

# Equity in Literacy





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## INTRODUCTION

In 2021 in the United States, all children should learn to read, and learn to read well enough that they can fully pursue their dreams in adulthood. Yet in no state, let alone in the country as a whole, have we managed to come close to this level of substantial literacy for 100 percent of our children. This should be cause enough for concern in and of itself. State Superintendent, Michael F. Rice, Ph.D. states,

Of additional and profound concern is that, on *average*, our children of color and our working class and poor children in Michigan and across the country underperform their peers. This is not a reflection of their capability. As educators and policymakers, both in Michigan and across the country, we have a collective responsibility to do better.

It was a belief in the centrality of literacy to children’s futures that led the plaintiffs in the *Gary B* literacy case to file suit. Whether you agree with the plaintiffs and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals panel that there is a legal right to literacy; believe in the moral right to literacy but don’t agree that this right is a constitutional one; or feel that while no legal or moral right to literacy exists but that literacy is a matter of economic necessity for children growing up in the 21st century, the conclusion is the same: we as a country have a responsibility to dramatically improve our teaching and encouragement of literacy—of reading and writing—in our children.

As abolitionist, writer, publisher, and orator Frederick Douglass said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” As it was in the 19th century when Douglass lived, in similar and additional ways it is true now.

As one aspect of the settlement of the *Gary B* lawsuit,<sup>1</sup> Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer asked the Michigan Department of Education to produce a document “to advise school districts throughout the state as to how they might use evidence-based literacy strategies, initiatives, and programs to improve access to literacy and literacy proficiency, with special attention to reducing class, racial, and ethnic disparities.” This is that guidance document.

This document is divided into five broad sections:

- Practices for creating engaging literacy learning environments
- The daily involvement of students in literacy
- The scientific or technical aspects of literacy
- The role of family engagement
- Resources to support equity in literacy

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1 [Detroit literacy lawsuit settlement](#): Gary B., et al. v. Whitmer, et al., 2020



## OVERVIEW

Most efforts to improve literacy begin (and often end) with the scientific or technical aspects of literacy. The presumption is that we need to improve our technical teaching of literacy and, if we do, children’s literacy levels will increase substantially. We can certainly improve our teaching of the technical aspects of literacy (reading and writing) and more broadly of language arts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This guidance document, in part, will outline ways in which to improve the technical aspects of the teaching and learning of literacy.

While gains can be generated by improving the technical aspects of the teaching and learning of literacy, there are major gains to come through engagement of children in literacy and through increased time in reading and writing. This guidance document begins with strategies for engaging children, particularly children of color, including the development and regular use of diverse classroom and school libraries, books written by authors of color, and books whose characters are of color.

If we are to make gains in literacy, we must reflect on who our children are. Thirty-five percent of Michigan’s public school children are students of color.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-eight percent of all *new* children’s literature in this country had a character of color.<sup>3</sup> While this is an increase in the number of new books written by authors of color, books for children have been relatively homogenous and relative devoid of characters of color for so long that educators need to be very deliberate in their choices of selecting and using books if we are to provide an appropriate level of diversity in student reading options. All children deserve to see themselves in their reading. Not only is there a validation for children seeing themselves in the books they read, there is a utility: children are more likely to connect to the reading and to want to read more—more of the author’s works, about specific characters, about specific historic events, about particular people or peoples, about particular themes in their lives. When students have access to books that are representative of themselves, they are validated by feeling seen and heard and are more likely to be engaged in independent reading.<sup>4</sup>

For us to assign books or other readings that suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that children will read just because we tell them to do so, irrespective of their interest in or attachment to the reading selections, is charitably naïve and less charitably a disconnect from our children. It is true that some children will learn to read well because they understand and accept the expectation of their families and their teachers that they will do so. It is also true that some children will *not* learn to read well, because their families or teachers don’t have the same expectations for them, because they need to be convinced of the relevance of reading in their lives, or because we as educators have connected inadequately with them.

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2 [MiSchoolData](#)

3 View statistics regarding Books by and/or About Black, Indigenous and People of Color (All Years) at <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-about-poc-fnn/>

4 For more about representation in text and culturally relevant text, see Freeman & Freeman, 2004; and Stringfellow, L. (2019); Style, E. (1988).



Low expectations for our children, particularly for many of our children of color, tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. If we expect less of children, we get less. If we expect more, we get more. When educators believe that children come to the classroom with the desire and ability to learn, students are more likely to grow and to develop. Beliefs of educators appear in the classroom through curriculum and instruction decisions and intentionality in the provision of different learning opportunities.

