

Millersville University

Examining the Relationship Between Diverse Children's Literature and Students' Ability to
Navigate Social and Emotional Learning

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Abstract

This thesis provides analysis regarding the strong relationship between diverse children's literature and its ability to build social and emotional learning (SEL) skills in the elementary classroom. It will examine fifteen highly awarded, diverse picture books based on a specially designed checklist unique to this thesis. Themes presented in diverse children's picture books often allow educators and young readers to recognize and build upon their SEL skills. The study addresses these top fifteen picture books and brings awareness to the idea that a classroom library is broad and unique to the teacher and the set of students. It is crucial that students are presented with opportunities to see themselves and new perspectives in children's books located in their classroom, as these opportunities lead to the ability to better understand and navigate SEL competencies.

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Introduction

In our ever-changing technological world, books in the early elementary classroom are being overlooked, along with the life and problem-solving skills that they teach (Carstens et al., 2021). Students head to their iPads or Chromebooks before they want to pick up a book and let their imagination run wild. Part of this issue could be that individual students simply are unable to connect to the books in their classroom libraries or that books do not share current social stories that could occur in their classrooms.

Reading not only develops language and literature skills but also allows students to grow in other areas of childhood development. Teachers have explicit reading instruction built into the school day, but this is often not enough exposure to quality books for developing students. Daily, independent reading time gives students the freedom to explore literature and find what interests them.

Independent reading completed in the environment of a classroom library increases the probability of students becoming lifelong learners (International Literacy Association, 2018). Literature, specifically diverse literature, opens doors for students and allows for shifts in perspective, knowledge, and development. Diverse children's literature allows students to better understand perspectives beyond their classroom walls and work through social and emotional changes that occur throughout their development. These perspectives can be understood through the lens of a mirror, window, and sliding glass door (Bishop, 1990, ix). Students can pick up a book and see themselves as the main character or imagine a completely new world within the pages of a book. This door to imagination gives students the ability to gain a new perspective and potentially gain the capacity to relate what they are reading to real-life scenarios inside and outside the classroom.

As a future educator, I have been reminded of the importance of literature's role in the classroom throughout my entire life. The more I research in the field of literature, the more I can see the parallels between social and emotional learning (SEL) and themes presented in diverse books in classroom libraries. These apparent parallels give insight into the power a book can have on students when understanding how they develop on a social and emotional level. Diverse literature allows students to see themselves in books, understand the world outside of their classroom, and explore differences in cultures and societies, further building their skills in social and emotional development. These skills include self-management, self-awareness, relationship skills, decision-making, and social awareness (CASEL, 2025). Children's literature and the themes throughout diverse books can model, teach, and provide new experiences for the reader when it comes to SEL.

This thesis examines how diversity seen throughout children's books can assist in the building of SEL skills in elementary students. SEL competencies allow both teachers and students to regulate multiple disciplines of childhood development in the classroom and ultimately relate to the academic success and well-being of the whole child (Positive Action, 2020). Books allow students to see their unique and individual selves, ultimately affecting how they manage social and emotional challenges. When children are exposed to both familiar and unfamiliar perspectives, they can develop resources to overcome these challenges by utilizing social and emotional skills (Positive Action, 2020). Through the investigation of multiple diversity-themed books analyzed through a specific diversity and SEL checklist, this project studies the ability of diverse children's literature to build students' social and emotional skills in a developmentally appropriate manner. The checklist and the findings present six books that correspond with the five SEL competencies as a resource for educators when building SEL skills

in the classroom. It also acts as a resource for educators and parents, as they can pick a children's book and complete the rating scale themselves to better understand its ability to teach and promote SEL skills.

Children's Literature

The Library of Congress (LOC) defines “Children’s Literature” as “material written and produced for the information or entertainment of children and young adults. This includes material in all non-fiction, literary, and artistic genres in physical and digital formats” (LOC, 2022, para. 1). Throughout this thesis, the literature that will be reviewed consists of physical picture books designed for readers in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. Children’s literature is mostly contained in individual classroom libraries in elementary schools. This reality allows educators to focus their attention on their libraries when looking to develop the SEL skills of students in their classrooms.

In a study published by the National Library of Medicine (2020), researchers divided children’s literature into three dimensions. These categories consisted of pedagogic, didactic, and therapeutic dimensions (Pulimeno et al., 2020). The pedagogic dimension studies children’s literature as a narrative tool and brings in the topic of society affecting education (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Analyzing books in this dimension also connects to societal tales that “share experiences, customs, norms, and values, providing the listeners with entertainment and new knowledge” through a cultural perspective (Pulimeno et al., 2020, p. 1). These tales are best represented through fairy tales in the classroom library.

The didactic dimension conveys the importance of reading and listening to literature as a way to enhance verbal proficiency and understand social relationships and everyday problems (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Children may pick up a book solely based on its illustrations or title, but

they could also gain a meaningful didactic experience. Finally, the therapeutic dimension represents the idea that as children learn new knowledge through a book, they also gain emotional support as they flip through its pages (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Looking back at the LOC's definition of “Children’s Literature,” a book must entertain and inform, but it is also a form of art. Literature as an expression of art allows students to feel empowered and motivated “...through its role in promoting students’ holistic development and wellbeing” (Pulimeno et al., 2020, p. 1).

Educators can consider these dimensions as they build their classroom libraries. With a thorough understanding of children’s overall development in pedagogic, didactic, and therapeutic dimensions, teachers can create an organized and concise library that addresses the needs of every student.

Classroom libraries should allow students access to books that they may not have outside of the classroom, and the more children are introduced to books, the more they are encouraged to practice reading. Research from the National Assessment of Education Progress Report (2015) shares that “...students have more positive attitudes toward reading when they have been exposed to classrooms with classroom libraries” (Rice & Richardson, 2022, p. 63). This data, along with the information shared in the study by the National Library of Medicine (2020), reflects the need for diverse books and classroom libraries. It also reminds teachers to intentionally choose books for their library, as the literature directly impacts SEL understanding and academic performance (Rice & Richardson, 2022).

Diversity in Children’s Literature

Two key elements in current elementary education curriculum are diversity and multicultural considerations, both in literature and through integration into lesson plans in the

classroom. Diversity in literature can represent and include, explore diverse experiences and identities, and reflect the real world (ALA, 2015). It also has the unique ability to place emphasis on underrepresented perspectives, experiences, and voices that might not be heard without the aspect of literature. It is the educator's job to create a safe and secure learning environment for students to implement ideas related to social-emotional learning, and this can be achieved through the diversity of books in a classroom library. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) holds educators to a standard when it comes to equity and diversity, which ensures that students are supported in an environment that focuses on diversity as a strength, upholds values of justice, and continually works on eliminating structural inequalities (NAEYC, 2019). NAEYC describes diversity through its five foundational documents. These include Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, Code of Ethical Conduct, Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards (NAEYC, 2019).

NAEYC describes specific standards and core values for educators, parents, the general public, and professionals. It does not directly emphasize the need for diversity in children's literature but provides an outline of how professionals working with young students should foster and encourage diversity. One method of meeting these standards is to provide diverse literature options in a classroom library to better represent all students.

The need for diverse literature is grounded in the research of a few key early childhood theorists. John Dewey, Frederick Froebel, and Elliot Eisner each determined that the curriculum directed at students must be meaningful for learning to take place (Garces-Bacsal, 2022). No two students will be the same in a classroom, which emphasizes the need for diversity when it comes

to curriculum and literature. The terms mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors create a framework that connects these elements of diversity to the individual student. This framework, developed by Rudine Sims Bishop in 1990, helps students engage in a deeper connection with the text and themselves. Books can be windows for students, as they are continually “offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange” (Bishop, 1990, ix). A window in literature can also be perceived as a sliding glass door when readers “walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author” (Bishop, 1990, ix). Bishop explains that a mirror can be found when the “lighting conditions are just right” (Bishop, 1990, ix), and the human experience can be reflected back to the student.

A mirror as an object reflects exactly what is placed in front of it, and it does the same through its framework in literature: text that reflects what a student looks like, is going through, or connects with allows for representation in the classroom. Teachers can experiment with a variety of texts to form these deeper connections for students in the classroom library (Waller & Sullivan, 2023). A window allows for the reader to understand a new perspective and expand their thinking, similarly to looking out a window and seeing a new landscape. Readers have the ability to learn about different cultures, locations around the world, ways of life, and people who may look different than them. Finally, a sliding glass door allows for a change in perspective but also moves and represents how a student can be shaped by a book that they have read. They can open a book, read it, and close it, having gained a new outlook on a specific landscape in the literature.

Teachers can easily observe the characteristics of their class year to year, and libraries can be altered to provide adequate mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to connect to readers. It allows for a broader classification of diversity in literature and can be personalized for reading

level, class demographic, and current events. It is often through mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors in books that “...we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human” (Bishop, 1990, xi).

