



Montana Early Childhood Project July 2011

NAEYC PATHWAYS TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE PROJECT

Are you in the mood to enhance your classroom library? Included in this newsletter are checklists for analyzing books, booklists and resources that may be helpful as you select new books that reflect the diversity of the children, families, and staff in your program and community.

Quick Ways to Analyze Books that Help Schools Support Disability Awareness

1) Promotes empathy not pity.

Look to see if the book creates an overall feeling of understanding for the child and his/her disability. The book should not make the reader feel sorry for the child with a disability.

2) Depicts acceptance not ridicule.

The book should in no way "make fun" of a child with a disability. The student with the disability should be depicted as more similar than different from the other children.

3) Emphasizes success rather than, or in addition to, failure.

The book should point out several of the individual's talents and strengths.

4) Promotes positive images of persons with disabilities.

The person with a disability should be represented as a strong, independent person, whom any other child could look up to or admire.

5) Addresses abilities and disabilities.

Make sure that the book not only talks about the child's disability, but also talks about the child as a person with many talents.

6) Assists children in gaining accurate understanding of the disability.

Make sure that the book provides accurate information written appropriately for young children.

7) Demonstrates respect for persons with disabilities.

The book should not offend anyone who has or knows anyone with this type of disability.

8) Promotes attitude of "one of us" not "one of them."

The book should discuss how the child with the disability is just like any other child, with his/her own unique strengths and weaknesses.

9) Depicts valued occupations for persons with disabilities.

When appropriate, the book shows people with disabilities in jobs that are important.

10) Uses language which stresses person first, disability second philosophy (e.g. Jody who is blind).

Any book written about a child with a disability should use people first language.

11) Describes the disability or persons with disabilities as realistic (i.e. not subhuman or not superhuman).

The book should accurately represent the child with a disability. The child should not have to "fit in" because of any superhero type skill or talent. He/she should be considered special for his/her own abilities, just like any other child.

12) Depicts persons with disabilities in integrated settings and/ or activities.

The book should not show people with disabilities working or in school only with other people with disabilities. It should depict persons with disabilities out in the community working or playing with typical friends.

13) Illustrates characters in a realistic manner.

If the book uses illustration rather than pictures, make sure that all of the children with disabilities are not drawn exactly the same. Avoid books that depict all children with a certain type of disability represented the same (i.e. all children with cerebral palsy in wheelchairs).

14) Uses similar art styles for persons with and without disabilities.

The children with disabilities should be drawn to look more alike than different than their typical peers.

15) Illustrates accuracy in technical detail of equipment.

If the book uses illustrations rather than pictures, make sure that any adaptive equipment is drawn accurately. Source: <http://circleofinclusion.org/english/books/section2/a.html>

Checklist for Selecting Multicultural Picture Books

For young children, multicultural picture books represent a rich resource for literacy, language, and cognitive development. It is important that these books represent the wide variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups within the United States and allow young children opportunities to develop their understanding of others, while affirming children's own diverse backgrounds. In addition, there are thematic and language considerations, particularly for young English language learners and their families who speak languages other than English at home.

Selecting the multicultural picture books that are culturally and linguistically competent requires an intentional review of the book's pictures and text. Some key considerations for selecting multicultural picture books are noted below.

- Is the story interesting, engaging, and free of stereotyping?
- Are characters "outside the mainstream culture" depicted as individuals or as caricatures?
- Are the character illustrations of those from the same ethnic group depicted as individuals with unique features? Or do they all look alike?
- Does their representation and depicted lifestyles include significant specific cultural information? Or does it oversimplify and follow stereotypes?
- Who has the power in this story? What is the nature of their power, and how do they use it?
- Who has the wisdom in the story? What is the nature of their wisdom, and how do they use it?
- What are the consequences of certain behaviors? What behaviors or traits are rewarded, and how? What behaviors are punished and how?
- How is language used to create images of people of a particular group? Does the dialogue accurately represent oral tradition from which the characters come?
- How are the relationships between characters from different cultural groups portrayed?
- What does the narrative or story and the pictures say about race? Class? Culture? Gender? Age?
- Who has written this story? Who has illustrated it? Are they part of the culture they represent?
- How recently was the book published and does it represent current understanding and dynamics of cultural and linguistic diversity?
- Is the book available in other languages?
- Is the book available in bilingual format with English and another language side-by-side?
- Is the text of the book age appropriate and is its language at or slightly above the child's mastery of the English language?
- Does the book contain repeated, predictable language patterns, such as rhyming and repetition of sounds, words, refrains, or entire sentences that can reinforce English language learning?
- Are the illustrations clear and help tell the story for children who are English language learners?