The first section of this document addresses the importance of creating engaging literacy learning environments for students. Children must be convinced that reading is important for them. Reading nurtures the imagination, opens doors to new learning, and leads to positive life outcomes for individuals and communities. Reading and writing are important literacy skills. As educators, we need to role model the importance of literacy for our students and provide opportunities for students to develop the necessary literacy skills to be successful. When students grow up with books and magazines and other reading material in their homes and with people reading to them, with them, and around them, students accept without dispute the importance of reading (and, often by extension, of writing as well). When students grow up with little to no connection to reading material, the simple functioning of the day-to-day experiences make students less likely to be convinced that their reading and writing are useful for them. Children in the latter category may master the basics, but they are more likely to need to be convinced, implicitly or explicitly, of the relevance of literacy to their lives if they are to engage sufficiently to get the substantial vocabulary, background knowledge, and reading practice required for learning success.

The second section of this document discusses the importance of the major aspects of literacy – that is, *daily* reading and writing; the minimum amount of reading and writing necessary at different ages; fluency as a lift-off to comprehension; comprehension as a foundation for more comprehension; vocabulary development; background knowledge development; and breadth and depth of reading development.

The third section focuses on the technical aspects of literacy mentioned previously.

The fourth section addresses the role of family engagement to support literacy.

The fifth section focuses on the resources to support equity in literacy.

This document includes resources to provide guidance to school districts about using evidence-based literacy strategies, initiatives, and programs to improve access to literacy and literacy proficiency. These resources will require periodic updating. Additionally, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Library of Michigan will be expanding from time to time the section for resources on diversifying classroom libraries to support student engagement.



## SECTION 1: PRACTICES FOR CREATING ENGAGING LITERACY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Students' literacy engagement is enhanced when teachers and schools attend to research-informed practices that support instruction and encourage students to find purpose in reading and writing. Students are more engaged in reading when they are given a choice of what to read. Engagement includes self-regulation and comprehension when reading, as well as participation in discussions with peers and adults about what they read. When students connect to the characters or the topics in the books that they read, the connection influences how students examine their own lives. To offer choices for reading, teachers must deepen their understanding of students as individuals and as readers.

Understanding that readers' engagement is dependent on many factors and strategies that support finding purpose is significant. These strategies include the use of:

1. **Diverse Texts:** exposing students to meaningful texts that represent a diverse set of backgrounds and circumstances, allowing students to see themselves and others in the literature and learning materials.
2. **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** creating learning environments where student diversity is valued.
3. **Literacy for Purpose:** creating learning opportunities so students understand why literacy matters and why reading can be life-changing.

When educators take an interest in students' lives, learn more about students as individuals, and support their individual learning needs through instruction, children are more likely to engage in learning. Students are motivated to read more when they have skills to fluently decode words, recognize words, and comprehend what they read. Children who have struggled with reading often need skill support and practice to help with reading and comprehension of grade-level text. While the skill practice and interventions are necessary for success, this should not limit the student's access to quality, grade-level literacy learning. For this reason, foundational skills, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary are all imperative; these will be discussed in other sections of this document.

## Diverse Texts<sup>5</sup>

Literacy instruction that engages all students uses texts, lessons, and assignments that encourage reflection and dialogue about differences, perspectives, and identities. To diversify the narratives of literature, educators and children should be engaged in books and other learning materials written by authors of color. Such authors include, but are not limited to: Langston Hughes, Jacqueline Woodson, Claude Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, Countee Cullen, James Baldwin, Jason Reynolds, Ralph Ellison, Christopher Paul Curtis, Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, and Amiri Baraka. Appendix A of this document includes a list of suggested authors by grade level. These include authors of color and authors from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. While this list is in no way comprehensive, it provides an introduction to challenge educators both to read texts from these authors and to make them available in meaningful ways to students. MDE and the Library of Michigan will make this list available on the Equity in Literacy [website](#) and it will be expanded over time with input from educators and students.

Literacy instruction that engages all students includes an intentional approach to choosing learning materials and topics. Intentional approaches can include using diverse texts in ways that disrupt negative stereotypes, build awareness of the position and voice of the author, and address the issues of marginalized populations. Curricular materials should be inclusive and avoid stereotypic depictions of race, national origin, gender, or disability; additionally, the materials should reflect the cultural practices and contributions of diverse communities in traditional and evolving ways. Students should see themselves and others reflected in the ideas and representation of the featured authors, characters, and perspectives.

### What to Look For

Each practice in this document will include a description and a “What to Look For” section to showcase how the practice might look in a literacy classroom or school setting. Additional resources are available in Appendix B: Resources to Support Equity in Literacy.

