow his awkward adolescent self. He was advised by his older sister to work hard in school and get into a good college, as she had. He looks forward to growing up, which includes becoming attractive to girls.

After close observation of the Black culture, he concludes that growing up presents three possible remedies. He could follow his father as a bootstrapping striver. His father endured prejudice in the 1950s when he attended an Ivy League college. His friends were limited to other Black students, some in nearby colleges. He could be verbally abusive of his wife when drinking, but he was a medical doctor and a proud pillar of the Black community. A second path was to become a militant. Do not capitulate to the white man; be the opposite of the bourgeoise; act hard, appear gangsterish.

Benji endorses a third remedy, which involves what he called embracing the contradiction. Looking back at elementary school, Benji recalled that he had punched a couple of his white classmates in the stomach for what he called "inappropriate 'Fro-touching"— students who claimed they were just curious about his hair. "I punched them according to my father's lessons."[31] But he was not of his father's generation. At age fifteen, he began thinking about other ways of responding, besides an aggressive punch.

Growing Up: Finding Purpose

Benji wants to work out a remedy for his life that would embrace the contradictions of living in a society with racial injustice and segregation on the one hand and the world of opportunities that awaited him and his friends who owned beach houses and were well educated on the other. This was a paradox with no easy answers. "Those inclined to this remedy didn't have many obvious models."[32]

Some parents believe that a racially integrated and rigorous education prepares their children with the knowledge, skills, and outlook needed to succeed in life and to participate in the culture. Jordan and Benji each had the benefit of a school experience that offered rich learning resources, academic challenge, and encouragement.

Jordan and Benji showed in their social interaction at school the positive effects of integrated education in overcoming stereotype threat. Consider two examples of encounters, each poignant in its own way, with white classmates. Jordan became friendly with Alexandra, a girl shunned by many of their classmates. Alexandra wore a puppet on her left hand and talked in a puppet voice. "I know everyone thinks I'm weird," she said.[33]

Toward the end of the school year, Alexandra confides in Jordan that her hand had been burned in an accident and she used the puppet to hide the scar. When she then removes the puppet, she reveals a small scar on her hand. This is a liberating experience for Alexandra. She gives up her reliance on puppets—she no longer looks or feels weird.

Benji is thrilled when Emily Dorfman, a fellow eighth grader, asks him to skate with her at a roller disco party. They spend several minutes holding sweaty hands, which for the inexperienced Benji was "sweet contact" he would remember forever.[34]

The Debate Continues

Evidence from educational research analyzed by Rucker C. Johnson and his colleagues documents the gains that integrated schools achieved in the 1970s and 1980s.[35] However, the debate over integrated education continues. Nikole Hannah-Jones, author of *The 1619 Project*, published a long and impassioned article in 2016 about how she and her husband decided to send their 4-year-old daughter Najda to a segregated public school in Brooklyn.[36] They lived in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood where most middle class parents, Black and white, avoided sending their children to the local segregated public schools. Hannah-Jones, a Black journalist, benefitted from her parents' decision to enroll her in a voluntary desegregation program in her hometown in Iowa.

Her integrated education was transformative and academically stimulating, opening up possibilities, expanding her world. Her husband, who also had the benefit of an integrated public education, initially argued against sending their daughter to a school with low test scores. Out of a sense of fairness, Najda was enrolled in a segregated public school, where she could share what other Black and Latino children her age experienced in the classroom.

Hannah-Jones is dismissive of integrated schooling in the New York City public schools. These scattered attempts are in her view curated integration. In other words, this was integration that included but a few select students of color. There were enough Black students to make the white parents feel that they were open to diversity and inclusion. Hannah-Jones was comfortable with her decision to enroll her daughter in a segregated public school, which was led by a strong and innovative principal. "I also knew that we would be able to make up for Najda anything the schooling was lacking," wrote Hannah-Jones.[37]

Reading the schoolboy novels of Vawter, Craft, and Whitehead, it becomes clear that an integrated educational setting is important—stereotype threat becomes less of a preoccupation as white students and Black students interact and find friendship in an integrated setting. For minority students in particular, it appears that performance improves when it is not compromised by self-doubt and the sense that one does not belong. This is consistent with the contact hypothesis in social psychology wherein racial discrimination is reduced by direct contact between Blacks and whites. &

