



PROMOTING PERSPECTIVE-TAKING THROUGH THE USE OF LITERATURE

"Diversity' should just be called 'reality.' Your books, your TV shows, your movies, your articles, your curricula, need to reflect reality."

-Tananarive Due

OVERVIEW

Teachers and librarians review their collection of books and other reading materials, and identify opportunities to include new readings that represent diverse backgrounds, promoting greater perspective-taking and well-being.

LEVELS

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To create an environment that encourages greater empathy and understanding among students
- To help empower students with marginalized identities
- To increase students' perspective-taking abilities

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤30 minutes

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- Pen/pencil
- Paper

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Teachers or school staff will:

- Review the readings materials in their classrooms, curriculum, or school library to identify the individuals and perspectives that are missing in the existing reading materials
- Make a commitment to increase representation in their reading materials
- Create a plan for how to execute their commitment

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Empathy
- Curiosity
- Cultural Humility

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Social Awareness

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Open Awareness
- Non-Judgment

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Try this practice at home. Take a look at the books you own or the materials you read, e.g., blogs, newspapers, magazines, Instagram and/or Pinterest pages.
- Whose perspectives are represented in those books or reading materials and whose perspectives are missing? How might you adjust your readings so that you are opening yourself up to learning about and better understanding those with different opinions, perspectives, or backgrounds? Why might this be useful for you to do?
- Make a commitment to one change you will make and set a timeline for your goal.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Individually or as a school staff, take a moment to review your curriculum, school library, or classroom library.
 - Count how many books in any of these places represent diverse students (e.g., students from traditionally under-represented racial/ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities, non-binary students, etc.)?
 - Consider which groups of students are not represented in the books you have included in your curriculum or in the school library.
- Based on your data, commit to making a change to your curriculum or library. Take about 10 minutes to write out your commitment and create an action plan. In your action plan, consider the following questions:
 - Which books will you add?
 - How will you get the funding to purchase these books?
 - By when will you try to have these books in your classroom?
- If you need support in finding books to include, consider using one or some of the following resources:
 - [Books on Black Joy](#) (preK-4)
 - [Asian American Picture Books](#) (preK-4)
 - [Scholarly Review of Children’s Books](#) (preK-6)
 - [Books for Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (preK-8)
 - [Nonfiction](#) (Grades: 7-12)
 - [Fiction](#) (Grades: 9-12)
 - [More Options](#) (K-6)
 - [More Options for Older Students](#) (Grades: 4-12)

SOURCE

[Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal, Ph.D.](#), United Arab Emirates University

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Do you notice any changes in students’ behavior after adding the new books and readings? Are they more empathic? Are they better able to take the perspectives of other students or other individuals outside the classroom with diverse backgrounds? Do they seem happier? Are they more open to ideas different from their own?
- How might you continue to support and encourage students to read more diverse materials? What sort of activities might you plan using these new books to better help students understand the content of the books?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research shows that children’s literature can be used to influence the behavior of children. In one study, children who read books about sharing were [more generous](#) compared to students who read stories about animals or seeds. In another [study](#), five-year old children showed an increase in perspective-taking and expressed more empathy after reading books about bullying and engaging in role-playing.

Furthermore, research shows that representation is important to students’ well-being. In one [study](#), Black students, but not white students, reported greater well-being after watching the Black Panther movie. Thus, by including books about individuals with diverse backgrounds teachers can increase the well-being of students from underrepresented backgrounds and also promote greater perspective-taking and empathy.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

By adding culturally diverse books to a classroom, teachers are [modeling interest and acceptance](#) of diversity in their classrooms. This can encourage students to do the same, thus, helping to create a safe and welcoming environment for all. By reading diverse books students can also develop the skills they need to form stronger intergroup relationships. Preparing them to better navigate our increasingly diverse society with more empathy, which is greatly needed.

Furthermore, much research has found that culturally sensitive and diverse literature is critical for [literacy achievement and motivation](#) among students. Thus, teachers can better support their students’ academic and personal development by simply making sure that the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of students from all backgrounds are represented in the books available at school and in the day to day curriculum.

TERMS OF USE

Thank you for downloading this resource! Please feel free to share it with friends, teachers, colleagues, and anyone else who might benefit from it.

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With gratitude,
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