### ***What to Look For in Classrooms Where Students Have Access to Diverse Texts that Are Meaningful and Grade-Level Appropriate:***

1. Learning materials positively depict people of color and other historically marginalized individuals and avoid stereotypic depictions of race, national origin, gender, and disability.
2. Teachers intentionally select books that allow for activities where students can reflect on and discuss ways in which their own identity and experiences influence how they read the text.
3. Resources are available to increase the number of diverse texts available for instruction and for students to read independently.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on using diverse texts, see Bishop, R. (1990); Coomer, M. N., Skelton, S. M., Kyser, T. S., Warren, C., & Thorius, K. A. K. (2017); Style, E. (1988); Vasquez, V. (2017, March).

## Culturally Responsive Teaching<sup>6</sup>

Another important element in engaging all students in literacy learning is to value student diversity through culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is a research-based approach in which the teacher makes meaningful connections of learning in the classroom to the individual cultures, languages, and life experiences of the students. This approach helps students engage with learning and see the relevance of reading and writing to their own lives. Culturally responsive teaching requires support and time for educators to explore how their perspectives and life experiences shape decisions that influence student learning. This approach to teaching allows educators and students to question inequality and injustice in the school, district, state, country, and world.

Culturally responsive teaching stems from a belief that all students can learn, a willingness to explore instructional practices that work for diverse classrooms of students, and an understanding of the racial, ethnic, and class barriers that contribute to inadequate access to literacy learning. Teachers who embrace this approach value the diversity of peoples' social identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, and home language. When teachers pair instruction and engagement by leveraging what they know about a child, they are intentionally providing access to literacy learning.

Professional learning to improve cultural responsiveness is critical in making high-quality literacy instruction accessible for all students. Districts are encouraged to provide all staff with current professional learning and to maintain a professional learning calendar that places equity in the forefront. Time and support are necessary for educators to address implicit bias that may influence their teaching practice. MDE has curated a collection of current opportunities for professional learning. This list is available on the Equity in Literacy [website](#).

### ***What to Look For in Classrooms Where Student Diversity is Valued through Culturally Responsive Teaching:***

1. Facilitated conversations and perception surveys are used so students can share experiences connected to their identities, to help create a welcoming environment in the classroom.
2. Teachers purposefully connect learning opportunities with students' personal interests and social concerns to deepen engagement.
3. Professional learning, coaching, and self-study materials are offered by the district to directly address implicit bias. Educators can talk about the strategies that they use to address personal bias to minimize its influence on their work in classrooms and schools.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on valuing student diversity and equitable approaches to teaching, see Callins, T. (2006); Hammond, Z. (2015); Ladson-Billings, G. (1995); Muhammad, G. (2020); Paris, D. & Alim, H. S. (2014); Paris, D. (2017); Stringfellow, L. (2019). For more information on ethnicity and student engagement, see Bingham & Okagaki, (2012). For more information on student engagement perceptions, see Ivey & Johnston, (2013).



## Literacy for Purpose<sup>7</sup>

**“Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.”**

– Frederick Douglass

Engaging students in literacy learning means being clear about why reading matters and how it can be life changing. For historically marginalized students, the ability to read has an even greater effect on life outcomes. Reading is an empowerment tool that can affect income, opportunities, and life happiness. Students who can read at grade level by the end of third grade are less likely to drop out of school, be incarcerated, or live in poverty. Creating purpose for students to read and to engage in literacy lessons is critical for students’ lifelong outcomes.

Creating purpose for literacy includes engaging students in learning about the world – both history and current events – and showing where real-life experiences of reading, writing, listening and speaking empowered people in the past and in current life. Teachers can create purpose by helping students understand how literacy skills can support more authentic learning during, and beyond, the school day. For students who have been marginalized and, according to data, are more likely to be struggling readers, the real-life purposes of literacy learning can be lost. When students get frustrated and struggle to read, the focus of learning might have to include intervention and skill-building; instruction might be limited to remediation. Struggling students especially need to be included in grade-level literacy learning and be provided with extra time for intervention. The instructional purposes for grade-level learning and intervention should be clear to the teacher, the student, and the student’s family.

### ***What to Look For in Classrooms Where a Purpose for Literacy Learning is Created:***

1. Teachers and students can talk about how the learning connects to their lives in ways that demonstrate knowledge and understanding. The learning is infused with stories, activities, and tasks that represent the students’ interests, personal experiences, and current events that are directly affecting their lives.
2. Teachers facilitate projects where students are using reading, writing, and communicating to solve real issues, such as creating a better classroom culture, improving the playground, or working with the community to solve a neighborhood issue.
3. Students can give examples of how literacy learning has had, and will continue to have, a positive influence on their lives.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on Literacy for Purpose, see Hansel & Pondiscio (2016, May); Paris, D. (2017); The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010); Thompson, G.L. and Shamberger, C. T. (2015).

## A Note on Student Intersectionality<sup>8</sup>

To engage students in literacy, it is important to engage all facets of their identities and to help them see themselves in the literature and curriculum in multiple ways. In other words, it is important to understand students' intersectionality when focusing on student engagement in literacy.

Coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a term that describes how a person's multiple identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) overlap and shape how everyday life is experienced. These identities affect the ways that individuals interact with and influence (or do not influence) the systems and institutions within which they operate (for example, schools, healthcare, and criminal justice). In the world of education, intersectionality highlights the idea that students can experience marginalization and discrimination in multiple ways based on their different identities. For example, African American girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls.<sup>9</sup> This is likely due to factors related to the combination of both gender (sexism) and race (racism), not one of these factors alone. While both African American and white girls may be marginalized based on gender, African American girls can be further marginalized by the intersection of their gender and their race.

Teaching with an awareness of intersectionality puts students' identities into context. With this awareness, educators recognize that students are not representatives of a single social identity, and that students' histories have been influenced by all the communities to which they belong. Honoring those histories acknowledges the complicated reality of students' lives; it helps ensure that students can show up authentically and meaningfully engage in their educational experience.

### ***What to Look For When Student Intersectionality is Addressed:***

1. Educators build meaningful relationships and collaborate with their students to allow for personal conversations to occur, so students have opportunities to authentically share and explore their identities.<sup>10</sup>
2. Educators engage in professional learning and self-study to understand their own identities, biases, and assumptions, to ensure they do not unintentionally reinforce stereotypes and systems of oppression.<sup>11</sup>
3. Districts offer professional learning; school personnel are encouraged to receive training in social justice education to better understand the ways internal, interpersonal, institutional and systemic racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression have historically influenced public education, and continue to do so.
4. Curriculum—including materials such as books, videos, and articles—are reflective of the school community and historical texts accurately reflect historical events. In districts that are predominantly white, the curriculum includes positive, non-stereotypical depictions of people of color, as well as discussions of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about intersectionality, see Brochin, C. (2018); Crenshaw, K. (1989)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BlackGirlsMatter\\_Report.pdf](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BlackGirlsMatter_Report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> For more strategies for building meaningful relationships, see the Resources for Building Teacher-Student Relationships [online](#) at Education Northwest.

<sup>11</sup> There are tools and professional learning opportunities available to help educators become aware of their own identities and biases. Some are included in the resource section at the end of the document.

**“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults.” – Fredrick Douglass**

*Now more than ever, educators and teachers will have to devote their energy to uplift, inspire, and enlighten the next generation of world changers. In a world filled with chaos, educators have the daunting task of ensuring that each of our students receives a quality education filled with care, inspiration, high expectations, knowledge, and love.*

*However, this is a time of reflection, evaluation, and rediscovery of self for educators across our state. We can no longer ask our students to excel while contributing to the barriers for each student to have quality education and have the ability to live productive and fulfilling lives now and in the future.*

*In this new world, educators can begin to make shifts in finding intersectional understanding, support, and care toward all our students, creating educational spaces that defy and demolish oppression toward our students' success.*

*To bring the best out of our students, educators need to embrace the biases we have carried in our souls, attitudes, and actions toward our students. Once educators begin to examine and reflect on how they have contributed toward an unjust society, they can begin to work toward providing all students with the feeling of safety, liberty, genuine equality, and happiness. In reflection, educators must especially think of the limitations on our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ, and other young individuals who wish to be allies and accomplices toward a better world. After realizing and accepting that we contributed to placing limitations on these individuals, we must right the wrongs and provide the necessary items to grow and flourish in education.*

*Abolitionist educator Dr. Bettina Love states, “Education is an industry that is driven and financially backed by the realities that dark children and their families just survive.” These words by Dr. Love are entirely accurate and the reason why educators must not wait to make changes in our educational system for our students. We can no longer sit back and allow a world filled with prejudice, racism, sexism, and xenophobic ideas to control our students' paths. It is time for educators to improve themselves so that we can indeed contribute to the growth for all in this state, country, or the world.*

*Activist Audre Lorde once said, “Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you; we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs on the reasons they are dying.”*

*It is time for us in education to think about the reasons that our kids are figuratively dying. How can we, as educators, take steps to ensure that we are examining, discussing, and providing growth to ourselves and our students on significant issues in their lives? Students are looking for us to provide a world filled with joy, protection, care, and without fear for them to be their authentic selves.*

*The time is now, educators. Waiting for change does a disservice to our young people, our country, and ourselves.*

### **Jessyca Mathews**

Regional Teacher of the Year, Michigan, 2019-2020; Finalist for Michigan Teacher of the Year, 2019-2020

Secondary English Teacher of the Year, MCTE, 2018

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English teacher, Carmen Ainsworth High School