The element of diversity seen in children’s literature has a clear and direct link to social-emotional learning throughout all stages of education. Students can gain a new perspective about themselves or the world around them when they read literature that contains components of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. They are then able to take this new perspective with them as they face real-world social and emotional obstacles. There are diverse books that promote each of the five SEL competencies, which are later defined, in and outside of the classroom, and it is the role of the classroom teacher to provide the resources for students to flourish in these areas of development.

SEL in Early Childhood Education

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has become a standard for SEL competencies throughout the country. Founded in 1994, this growing movement has been a voice in the SEL field, as its principles are shared with students, educators, and professionals throughout the education field and beyond (CASEL, 2025). CASEL uses a familiar framework, known as the “CASEL wheel,” which describes unique competencies and settings that a person will encounter (CASEL, 2025). The five key components include self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness, with possible environments including classrooms, schools, families and caregivers, and communities (CASEL, 2025).

The first element of SEL is self-awareness, which is “the ability to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts” (CASEL, 2025,

Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students who develop this ability can recognize their own strengths and limitations, identify emotions, and establish a growth mindset (CASEL, 2025). They can also better cope with adverse situations when they understand and truly know themselves. In the classroom, self-awareness can be discussed in several different scenarios.

A daily check-in and “I Wonder” statements allow students to tap into their inner feelings and prepare for a new school day (Curley, 2021). “I wonder” statements can be used in morning meetings as the teacher facilitates the question to warm up students' brains. These statements may be “I wonder how we are doing this morning” or “I wonder how our brains are feeling” (Curley, 2021, paras. 25-27). These open-ended statements are a risk-free way for students to share with the class and connect with their individual minds and bodies as they continue to build self-awareness. Mindfulness is another way to incorporate self-awareness into the classroom on a daily basis (Curley, 2021). It reminds students that it is beneficial to take a minute to tap into their awareness of their body, both mentally and physically. When students are in a positive mental and physical space, they get the most out of their learning.

Self-management is “the abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Some examples of self-management include managing emotions, setting goals, planning, and showing self-discipline and self-motivation (CASEL, 2025). These skills can be more complex for younger elementary students to fully grasp and implement in the classroom, and teachers need to implement strategies for self-management early on in the school year.

Students may need strategies to cope with big feelings and express how they are feeling. Feelings color charts can be made to associate colors with feelings and then suggest coping

strategies when students are experiencing more significant feelings (Curley, 2021). Another way for students to regulate their behavior is by using their five senses (Curley, 2021). When they focus on a single sense and pick out a sight, smell, noise, feeling, or taste, they eliminate outside stressors and bring the attention back to their own body. Students can also struggle when it comes to management and academics. They might be unorganized, not completing their work on time, or forgetting to bring important items home. Teachers can create a routine checklist for these students to follow so that they can visually see what they are in charge of to continue to manage elements outside of their individual bodies.

The third component, responsible decision-making, is defined by CASEL as “the abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students may demonstrate this ability by showing curiosity, identifying solutions for problems, recognizing critical thinking skills, and reflecting on their individual roles in different conditions (CASEL, 2025). Students are faced with decisions every single day, both inside and outside of the classroom. This competency allows students to think through choices and understand the impact of positive and negative options.

Students might be seen in the classroom jumping to an incorrect answer without showing work or not choosing to do the right thing as a member of a classroom community. The acronym “T.H.I.N.K. before you speak” reminds students to think about their actions and the impact that they have not only on them but also on peers and adults around them (Curley, 2021). These letters stand for “Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it inspiring? Is it necessary? Is it kind?” (Curley, 2021, para. 23) and can be defined and modeled in the classroom. Students must also understand the concept of friendship and respect in the classroom, which can be difficult as many early

elementary schoolers are still in the egocentric stage, as described by Piaget (Kesselring & Müller, 2011). When they are asked to think about how they would feel in a specific situation, their decision to act may be different than what they originally portrayed.

Relationship skills are known as “the abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students will come into the classroom with multiple realms of relationships, and they will then need to add in the relationships at school with peers, teachers, and other adults. The component of diversity is also intertwined with building relationship skills, as students will come in contact with people who are very different from them. Students may act out if they do not fit in, or the exact opposite, by demonstrating timidity and separation from the classroom community. Morning meetings and classroom community rules can both be used to build relationship skills at an elementary level (Curley, 2021). In morning meetings, a sense of community is built through sharing personal stories and ideas and learning more about peers. Teachers can also explain the concept of a classroom community and how the shared classroom represents a family. Just like there are often family rules, there can be classroom community rules to establish trust, respect, and kindness towards each other and the objects and valuables in the classroom. There will be times when students will have conflicts with their relationships, and teachers can provide strategies for resolution when they face these conflicts. Students will have to use their skills of self-awareness to decide how to best share their feelings when solving a friendship issue.

Outside of the classroom, a student may also be experiencing difficult familial relations. Their parents may be going through a divorce, a new baby may be born, or they might have a sibling moving out or going to college. These life changes all affect the student's immediate

relationships and roles within the family. As the teacher, it might be necessary to hold one-on-one conversations to maintain a constant, trusted relationship with a student.

The final element, social awareness, is “the abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Social issues are not only found in the real world but are prevalent in schools and classrooms as well. Students who are building their social awareness are better able to understand those around them, even those who hold unique differences. The aspects of windows and sliding glass doors are also represented and constructed through the SEL competency of social awareness. In most cases, a student just has not grasped the idea of looking at situations from other perspectives and just needs to be educated. Students learn through modeling and practicing, and empathy and compassion are elements to teach in the classroom (Curley, 2021). This can look like showing respect to students and asking them to show the same respect back to the teacher and their peers. “How would you handle...” scenarios create sentence starters for deeper empathic conversations (Curley, 2021). In small groups, students may be asked, “How would you handle a classmate who has a physical disability and is always picked last to play kickball at recess?” (Curley, 2021, para. 26). Students can work together to brainstorm ideas for inclusion and build their classroom community.

The five components of SEL, as described by CASEL (2024), work together to develop the whole child. Teachers can create lesson plans, strategies, and activities to assist students in understanding these more complex elements, but it might not be enough. Through literature, students are able to see how these five elements truly affect a character, and when literature functions as a mirror, window, or sliding glass door, students are better connected not only to the text but also to the SEL competencies.

CASEL outlines these five competencies to assist young learners in better understanding SEL on multiple levels. However, SEL has begun to develop criticism in the world of education and culturally relevant teaching. SEL often brings up the concepts of race and racism, as the color of their classmates or media and literary characters' skin provides a surface-level example of diversity for young children. In a Pew Research Center study completed during the 2020-2021 school year, data shared that 80% of U.S. teachers were identified as non-Hispanic White (Schaeffer, 2024). This teacher population can lead to resistance when it comes to learning about race and Whiteness (Forman et al., 2021). In order for students to build culturally relevant SEL skills, their teachers must understand their SEL curriculum and what it is promoting. Curriculum such as RULER, which is an evidence-based approach to SEL, was created at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (RULER Approach, 2024). The program trains teachers to better understand the SEL competencies in the classroom, but fails to explicitly address the major topics of race and racism (Schaeffer, 2024).

Critiques of SEL, such as the neglect of race and Whiteness, are evident in classrooms around the world (Schaeffer, 2024). There are resources to better understand these topics, and this thesis works to present SEL teaching in a way that is culturally relevant and authentic for all students in the classroom. The research completed on diversity and SEL in children's literature, along with the data collected from this thesis, allows for an understanding that diverse children's literature can authentically promote SEL. Many of the books chosen for this project are defined as "OwnVoices" books, which is a term created by Corinne Duyvis, a young adult author (OSCL, 2022). The term describes books "about characters from underrepresented/marginalized groups in which the author shares the same identity" (OCLS, 2018, para. 1). This personal reflection seen within diverse books can speak to children about the topics of race and racism in an

authentic and child-friendly way, as opposed to some SEL curriculum, since they provide specific representation that the 80% of non-Hispanic White teachers are not able to share (Schaeffer, 2024).

Literature Checklists

There are multiple literature checklists that have been created by professionals to assist teachers as they understand the complexity of diversity and build their classroom library. The checklists created by Harper and Brand (2010) and Lee and Low (2017) were used to generate ideas for a new checklist combining diversity and SEL competencies. The Harper and Brand (2010) checklist allows educators and professionals to better understand what children should see when they open a book. This diversity-specific checklist was developed in 2010 to categorize, select, and evaluate multicultural literature. It asks questions such as “Are characters believable?”, “Does the story reflect a variety of places and times?” and “Do the illustrations and text convey characteristics common to all people and cultures?” (see Appendix A for the full checklist). Harper and Brand (2010) created an all-encompassing checklist with simple “yes” or “no” questions to evaluate multicultural literature in a classroom. It examines all literary elements, including characters, themes, authors and illustrators, lifestyles, lessons, and reflecting contexts that are familiar to the student.