Adapted from:

Higgins, J. (2003). *Multicultural children's literature: Creating and applying an evaluation tool in response to the needs of urban educators*. Retrieved July 30, 2003, from New Horizons for Learning Web site: www.newhorizons.org/strategies/multicultural/higgins.htm

Selecting multicultural picture books. (2002, Spring). *ERIC/ECCE Newsletter*, 14(1).

Smallwood, B. (2002, November). Thematic literature and curriculum for English language learners in early childhood education. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved July 30, 2003, from www.cal.org/resources/digest/0208smallwood.html

Guidelines for Selecting Children’s Literature that deals with Native Peoples—adapted from Lessons From Turtle Island, Jones, Moomaw, 2002

- **Scrutinize the author’s biographical information:**
Many Native authors will list their tribal affiliations. Other authors may describe authentic experiences with particular cultures, such as being a teacher for many years in a Native school.
- **Look carefully for any stereotypes in the text and illustrations.**
Mono-dimensional images such as warrior pictures, princess, stoic, environmentalist, primitive, should naturally be avoided.
- **Avoid books that lump all Native cultures together:**
These are not authentic representations.
- **Examine characters:**
Are they real, with in-depth personalities? Books should not glamorize a group of people.
- **Think about how the book relates to your overall curriculum.**
Does it fit into a more global topic, such as families, so that children can see similarities as well as differences among culture?
- **Resist highlighting Native American Cultures as topics for study.**
Integrate Native books and materials all year, just as you would with other groups.
- **Do not include books in your classroom that show children playing Indian or depict animals dressed as Indians:**
This degrades and objectifies Native peoples and cultures.
- **Look for books that portray Native people today for preschoolers.**
Otherwise, non-Native children will continue to regard American Indians as living only in the past, or as living today exactly as they did a hundred years ago. Preschool children do not understand historical references.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN HIGHLIGHTING:

ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

- ***All Families Are Special***, Norma Simon. (2 – 3). Goes beyond other books in portraying different kinds of families and shows both what can be hard in a family, as well as what is good. Includes two-mom, blended and international families.
- ***Families***, Susan Kuklin. (4 – 5). Combining interviews and engaging color photos, this shows the diversity of families in America. Includes mixed-race, immigrant, two-dad, two-mom and single-parent families and families for whom religion is a focal point.
- ***The Family Book***, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K). All kinds of families are celebrated in a funny, silly and reassuring way. Includes adoptive families, stepfamilies, single-parent families, two-mom and two-dad families and families with a mom and a dad. Quirky humor and bright, childlike illustrations.
- ***Who’s in a Family?*** Robert Skutch. (Pre-K – 1). A picture book showing multicultural contemporary family units, including those with single parents, two moms or two dads, mixed-race couples, grandparents and divorced parents.
- ***Material World: A Global Family Portrait***, Peter Menzel. (4 and up). Visual portrait of life in 30 nations. Photographs of families from around the world, outside of their homes with all of their belongings.
- ***We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past***, Jacqueline Woodson. (K – 2). Join Teeka’s sprawling, urban African-American family for their annual picnic in the park and experience an extended family gathering that brims with love and acceptance.
- ***When Lightning Comes in a Jar***, Patricia Polacco. (K-2) Soon all the relatives will arrive, dozens of aunts and uncles and cousins. And the fun will begin! Every year, the family rituals are the same. But this year, Gramma has promised something new.

