



Using Children's Books to Support Identity, Equity, and Inclusion

A SCRIPT-NC Webinar Handout

Definitions of Key Terms (Source: NAEYC's [Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education](#), pgs. 17-18)

diversity—Variation among individuals, as well as within and across groups of individuals, in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences. These experiences are related to social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin. The terms diverse and diversity are sometimes used

as euphemisms for non-White. NAEYC specifically rejects this usage, which implies that Whiteness is the norm against which diversity is defined.

equity—The state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic. In practice, equity means all children and families receive necessary supports in a timely fashion so they can develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential. Equity is not the same as **equality**. Equal treatment given to individuals at unequal starting points is inequitable. Instead of equal treatment, NAEYC aims for equal opportunity. This requires considering individuals' and groups' starting points, then distributing resources equitably (not equally) to meet needs. Attempting to achieve equality of opportunity without considering historic and present inequities is ineffective, unjust, and unfair.

inclusion—Embodied by the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to help them reach their full potential. Although the traditional focus of inclusion has been on addressing the exclusion of children with disabilities, full inclusion seeks to promote justice by ensuring equitable participation of all historically marginalized children.

race—A social-political construct that categorizes and ranks groups of human beings on the basis of skin color and other physical features. The scientific consensus is that using the social construct of race to divide humans into distinct and different groups has no biological basis.

Children's Books as a Vehicle for Promoting Inclusion

- **Activity:** Do you remember when you recognized yourself/your family in a book for the first time?
 - How You Felt When You Recognized Yourself in a Book for the First Time
<https://www.weareteachers.com/diverse-books-meaning/>
- **Windows and Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors**
 - It's Hard to Be What You Can't See
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/its-hard-to-be-what-you-c_b_8022776.html
 - Many Kids of Color Don't See Themselves in the Books They Read
https://www.marketwatch.com/story/males-particularly-white-males-are-persistently-overrepresented-many-kids-of-color-dont-see-themselves-in-the-books-they-read-11628535154?link=MW_latest_news
 - Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>
 - de la Peña, M. (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. London: Penguin Books.

- Rudine Sims Bishop https://youtu.be/_AAu58SNSyc
- Windows and Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors: Ensuring Students See Themselves and Others in Literature
<https://humaneeducation.org/windows-and-mirrors-and-sliding-glass-doors-ensuring-students-see-themselves-and-others-in-literature/>

The Demographics of Children's Books

Education without Representation

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/05/education/young-latino-students-dont-see-themselves-in-books.html?hpw>

They Need to See Themselves: NC Librarians Push for AAPI Representation in Kids Books

<https://flipboard.com/article/they-need-to-see-themselves-nc-libraries-push-for-aapi-representation-in-kids-/f-2d43cd1eac%2Fnewsobserver.com>

Picture This: Diversity in Children's Books 2018 Infographic

<https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2019/06/19/picture-this-diversity-in-childrens-books-2018-infographic/>

Racial Diversity in Children's Books Grows, But Slowly

<https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-wisconsin-madison-childrens-books-480e49bd32ef45e163d372201df163ee>

Report: 2018 Diversity in Children's and YA Literature

<https://bookriot.com/diversity-in-childrens-and-young-adult-literature/>

The Ugly Truth About Children's Books

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1Jbd4-fPOE>

Selecting and Using Children's Books

Checklist: Considerations in Selecting Books for Young Children That Build Equity and Inclusion (pg. 9-10)

Free Resources About Similarities and Differences <https://scriptnc.fpg.unc.edu/natural-resources-free-resources-about-similarities-and-differences>

Race and Gender in Children's Books <https://bfi.uchicago.edu/insight/blog/race-and-gender-in-childrens-books/>

Using Stories to Nurture Identity <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2788-using-stories-to-nurture-identity>

What We Teach About Race and Gender: Representation in Images and Text of Children's Books

<https://bfi.uchicago.edu/working-paper/2021-44/>

<https://bfi.uchicago.edu/insight/multimedia/watch-what-we-teach-about-race-and-gender-representation-in-images-and-text-of-childrens-books/> (video)