## SECTION 2: THE DAILY INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN LITERACY

At all ages, children should be provided with ample daily opportunities to engage in, and make choices about, literacy. Daily reading and writing have lasting positive effects on literacy achievement. Intentional instruction that addresses literacy should occur throughout the school day, and not exclusively in an English language arts setting. Incorporating appropriate literacy skills into subjects such as mathematics, social studies, and science reinforces and builds literacy skills and provides purpose for engaging students in reading, writing, and learning. Differentiated instruction is necessary to support students with the teaching and practice needed for improving literacy skills. For students who are facing barriers to learning, extended practice and time for instruction, informal or otherwise, are needed outside of school. Opportunities for instruction and extended practice should occur before and after school, as well as during school breaks such as summer vacation. For all children, support for literacy should be a part of daily life before they begin kindergarten.

While in the classroom, children should experience direct instruction in reading and writing every day. This instruction must happen during the daily literacy block and during content area learning. There are varying schools of thought regarding the minimum time that should be spent on reading and writing in school at different grade levels. However, what is most important is that children have significant time each day with literacy learning that includes direct instruction, time to read and write, and specific literacy skill support as needed. Students should also be provided time during the school day for opportunities that offer choice in what they read and write. Literacy teaching and learning must be intentional and connected to a purposeful scope and sequence of a learning progression to ensure continuity and alignment from grade to grade.

### Literacy Learning Progressions<sup>12</sup>

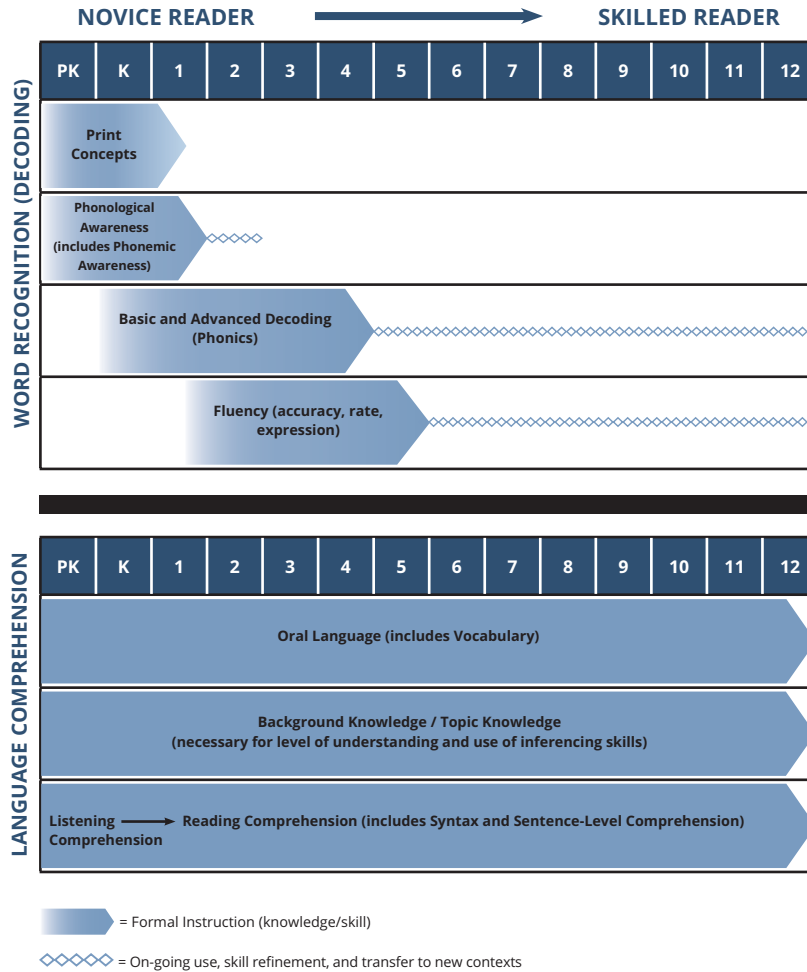
Literacy instruction should follow a research-informed progression. It is crucial that the complexity of teaching literacy skills progresses with grade level. The following figure is an example of what a grade-level progression for reading skills might look like from kindergarten through third grade. While reading development is a complex process, the progression below is developed from the Simple View of Reading, which broadly defines this process by dividing reading into the two primary categories of word recognition and language comprehension. In the progression, a shaded bar is shown within a grade-level band, with each bar representing an evidence-based estimate of when readers typically master these skills. Some of the component skills are extended by a thin line that represents ongoing use and refinement of skills.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the literacy learning progressions, see Foorman et al., (2016); Graham et al., (2012); Hoover & Gough (1990); Berninger & Chonquoy (2012); and St. Martin, Vaugh, Troia, Fine, Coyne, (2020).