ADOPTION

- ***Jin Woo***, Eve Bunting. (K – 3). David likes his family the way it is. He never wanted to be a big brother. And he certainly didn’t want Jin Woo, who is now getting all the attention. A surprising letter helps him to understand that being a brother can mean being surrounded with more love than ever.
- ***Star of the Week: A Story of Love, Adoption, and Brownies with Sprinkles***. Darlene Friedman. (K – 3). It’s Cassidy-Li’s turn to be Star of the Week. She is making brownies and collecting photos for a school poster. She has pictures of all the important people in her life – except her birthparents. But with help she comes up with a solution.

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- ***We Belong Together: A Book About Adoption and Families***, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – 1). Explores the ways that people can choose to come together to make a family. It's about sharing your home and sharing your heart to make a family that belongs together.

DIVORCE

- ***Pricilla Twice***, Judith Caseley. (K – 4). Looks at a family break-up through a child's eyes. When her parents separate, Pricilla spends her days between two homes, feeling split apart yet needed more than ever before.

FOSTER CARE

- ***Our Aunt Gracie***, Jacqueline Woodson. (K – 4). Johnson and his sister, Beebee, have to take care of themselves after their mother leaves. Then they're moved to their Aunt Gracie's house and things start getting better.
- ***Zachary's New Home: A Story for Foster and Adopted Children***, Geraldine Molettiere Blomquist. (K – 2). Zachary, the kitten, is taken from his mother's house when his mother is unable to take care of him. He is fostered and then adopted by a family of geese. He experiences the true-to-life feelings.

FAMILIES WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) FAMILY Members

- ***The Different Dragon***, Jennifer Bryan. (K – 1). Shows how the wonderful curiosity and care of a little boy, with some help from his two moms, can lead to magical places with a dragon who is tired of being tough.
- ***In Our Mothers' House***, Patricia Polacco. (3 – 5). Marmee, Meema, and their kids cook, laugh, and dance together in their home. But some families don't accept them, saying they are different. Yet Marmee and Meema's house is full of love. And they teach their children that different doesn't mean wrong.
- ***Uncle Bobby's Wedding***, Sarah S. Brannen. (K – 3). Looks at the fears that a young girl has of losing her favorite uncle when he plans to get married. Everyone in the family is happy, but her. Finally, she sees that she is not losing an uncle but gaining another uncle.

INCARCERATED PARENTS

- ***Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart***, Vera B. Williams. (1 – 4). A series of poems tells how two sisters help each other deal with life while their mother is working and their father is in jail. Friendships and support shine through the difficulties.
- ***Mama Loves Me from Away***, Pat Brisson. (1 – 3). Shows the loving bond between Sugar and her single parent mom through memories. But Sugar now lives with Grammy, and they travel every Sunday on three long bus rides to visit Mama.

SPECIAL NEEDS

- ***My Brother Charlie***. Holly Robinson Peete. (K – 2). Callie is very proud of her brother Charlie. He's good at so many things. But sometimes Charlie gets very quiet and his words get locked inside him. A sister's story of living with a brother who has autism.
- ***Dad and Me in the Morning***, Patricia Lakin. (K – 2) A young boy sneaks in to wake his dad and they head out together, to watch the sun come up over the lake by their home. The illustrations in this book present American Sign Language (ASL) beautifully, as a deaf son and his father communicate their strong bond with each other.

Source: www.welcomingfamilies.org

Resources:

- <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/links/links.asp?idLinksCategory=4>
- <http://circleofinclusion.org/english/books/section1/c.html>
- http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/IndianEd/EarlyChildhood/SuggestedBooks_IEFA_EC.pdf
- www.welcomingschools.org
- teachingtolerance.org

★As a thank you for participating in this Cultural Competence Project, the Early Childhood Project will be sending children's books for your program's library. If you need resources or have something you would like to share with others give me a call: Christy Hill Larson—406-444-7067.