Incorporating Children’s Books to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Early Childhood Courses

In a course like you could use an activity or assignment like this
Child, Family, and Community	<p>Nurturing Identity. This assignment requires students to connect with a family and to identify children’s books that can be used to nurture identity. First, ask students to read Using Stories to Nurture Identity or a similar article to learn about how families can use children’s books to support identity development. Next, ask each student to locate a family with young children and to learn about them, including the things they value, enjoy, are interested in, and aspire to. Then, ask students to identify age-appropriate books that will support and enhance family interests, particularly those of the child/ren. Include sample prompts and open-ended questions that families might use when reading each book. Give bonus points to students who locate a library at which the family could borrow the titles identified. Neon the Chameleon is one example of a book that would be great to share with families.</p> <p>Help Connect Diverse Children and Families with Books That Reflect Their Lives. Recent surveys of the children’s book section of libraries have revealed a lack of books that authentically reflect children and families of diverse cultures, races, languages, abilities, and configurations. This could give rise to several kinds of assignments for students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students could contact local families to see what kinds of themes and images they would most like reflected in the children’s books at the library. They could also explore changes in the demographics of the local community to pick up topics that may not have been mentioned. 2. Students could review the collection of children’s books in a local library. Based on their review, students could document topics on which current titles are not available and suggest high quality options to add. 3. Students could also determine who makes decisions about new acquisitions at the public library and write a letter advocating for new acquisitions. The letter could include the data collected as well as a justification supported by family priorities and other evidence.
Child Guidance/ Social- Emotional Development	<p>Create an Original Book Nook. The original Book Nooks are easy-to-use guides that were created especially for teachers/caregivers and families to provide hands-on ways to embed social emotional skill building activities into everyday routines. Each Book Nook includes activities and ideas for extending the content of the book into other domains and applications. A very effective assignment is to ask students to create an original Book Nook. Structure the assignment so students know what topics they will be addressing in their Book Nook (e.g., age of the children, emphasis on social-emotional development, positive attention to specific aspects of diversity like race, home language, ability, equity, different family configurations). Components of the assignment might include finding a book and creating a Book Nook that addresses the specific features of that book, including examples of how teachers or families might use the children’s book. The beauty of this activity is that students have 22 different examples of what they are striving for. NOTE: The 22 Book Nooks are available at http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html</p>

In a course like you could use an activity or assignment like this
Curriculum	<p>Inclusive Shared Storybook Activity Using State Early Learning Guidelines</p> <p>In this activity, students will use their state early learning guidelines/standards to determine a domain and target skill(s) and plan a shared storybook reading lesson/activity on that topic using a children’s book. Require students to use the Considerations in Selecting Books for Young Children (pgs. 9-10) to ensure that the book appropriately reflects diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students should be sure to include suggested adaptations for children in the classrooms described below:</p> <p>Infant/Toddler: This classroom is made up of 6 children (3 girls, 3 boys) ages 18-24 months. All of the children seem to enjoy coming to school and are becoming increasingly aware of each other. One of the children, Luke (22 months) loves active play, especially throwing and kicking balls, and he is often on the move. Another child, Kate (24 months) is not yet using words to speak but is very interested in interacting with friends and teachers. And Joyce (20 months) has a visual impairment. This is an all-day program that runs from 8am-5pm and includes snack times, lunch, and an afternoon nap.</p> <p>Preschool: This classroom is made up of 8 children (5 girls, 3 boys) ages 36-48 months. They are a silly group of children who love recess and singing songs together. One of the children, Emily (42 months) has a hearing impairment and another child, Harry (36 months) has strong sensory needs and is frequently seeking sensory input. This is a half-day preschool program that runs from 8am-12pm and includes a snack time. For the assignment, students will submit a 1-page “plan” that identifies content from state early learning guidelines and storybook to support content. Plans for adapting the activity to include all children in the shared story time.</p> <p>Similarities and Differences: Supporting young children to discuss differences thoughtfully requires both vocabulary, instruction, and practice. Ask students to design an activity plan for a classroom of children, picking an age that correlates to other content being covered in the course. The purpose of the activity would be to introduce children to words and strategies children could use to thoughtfully talk about similarities and differences. The plan should include the vocabulary to be introduced and materials, practices, duration, sequence, and open-ended questions to be used. The plan should also identify opportunities to practice using the vocabulary and strategies as part of other classroom routines, e.g., snack. Free Resources About Similarities and Differences would be helpful in completing this assignment.</p> <p>This list may be useful in finding a book: https://www.mrsdscorner.com/60disabilitybooksforkids/</p> <p>For the assignment, students will submit a “plan” in the medium of their choice (e.g., Flipgrid, slide deck using PPT or google slides, tipsheets using Canva, etc.) for adapting the activity to include all children in the shared story time.</p>