The second checklist that inspired the original checklist used in this thesis study is the “Lee & Low Books Classroom Library Questionnaire” (2017). This is a more in-depth questionnaire that requires educators to take a step back and identify the extent of their culturally responsive and diverse classroom library. It also includes a continuum to assess if the library can be adjusted to better meet the concepts found in diverse books. It prompts educators to grade statements such as “The classroom library contains multiple books that include non-human,

anthropomorphic main characters” and “The classroom library contains some books that include misrepresentations of a group of people” (see Appendix B for the full checklist). Educators can then grade these statements with “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” The checklist is broken up into six main sections, and they dive into specific topics such as: race, culture, or stereotypes about a specific group of people.

The Diversity and SEL Checklist (Appendix C) created for this thesis takes elements from both Harper and Brand (2010) and Lee and Low (2017) to relate diverse children’s books to how they might be able to be used to develop students’ SEL skills inside and outside of the classroom. It uses the continuum found in the Lee & Low checklist (2017) to visualize what areas of improvement are needed in the classroom library. The Lee & Low checklist (2017) also inspired questions regarding non-human elements in the current checklist. The Harper and Brand (2010) checklist influenced the new checklist questions relating to emotions, locations, and timelines within picture books. The other checklist questions were curated through the knowledge of diverse literature and the five SEL competencies. These included questions about a potential mirror, window, or sliding glass door, and a solution to a possible real-life problem, which are concepts that relate to diversity in literature and recurring notions seen within SEL competency descriptions.

The checklist states the book’s name, author and illustrator, and the library where the specific book was located. The addition of the library where the book was located reminds educators and readers that award-winning, diverse picture books are readily available. There is also a section that includes the key SEL competency seen throughout the book as well as a key example of the competency as described by CASEL. It asks specific questions that relate to the diverse human characters, diverse settings, locations, and experiences, a common theme that is

present in many students' lives, the development of time and location, relative emotions, and solutions to possible real-world problems. These questions were developed after reading and understanding the two diverse literature checklists, and they allow educators to see directly how diverse books lead to the development of the five SEL competencies. There is also a comments section in the thesis checklist in order to relate the broader questions to the specific book. The comments strengthen the rating of the book and link the diverse literature elements to the SEL competencies.

Connecting Diversity and SEL Checklist to SEL Competencies

The first question from the created checklist asks, “Does the book include elements of human character diversity?” and can be found within aspects such as illustrations, character names, and character ages, as well as other diverse human features. Human character diversity in this checklist also describes various characters of different backgrounds who interact together within the story. This can include differences within their race, background, and interests. The question directly relates to all five of the SEL competencies and allows students to better understand characters who may look, act, and speak differently than themselves. *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* includes various races and ages of human characters (Maillard, 2019; see Appendix C, book 3). The story and illustrations allow readers to expand their understanding of human characters around the world.

The competency of self-awareness shines a light on personal and social identities, prejudices, and growth mindsets (CASEL, 2025). These concepts are present in a children’s book that includes elements of human character diversity. Understanding others’ perspectives and identifying diverse social norms are included under the competency of social awareness (CASEL, 2025). When a student reads a book about diverse human characters, they can take

another perspective and possibly see a new and diverse social norm. Relationship skills focus on developing positive relationships and teamwork, and a book that includes diverse characters working together builds students' understanding of diversity and this SEL competency (CASEL, 2025).

The specific element of displaying curiosity and open-mindedness from the responsible decision-making competency is also reflected through diverse human characters (CASEL, 2025). When students are exposed to new and diverse characters, they will begin to develop an appreciation and awareness of others. Self-management challenges students to set personal and collective goals, which can be supported through reading about diverse characters (CASEL, 2025). Students can see role models through diverse characters and can be prompted to take action after reading a piece of diverse children's literature.

The second checklist question brings in another element of diversity and asks, "Does the book include a diverse setting, timeline, or experience?" This question separates other diverse topics seen within the book from diverse human characters that might be portrayed. This checklist question allows the student to see diversity from a new perspective and expands their viewpoint of diversity within literature. *Last Stop on Market Street* describes a child's bus ride to the soup kitchen (De la Peña, 2015; see Appendix C, book 7). Along the way, he encounters unique ways of life that differ from what he is used to. The interactions allow him to expand his knowledge of the world around him in ways that are outside of human diversity.

This distinct question connects to self-awareness through the element of "integrating personal and social identities" as students may see connections to personal and societal diversity in the form of traditions, activities, and other ways of life (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). The book can connect and integrate new and diverse elements into the students'

understanding of the world around them. To address the competency of social awareness, this question connects to the element of identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones (CASEL, 2025). Diverse experiences can come across as a social norm in literature, and students can be made aware of what is just and unjust through reading.

These elements of diversity also relate to the competency of relationship skills, specifically demonstrating cultural competency (CASEL, 2025). Many of these diverse settings, timelines, and experiences hold cultural significance, and their presence in a larger community builds strong relationship skills, especially among young students. Similarly to the ability to demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness through diverse characters, diverse settings, timelines, and experiences reflect the same responsible decision-making attribute (CASEL, 2025). Readers are presented with the opportunity to learn about elements of diversity outside of characters and form decisions on what is right and wrong. The final competency of self-management is also discovered through these diverse elements in children's books. Students can see the impact that diverse settings, timelines, and experiences have on the main character, and the literature can challenge them to demonstrate both personal and collective agency (CASEL, 2025).

The checklist then asks, "Does the book include a theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)?" It is crucial for students to see themselves represented in a book. Since it is impossible to determine what a mirror, window, or sliding glass door will be for every individual student, this question looks for commonalities that are found in life, especially in young students' lives. A strong example of a commonality is seen in *Watercress* (Wang, 2021; see Appendix C, book 9). The main character is faced with feelings of embarrassment and isolation due to her culture. Students

may feel how the character feels at the beginning of the book, or at the end of the book, where she is feeling proud of her family, culture, and traditions.

This question directly connects to the first competency of self-awareness, as some of its focuses are “identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets” and “having a growth mindset” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students can identify elements that relate to them within the literature, but they can also use a growth mindset to understand other mindsets and ways of life that exist around the world. Social awareness practices include taking different perspectives, and a window and sliding glass door represent this change (CASEL, 2025).

The checklist question also corresponds to the SEL competency of relationship skills. Having the ability to stand up for others and to develop positive relationships can be built through reading books that present possible mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (CASEL, 2025). Students can build their responsible decision-making skills by “demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness” when they read diverse literature (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). The characters may present a new or familiar problem in the book, and students can better understand how to work through these issues. One key element of self-management is the ability to “demonstrate personal and collective agency”, and it correlates to commonalities in children’s literature (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students must understand that their personal choices ultimately relate to a larger group, and this is often the same for the main character or characters in a book.

The fourth question on the checklist is, “Does the book include elements of the story developing over a period of time?” An extended time frame in a book allows for character development, problems to be solved, relationships to be built, and changes to occur throughout the plot. The picture book *Grand Canyon* shares the developing age of the canyon in great detail,

and the information in the book spans billions of years (Chin, 2017; see Appendix C, book 4). Since understanding the developing world around you and taking on new perspectives, such as learning more about a well-known landmark of the United States, is connected in some way to each of the five competencies, this book fits into this diverse children's literature category. Students can better understand how our world has been shaped and changed over a large number of years and could potentially gain an appreciation for the beauty of our ever-changing planet.

Self-awareness includes the element of "Developing interests and a sense of purpose", which takes time within a book for characters to develop (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students might even find a new interest within a book and better understand the interest as the book progresses. When looking to connect this checklist question to social awareness, it is clear that the SEL competency focuses on understanding and identifying social norms, organizations, and systems of behavior (CASEL, 2025). These norms, organizations, and systems could potentially be a part of history or seen in the current world. Students can identify changes that have occurred in the world by reading books with a spread-out timeline.

"Developing positive relationships" is a key element in the relationship skills competency and one that often occurs over a longer period (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). It takes time to build relationships, and book characters can model strong relationships that build throughout a longer duration of time within the book. Responsible decision-making is focused on demonstrating, anticipating, and learning how to make sound judgments (CASEL, 2025). It often takes time in real life to make a strong decision, and when characters take the time to think their decisions through, it acts as a valuable lesson for young students. Finally, self-management is centered around a few key goals, one being the ability to set goals, both individually and for a

group (CASEL, 2025). When a book includes a goal in the beginning and illustrates how the main character reaches this goal, it reminds students that strong goals may take time to reach.

Next, “Does the book include elements of the story developing in multiple locations?” is presented on the checklist. This may include characters living in different areas, diverse locations outside of the country, or drastic changes in location for the main character. Children’s picture books may also include dreamlike illustrations, and these are included in the checklist rating. A high-ranking book for this checklist question would include multiple locations that enhance the reader's knowledge of the world. *I Am Every Good Thing* scored high on this question, as it includes a new and diverse location on every page, as well as illustrations of his engaging dreams (James, 2020; see Appendix C, book 8). The boy is seen interacting within his environment and shares with readers that dreams and passions can be achieved in virtually any environment.

