

# Framework for Inclusive Literature in Teacher Education

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*A broad selection of appropriately inclusive literature is a major step in creating a classroom that honors the diverse population of students and creates a welcoming, accepting atmosphere. Children who find stories reflecting their experience feel seen and valued. Diverse classroom literature also opens minds, extends knowledge, and increases compassion by allowing children to learn about their classmates' cultures and experiences. The purpose of this article was to provide a framework for evaluating diverse texts for preservice teachers. We developed a framework with eight different categories of inclusive children's literature based on established theories of culturally relevant pedagogy. It provides preservice teachers with a means to review children's books to ensure that their use of literature is varied, sensitive, and reflective of diversity. We concluded that teacher-education programs must do more to meet these challenges.*

*Keywords: culturally relevant pedagogy, teacher education, children's literature, diverse literature*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2017-2018, nearly 80% of teachers in the U.S. reportedly identified as White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This lack of a diverse teacher workforce may cause biased myths and a loss of perspectives (Hartsfield, 2021). In contrast to demographics in the teacher force, students' ethnicities reported for 2018 included the following:

- American Indian/Alaska Native (1%);
- Asian (5%);
- Black (15%);
- Hispanic (27%); and
- Two or more (4%); and
- White (48%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

In addition to students seeing themselves in their teachers, representation in books is important. When children cannot see themselves represented in books or see themselves presented only as stereotypes, they learn how society undervalues them (Bishop, 1990). Bishop (1990) noted that books can act as mirrors, reflecting one's own experiences, windows with views of different experiences than one's own, or sliding glass doors, where children can step into another world, real or imagined. According to Willett (1995), when children see themselves represented in books, it contributes to a positive self-image and reaffirms

their worth and value. Bishop (1997) stated the following five purposes for utilizing diverse literature:

- Provide knowledge or information
- Change students' perspectives
- Promote and develop cultural appreciation
- Encourage critical inquiry
- Provide enjoyment and highlight the universal human experience.

The role of multicultural teacher education is to improve future relationships between teachers and students (Jetton and Savage-Davis, 2005). Using inclusive literature is one way to teach educators to be culturally responsive teachers (Casto, 2020).

### **Racial Inequities in Schooling in the United States of America**

Teacher-education programs have a lack of training in culturally diverse teaching; thus, they are not preparing preservice teachers with effective methods to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population in public schools (Allen et al., 2017). Preservice teacher education courses should be utilizing and teaching pedagogy that addresses racism and other social justice issues (Hartsfield, 2021).

In the first years of teaching, new teachers do not have time to do all the necessary tasks to prepare themselves to teach in a multicultural world. These tasks include research, find materials and resources, read about different types of curricula and instruction, and learn about racism and social justice issues (Hartsfield, 2021), which leaves a limited amount of time to learn about minority populations. Preservice teachers frequently blame culturally diverse students' failure and academic deficits on lower family expectations of academic performance (Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2021).

### **Lack of Representation**

There is a lack of representation in the "classic" books used in classrooms. Larrick (1965) shared that it is hard to find diversity in children's books. This lack of diversity affects students of color and, perhaps more negatively, White children. "There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, instead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books" (Larrick, 1965, p. 63). Multicultural children's literature focuses on the cultural, social, and economic experiences in underrepresented groups (Norton, 2009). Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been fighting for classroom books that are fair, non-racist, and individualized (Hartsfield, 2021).

Jipson and Paley (1991) noted that when selecting texts, teachers frequently overlooked or ignored books about women, people of minority races, ethnicities, and social classes. Instead, teachers tended to feature books with primarily White male authors and characters. The imbalance or the lack of diverse literature presented students with a conceptually biased, culturally limited, and incorrect view of humankind (Jipson & Paley, 1991). They analyzed why teachers selected the children's books used in their classrooms. Forty-five percent of books are chosen for personal reasons, while 37% of teachers explained that they selected their text because it was a personal favorite of the teacher or their students. Four percent of their books were chosen because they won national book awards or were "children's classics." Another 4% were selected because of the illustrations (Jipson & Paley, 1991).