## Learning Progression for Developing Skilled Readers

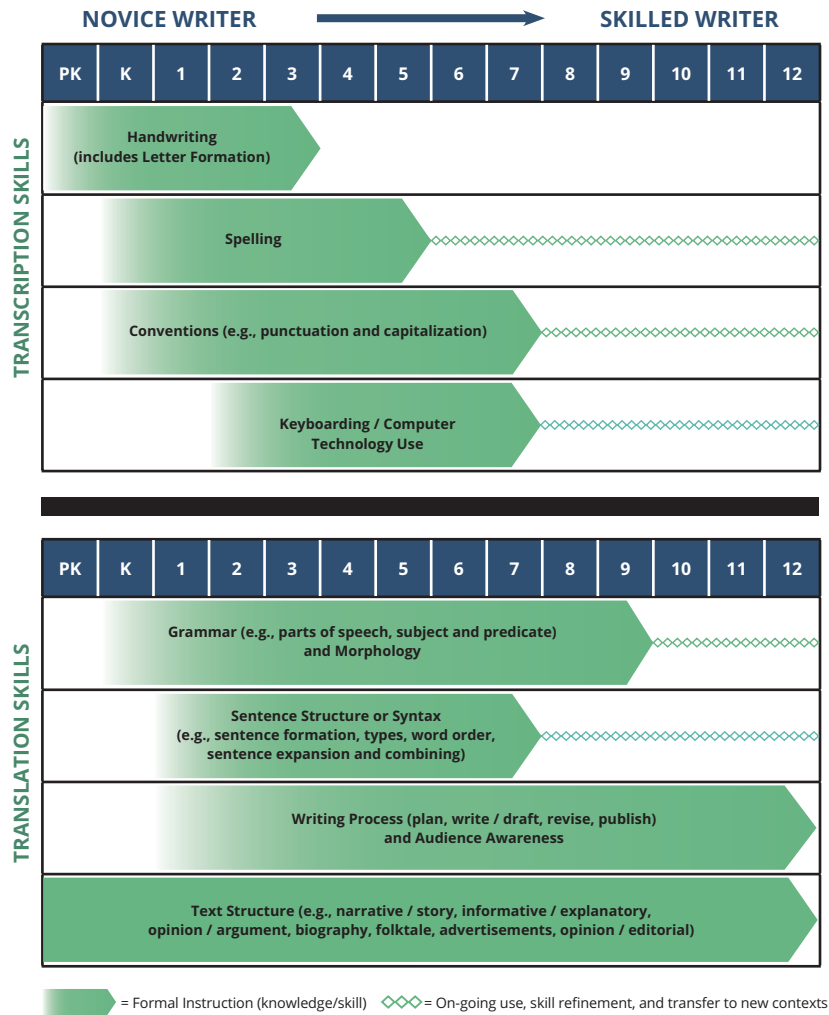
### LEARNING PROGRESSION



As with the Simple View of Reading development, the writing progression (developed from the Simple View of Writing) is also divided into categories of development, which include transcription and translation skills. The following figure shows a learning progression for development of these writing skills. It includes a sequence of teaching the skills necessary to be an accomplished writer. Each of the component skills listed within blue bars can and should be further defined and presented in a more in-depth instructional scope and sequence. The thin line represents the need for ongoing use, skill refinement, and transfer to new contexts.

## Learning Progression for Developing Skilled Writers

### LEARNING PROGRESSION



### What to Look For When Students are Provided Instruction that is Aligned to Reading and Writing Learning Progressions:

1. Ample time is provided in the daily schedule for direct instruction and student exploration in literacy.
2. Direct instruction in reading and writing occurs daily in literacy-specific learning time. Direct instruction in reading and writing also occurs in content area learning. Additionally, students are provided daily time to exercise their choice in reading and writing.
3. A clear purpose for reading and writing instruction can be explained by both the teacher and the students.
4. Teachers have daily lesson plans showing standards-based instruction that connect to the appropriate learning progressions. Time is available for students to receive additional skill support as needed.

## Differentiated Literacy Instruction<sup>13</sup>

The reading and writing progressions shown above represent the trajectory for typical skill development. When educators understand the typical learning progressions and associated research-based teaching practices, students are more likely to receive the high quality literacy instruction and interventions that they need to be successful readers and writers. For students who struggle in one or more skill areas, differentiated instruction and intervention in addition to grade-level instruction will be needed. For this reason, grade-level classroom instruction must be a priority, with the teacher providing scaffolds and additional time for skill development as needed before, during, and after school. When a student struggles with literacy, is unable to complete assignments, or shows frustration in learning, a multi-disciplinary team should convene to problem-solve a situation. At a minimum, the team should include the classroom teacher, an educator with literacy expertise, a special education teacher (if possible), and a family member of the student.