One aspect of self-awareness is the ability to link and integrate personal and social identities (CASEL, 2025). To do this, the characters must be located in various settings to grasp potential social identities fully. Similarly to self-awareness, social awareness asks students to practice “recognizing situational demands and opportunities” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). This is mostly completed in various locations, and having a contrast between two or more locations allows for this element to shine through in a picture book.

Students can also build relationship skills when the literature includes various locations throughout the story. The ability to demonstrate cultural competence is a key aspect of this competency (CASEL, 2025). This allows students to understand their own worldviews and to be open to other cultures and perspectives around them. A book that includes diverse locations will allow readers to better understand how culture forms. “Reflecting on one’s role to promote

personal, family, and community well-being” is a part of the SEL competency of responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). As this skill involves individuals, family, and community, it must also be reflected in a book that includes these separate characters and locations. Self-management includes the concept of “demonstrating personal and collective agency” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Personal agency involves a character acting for themselves, but collective agency involves a group working towards a goal. Groups of characters can be from different houses, neighborhoods, or regions, as they work together for a collective goal, and diverse children’s literature can portray this.

The sixth question states, “Does the book include a representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?”. The emotions presented in books allow students to understand that emotions are real and normal, and they can even vary throughout the entirety of the book. Emotions arising from unfair situations are described throughout *How Do You Spell Unfair?: MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee* (Boston Weatherford, 2023; see Appendix C, book 10). The main character is faced with prejudice and separation due to the color of her skin. The book shines a light on the main character’s perseverance and unwavering ability to stand tall and proud of who she is and reminds students who are feeling the same emotions to do the same.

A key aspect of self-awareness is “identifying one’s emotions”, and the representation of emotions in a book allows children to identify their own emotions, either similar or different (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). When looking into the SEL competency of social awareness, some elements include understanding various emotions and showing consideration for others’ feelings (CASEL, 2025). Students will be better able to understand the emotions of those around them when they see a wide variety of emotions. Many children’s picture books also

include opposing emotions from different characters, which is a key part of practicing social awareness.

Relationship skills, according to CASEL, include effective communication, positive relationships, and practicing teamwork (CASEL, 2025). Emotions are tied to all of these examples, and books and illustrations can model how specific emotions might be represented in specific situations. Relationships are often built upon emotions, and the way characters handle and control their emotions determines how they collaborate and communicate. “Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness” could be considered an emotion in itself and is an important part of responsible decision-making when understanding SEL (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). Students can see a character with curiosity and better understand how it might impact how they choose to make or not make a decision. The fifth competency of self-management includes the practice of managing personal emotions (CASEL, 2025). A diverse picture book may include the character practicing the management of emotions in various ways, how to individually cope with big emotions, and techniques to assist students when it comes to self-management.

The final question on the checklist asks, “Does the book include a solution to a possible real-life problem?”. Students face problems daily, and understanding SEL skills as well as reading diverse literature allows them to work through solutions. In *Big*, the main character is faced with the real-life problem of bullying and learns how powerful other people’s words are (Harrison, 2023; see Appendix C, book 5). To stand up against the harsh words of others and teach young readers to do the same, the main character looks for good on the inside and embraces the concept of self-love to solve her problem.

When students work through self-awareness skills, they practice “linking feelings, values, and thoughts” (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). These features allow students to fully think through solutions, and characters can model the connection between feelings, values, and thoughts to find a solid solution to their problem. The social awareness skill of understanding just and unjust social norms also connects to this checklist question (CASEL, 2025). When book characters are faced with an unjust social norm within the book, they work through a series of solutions to solve the problem. Students can understand how this thinking process works and can apply it to their daily lives when finding solutions to a problem.

“Resolving conflicts constructively” is seen within the relationship skills competency, and relationship conflicts are a common and real-life problem in many students' lives (CASEL, 2025, Interactive CASEL Wheel). There are appropriate ways to act and talk in relationship conflicts, and when book characters model how to communicate to solve a problem properly, students can practice doing the same. When working through aspects of responsible decision-making, one element includes the ability to find solutions for both personal and social problems (CASEL, 2025). A children’s book may address how to make a responsible decision when faced with a problem or how to tackle a larger-scale problem with a community or group of people. Finally, self-management handles how to properly use planning and organizational skills (CASEL, 2025). It is normal for a real-life problem to be complex, and children’s literature can remind students to take a step back, look at the problem, and plan and organize how to find a proper solution to their problem.

Selecting Books

The children’s picture books for this project were selected from the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children’s Literature (CSMCL). Established in 2011, it has a mission to

“preserve the richness of the many cultures in the field of children’s and young adult literature.” (CSMCL, 2023, para. 1). It connects students, teachers, parents, and librarians to the beauty of diverse literature and works to promote awareness and excitement for multicultural books. CSMCL has been identifying the “best in multicultural books” yearly since 2013, and defines “best” as: “worthy of note or notice, important, distinguished, outstanding.” (CSMCL, 2023, para. 1). These books vary in grade level and genre, but they all include an element of interest for developing readers.

TeachingBooks provides a webpage for educators, parents, and librarians to sort through the CSMCL Best Books, 2013-2024 (TeachingBooks, 2025). The website includes every title that has been recognized by the CSMCL in the past eleven years and also provides filters to sort through the award-winning titles. The “Grade Level” filter was used for this project, and the books were limited to grades 1-2 (TeachingBooks, 2025). This grade range enforces the idea that since children begin to understand aspects of SEL as young as infancy, it is important to start promoting the competencies as early as possible in the classroom (CASEL, 2025). The top fifteen books for the first through second-grade reading levels were chosen for further research in the project checklist. These top fifteen books are ranked by the number of awards that they have won and include: the Randolph Caldecott Medal, ALSC Notable Children’s Books, Charlotte Huck Award, SLJ Best Books of the Year, and Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards, among many other notable literature awards. These award-winning books are noted at the top of their award category and share how books, especially diverse books, can enhance SEL skills. Many books can be used to teach SEL skills in the classroom. This checklist allows educators to rate children's literature to determine whether a book presents an opportunity to teach students SEL skills.

Thirteen of the fifteen books were located in the Millersville University McNairy Library. The other two books were not available in the university library, and one was found at the Lancaster Public Library, while the other was purchased and used for the thesis. Public, school, and University libraries provide educators, parents, and students the opportunity to freely and conveniently access these award-winning books that can enhance the SEL skills of young students. The in-person reading of these children's picture books allowed for a complete understanding of the text, illustrations, and background information provided in the front and back of the book. However, virtual access to these books still allows for a thorough understanding of the literature and the ability to score the books according to the created checklist.

Scoring Diverse Children's Literature

After the top fifteen diverse children's picture books were read, they were assessed and sorted by SEL competency (see Appendix D). To find a stand-out competency, the main problem or theme in the book was assessed and then related to one of the five competencies that it best related to. Detailed examples of each of the five competencies are defined by CASEL, and checklist users can reference these examples when it comes to scoring each book (CASEL, 2025). The flexibility of this checklist allows educators to curate a classroom library that fits their personal educational pedagogy and what their individual students need to read and see in a book. In the Diversity and SEL Checklist (see Appendix C), the fifteen books were ranked according to the continuum and then given a total score based on the number of points each book scored. Any questions that received a "strongly agree" received five points, and the rest of the continuum is associated with numbers four through one, respectively. There was a total score of thirty-five, and many books scored well over thirty.

Findings

All fifteen books allowed for a better understanding of the large impact that diversity within literature has on teaching and understanding SEL skills. Specific diversity-centered books provide unique perspectives, emotions, problems, characters, and elements that connect to the five SEL competencies. Out of the fifteen, six standout books relate to each of the five competencies, with one competency having a tie for two top books.

Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat scored the highest on the checklist for the self-awareness competency (Steptoe, 2019; see Appendix C, book 15). It is directly related to the idea of “developing interest and a sense of purpose” (CASEL, Interactive CASEL Wheel, 2025) as it shares the true story of a young artist who found his way in life through art. The reader is able to better understand Basquiat’s diverse Puerto Rican background and the uniqueness of his collage-style paintings and artwork. A common theme exists as the main character connects to a role model, his mother, as he learns to find beauty in differences and passions that he realizes do not need to be “perfect”. The book includes fewer elements of a developing time frame and location, but the emotion of passion is well-represented through the picture book. The real-life problem also strongly relates to SEL competency, as Jean-Michel's mother's struggles impact his art and serve as an outlet for emotions for him as an artist.

The top book for the self-management SEL competency is *I Am Every Good Thing* (James, 2020; see Appendix C, book 8). The story follows a young boy who has many passions, dreams, and talents as he “exhibits self-discipline and self-motivation” (CASEL, Interactive CASEL Wheel, 2025). Readers can see the theme of being true to yourself exhibited within the book, and there are a variety of human characters as well as vast locations intertwined in the storyline. Barnes also incorporated the human emotion of respect as the main character not only

has great respect for himself, but he also respects other people and the world around him. The bright and bold illustrations paired with the inspiring phrases and reminders to get back up when you fall, to never be afraid to dream, to be a support to those around you, and to only answer to your own name provide a resource for students to better understand the competency of self-management.