In a course like you could use an activity or assignment like this
Health, Safety, and Nutrition	<p>Students in a course about nutrition could survey children’s books about diverse food culture and cooking (e.g., <i>The Ugly Vegetables</i> by Grace Lin). Students could ask questions and design activities to help children learn about their food culture and other friends’ food culture. (e.g., designing nutrition programming where children are supported to survey other children and staff about home meal practices, and make changes to lunch menu to incorporate those practices)</p> <p>Students learning about health sciences could survey children’s books reflecting diverse grooming, sleep, feeding and health practices and examine their attitudes/biases about “appropriate” health practices for families. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Big Bed by Bunmi Laditan (co-sleeping) • Mama Feeds Me All the Colors (extended breastfeeding) • I love my Hair, Hair Love, Crown: Ode to the Fresh Cut (styling and caring for Black hair) <p>In courses about safety, students could survey children’s books advancing equitable representation in outdoor and water sports and safety. They could collaborate with local swim organizations or outdoor organizations and the local public library to design story hours centered around these topics. Students could also work with swim schools and outdoor and nature education programs to design outreach efforts and promote inclusive programming (e.g., Black Birding Week) https://www.audubon.org/news/black-birders-week-promotes-diversity-and-takes-racism-outdoors Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall • Maya’s World: Mikale of Hawaii by Maya Angelou • Where’s Rodney by Carmen Bogan • The Hike by Alison Farrell • Leo Can Swim by Anna McQuinn
Language and Literacy	<p>Use a persona. Personas are 1-2 paragraph stories that provide a snapshot of a child, his/her family or context, and who the child is as a learner, including likes and dislikes. Many of the personas could be used to help students learn how to use children’s books and literacy practices to support individual children. Preschool and early elementary personas may be found at https://scriptnc.fpg.unc.edu/shifting-blackboards An assignment might involve asking students to read recent research about effective literacy practices for supporting Black children (e.g., Storytelling Skills Support Early Literacy for African American Children), then identifying specific strategies and children’s books they would use to engage a specific child. For this particular assignment, the preschool person Winston or the early elementary persona Joseph would be good ones to use. The assignment could also be used, with different personas, to support individualizing for children who are dual language learners, have disabilities, etc.</p>

<p>In a course like . . .</p>	<p>. . . you could use an activity or assignment like this</p>
<p>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)</p>	<p>Representation in STEM. Students may choose one from STEMIE’s curated lists that are reflective of inclusion and equity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematical (STEM):</p> <p>Representative of Black, Indigenous, People of Color: https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/sites/stemie.fpg.unc.edu/files/Storybook%20List-Black%20Authors%20%26%20Pioneers%20in%20STEM.pdf</p> <p>Representative of Asian American/Pacific Islanders: https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/sites/stemie.fpg.unc.edu/files/Storybook%20Conversations%20-%20Celebrating%20Asian%20Pacific%20Heritage.pdf</p> <p>Representative of Women: https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/sites/stemie.fpg.unc.edu/files/Storybook%20Conversations%20-%20Women%20in%20STEM.pdf</p> <p>Select a book and prepare prompts for children to encourage STEM talk and open-ended questions related to STEM concepts and equity and inclusion represented in the books. Questions for the conversation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you see in the book? • How are the characters like you or not like you? • What would you do if you were (character in the book)? • How did (character in the book) solve problems? <p>Students may also consider finding stories about professionals from a variety of backgrounds who have had successful STEM careers. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Girl who Thought in Pictures (about Dr. Temple Grandin) by: Julia Finley Mosca • Counting the Stars (about Katherine Johnson) by: Lesa Cline-Ransome • Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines (about Maya Lin) by: Jeanne Walker Harvey • Five Brilliant Scientists (about Susan McKinney Steward, George Washington Carver, Ernest Everett Just, Percy Lavon Julian, & Shirley Ann Jackson) by: Lynda Jones <p>Students could also view these two videos to illustrate STEM and inclusion:</p> <p>STEM for All (about including all young children in early STEM learning: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWsor3Kg-vU)</p> <p>Princess v. Engineering (about gender equity in STEM): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArNAB9GFDog</p>

