

Learning About a Diverse Range of Children's Literature

“Because reading success does not necessarily transfer between different genres, students should be exposed, in volume, to the full range of genres we want them to be able to comprehend.”

–Duke, Nell K., et al. “Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension.” *What Research has to Say about Reading Instruction 4* (2011): 286-314.

With this in mind, books selected for literacy learning should be representative of the diverse streams of culture, history, and language that compose today's increasingly global society. *Expanding the Canon*, ILA Literacy Leadership Brief, 2018.

These two quotes speak to the need to expose children to a diverse range of texts by a diverse range of authors. But often it is hard to know where to begin with thinking about doing this work because we ourselves don't know where to learn more about a diverse range of high-quality texts, or how to start steering ourselves and our teams towards advocating for more text diversity when school budgets allow for text purchases, or seek to replace older texts with newer ones. This tip sheet has some suggestions for how to get started with this work.

Become familiar with the major organizations and prizes for diverse children's literature

One place to start with this work is by familiarizing yourself with the broad range of prominent book awards beyond the Newberry and the Caldecott medals. These include:

- [The Coretta Scott King Awards](#) books that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values.
- [Pura Belpré Awards](#) books that best portray, affirm, and celebrate the Latino cultural experience.
- [American Indian Youth Literature Awards](#) writing and illustrations by and about American Indians
- [Orbis Pictus Nonfiction Award](#) nonfiction for children

For a longer list of awards that celebrate diversity in literature see the [American Library Association's](#) extensive list of awards, published in their magazine *Children and Libraries*.

Read widely from the lists of diverse award-winning children's literature. After becoming familiar with more diverse book awards, consider spending some time really reading and enjoying some of the books, alone or with colleagues, and, perhaps thinking

of ways they may fit into your curriculum or school library in the present or future. This knowledge and appreciation of diverse children's literature will enrich you as a reader and a teacher of literacy even if you do not have immediate opportunities to purchase or use the literature you are learning more about.

Talk to colleagues about diverse children's literature and its role in their classrooms. Work with your grade level team or across grade level teams to explore how others are using more diverse children's literature in their instruction, and share ideas and texts.

Consider the relation between the old books you have and the new ones you are learning about.

Often it is hard to think about working with more diverse texts in schools because we are reluctant to change units or lessons to accommodate new or different texts, but this may not be as daunting as you think, since sometimes more diverse texts easily slip into a slot in which you were previously using very homogeneous ones. For instance, on a unit on families maybe most of the texts in the unit only represent one standard version of what families look like, and could be relatively easily replaced by more diverse texts about families.

Recognize that using diverse literature is about access to great literature, and equity. The reasons for improving children's access to more diverse literature is to give them opportunities to read a lot of great literature they are missing that is being left out of classroom libraries and curriculums, and also to provide “mirrors” and “windows” for children where they can see themselves in the characters, as well as more clearly see the broader world to which they belong.