The ability to demonstrate cultural competency is a complex relationship skill, but *The Undefeated* works to build this SEL competency through children's literature (Alexander, 2018; see Appendix C, book 1). The book introduces elements of African American culture on every new page, and the reader is able to experience the triumphs, struggles, world-changing actions, and passions that are exhibited throughout the book. The author emphasizes the idea that cultural competence is an ever-changing, dynamic process and shares stories about generations of humans who have learned and grown within their culture. It gives insight into what life was like during slavery, the Civil War, current times, and every time period in between. Students of different cultural backgrounds are able to respect values, attitudes, and beliefs, while students of Black culture are able to connect with those who represent the strength, new ideas, and excellence of their own culture (CASEL, 2025). This inspiring book shares true success stories that can allow any reader to build the SEL competency of relationship skills.

Two children's picture books were highlighted for the responsible decision-making competency. *We Are Water Protectors* is centered around a young girl in the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and her fight to unite her community and nature together as they stand against oil pipelines (Lindstrom, 2020; see Appendix C, book 2). Readers are able to "reflect on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being" as a call to action is created by the end of the book (CASEL, Interactive CASEL Wheel, 2025). It was the young character's bold

decision to fight for her community and land, and its strong message of environmental justice is introduced to students. There are multiple diverse characters, a diverse setting and experiences seen in cultural elements and nature, and a common theme of standing up for what is right. The watercolor illustrations remind readers of the beauty of the world and the impact of human decisions on nature around the world.

Parrots Over Puerto Rico also builds responsible decision-making skills as it brings awareness to the diminishing population of Puerto Rican parrots (Roth & Trumbore, 2013; see Appendix C, book 11). CASEL includes “anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one’s actions” within this competency, and the consequences of human actions are brought to the surface within this book (CASEL, Interactive CASEL Wheel, 2025). The story starts around 5000 BCE and continues to share the story of human development on the island of Puerto Rico and the destruction of the parrot’s habitat. There is a sense of fear portrayed throughout the book, and readers can see how impactful and consequential human actions can be on the environment. There is a happy ending to the book, however, and once the human characters realize their grave mistake, they begin to focus on the unique and diverse species brought back to life on the island. Readers can see that there are ways to make responsible decisions and can practice this skill on a small scale when it comes to decisions, actions, and consequences in the classroom.

Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation is the sixth stand-out book when relating diverse children’s literature to SEL skills (Tonatiuh, 2014; see Appendix C, book 6). Although the content is on the longer side, this book offers the ability to build social awareness skills and for students to understand the influences of organizations and systems on behavior (CASEL, 2025). The main character is not welcomed into a school solely based on the color of her skin, and readers can see that the blueprint of society wrongly casts her

and her family out. Segregation breaks down the main character's spirit until she decides to fight for what is right for her and her family. Students can understand the impact that rulings and decisions have on those around them, and can strengthen social awareness skills inside and outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

The research completed throughout this thesis allows educators to rely on literature in the classroom to guide students as they become familiar with and develop SEL skills. The diverse children's books used within the research allow for a direct correlation between award-winning diversity-themed books and the building of SEL competencies. Diverse books present new perspectives on human characters, non-human characters, ways of life, timelines, locations, emotions, and real-life problems. Students will encounter these diverse elements within a book and be able to connect to one, if not more, of the CASEL competencies by themselves or with guidance. This process of navigating and building SEL competencies takes time for young children, and many SEL components do not come automatically for students. This is when diverse children's literature can act as a resource inside and outside of classrooms alongside teacher and parent instruction, as it provides age-appropriate examples of SEL competencies in a story-driven framework.

With the help of the Diversity and SEL Checklist (Appendix C), educators can begin to build their classroom libraries with a wide variety of diverse children's literature. It is clear that many books represent more than one SEL competency, and this flexibility within the checklist and rating scale allows for books to have the ability to promote and teach multiple competencies at once. Award-winning books represent the top qualities within children's literature, but a classroom library can and should be constructed in a way that benefits and interests a unique

classroom of students. Educators can use and reference this tool to curate a library and space where children feel welcomed, respected, and represented, and are given the ability to better connect with literature in this current technology-centered world.

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Appendix

Harper and Brand (2010)

Harper and Brand's Checklist for Selecting and Evaluating Multicultural Literature

Checklist criteria <small>(Harper and Brand 2010)</small>	
Are the author/illustrator qualified to write or illustrate material relating to the culture(s) portrayed? How?	
Have the author/illustrator conducted related research? If not, have they lived among (either as a member of or as a visitor to) the groups of people represented in the book?	
Is the story interesting to children?	
Does the story contain authentic language?	
Are factual and historical details accurate?	
Overall, is this a high-quality story, independent of its multicultural aspects?	
Are characters believable?	
Are universal human emotions, attitudes, needs, and experiences reflected?	
Do characters represent people from a variety of cultural groups?	
Are lifestyles realistic?	
Are females as well as males depicted in leadership roles?	
Does the story reflect a variety of places and times?	
Are urban, suburban, and rural settings represented realistically?	
Are cultural settings and geographical features represented accurately?	
Are real situations depicted?	

Are rigid boundaries of class, culture, religion and ethnicity dismissed?	
Are various conflicts presented for children to explore and discuss?	
How are conflicts resolved?	
Does the story offer children a variety of situations, concepts, and new ideas on which to reflect, question, and consider?	
Are values explored, rather than preached?	
Are there lessons to be learned?	
Are children exposed to multiple perspectives and values?	
How does the story promote understanding of our diverse society?	
Are diverse populations represented?	
Is there diversity within cultural groups?	
Are characters realistically and genuinely represented?	
Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?	
Do the illustrations and text use authenticity to demonstrate respect for other cultures?	
Do the illustrations and text convey characteristics common to all people and cultures?	
Is the story age appropriate; can children understand what is presented?	
Is the story individually appropriate in terms of children's family backgrounds?	
Does the story reflect the social, linguistic, and cultural contexts in which children live or to which they can relate?	
Will the story encourage meaningful and relevant discussions?	

Appendix B

Lee and Low (2017)



Classroom Library Questionnaire

Educators, how culturally responsive and diverse is your classroom library? Use the following questions as a guide to analyze your classroom library book collections and determine where there are strengths and where there is room to grow.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The classroom library contains multiple books that include . . .					
non-human, anthropomorphic main characters (e.g., talking animals, talking trucks, talking vegetables, imaginary or science fiction creatures, etc.)					
2. The classroom library contains numerous books that include . . .					
main characters who are Black, Native/Indigenous, or people of color					
main characters who identify as LGBTQIA					
main characters with disabilities					
3. The classroom library contains numerous books that . . .					
are written or illustrated by a person of color or a Native/Indigenous person					
feature a person of color or a Native/Indigenous person on the front cover					
feature contemporary diverse characters and storylines					
feature a range of family structures and family configurations					
feature characters with different types of gender identity and gender expression					
feature a Black main character					
feature a Latinx main character					
feature an Asian or Asian American main character					
feature a Middle Eastern and/or Muslim main character					
feature a Native American/Indigenous main character					
Are set in diverse regions of the world, including contemporary Asia, Africa, Europe, Central/South America, Oceania, and Native/First Nations/Indigenous regions					
are reflective of my students' cultures and heritages					
explore different socioeconomic backgrounds					
explore religious diversity					
are set in different geographic settings (urban, rural, suburban)					
are written in languages meaningful to my students' backgrounds or the community in which they live (e.g., Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog)					
teach about immigration to the United States beyond the Ellis Island-narrative					
teach about Black/African American contributions to the United States beyond the Civil Rights Movement					
feature diversity throughout the year, not just in heritage and observance months (e.g. Black History Month, Native American History Month)					

4. The majority of books featuring people of color or Native/Indigenous people . . .	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
are only about issues of race, prejudice, or discrimination					
are only culturally specific (e.g., flags, foods, festivals)					
are only culturally neutral or contain incidental diversity					
are written by white authors					
are nonfiction					

5. The classroom library contains some books that include . . .	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
harmful stereotypes about a group of people					
inaccurate/outdated information about a group of people					
generalizations about a group of people					
misrepresentations of a group of people					
discriminatory content about a group of people					
non-authentic stories about a group of people					

6. The classroom library reflects the diversity of my students and the community in which we live (e.g., gender, race, family structure, language, culture, socioeconomic background, etc.)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

What Now?

If your classroom library is not as diverse and culturally responsive as you want it to be for your students . . . you are not alone!

Learn how others have built diverse library collections and where you can find diverse children's books here:

www.leeandlow.com/educators/grade-level-resources/classroom-library-questionnaire

Contact us at educators@leeandlow.com
for more information on building customized
classroom libraries or book collections
for your students.