Teachers are not selecting diverse, inclusive literature due to suggested book lists, such as Common Core Reading Lists and America's Battle of the Books lists, which lack diversity (Hartsfield, 2021). Gomez Najarro (2020) found on the *Common Core Reading* list for grades two through three, almost half the books have a White main character, and nearly half have a main character that is an animal. Only 15% of the books had a main character who was a person of color. Eighty-five percent of the books had a main character that was male (Gomez-Najarro, 2020). Many suggested book lists include titles with older copyright dates. *America's Battle of the Books* third-grade reading list included 15 books. Of those, 9 were published between 1956 and 1998, and 3 between 2003 and 2007. The last 3 were published in 2011, 2012, and 2017 (Hartsfield, 2021). Fewer books with diverse populations were represented because the lists included older copyright dates. When the lists are updated, diverse literature may still be left out due to lack of realization

and information or to avoid controversy (Hartsfield, 2021). For example, on March 2, 2021, Penguin Random House LLC (2021) shared that they were ceasing the publication and licensing of six books. The reasoning was to portray and uphold all communities and families. This "...provoked an uproar, as many rushed to defend Dr. Seuss or decry what they saw as banning books" (Hartsfield, 2021, p. 3), even though most of the books depicted negative stereotypes of people of color.

Crisp (2016) reported that "the world depicted in children's books is overwhelmingly White. It is also a world predominantly upper middle class, heterosexual, nondisabled, English-speaking, and male." Crisp (2016) found that only 5.7% of classroom libraries featured one leading character or subject of a racial minority; 2.7% had leading characters or subjects with dis/abilities, developmental differences, and/or chronic illnesses. Also, male characters were represented twice as frequently as female characters (Crisp, 2016). "...when there are female characters, the books rarely reflect diverse groups of women of various cultures, faiths, and sexual orientations. Moreover, they are portrayed through stereotypes that perpetuate views of females as nurturers" (Gomez-Najarro, 2020, p. 396).

### **Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors**

Research into inclusive and diverse children's literature has grown due to the lack of representation in books over the years. Representation "refers to underlying messaging about social identity groups within and through children's literature" (Hartsfield, 2021, p. 377). Bishop (1990) noted that books can act as mirrors, reflecting our own experiences; windows, with views of different experiences than ours; or sliding glass doors, where we can step into another world, real or imagined. Furthermore, "When children cannot find themselves in books, or when they see themselves presented only as laughable stereotypes, they learn a powerful lesson about how much they are undervalued in the society in which they are a part" (Bishop, 1990, p.5). Students need to see books represented as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to encourage empathy, cultivate compassion, and unify understanding.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **History of Characters and Depictions in Literature**

Hartsfield (2021) defined children's literature as "literature, including picture books, novels, nonfiction, graphic novels, and poetry written for children" (p. 101). Children's literature began in the 1800s, when Puritan primers were used to educate children about their social stature and norms in the United States and England. Children's literature was only for the middle class at this time, dismissing all others. By the mid 19th century, the only schools available to poor children were factory schools, which focused on teaching students how to read (Botelho & Rudman, 2009).

Historically, African Americans and Asian Americans have been missing from children's literature. When they were represented, they were often misrepresented with stereotypes, anti-Blackness, and sometimes even racial slurs (Hartsfield, 2021). In a study conducted from 1962-1964 by Larrick (1965), of 5206 children's trade books from 63 publishers, only 349 included a Black character. While some garner literary merit, four Black librarians rated 149 books as excellent and 13 as objectionable that poorly portrayed Black persons in text or illustrations (Larrick, 1965). When Black characters did appear in children's books, they were often exaggerated or stereotypically negative (Larrick, 1965).

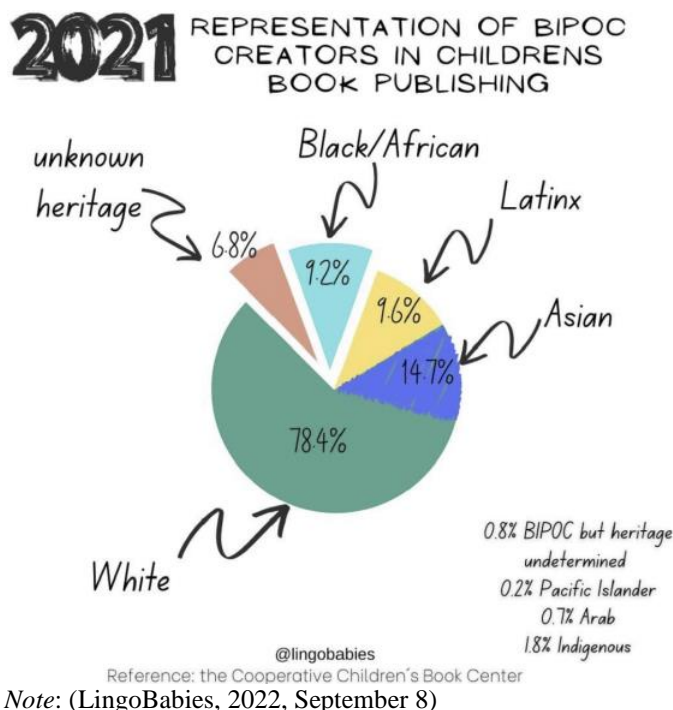
African American children's literature has developed throughout history and Bishop (2012) created a framework to include three distinct groups: socially conscious books (White readers encouraged to learn about social inaction and their responsibility to improve), culturally conscious books (illustrate the unique Black American culture and universal human experience), and image makers (authors who were fundamental to 20th century Black American children's literature). This framework has been used since by researchers of other marginalized groups (Bishop, 2012).