Some students will need to receive evidence-based intervention. Multiple considerations should be addressed to ensure students are receiving the appropriate additional instruction that will improve literacy skills. One consideration is that the chosen intervention matches the need of the student as determined by screening and progress-monitoring assessment tools. A second consideration is to provide an appropriate amount of time for instruction and practice. Additionally, educators can ensure that the student receives opportunities to transfer a skill that was taught during intervention to classroom activities. Finally, the student may need additional explicit instruction such as simpler directions, additional modeling, more in-depth development of background knowledge, more immediate feedback, gradual fading of instructional supports, and sufficient independent practice. Teachers may also need to consider behavioral supports that can contribute to student success; these might include an environment that allows for increased focus, instructional methods to keep students on-task, and provision of strategies to help the student self-monitor engagement and progress.

The literacy supports offered must accelerate learning as opposed to continuing a cycle of remediation. Classroom teachers in all content areas can provide scaffolds to ensure students are engaging in grade-level literacy activities. Some scaffolds include reading with partners, reading aloud, shared writing, providing purposeful reasons for re-reading passages and revising drafts, and instruction on how to break complex sentences into more manageable pieces for better comprehension. While these research-based instructional practices are appropriate for all students, they are also key practices for reducing inequities by race, class, and ethnicity. Too often, differentiated instruction occurs outside the classroom and differs from instruction that occurs in the classroom with the whole class. When this takes place, there is a disconnect between what the individual student learns and what the rest of the class learns, putting the struggling learner at a greater disadvantage and exacerbating inequities. Often, a more effective model is to have the interventionist work in the classroom with students who are struggling with their literacy progression.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on Differentiated Literacy Instruction, see Gersten et al., (2008); MDE MTSS Team. (2018); and Michigan Department of Education. (2020).

### ***What to Look For When Students Receive Differentiated Learning:***

1. Differentiated instruction is provided for students struggling with literacy learning inside the classroom from the teacher, interventionist, or other support staff. The differentiated instruction matches the student's learning need and accelerates progress in reducing learning gaps. The instruction is engaging and relevant to the student.
2. Teachers use varying grouping strategies among the students, with flexible groups for instruction that target students' learning needs.
3. Students work together in pairs and small groups to draw on their own knowledge and their peers' knowledge to co-construct meaning.

### **Time for Literacy Outside of School<sup>14</sup>**

Time for literacy outside of school is also important. Spaces where reading time can be maximized include the years before a child enters school, hours spent outside of the school day, and school holiday and summer breaks. Additional time for both supported and independent reading increases the eagerness to read more, expands vocabulary, and builds knowledge.

#### **The years before children enter school**

Engagement with books and opportunities to write and draw from an early age promote excitement about reading and writing. Families and educators play a role in motivating children to read. Having a variety of books in the home, singing and talking to infants, reading books and nursery rhymes, and playing rhyming games with toddlers as part of daily living is important for vocabulary development. Creating an environment that promotes literacy includes allowing young children to use crayons, pencils, chalk, and paints to express their thoughts and ideas. Reading to children, talking about stories, and acting as reading role models are all ways to support more reading for very young children. The positive interactions that young children have when they read with adults increase their motivation to read more. Ensuring that families have access to high quality books during the years before preschool and beyond is necessary to ensure that children benefit from reading experiences. Local library programming or Great Start Collaborative programs such as Talking is Teaching can be leveraged to expand the vocabulary of young children.

#### **Hours outside of the school day**

Reading and writing before and after school are important for literacy development. Encouraging students to spend more time reading and writing outside of the school day can start by creating a culture of reading in the school building. To do this, schools make books available for borrowing, encourage book reviews and student writing to be shared during school announcements, and organize book clubs and writing groups as after-school activities. Schools can collaborate with communities by announcing library events and working with local businesses (such as barbershops, hair salons, and laundromats) to provide books for children to read while they wait. Guiding students to read independently or with a buddy while riding a bus to and from school is another way for a school to encourage more time for reading. It is important for educators to provide

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on the importance of independent reading, see Anderson et.al. (2019); Augustine et al., (2016); Kim & White, (2011); Kim & Quinn, (2013); Senechal & Young, (2008).



families with strategies to use when reading with their children. Some strategies include reading aloud together, providing writing materials to use at home, and giving guidance on how to talk with children about what they read. Effective family engagement strategies for literacy and resources are included on the MDE literacy [website](#).