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Appendix C

Diversity and SEL Checklist

Book 1: The Undefeated. Written by Kwame Alexander and illustrated by Kadir Nelson.					
2019 Selection, 22 Awards					
Location of the book: Purchased a physical copy. Read on 2/3/25					
Key Competency:	Relationship skills: Demonstrating cultural competency				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The book shines a light on Black people and culture, with some of the characters being fictional and many characters being famous African Americans. There is a large age difference between many of the characters, which offers another aspect of diversity.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The diverse elements seen throughout the book are seen as the characters' passions and triumphs are illustrated within the pages. There are athletes, musicians, survivors of slavery, soldiers, dreamers, and young students. Each character brings an element of diversity to the book. The elements of Black culture are also represented through illustrations and provide another form of diversity.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The illustrations and characters in this book represent almost any passion or way of life that a student could relate to. Students can understand that what you are passionate about is worth fighting for, and sometimes, it takes time and history to make progress. Students of diverse backgrounds may also feel like they can relate to many of these characters as the author writes about many struggles of living in America.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?	X				

Comments	Since the book alludes to many famous Black people, the timeline is widespread. There is a reference to slavery, which existed from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth century, and an illustration of a soldier during the Civil War in the 1860s. There are athletes, artists, authors, and musicians who also represent a long period of time. Some characters were alive in the eighteenth century, and others were just recently born in the twenty-first century.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?		X			
Comments	There is no true background to many of the illustrations seen within the book. Many of the characters are placed on top of a white background so that their image stands out. However, it is clear that there is a change in location throughout the book. Some characters are living in a time of slavery, some are competing in a sport or performing on a stage. At the end of the book, the author and illustrator bring the story back to this current day and age and reflect on how history and the undefeated have changed this world for the future.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	An underlying emotion of inspiration is present throughout the book. The characters who have made changes within their lifetime have impacted the current world, and it took time, energy, and passion to remain undefeated.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?		X			
Comments	The author does not explicitly share a problem, but there are illustrations of problems that have occurred and are still occurring in our world. There are characters who have lived through the time of slavery, and the author mentions the strong ties to their faith that carried them through this problem. There are characters who have faced discrimination while pursuing their passions, and the author reminds readers to fight adversity and stand for the underdogs.				

Book 2: We Are Water Protectors. Written by Carole Lindstrom and illustrated by Michaela Goade.					
2020 Selection, 19 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library, Read on 1/29/25					
Key Competency:	Responsible Decision Making: Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character is part of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and throughout the book, other Native American characters are illustrated. There are no other characters outside of the tribe, but the background characters that are represented differ in gender and age.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	There are multiple diverse settings, timelines, and experiences. Wildlife and nature are a large part of the book, and there are illustrations of birds, bears, plants, and bodies of water that are unique to the North Dakota area. There are also elements of the Ojibew culture, such as language, songs, and drums that are unique and might be new information to students.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Standing up for what is right is a common theme that the main character expresses throughout the book. The water brings people and wildlife life, and it is being destroyed by oil pipelines. The main character must fight for her people, the water, and the Earth as a whole. Many students might want to fight for an environmental issue similar to this or stand up for another cause that is worth taking action for.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?			X		
Comments	The story does not develop over a long period of time. The main character is faced with a problem, takes a moment to think about her actions and ancestors, and begins to make a change with help from the community around her.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The story takes place in North Dakota and follows a Native American tribe. The illustrations reflect the wildlife and homeland of the tribe, but they also signify the Earth as a whole and the importance of water.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				

Comments	The feeling of connection is represented throughout the book by the main character. She shares her connection to the land, her people, and her culture. She also reminds the reader that everyone is connected by water and that we can stand together to fight against environmental issues.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	There is a real-life environmental issue that is depicted within this book. Oil pipelines are entering protected tribal lands and affecting its waterways, wildlife, and human life. The main character creates a call to action at the end of the book and reminds the reader that, as a community, change can be created. The young girl brings her tribe together to peacefully protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline.				

Book 3: Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story. Written by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal.					
2019 Selection. 18 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library, read on 1/24/25					
Key Competency:	Social Awareness: Taking others' perspectives				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?	X				
Comments	The illustrations throughout this book include various races of human characters. There are American Indians, African Americans, and Caucasians all represented within the illustrations.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	In this book, the making of frybread is seen as a diverse experience. The story shares how fry bread is a combination of diverse ingredients, shapes, sounds, colors, flavors, time, art, history, places, and nations.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)		X			
Comments	The story is specific to those familiar with frybread and the American Indian				

	culture. However, students might see themselves in the story through the illustrations and the fact that they might have a cultural food that is important to them.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?		X			
Comments	The only element of the book that shows a change in a period of time is the age of the characters and the tradition of frybread. It showcases families with their loved ones using the object of frybread to remember their history.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?	X				
Comments	There is a section of the book that shares different places where frybread is made. It is made all over the world and reminds the reader that culture is a shared element that connects us. It also includes a page about American Indian Nations and tribes to remember ancestors and those who came before us and shared this recipe of frybread.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The human emotion of love is represented throughout this book. It shares images of affection and depicts characters who love the frybread as well as all of the traditions and customs associated with it.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?				X	
Comments	There is no true problem represented in this book. The story showcases frybread and its many unique and unifying characteristics. It could potentially relate to the problem of the social divide in our country, and at the end of the book, the author states that fry bread is “us” and “you” and relates frybread and traditions to a solution of this divide.				

Book 4: Grand Canyon. Written and illustrated by Jason Chin.					
2017 Selection, 17 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/29/25					
Key Competency:	Responsible Decision Making: Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Elements of human character diversity?			X		
Comments	There are no main characters portrayed in this book. However, there is a father and daughter who venture through the Grand Canyon, and the reader learns more about this natural beauty through the eyes of the two characters.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The wide variety of animals, rocks, plant life, and water sources are diverse and unique to the Grand Canyon. Many students who do not live in a location close to the Grand Canyon have never experienced something of its magnitude, but the book is able to capture the diversity that it shares with its visitors.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The changes in the landscape provide a “before” and “after” depiction for the reader. Many students will deal with large changes, either within a short time frame or over the course of years. Students can see that change is not a bad thing and that the original beauty of the separate landforms still exists in the Grand Canyon even after billions of years.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?	X				
Comments	The author/illustrator writes and draws about the developing age of the canyon in great detail. He shares that some of the bases of the canyon are thousands of millions of years old. Throughout the book, the reader can also see parts of the current landform and what it looked like in the past through a cutout on the page of the book. The book depicts what the Grand Canyon looked like billions of years ago and allows students to have a sense of perspective when reading the book.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?				X	
Comments	This book only takes place in the Grand Canyon. It does follow the two hikers as they explore the canyon, but there is only one location throughout the book.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				

Comments	The emotion of discovery is present throughout the book, both for the characters illustrated in the book and for the readers themselves. The author/illustrator portrayed the characters with strong emotions as they explored the canyon. The reader can also explore and interact with the book, all while learning new and possibly exciting information about this landform.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?		X			
Comments	There are multiple minor real-life problems seen within this book. One problem deals with animal extinction due to climate change and human activity. Another problem is the large size of the canyon and how difficult it can be to explore. The author reminds readers to be gentle with the landscape and to take in its beauty as much as they can.				

Book 5: Big. Written and illustrated by Vashti Harrison.					
2023 Selection, 17 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/29/25					
Key Competency:	Self-Management: Managing one's emotions				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character is a young Black girl who shares her story of being different from others. There are not many other background characters, but those that are included are classmates or teachers. There are girls and boys illustrated, but other than gender, the book does not include other elements of character diversity.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The main character has experiences that separate and diversify her from the rest of her peers. She is bullied and looked at differently based on the size of her body, and the conversations that others have with her are different compared to her classmates. Every human body is different, and this book shines a light on the idea that body diversity does not have to be a flaw.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding	X				

glass door)					
Comments	All students look different at first glance, and the main character shares with the reader how small she can feel when people direct harsh words toward her. She finds the space that she deserves to take up and not only embraces herself but also shows others around her that she is meant to be right where she is.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?				X	
Comments	There is not a large timeline within this story. The main character goes through a journey of self-love, but it is completed in a short timeframe.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	There are a few locations throughout the book, but they all exist within the young girl's hometown. The reader can see her home, her school, and her dance recital, but outside of those locations, the setting does not frequently change.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The human emotion of loneliness is present throughout this book. The young girl is surrounded by people who see her as “big” and mature, and they throw words at her that hurt her and make her feel completely alone. Many students go through this same feeling, even if it is not directed toward their body image. The main character eventually finds the power within herself to let those harsh words go and find the beauty and good in herself.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The young girl is faced with the real-life problem of bullying and learns how powerful other people's words are. The main character eventually feels so invisible and small that she wants to make a change. She takes away the power from the harsh words, takes control of her own emotions, learns about self-love, and looks for the good in everything, even how she looks from the outside.				

Book 6: Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation. Written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatuih.