And you will be able to register soon for virtual STEMIEFest 2021: <https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/stemiefest>

Topic	Examples of Additional Resources
<p>Diverse Images and Content</p>	<p>60 Books About Disabilities and Differences for Kids https://www.mrscorner.com/60disabilitybooksforkids/</p> <p>2021 IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities https://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/2021_IBBY_Outstanding_Catalogue.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1sGREZOFMKtOpZ7uJhSBiDNtzO4490DitOKBVIrsKIHE_qmtrs04hjgg4</p> <p>An Asian American Reader Looks for Herself in Books? https://diversebooks.org/an-asian-american-reader-looks-for-herself-in-books/</p> <p>Children’s Books that Include Diverse Family Structures https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/childrens-books-include-diverse-family-structures</p> <p>Children’s Books to Celebrate Black Culture https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/childrens-books-to-celebrate-black-culture</p> <p>Children’s Books with Strong Black Characters https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/childrens-books-about-race-and-diversity</p> <p>Diverse Book Finder https://diversebookfinder.org/books/</p> <p>Hair Representation in Children’s Literature https://www.dcareeducators4socialjustice.org/news/hair-representation-in-childrens-literature</p> <p>Looking Back: Musings on Diversity and Identity in Hispanic and Latin American Children’s Literature https://diversebooks.org/looking-back-musings-on-diversity-and-identity-in-hispanic-and-latin-american-childrens-literature/</p> <p>Reading and RES: Choosing and Using Books to Discuss Race and Ethnicity https://www.apa.org/res/parent-resources/choosing-books.pdf</p> <p>Reading Your Way to a Culturally Responsive Classroom https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2016/culturally-responsive-classroom</p> <p>We Need Diverse Books https://diversebooks.org/</p> <p>Where Are the Arab Authors in Kidlit? https://diversebooks.org/where-are-the-arab-authors-in-kidlit/</p>
<p>Effective Literacy Practices</p>	<p>CONNECT Module 6: Dialogic Reading Practices https://connectmodules.dec-sped.org/connect-modules/learners/module-6/#1542184048078-46ac412b-8b4655d2-006bcf25-102e</p> <p>CONNECT Video 1.16: Routine in a Program-Reading at Circle Time https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHGFQOoMcKw</p> <p>How to Use Children’s Books to Talk about Race and Racism https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-use-childrens-books-to-talk-about-race-and-racism</p> <p>Read It Again! Benefits of Reading to Young Children https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/read-it-again-benefits-reading-young-children</p> <p>Resources for Race, Equity, Anti-Racism, and Inclusion https://diversebooks.org/resources-for-race-equity-and-inclusion/</p> <p>Storybook Conversations https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu/resources?f%5b0%5d=field_topic%3A36&f%5b1%5d=field_routines_everyday_activity%3A64&f%5b2%5d=field_resource_type%3A21</p>