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Making the Invisible Visible

EDI Is More Than a Buzzword

Alex Aspiazu

Alex Aspiazu *(she/her) is a DC-area library assistant with experience in youth services and public librarianship, in particular with creating inclusive spaces that promote every child's artistic expression. She will soon graduate with her MSLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*

Antiracism and antidiscrimination work requires all of us to try our hardest to question and dismantle systems of inequality that have been in place for so long that we don't notice them in the day to day. The key is to make any invisible hardships that we notice visible, especially if we are not in the group affected by them, and begin the work of rectifying those imbalances. This is at the heart of EDI—which stands for equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives and practices.

How do we create EDI opportunities in libraries, other than basic inclusive hiring practices? How can we be an ally if we are not in charge of hiring? How do we level the playing field for everyone?

The ALA's EDI Task Force defines equity, in part, as a concept that "assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome," diversity as "the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different," and inclusion as "an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success."[1]

Equity and *equality* do not mean the same thing. *Equality* means that everybody gets the same exact piece of blueberry pie. This works just fine when everybody ate the same meal. But if one person at the table didn't get to eat, and all the other food is gone, maybe they should get a little more pie? Deciding that we won't let our friend starve just because they weren't invited to the first dinner party and couldn't make it to most of the second is *equity*. We must make an effort to compensate for lost time or prior unequal distribution of resources to ensure that everyone ends up in the same place.

EDI is especially important in youth librarianship because it is important that kids see themselves and others reflected in the library setting, by interacting with diverse staff members, and being exposed to diversity and inclusion in programming and collections. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop introduced the world to the "mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors" theory, which outlines the powerful need that children have to see not only a variety of other people and possibilities in literature, but also, and perhaps most importantly, themselves.[2] Creating a world where children can envision themselves in many different roles is not only the purview of authors and illustrators, it is something we can do by inhabiting our roles in the profession with authenticity about our own differences and in open and enthusiastic support of our diverse colleagues.

One of the deep and abiding complications in our pursuit of equity for all is that librarianship has historically been overwhelmingly white.[3] Many factors have influenced this, but the result of having a profession be so overwhelmingly monoethnic is that we don't generally reflect the communities we serve. This can lead to misunderstandings, snafus, and tokenism (when we expect the one staff member of a certain race, age, ethnicity, orientation, or ability to act as envoy for their entire group). At worst, it can push well-meaning librarians or administration into awkward or defensive relationships with community members and create a “white savior” complex that can turn into a public relations nightmare.[4]

One of the best ways to avoid this is to engage directly with the communities around us to find out what they need, want, and expect from their libraries. To be successful EDI advocates, we need to be willing to speak up on behalf of those who don’t yet have a seat at the table, but we can’t and shouldn’t do that without engaging them first.

As an example, during an interview with a suburban library, I was once told by the three very nice librarians who were interviewing me that they didn’t have any Spanish-speakers in their community. Spoiler alert: as a Hispanic American, I can assure you that they did. They just had no idea where these people were or how to turn them into library patrons, so they jumped to the conclusion that there weren’t any in the area.

Assuming that our communities are homogeneous because of who is coming into the library is a common mistake—one easily solved with demographic research and a little outreach effort. Educating people about our services and then removing barriers to access is an achievable goal for library workers, whether a branch manager or front desk staff.

How can librarians to create more equity, diversity, and inclusion in our library spaces? We can examine our unconscious, or implicit, biases, which usually involves asking ourselves “*What do I believe about this person and why do I believe it?”* This examination of implicit bias is necessarily uncomfortable, but being honest with ourselves about our prejudices is the only way to stop them from affecting our behavior.[5]

It’s also important to examine and audit collections to ensure that we are providing our patrons with as many different options as we can. We want to offer materials that show children versions of themselves, that humanize people different from them, and that create spaces in their imaginations for them to envision a better, more compassionate, more inclusive future: theirs. &

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2. Carol Westby, “Using Books as Mirrors, Windows, Sliding Glass Doors,” *Word of Mouth* 33, no. 5 (2002): 4–6, https://doi.org/10.1177/10483950221086338a.
3. The ALA has not yet updated this page with the results of the 2020 Census, which will hopefully show some gains, but likely not huge ones: “Librarian Ethnicity,” American Library Association, July 30, 2013, https://www.ala.org/tools/librarian-ethnicity.
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5. A fantastic way to evaluate our unconscious biases is by self-administering one of the many tests offered by Project Implicit at Harvard: “Take a Test,” Project Implicit, 2011, https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html.