2014 Selection, 16 Awards

Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/30/25

Key Competency:	Social Awareness: Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?	X				
Comments	The main character, Sylvia Mendez, comes from a family of Mexican descent. There are various other backgrounds mentioned throughout the book. There are also caucasian background characters who end up becoming friends with Sylvia by the end of the book.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The element of diversity seen throughout the book is a difference in attitude towards the idea of segregation. There are numerous characters that either support or do not support segregation, and the reader learns about each character's opinion and why. The book shows the ability to bring differences together in order to reach a greater goal for the future of young students.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in all students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Sylvia does not fit into her school because of the color of her skin. Many students feel like they do not fit in, and this can be due to race, gender, interests, language, and other factors. Students can see Sylvia fight for her right to attend school, and throughout that process, she makes friends of all different backgrounds.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?	X				
Comments	The book occurs over the span of a few years. The reader meets Sylvia when she first moved to California in 1944, and it is not until 1947 that the courts ruled in favor of the Mendez family.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The story mainly takes place in the main character's home neighborhood in Westminster, California. There is a section of the book that takes place in San Francisco, as it discusses the law that went into effect for the whole state of				

	California.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	Students can relate to the feeling of being left out, similar to how Sylvia was feeling throughout the book. It took her time to understand that she had a right to be in her school, and it was not an easy journey. She consistently felt out of place, was made fun of, and was told that she did not deserve to go to a specific school.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The real-life problem presented in this book is the issue of segregation. Sylvia is told that she cannot attend a school based on the color of her skin and is told to attend a Mexican school. In order to fight against this problem of segregation, Sylvia's father worked together with other families experiencing the same harsh segregation and took it to court. He never backed down from fighting for the rights of his family, and eventually, a law was made for the entire state of California. The author reminds readers to never back down from a fight for what's right.				

Book 7: Last Stop on Market Street. Written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson.					
2015 Selection. 16 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library, read on 1/24/25					
Key Competency:	Self-Awareness: Integrating personal and social identities				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	There are diverse characters, but they are background characters within the illustrations. The main characters include an African American child and his grandmother. The background characters include a blind caucasian man, a caucasian man playing the guitar, and an African American bus driver.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The book focuses on the child's bus ride to the soup kitchen. He encounters unfamiliar elements everywhere he looks. He sees a friend driving in a car, an interaction with a blind man, the magic of music, and a grimy street.				

A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Students can relate to this book if they live in the city or travel by bus frequently. They might also see themselves through the main character as he makes sense of the new things around him and how his grandma reminds him that different does not mean bad.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?				X	
Comments	The story takes place throughout the span of the bus ride, and it is not a long book.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?		X			
Comments	The bus ride continues throughout the entire story, and the boy takes notice of the differences in each new location that they travel to. He questions the world around him and reflects on what is different from what he is used to.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The emotion of wonder is prevalent throughout this story. The young boy is aware of new surroundings and ways of life that are new to him. He questions and wonders about different ways of life, and his grandma not only encourages the wonders but also provides him with accurate and complete answers.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?		X			
Comments	There is no real problem portrayed throughout this story. However, a child might have a problem with feeling like they do not fit in with the world around them. This story shares the magic of discovering new things and results in a happy ending with the young boy stating, "I'm glad we came", in reference to volunteering at the soup kitchen.				

Book 8: I Am Every Good Thing. Written by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James.

2020 Selection, 15 Awards

Location of the book: Lancaster Public Library. Read on 2/3/25					
Key Competency:	Self-management: Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character in this story is a young Black boy, and throughout the book, there are multiple other characters who are all from the same race. There are some differences in age, but most of the characters act as peers to the main character.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The book focuses on the main character and all of his passions, dreams, and talents. They are unique to him and include skateboarding, space exploration, and creativity. There are also unique emotions in this young boy, and he has humor, the ability to love, and the ability to be himself. These elements are diverse for this character, and they make up his true identity.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The theme of being true to yourself is seen throughout this book. Many young students are proud of what makes them unique, and if they are not, this book reminds them that they are worthy and every good thing.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?			X		
Comments	This book is focused on one period of the young boy's life. He is portrayed as an elementary schooler, and the book does not show him growing or developing in age.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?	X				
Comments	This picture book includes a new location on every page. There are locations in the boy's neighborhood, scenes where he is dreaming, and pages that portray him with his loved ones.				

A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	There is a human emotion of respect seen throughout the entirety of this book. The young boy not only has great respect for himself, but he also respects other people and the world around him. This reminds students to embrace the same emotions in their lives. They can look for the good, show respect, and are worthy of love.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?		X			
Comments	There is no true problem in this book, but every page serves as a way to potentially solve a problem that young children might have. The pages are full of inspiring phrases and reminders to get back up when you fall, to never be afraid to dream, to be a support to those around you, and to only answer to your own name. If students are facing a problem where they begin to question the respect, safety, kindness, and happiness that they deserve, the main characters present solutions for them.				

Book 9: Watercress. Written by Andrea Wang and illustrated by Jason Chin.					
2021 Selection. 15 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/24/25					
Key Competency:	Self-Awareness: Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character is a Chinese American girl who lives with her family in Ohio. There are not many background characters, but the author shares her cultural background and the differences between life in China and life in the United States.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	Eating watercress is seen as an element of diversity throughout the storyline. It was first shown as a plant on the side of the road, but as the story progresses, the watercress represents the struggle of the mother when she lived in China. At the end of the story, it represents a new beginning and happiness for the family in the United States.				

A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The main character feels ashamed and isolated because of her family traditions. She does not fit in because of the food she eats, the clothes she wears, and the recycled furniture that the family uses. After learning about her family story, she comes to realize that the things she was ashamed of are what truly represent her family. Many students may feel this way about their culture and family traditions, and the main character sends the message that new memories can be formed out of past traditions.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?				X	
Comments	The book shares the story of a girl and her acceptance of her family's cultural background. It follows her throughout the day and only shares a few glimpses of her mother's past life in China.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?		X			
Comments	The story is set in Ohio, but for a few pages, it shares a glimpse into life in China. These multiple locations contradict each other and remind the main character that her family and her life are nothing to be ashamed of.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The emotion of belonging is emphasized in this book. The main character does not feel like she belongs in her home with her cultural differences. Throughout the book, she learns more about her family and begins to accept and appreciate her unique differences.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	There is a real-life problem of not fitting in for the main character. Many young children feel this way when they are placed in a new school or classroom that is unfamiliar to them. The book teaches children to embrace what makes them unique, and the main character gives insight into making new memories that you can now cherish and feel proud of.				

Book 10: How Do You Spell Unfair?: MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee. Written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Frank Morrison.					
2023 Selection, 15 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library, Read on 1/27/25					
Key Competency:	Social Awareness: Recognizing strengths in others				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character of this book is a young African American girl. There are a few other background characters, including caucasian students who are in the spelling bee.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?			X		
Comments	The concept of racism is present throughout this book. Racism relates to diverse timelines and experiences that are thankfully not present today. The book takes place in 1936, when segregation in the South was in full effect. There are scenes where the main character is separated due to the color of her skin, and that in itself represents an element of diversity.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The main character is constantly faced with obstacles based on the color of her skin, and students today are still facing the same struggles around the world. Students might see themselves through the main character or maybe even be able to better understand what life was like for a young student who was constantly treated as an outcast.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?		X			
Comments	The story takes place over the course of the National Spelling Bee and follows the main character as she takes her amazing ability around her hometown and then to Washington, D.C.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple		X			

locations?					
Comments	There are a few slight changes in location throughout the children's book. The students can see how the attitudes towards the main character change based on where she is competing. In her hometown, she is recognized as a young celebrity; however, upon arriving in D.C., she is faced with more challenges and prejudice than ever before.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	There is a strong message of unfairness throughout the book, and this is an emotion that all humans have to work through, especially young students. The book shines a light on the main character's perseverance and unwavering ability to stand tall and proud of who she is. Although she is constantly separated and disconnected from the other characters, she finds joy in what she is able to accomplish and is proud of her differences.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The problem presented in this book is that the main character is faced with acts of racism from other characters. However, the main character reminds the readers that with a level playing field, which she fought for and earned, she was able to prove her abilities, no matter the color of her skin.				

Book 11: Parrots Over Puerto Rico. Written and illustrated by Susan L. Rother and Cindy Trumbore.					
2013 Selection. 14 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/27/25					
Key Competency:	Responsible decision-making: Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?			X		
Comments	The main characters of this book are the Puerto Rican parrots. There are a few main groups that are shown throughout the book that contribute to the downfall of the species. These groups include the Taínos, Spanish settlers, Africans, and American citizens. They all had a large impact on the parrots, and it was eventually the governments of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico who worked together to protect the parrots.				