### **Publishing History**

John Newbery pioneered children's book publishing and sales, beginning in 1744, by writing books that entertained children while providing information to parents (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Children's

books promoted the American Dream and the goal of achieving affluence (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). At the end of the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie increased children’s accessibility to books with the opening of public libraries in the United States (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). However, the audience for the majority of books were set in a White world and were read by White children (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). *Figure 1* shows 2021 data: 78.4% of publishers are White, with the remaining 21.6% divided between publishers who are Black/African, Latinx, Asian, unknown heritage and BIPOC heritage undetermined, Pacific Islander, Arab and Indigenous (LingoBabies, 2022, August 3).

**FIGURE 1**  
**REPRESENTATION OF BIPOC CREATORS IN CHILDREN’S BOOK PUBLISHING**



**Current State of Literature**

According to the American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom, there were 729 challenges to library, school, and university materials and services in 2021, which resulted in more than 1,597 individual book challenges or removals. A challenged book is “a book that has been the subject of a formal complaint; challenges may disagree with the book’s ideology, its suitability for the targeted age group, or the content, among other reasons” (Hartsfield, 2021, p. 253). Books written by or about Black or LGBTQIA+ people are being banned the most (American Library Association, 2022). LGBTQ+ is “an acronym standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and other gender identities and sexual orientations” (Hartsfield, 2021, p. 64).

The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC), School of Education, University of Wisconsin Madison, has documented the progress of representation of racial, ethnic, LGBTQ+, dis/ability populations, and more. Every year, the CCBC completes an analysis of books published that year, noting character representation and the author’s racial and/or ethnic identity (CCBC, 2022). According to the CCBC in *Figure 2*, 33% of children’s books received in 2021 have a main character or a significant secondary character that is White, while 10% have a main character or a significant secondary character who is Black. Only 5% of books have at least one Latinx main character or a significant secondary character, and 3% have at least one main character or a significant secondary character with a disability. However, 29% of

books have a main character or a significant secondary character who is an animal or “other” (LingoBabies, 2022, August 3).

**FIGURE 2  
REPRESENTATIONS**



*Note:* (LingoBabies, 2022, August 3)

Multicultural literature is central to student learning and fostering culturally responsive practices. Multicultural literature is “about racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the White Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States, whose largely middle-class values and customs are most represented in American literature” (Norton, 2011, p. 73).

Teacher demographics do not currently match the increasingly diverse student population. Teachers will continue to work with students whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds differ from their own. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using ethnically diverse students’ cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as conduits for teaching them more effectively. This is a necessary framework that all preservice teachers need to study and understand (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) examined the following five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching:

1. Develop knowledge base about cultural diversity;
2. Include ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum;
3. Demonstrating caring and building learning communities;
4. Communicate with ethnically diverse students; and
5. Respond to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.

Preservice teachers must be prepared to critically analyze important issues, such as how race and culture shape the learning experience for many students. In teacher educator programs, preservice teachers should learn to use practices that have relevance and meaning to students’ social and cultural realities (Howard, 2003). To foster culturally-responsive practices, preservice teachers must learn how to best teach students from diverse backgrounds and promote diversity competencies. Preservice teachers should be required to take college courses focusing on multicultural literature to learn how to integrate it into their future curriculum (Iwai, 2019). Preservice teachers often lack knowledge of how to use multicultural literature (Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2021). Multicultural literature will help improve preservice teachers’ diversity cognizance and deepen their understanding and abilities to apposite culturally responsive teaching (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005).

Preservice teachers struggle with the concepts or beliefs of social justice and the teacher's role in relaying open-minded values to students. To help with this, preservice teachers can evaluate their experiences, practices, and beliefs in a supportive space. They can share classroom struggles, beliefs, and teaching methods to achieve social justice. Examination of social justice-oriented and multicultural children's literature helped professional learning communities understand social justice, action, and functions within cultural teaching forums (Burke & Collier, 2017).