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ALSC Member Profiles

Keary Bramwell

Keary Bramwell *is School Librarian at Grace Lutheran School in River Forest, Illinois.*

Brian E. Wilson, Children's Librarian, Evanston (IL) Public Library

What's your best ALSC memory? Being treated so kindly when serving on the ALSC Budget Committee; the other members serving were so patient with me! I also really love the excitement of the Youth Media Awards announcement. Hearing a large group of people say "ooooh" when it has been revealed there are a certain number of honor titles. This is so much fun in-person, but it's a blast virtually as well.

What is your favorite book to read aloud? I love Grace Lin's *A Big Mooncake for Little Star*, Kevin Henkes' *Kitten's First Full Moon*, and any book by the extremely talented Keiko Kasza who knows how to serve up narrative twists and surprises. An underrated book that should be on everyone's list of great read-alouds is Floyd Cooper's absolutely terrific *Max and the Tag-Along Moon*.

What is your favorite part about working with youth? I love doing storytimes. Hearing children laugh at a book or silly song or a puppet show that surprises and delights them makes my day.

What is your favorite library event, program, or outreach initiative? For several years, I have run a program called Caldecott Club for first to eighth graders. We meet once a month for three months and examine an easy to understand version of the Caldecott criteria and then the art in four possible contenders. The children vote for their favorites.

What do you do to reset during stressful times? I listen to music. That helps me decompress. I like to keep on top of the new stuff but I have to admit, I like digging out my longtime favorites for comfort. Also, reading funny books, watching some favorite funny TV shows. I cherish anything that makes me laugh.

Michael Kwende, Children's Librarian, Berkeley (CA) Public Library-Claremont Branch

What is your favorite book to read aloud? As is likely the case with many children's librarians, I get this question quite often, so often that I created an Instagram account called @storytimegold to keep track of my favorites. So far, I have posted over four hundred titles, among them *Too Tall Houses* by Gianna Marino, *Thank You, Omu!* by Oge Mora, *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall, and *Big Mean Mike* by Michelle Knudsen and Scott Magoon.

What is your favorite part about working with youth? Watching children develop deep and meaningful relationships with their libraries. I have had the pleasure of knowing children who were brought to our Baby Rhyme Time and Preschool Story Time programs many of whom I now see regularly in my visits to their preschools and elementary schools. After so many years of cultivating these relationships, I have noticed there is a level of comfort that develops within children that makes coming to the library as natural as going to other familiar and beloved spaces in their lives.

What do you do to reset during stressful times? For me, one way to reset from stress is, ironically, built into my work. Interacting with the children during their library visits or my outreach visits to their classrooms reminds me of how fortunate I am to have my profession be a labor of love, which for the most part, does not generate stress.

Outside of work I enjoy walking in nature, weight training, listening to music and creating music, sitting by the ocean, hatha yoga, acupuncture, saunas, napping, and, oh yeah, reading, too!

What are you most passionate about in children's services? Outreach! What good is a public library without a community that uses it? I believe children's librarians should not sit around hoping and waiting for children to enter the doors of our facilities. We should be visiting schools, doing read-alouds, book talks and promoting the programs we offer, getting kids excited about what they can experience when they visit their local public libraries. We should also be at parks, community centers, nursery facilities, shelters, farmer's markets, and any other place we can reach the children and their caregivers.

Erica Siskind, Children's Librarian, Oakland (CA) Public Library

What is your favorite book to read aloud? Right now, it's *The World's Biggest Fart* by Rafael Ordóñez. It's interactive, humorous, and memorable. Because it upends our taboo against farting in public, reading it relieves tension.

What is your favorite part about working with youth? Witnessing children's unspoken delight and gratitude is my favorite part of working at the library. For example, when you find the exact book a child was hoping to get, and they clutch it to their chest and smile, or even jump up and down in celebration. Once, after several weekly conversations resulting in multiple stacks of possible books a regular library patron took home to her grand-nephew, she returned with a photo of him in the middle of his parents' bed, totally absorbed in a book, surrounded by the momentarily-forgotten toys and electronic devices. She was so happy! Because these things happen fairly regularly, I love doing reference and readers advisory on the children's public service desk.