A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?		X			
Comments	When each group came and inhabited the land that was once only for the parrots, they brought with them diverse cultures and traditions. There were various crops planted, settlements built, warships, and houses built on the land. These diverse elements represent what different groups brought to the island and what led to the endangerment of the parrots.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Many students can relate to the issue of changes in their environment, similar to how the parrots dealt with generations of changes in their homeland. The parrots were once living their perfect lives but then were faced with obstacles and adversaries that they could not overcome. They eventually needed help from an outside source, which happened to be worried scientists. Students can better understand that responsible decisions can be made not only by themselves but with help from the community around them.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?	X				
Comments	The book begins around 5000 BCE and continues to share the story of the development of the island and the destruction of the parrot's habitat. It continues to the present day, where Puerto Rican parrots are beginning to flourish in their homeland again.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The location of the book does not change, as the island of Puerto Rico is the setting of the book. However, the island takes on numerous changes as its inhabitants and structure change over time.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The emotion of fear is present throughout this book. The parrots use their famous call sound on every page, and towards the end of the page, it was used to warn the species of danger.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				

Comments	The real-life problem presented in this book is the consequence of human actions over time. The parrots had once had free and complete control of their homeland, but when humans started to take over, their homes and habitat slowly started to become destroyed. There is a happy ending to the book, however, and once the humans realize their grave mistake, they begin to focus on the unique and diverse species back to life on the island.
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Book 12: Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music. Written by Margarita Engle and illustrated by Rafael López.					
2015 Selection, 14 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/28/25					
Key Competency:	Relationship skills: Resisting negative social pressure				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character of this book is a Chinese-African-Cuban girl who fights against social standards in order to pursue her passions. There are a few other background characters, and they vary by age and gender.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The experience of playing drums is seen on every page of this book. There are bongó drums, conga drums, and timbales. These are specific to the main characters' culture, and readers can learn about diversity in music throughout this book.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Many readers can see themselves in the main character as she is stopped from achieving her dreams in the public eye. This is due to the fact that she is a girl, but readers can relate to her character on multiple levels. She can only be herself when she is alone. She wants to join others but is stopped by the social norms and sees boys playing when she is not allowed to herself.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of				X	

time?					
Comments	This book does not include a large timeline. The main character is on a journey to find herself within music, and it does not take place over a long period of time.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?		X			
Comments	There are elements of the main character on the ground and in the sky. On the ground, she is in her house and exploring her homeland in order to hear music in as many settings as possible. In the sky, she connects with the sun and finds a magical escape to create her own music on her drums.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	The emotion of discovery is presented through the main character in this book. She knows that she has a gift and a passion for creating music on the drums, but it takes persistence to discover how she can share her talent with the world. The main character reminds readers to never give up on their passions, even if it means finding an escape to chase their passions alone.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The real-life problem represented in this book is gender inequity, specifically looking at gender differences in a particular culture. The main character is told that she cannot play the drums, as it is an activity for boys. However, she continues to follow her passions and dreams, and her father finally shows support for her and allows her to learn from a drum teacher. The main character never once stopped drumming just because society said it was for boys.				

Book 13: A Different Pond. Written by Bao Phi and illustrated by Thi Bui.					
2017 Selection, 14 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/28/25					
Key Competency:	Self-awareness: Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?	X				

Comments	The main character and his family are from Vietnam and share their culture throughout the book. There are also a few characters that interact with the young boy, including a Hmong man and an African American man.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The story is centered around a young boy and his father who fish for their family dinner, a fish called a crappie. This is a diverse event that portrays the family's culture, and the boy is proud to have helped his father fish for family dinner.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	Students may see themselves within the main character, as he is curious about his family roots and dreams of other fish in other parts of the world. The boy is proud of his family and culture, and because of this, he has more questions about Vietnam. Students have questions about their families, and the main character reminds them to embrace their culture and never stop dreaming.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?				X	
Comments	This book does not develop over a long period of time, as the story occurs within one day. The boy and his father head out to fish, the parents leave for work, and at the end of the day, the family is all eating together, enjoying the fish that was caught in the morning.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The story includes a few locations: the main character's house, the neighborhood, and the fishing pond. The father also reminisces about his life in Vietnam on a few pages of the book. There is not a drastic change in the setting, but it is diverse and shows how the young boy's home life may differ from other students.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	There is a strong representation of pride throughout the book. The young boy is proud that he gets to fish with his father, his family, and his cultural traditions. Many students feel this same pride when they share a story about someone they				

	love, and they can see this emotion come across as the young boy shares his story in the book.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?		X			
Comments	There is a minor problem represented throughout the book. Although it is not the main theme of the story, the parents are struggling with money. The father had to pick up a second job, the mother had to leave her children during the day to work, and they sometimes had to fish for their own dinner. This problem is solved by the family staying connected and celebrating their culture together. They embrace what they have but never forget to dream about other possibilities.				

Book 14: Freedom in Congo Square. Written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie.					
2016 Selection, 13 Awards					
Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/29/25					
Key Competency:	Social awareness: Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The characters represented in this book are enslaved Africans who were captured in West and Central West Africa. Outside of these characters, there is mention of a slave master, but there is not an abundance of diverse characters illustrated within the book.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	The representation of African music and celebration is seen towards the end of the book. There are illustrations of the characters dancing, creating music, and celebrating each other. Some of the instruments include tambourines, triangles, gourds, bells, banzas, flutes, fiddles, and shells. Students are able to gain insight into the African culture and see the celebration of their freedom.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				

Comments	Students can understand the feelings of freedom and identity that the characters also felt when they were in Congo Square. The characters were able to have an afternoon where they were not bound to the slave owner and could truly be themselves around friends and family. The 13th Amendment has rightfully abolished slavery, but the feeling of finding an escape in things you love is still a prevalent theme in human lives.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?		X			
Comments	The story occurs over the span of a week. The characters are enslaved and are counting down the days until they can get a taste of freedom on Sunday when they have an afternoon off.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The story occurs within the city of New Orleans, but the slaves are working in different locations on the plantation. On Sunday, there was a change in setting as the people of African heritage came together at Congo Square to celebrate their culture.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	Congo Square represents a sense of belonging among the people of African heritage, even those who were free. Students reading this book might also have a location, group of people, or an object that allows them to feel free and like they belong. This book reminds readers to find a sense of light even in the darkest of times.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The real-life problem seen in this book is slavery. In the book, the characters find a source of freedom every Sunday in Congo Square. They find joy in the presence of others, music, dance, and their African culture. Their appreciation for their culture reminds readers that even when life is cruel and difficult, it is important to look for the things that bring you joy.				

Book 15: Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. Written and illustrated by Javaka Steptoe.

2016 Selection, 13 Awards

Location of the book: McNairy Library. Read on 1/29/25

Key Competency:	Self-Awareness: Developing interests and a sense of purpose				
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?		X			
Comments	The main character and his family are Puerto Rican, and their family and culture are represented in the book. There are not any background characters outside of family members, but at the end of the book, there is a diverse image of people who were impacted by the artwork.				
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?	X				
Comments	Jean-Michel's artwork is an element of diversity within the book. Since this is a biography, the artwork is representative of his real drawings. He was known for his collage-style paintings and his unique ability to create art that held its own beauty.				
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)	X				
Comments	The main character finds his love of art by observing his mother. Many students have role models in their lives whom they look up to, and this book emphasizes the need to connect to people around you. The book also focuses on finding beauty in everything that you create. Students can struggle with the need to be perfect, and this artist reminds the reader that beauty is everywhere, and even though it may look weird or different, art and other passions can still be beautiful.				
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?		X			
Comments	This book is based on the main character's life and follows the artist from childhood through adulthood. The reader can see the artist fall in love with his passions, deal with pain and heartbreak, and use his art to depict strength and beauty.				
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?			X		
Comments	The story takes place in New York City and follows the life of this artist. There are a few locations shown that include his childhood home and parts of his				

	community. However, the book focuses on segments of his life that occur within the same general area.				
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?	X				
Comments	There is a strong emotion of passion seen within this book. The main character is passionate about his mother, his artwork, and representing objects and people in their own beauty.				
A solution to a possible real-life problem?	X				
Comments	The author shares details about Jean-Michel's mother having a mental illness. This element of the story is extremely relevant to today's society and impacts a large number of Americans. The main character shares his heartbreak after seeing his mother's struggles throughout the story and turns towards his art as an outlet for emotions. Jean-Michel reminds readers to honor those you love, and he was able to honor his mother through his art.				

Appendix D

Diversity and SEL Checklist Scores

Book	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making	Social Awareness
The Undefeated			X: 32 points		
We Are Water Protectors				X: 30 points	
Fry Bread					X: 30 points
Grand Canyon				X: 29 points	
Big		X: 29 Points			
Separate is Never Equal					X: 33 points
Last Stop on Market Street	X: 29 points				
I Am Every Good Thing		X:31 points			
Watercress	X: 30 points				
How Do You Spell Unfair?					X: 30 points
Parrots Over Puerto Rico				X: 30 points	
Drum Dream Girl			X: 30 points		
A Different Pond	X: 29 points				
Freedom in Congo Square					X: 31 points
Radiant Child	X: 31 points				

Appendix E

Blank Diversity and SEL Checklist

Book					
Key Competency:					
Does the book include...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Elements of human character diversity?					
Comments					
A diverse setting, timeline, or experience?					
Comments					
A theme that can be represented as a commonality in many students' lives? (potentially a mirror, window, or sliding glass door)					
Comments					
Elements of the story developing over a period of time?					
Comments					
Elements of the story developing in multiple locations?					
Comments					
A representation of a human emotion that children can relate to?					
Comments					

A solution to a possible real-life problem?					
Comments					