### **Frameworks and Tools That Have Contributed to the Development of Our Framework**

Many frameworks and tools contributed to developing the Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature (Figure 4). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) creates a social justice framework to support academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. This can then be used to examine and understand how race, power, and privilege play a role in the context of schools. Preservice teachers must gain skills in critical reflection and critical consciousness to deconstruct the existing social order and support CRP to prepare teachers (Allen et al., 2017).

Ladson-Billings (1995b) followed eight teachers through interviews, in-person classroom observations, videotapes of the classrooms, and group analysis of videotaped classrooms. The teachers were selected as excellent teachers by parents and administration alike. This continual dialogue among the participating teachers allowed for reflection and growth. Encouraging academic achievement along with cultural competence can be a challenge. The author found that using positive reinforcement of leadership capabilities spread to others in the classes. When done with sensitivity, social justice can be successfully implemented. Teachers in the study: "believed that all the students were capable of academic success, saw their pedagogy as art-unpredictable, always in the process of becoming, saw themselves as members of the community, saw teaching as a way to give back to the community" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 478). Ladson-Billings's interest is to challenge deficit paradigms for Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Philosophically, teachers: maintain student-teacher relationships, demonstrate a rapport with all students, develop a learning community, encourage students to learn collaboratively, and be responsible for each other (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). To build on Ladson-Billings's (1995b) work, we also used Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) which stated that teachers should acknowledge past research while valuing students' cultural experiences in creating our framework (Paris, 2012).

When preservice teachers' critical reflection and consciousness skills are established, they need to examine teaching from perspectives of diverse learners (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These skills will make preservice teachers more prepared, confident, and successful than those with little or no diversity training (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Teacher education is more effective when creating more tightly integrated programs with extended clinical preparation, more coursework on teaching, and more discussion of diversity in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Preservice teachers should intentionally select texts for instruction to increase student engagement and success. Additionally, preservice teachers should select children's literature that offers stories about diversity and the struggles faced by marginalized families. Preservice teachers' efforts to incorporate culturally relevant texts into teaching cycles can improve their cultural competence (Christ & Sharma, 2018).

Papola-Ellis (2020) prepared future educators for teaching a culturally and linguistically diverse population by requiring preservice teachers to compose annotated bibliographies of children's texts based on each preservice teacher's choice of topics to increase understanding of the connections between children's texts and social justice. When preservice teachers collaboratively learned, discussed, reflected on, and planned lessons for students from various backgrounds, they increased awareness and gained positive perspectives. Preservice teachers benefited from collaborative work that analyzed and integrated multicultural children's literature (Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2021).

Education programs have created stronger, more adequate programs by adding three critical components: firstly, tight cohesion and integration between coursework and clinical work in schools; secondly, extensive and closely supervised clinical work with course work that links theory and practice; thirdly, closer relationships with schools that serve diverse learners and model good teaching practices.


Education programs should resist pressures to limit or simplify preparation, which weakens the preparation of teachers, the strength of schools of education, and the profession's integrity (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Hartsfield (2021) recommended critical reflection to incorporate equity and social justice issues into teaching practices and strategies. She further outlined considerations for critical reflection and culturally relevant teaching for teacher education, arguing that the development of culturally relevant teaching strategies is contingent upon critical reflection about the race and culture of teachers and their students. In teacher educator programs, teachers need to learn to use practices relevant to students' social and cultural realities (Howard, 2003). Bercaw and Collins (2007) shared that preservice teachers should start by examining their own beliefs about others by critically discussing culturally relevant children's literature.

Preservice teachers should start by examining their beliefs about others by critically discussing culturally relevant children's literature. Students explore and discuss the notion of discussion filters, based on what they believe is acceptable in various situations, such as sharing what one thinks the instructor wants to hear or what one thinks is politically correct. The awareness of the discussion filter may lead preservice teachers to a deeper analysis of their own thinking and a deeper understanding of cultural norms that influence their and others' perceptions (Bercaw & Collins, 2007).

One tool that contributed to the Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature was the Reading Diversity Lite: A Tool for Selecting Diverse Text from Learning for Justice - *Figure 3* (2016). This tool allows users to analyze texts for multiple dimensions of diversity while highlighting critical literacy and responsiveness, and text complexity.