	<p>Tips for Parents: Choosing Books for Infants and Toddlers https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/parenting/article/tips-parents-choosing-books-infants-toddlers (English) https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/crianza-de-los-hijos/articulo/consejos-para-los-padres-como-elegir-libros-para-bebes-y-ninos (Spanish)</p>
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Topic	Examples of Additional Resources
Different Languages	<p>50 Bilingual and Spanish/English Integrated Books https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=102</p> <p>Bilingual Books: American Indian Heritage https://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/bilingual-books-american-indian-heritage</p> <p>Bilingual Books: Asian Pacific American Heritage https://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/bilingual-books-asian-pacific-american-heritage</p> <p>How to Use Bilingual Books https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/how-to-use-bilingual-books.pdf (English) https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/how-to-use-bilingual-books-esp.pdf (Spanish)</p> <p>Selecting and Using Culturally Appropriate Children’s Books in Languages Other Than English https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/select-cultural-childrens-books-non-english-eng.pdf (English) https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/select-cultural-childrens-books-non-english-esp.pdf (Spanish)</p> <p>Unite for Literacy https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/</p>
Different Formats	<p>Tar Heel Reader https://tarheelreader.org/</p> <p>Tar Heel Shared Reader https://www.sharedreader.org/</p>



Considerations in Selecting Books for Young Children that Build Equity and Inclusion

Considerations for Characters	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1. Look at the characters who are diverse. Are they treated like strong, active, and capable individuals? Are they able to make a contribution? Are they portrayed and treated as if they are lacking? Are diverse characters placed on a pedestal? Does their inclusion reflect tokenism?				
2. Watch how the characters treat each other. Do characters model views or actions that you would like children to emulate?				
3. Consider how families are portrayed. Are families of diverse cultures, compositions, and configurations portrayed authentically and respectfully? How are siblings depicted? Are siblings shown as being allies?				
4. Consider the insights children will gain from the book. Are there one or more characters with whom a young reader who is diverse can readily identify in positive and constructive ways? Do the words and images provide <u>mirrors</u> (i.e., an accurate reflection that values diverse children, their families, and their communities? Do the words and images provide <u>windows and/or sliding doors</u> (i.e., opportunities to learn about or partake in someone else's experience)?				
5. Consider the potential impact of the book. Will it help to expand a child's world view? Will it build knowledge of other cultures and lifeways? Will it provide accurate insights that build opportunities for inclusion?				
Considerations for the Story, Theme & Setting	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
6. Think about the narrative. How are problems resolved? Does the storyline <u>encourage</u> conversations about differences? Does the storyline facilitate normalizing conversations? Does the storyline help change stereotypes or change the narrative? Does the theme allow the characters to go beyond "hero-ism"? Are children able to relate to the story irrespective of the character's ability?				
7. Watch the vocabulary. Is person-first language used (e.g., a child with a disability rather than a disabled child)? Is current and preferred terminology used?				

Considerations for the Story, Theme & Setting (continued)	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
8. Look for the values conveyed through the book. Does the narrative emphasize equity, fairness, and inclusion?				
9. Look at the places in the book. Are the ways in which homes, communities, and other settings portrayed and depicted authentically and respectfully? Does the context support or refute stereotypes?				
10. Consider the insights children will gain from the book. Are there one or more characters with whom diverse young children can readily identify in positive and constructive ways? Do the words and images provide <u>mirrors</u> (i.e., an accurate reflection that values diverse children, their families, and their communities?) Do the words and images provide <u>windows and/or sliding doors</u> (i.e., opportunities to learn about or partake in someone else's experience)?				
11. Consider the potential impact of the book. Will it help to expand a child's world view? Will it build knowledge of other cultures and lifeways? Will it provide accurate insights that build opportunities for inclusion?				
12. Consider the setting. Do the stories promote understanding of our diverse society? Does the book speak to ALL children?				
Considerations for the Illustrations	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
13. Consider the age-appropriateness of the illustration style. Are the illustrations colorful and engaging to hold young children's attention?				
14. Consider how the illustrations portray different people. Are diverse populations represented well?				
15. Look at the illustrator's experience and background with the communities represented. Are the illustrations and the information they communicate accurate and respectful?				
16. Do the illustrations represent diversity within cultural groups? Are the illustrations mindful of cultural differences within groups? Do the images capture diversity from the real world?				
17. Are characters realistically and genuinely portrayed?				
18. Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?				

This checklist was adapted by Camille Catlett and Shivani Pandit from Catlett & George (2005), Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force (1989), and Barnes, Berrigan, & Biklen (1978).