What is your favorite library event, program, or outreach initiative? My favorite outreach initiative is something I haven't done since before COVID—a twice-yearly visit to a local women-and-children's shelter. It is not close enough to our library to walk, and the moms are all working single parents, so their regular visits to the library are a challenge. When I go there, a non-profit organization, Community Education Partnership, treats us all to a meal, and after we eat together, we have storytime. When I first started visiting, the moms seemed to think it was going to be boring and babyish and were reluctant to give up their evening. I planned the most engaging materials I had—participatory books, a portable felt-board, and my favorite sing-alongs. After the first few sessions, there have always been at least a few moms and older kids who know what to expect; they're ready to sing along, and they ask if I brought whatever book they liked best the last time.

What do you do to reset during stressful times? I have a small backyard, but it has plenty of room for a hammock. In the warmer, dryer, more day-lit months of the year, I can plop myself down right after work; on the weekends, I bring a book and have a picnic. Looking up at the sky and swaying gently, listening to bamboo leaves rustling feels replenishing.

What are you most passionate about in children's services? The connection between enjoyment and literacy is what I am most passionate about. When children are delighted with the books (and stories in other formats) they find at the library and also enjoy the experience of finding them, we are linking literacy to joy, which means we are building a lifelong literacy habit. We know that has a high correlation with financial stability and employment, sense of personal competence and achievement, and civic engagement or other forms of participation in the community.

We need to make sure that all the children in our city see the library as their own place, know they are welcome to come back often, and find stories that bring them deep joy.

For me personally, that means making myself available to the public, paying attention to whatever cues they give me so I can let them direct the interaction, practicing a nonjudgmental response, and reading children's literature enough to always have something to suggest.

Sukalaya Kenworthy, Librarian, Fort Lauderdale, FL

What's your best ALSC memory? I was one of the members of the 2021 Newbery Award Committee. We called in to inform the winners of the award results, and everyone had tears in their eyes.

What is your favorite book to read aloud? *I'm the Biggest Thing in the Ocean!* by Kevin Sherry. This book is guaranteed to make kids and believe it or not, parents laugh out loud. I really enjoyed the surprise in this book.

What is your favorite part about working with youth? They reenergize me with their boundless energy and creativity. I love listening to their inputs and questions. I create videos with them and teach many different classes including coding. I learn a lot from them and enjoyed the interactions immensely.

What do you do to reset during stressful times? Especially during the pandemic, I reset by spending time in my backyard cooking Thai food. I also draw in my iPad and folded origami paper to relax.

What are you most passionate about in children's services? I am passionate about getting kids excited about reading and learning new things to enrich their lives. I encourage children to be brave about learning, exploring, and not to be afraid of making mistakes. I often share my background of growing up in Thailand and coming to the United States to study. &

Jedi Librarians Unite!

What is the first thing you do when you win the Super Bowl or retire from teaching librarianship? Head to Disneyland, of course! And if you are a Star Wars fan, like Sylvia Vardell, professor emerita of Texas Woman's University, you visit the Galaxy's Edge area in Disneyland where the world of Star Wars comes to life. Plus, this year, the Star Wars convention was in Anaheim, too. (Yes, she regularly attends Star Wars conventions!)

What a perfect time to meld her two worlds: librarianship and Star Wars fandom. "I love cosplay, so creating a Jedi Librarian costume was natural for me. When I spotted a library display at the convention, I had to strike a pose. Please forgive me for the "shush" pose, but it was the perfect way to signal "I am a Jedi Librarian!"

Vardell adds, "I do realize, however, that librarians no longer shush patrons and now welcome lively interaction and participation, especially in the libraries of galaxies far, far away!

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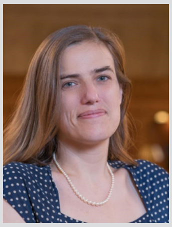
Learning Beyond

Twenty-First-Century Summer and Out of School Time Toolkit

Emily Nichols



***Emily Nichols** is a member of the School Age Programs and Services committee of ALSC.*

This fall, library staff serving school-age children have a new ALSC toolkit with a supportive framework that applies year round: Learning Beyond, available online at https://bit.ly/3FR5BUT. Here are a couple key tools from the work that I think especially apply to programs and services during this school year.