**FIGURE 3**  
**READING DIVERSITY LITE: A TOOL FOR SELECTING DIVERSE TEXT**



**READING DIVERSITY LITE (TEACHER'S EDITION): A TOOL FOR SELECTING DIVERSE TEXTS**  
Use this checklist to enhance reading diversity in your classroom.

Title	Author	Grade level	Lexile score
1. What voices does this text include in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, ability, religion, place, immigration status or LGBT identity? Do the identities or experiences of the author(s), illustrator(s), character(s), speaker(s) or narrator(s) contribute to students' diverse reading experiences?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does this text accurately reflect lived experiences in terms of setting, characters, speakers, events, language and illustrations?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Consider the author's attitudes, beliefs and point of view. Do they promote inclusion and equality?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does the content perpetuate or rely on stereotypes, generalizations or misrepresentations? (Note: A text may address a stereotype without relying on it.)			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Consider the gaps and silences. Are certain people or groups left out or given only a silent or insubstantial role?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Are certain questions or issues related to the topic omitted?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does this text pair well with other texts that students encounter at school, home, in the media and through cultural transmission?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Consider the historical, social and cultural context in which the text was written. Is the text relevant now?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Does this text mirror the identities and experiences of my students?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
9. Might this text be a window into the identities and experiences of people whose lives are different than my students' lives?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Does this text connect with the interests and concerns of my students?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Does this text relate to and build upon the knowledge my students bring with them?			
			YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
12. Does this text work toward goals within the four domains of anti-bias education:			
			<b>Identity:</b> Promote a healthy self-concept and exploration of identity YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			<b>Diversity:</b> Foster intergroup understanding YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			<b>Justice:</b> Raise awareness of prejudice and injustice YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			<b>Action:</b> Motivate students to act by highlighting individual and collective struggles against injustice YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
13. How might this text motivate, engage or enable my students?			
I will use this text in my instruction to [indicate task].			
I will not use this text in my instruction because [indicate reason].			

A book’s author and illustrator contribute to students’ diverse reading experiences. Parts of a text can accurately reflect their lived experiences, with the author promoting inclusivity and equality. Texts can serve as a window and a mirror for different students, and they can connect students’ interests and concerns.

**Methods**

In our research, we reviewed texts used by preservice teacher education courses and current teachers working in the field. We began our search by using the keyword phrases “culturally responsive pedagogy,” “teacher education”, and “children’s literature” in an advanced search in the university library’s online public access catalog. This resulted in foundational articles. Backward citation searching these articles provided a wider perspective of the history of children’s literature and publishing, which led to the lack of access and diversity in children’s literature.

When we started reviewing previous studies, we found many mentions of race and ethnicity. We developed our framework to broaden the factors considered when selecting texts. Thinking of diversity in all forms contributed to the different dimensions to include in the framework (Figure 4). We consulted Social Justice Books for inclusive examples of texts (Booklists, n.d.).

**Findings**

**FIGURE 4  
MULTIDIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE LITERATURE**





## Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature

The outside circle contains the eight categories of diverse literature. Moving inwards to the next circle gives examples of each category. The third circle from the outside names a children's picture book representing the category. For this article, we will be using the following description of each category:

- **Economic Class** measures a person's household income (Kapsos & Bourmpoula, 2013). These classes are based on family finances and household incomes. Examples of the economic class include the upper class (wealthy), middle class (average income), and lower class (poverty level). The book chosen is *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi, a story about a young boy and his father who had to get up early in the morning to fish for their day's food, unlike other families who fished for pleasure.
- **Disability** is a continually changing term that defines the body or mind as limited or restricted physically or mentally. The limitations may disrupt life's activities (Hartsfield, 2021). Examples of a disability include Autism Spectrum Disorder, Blind, Cerebral Palsy, deaf, Down syndrome, mental health challenges, and neurodivergence. The book selected as an example is *I Talk Like a River* by Jordan Scott, a picture book about a boy with a stutter who gains confidence from walks by the river with his dad (Scott, 2020).
- **Race** is a local, geographic, or global human population distinguished as a distinct group by physical and cultural characteristics that are perceived to be similar within the racial group (San Diego Mesa University, 2015). The United States of America federal government recognizes these races: White, Black or African American, American Indian, and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races (Jones et al., 2021). We selected *An American Story* by Kwame Alexander, which tells the story of a teacher who begins a discussion about slavery with her class (Alexander, 2023).
- **Ethnicity** is a category of people who identify with each other based on presumed commonalities such as genealogy, ancestry, language, history, society, culture, or nation (Mersha & Abebe, 2015). Ethnicities include Arab, Dutch, French, Han Chinese, Hmong, Irish, Japanese, Jewish, Korean, Swedish, Greek, Caribbean, and Hutu. We selected *An American Story* by Kwame Alexander, which tells the story of a teacher who begins a discussion about slavery with her class (Alexander, 2023).
- **Family Structure** has been defined as families related by genetics, marriage, law and/or living in the same residence (Tillman & Nam, 2008). Examples of family structure include traditional (married parents of the opposite sex), nontraditional (same-sex parents), single parent, and extended family (grandparents, cousins, friends). The book chosen as an example of family structure is *Love* by Matt de la Pena, a story that focuses on love's role in our lives (de la Pena, 2018).
- **LGBTQ+** is "an acronym standing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and other gender identities and sexual orientations" (Hartsfield, 2021, p. 64). Examples of additional gender identities and sexual orientations include male, female, transgender, gender neutral, non-binary, agender, pangender, genderqueer, two-spirit, and third gender. The book chosen as an example of LGBTQ+ is *Sharice's Big Voice*, a picture book autobiography by U.S. Congresswoman Sharice Davids, and how she overcame obstacles to becoming the first LGBTQ person to represent Kansas in the U.S. Congress (Davids, 2021).
- **Religion** is "a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Religion is the service or worship of God or the supernatural" (Paul & Treschuk, 2020, p. 107). Examples of religion include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Jainism, Baha'i, Native and Spirituality. The book chosen as an example of religious diversity is *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad, a story about two Muslim sisters on their first day in an American school who are criticized for wearing traditional clothing such as a hijab (Muhammad, 2019).
- **Non-dominant Culture** are cultural groups that have less societal power (Hartsfield, 2021). Examples of non-dominant culture include homelessness, incarceration, and immigrant or

refugee status. The book chosen as an example of non-dominant culture is *Mango, Abuela, and Me* by Meg Medina, an intergenerational story in which a child and her grandmother teach each other languages and stories of the past (Medina, 2015).

- **Physical Features & Appearances** are traits of a human's body that are visual for others to see (White, n.d.). Examples of physical features and appearances include different ages, body shapes and types, health, height, looks, physical disabilities, and weight. It also includes how one feels about one's body and physical appearance concerning acceptance. The book chosen as an example is *Big* by Vashti Harrison, an encouraging picture book about a girl who accepts herself despite harmful words (Harrison, 2023).

## IMPLICATIONS OF FRAMEWORK

By using the Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature (*Figure 4*), preservice teachers can analyze and select books for their future classrooms. When considering a children's book, they should determine if it includes at least one of the eight categories of diverse literature: Economic Class, Disability, Ethnicity/Race, Family Structure, LGBTQ+, Religion, Non Dominant Culture, or Physical Features and Appearances. Preservice teachers can use the Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature (*Figure 4*) to see explanations of each category and to find examples of books to use. This framework guides preservice teachers to consider how their book selections represent multidimensional inclusive literature. If the book doesn't include at least one of the eight categories, they should critically consider why they chose the title and how it benefits their students.

On a building or district level, the Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature (*Figure 4*) can be used to audit a classroom or school library. Auditing school or classroom libraries provides staff data to inform future purchases. Using the framework, school librarians and classroom teachers can analyze their collections to ensure that all students are represented in the books they see and use in their learning. The Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature (*Figure 4*) can also aid school librarians in developing culturally relevant school library collections.

### Additional Considerations

Preservice teachers should also consider the diversity in their future classrooms. For example, suppose the school district has a Latinx dominant population. In that case, they should have several books available with Latinx protagonists so that more than one child at a time can read a book that has a character to whom they can relate—someone who may look or live as they do.

The Multidimensional Framework for Inclusive Literature should be revisited regularly to adjust classroom literature based on societal needs.

## CONCLUSION

Using a broad selection of appropriately diverse literature is a major step in creating a classroom that honors the diverse population of students and creates a welcoming, accepting atmosphere. Children who find stories reflecting their experience feel seen and valued. Varied classroom literature also opens minds, extends knowledge, and increases compassion by allowing children to learn about their classmates' cultures and experiences. The framework (*Figure 4*) provides preservice teachers with a means to review children's books to ensure that their use of literature is varied, sensitive, and reflective of diversity. Taking time to analyze current teaching to ensure integration will pay dividends throughout students' lives as they contribute to the world, sustainability, and justice (Sipos et al., 2008).

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