Firstly, the *case studies* in each section show how libraries of different sizes and structures put these tools into practice. This grounded approach ties together the breadth of ALSC membership and illuminates the structure and topics with examples. These examples are from the task force members' own experiences leading this work and many center on STEAM as a tool for building equity and access. Case studies are handy for demonstrating proven relevant results of investing in scientific and makerspace equipment and programming partnerships to funders in your community and your boss or board.

Secondly, I recommend the tool of *reflection*, one that is available to anyone at any time and applies in nearly any context. Our communities are so very lucky to have the support of their caring librarians and wonderful library collections and buildings. But how do we activate those "rich learning environments" to meet our patrons where they are on their learning journey?

In section 6 of the toolkit, "Reflection—The Measurement Tool of Why," Sue Abrahamson from Waupaca (WI) Area Public Library explains that reflection is an essential part of learning in the STEM programs she created for eight-to-eleven-year-olds. She also suggests that reflection by librarians can help with achieving program goals and measuring impact.

Reflection comes in many forms depending on different learning strengths. Writing this column is part of the reflection component of my work in understanding and implementing the toolkit, in the same way that the kids at Waupaca Lego Robotics Camp spend part of their camp day discussing their frustrations and successes.

Talking about what went well and what we might do differently is something that I try to build into each program planning process with my colleagues in the library and on our ALSC committee. Seasonal reflection is suited especially to the librarian's cyclical programming process, including our autumnal re-engagement with schools and educators. &

Lights, Camera, Action!

News Program Fosters Technology Ambassadors

Amy M. Borders

Libraries function as the central hub of the school, the place with the ability to inspire creativity, risk taking, acquisition of new ideas and skills, and camaraderie among students and throughout the school. Today, libraries are the centralized hub of all aspects of media, which now encompasses technology, an aspect that continues to grow in influence by the year.

Since becoming the media coordinator for C.F. Pope Elementary School, a rural elementary school located in the county seat of Pender County, North Carolina, I quickly learned that approximately 90 percent of our 425 students experience economic hardship and were not being challenged to attain many skills that are necessary for them to be academically competitive against peers their age, even within our own county.

This challenged me to create better opportunities for my students, where they could be challenged to build their skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). While many STEM materials and lessons have been implemented, I have honed in on green screen technology as this technology was already readily available within the library when I began. This technology was utilized as a way to provide students with the ability to become leaders as they produce a daily live news broadcast called The Panther Report. The students' five- to seven-minute production broadcasts daily on CFP-TV, our in-house live-streaming network within the school.

A group of eight students work to develop their daily production, where they take turns with various jobs such as anchor, weather anchor, teleprompter manager, camera, and sound, which provides students with an opportunity to explore digital production, journalism, photography, technology, and student leadership all while reinforcing writing, typing, listening, and speaking skills. Students utilize green screen technology to deliver the live broadcast that is streamed to all desktop computers throughout the school, allowing all students and stakeholders to be kept up-to-date with the school's current events, announcements, and special recognitions.

This broadcast is created by the students, including the writing and proofreading of the daily script, which strengthens their skills and supports the core curriculum. This technology-based production also teaches students about leadership by staying current on school events, interviewing others throughout the school, and presenting in front of a camera with more than five-hundred students and staff members watching them in real time.

The broadcast consists of a community weather segment, as well as health and nutrition information, including daily menus, important announcements, staff and student recognitions and attendance recognitions. Students also record segments around the school prior to broadcast.

In addition to the writing, recording, and presentation of the broadcast, students also learn technology skills running the lights, camera, teleprompter, sound board, and broadcasting software. They also learn how to edit pictures and videos, operate within copyright and fair-use guidelines, and even troubleshoot technical difficulties.

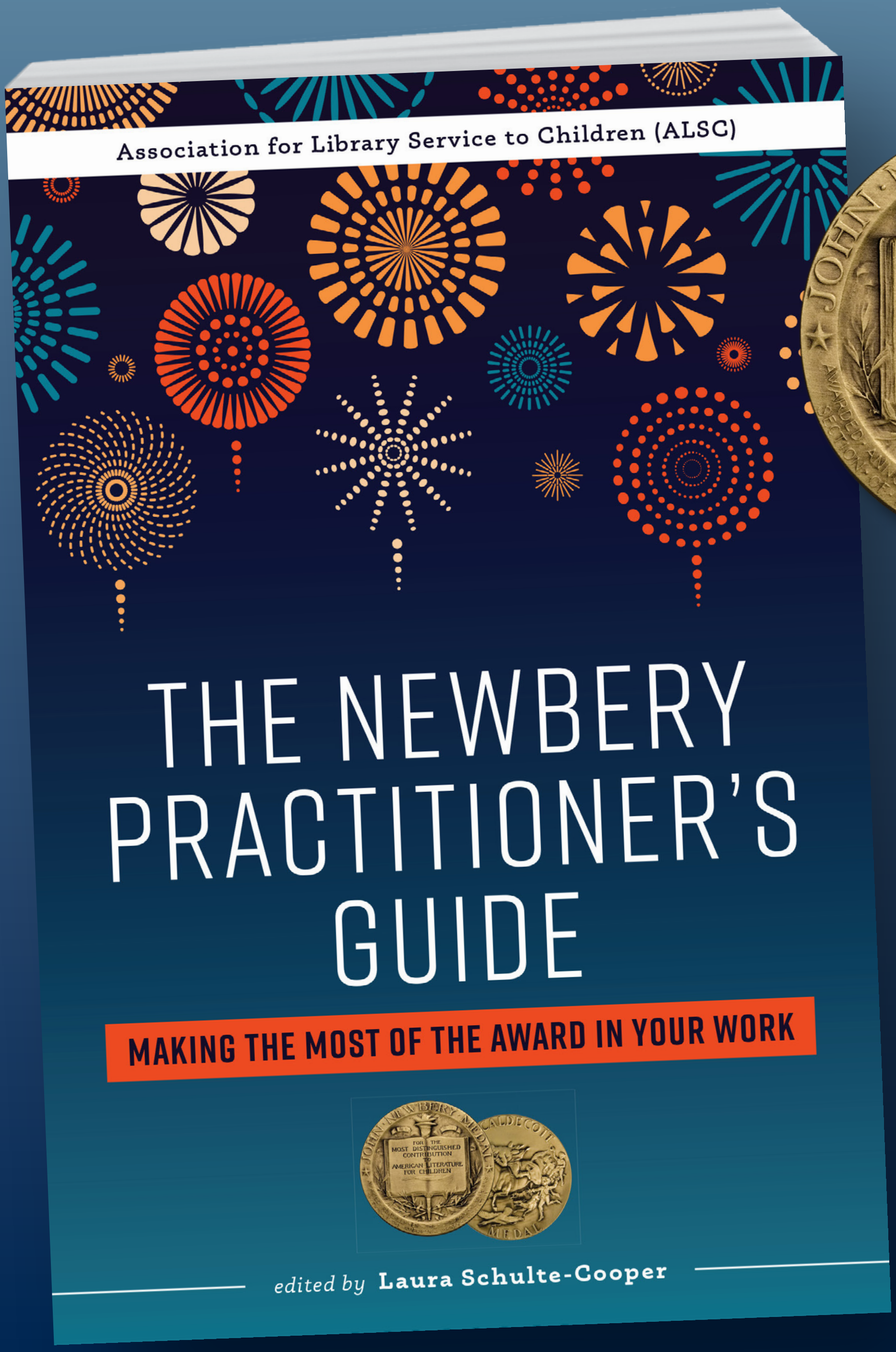
All of these skills turn them into technology ambassadors for the school, so they are able to train and teach other students.

Through the creation of the student news program, many students who previously did not have a voice within the school—students who may have fallen into the shadows—have risen to the forefront as leaders, ambassadors, and integral parts of our school community.

In giving them a voice, this program has ignited the students to push themselves to grow and develop. In the context of this program, the students have focused on becoming the best at their job, without realizing how their work and determination strengthens their reading and writing skills.

__Amy M. Borders__ is the Media Coordinator at C. F. Pope Elementary School in Eastern North Carolina where she has been a classroom teacher or librarian for the last eleven years.

Celebrate a century of the Newbery Medal with this handy guide from ALSC!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