### **Literacy during summer and holiday breaks**

Loss of reading skills during breaks from school can widen the learning gap for students. Independent reading and extra support for literacy skills can be provided during summer and holiday break time. Both informal and formal reading can be supported by the school. Informal learning opportunities include encouragement for students to read every day. For young children, reading with an adult each day should be strongly encouraged. For all students, daily reading outside of school is critical, with older students reading independently. To strengthen reading skills, children in grades 2 and below should read with an adult for at least 20 minutes daily outside of school time. Children in grades 3 and above should read at least 30 minutes daily outside of school time, either with or without an adult. This additional reading builds fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge, all of which are necessary for the development of literacy skills. Local libraries can provide book suggestions and engaging summer reading programs that encourage a lot of independent reading. The encouragement for daily reading can come from teachers who provide personalized lists of books that students may like to read that are connected to their interests. Guidance to families and students can also include sharing of reading experiences, practicing skill development that was learned during class, and discussion prompts for older children who can read independently. Families can be encouraged to support their child's reading without concern for the length of text or genre. Novels, short stories, comic books, cooking recipes, and poetry are all forms of reading.

Formal reading programs involve face-to-face learning, virtually or in person. Summer reading programs can be offered by the school or from school partners like community centers and libraries. These programs work best when they recruit students who are not demonstrating grade-level literacy skills, the students attend regularly, and explicit instruction can be individualized. The learning objectives in the program should connect with learning from the regular classroom the goal of accelerating student learning. For these programs to be successful, the students must attend regularly and complete the full summer learning course. For older students, summer learning can provide them with the time they need to complete course credits. More details on formal reading programs for students who need skill practice are provided in Section 3.

### ***What to Look for When Students are Involved in Time for Literacy Outside of School:***

1. Schools find ways to provide free books to families with young children prior to the children starting school. This may include collaborating with community businesses and with school and local libraries.
2. Schools and families partner to encourage reading and writing before and after school. Schools provide books, resources, guidance, and coaching on how families can work with children to encourage reading and writing. Indeed, some districts have set up parent education and family literacy programs, in some cases similar to those initiated by the Harlem Children's Zone.
3. Schools collaborate with families to ensure students are engaged in reading and writing during holiday breaks and summer months. Schools provide access to books for informal learning and more formal summer school programs to support and accelerate literacy learning.
4. Schools partner with faith-based institutions, boys and girls clubs, and other youth-serving organizations on out-of-school-time literacy programming and supports.



## SECTION 3: THE SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION

### Michigan’s Essential Practices for Literacy<sup>15</sup>

Michigan is committed to the *Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy (Literacy Essentials)* documents developed by the Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF), a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA), and the General Education Leadership Network (GELN)<sup>1</sup>. A suite of *Literacy Essentials* has been developed by grade-band sets for ages birth through grade 12. These instructional practices define non-negotiable literacy engagement and instruction that children and students should experience every day from birth through grade 12. This minimum threshold for literacy instruction ‘underscores our state’s commitment to specific, research-based practices to improve literacy achievement.

The suite of *Literacy Essentials* addresses critical practices that support literacy at the early ages, such as talking to infants and playing rhyming and singing games with toddlers. In the elementary grades, core literacy instruction practices focus on vocabulary, phonological (including phonemic) awareness, phonics, writing, and comprehension. Building knowledge with science and social studies along with critical thinking and communication is an equal priority to learning to decode and comprehend. In middle school and beyond, content learning leads with a commitment to being literate across all curricular areas. This includes practicing the specialized ways of reading, writing, thinking, and communicating in each discipline. The *Literacy Essentials* are research-informed and, when connected to standards-aligned core literacy curriculum, will provide students with a firm literacy foundation. The *Literacy Essentials* also address the need for commitment to literacy at the district and building levels, where family engagement, professional learning, decision-making based on data, and student motivation and engagement are present.

A commitment to the *Literacy Essentials* is a step in the direction of equity for our state. Also needed is a deep understanding of literacy development among those who are educating students. As noted in the learning progressions in Section 2, the process of developing strong readers and writers is multi-faceted. There are many components to be taught in the outlined progressions. In addition to following the outlined progression of skill development, teachers need to implement evidence-based practices specifically geared toward teaching those skills. Explicitly teaching the requisite skills of reading and writing development will ensure students across grade levels have the best opportunity to become successful readers and writers. This means teachers will use a combination of modeling, guided, collaborative, and independent practice during instruction. The skills within the reading and writing learning progressions are discussed briefly below. Addressing these skills will look different in classrooms for younger students than in those with older students.

### Reading<sup>16</sup>

#### Decoding (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency)

Students bring a wide variety of lived literacy experiences when they first step into a classroom. Building on the knowledge that they have, the development of strong word recognition, and decoding abilities allows students to transform the print in books into spoken language. Explicit teaching of print concepts, phonological awareness, and phonics will establish a foundation for students to be able to read text accurately, at an

<sup>15</sup> The suite of Essential Practices can be found at [LiteracyEssentials.org](https://www.literacyessentials.org)

<sup>16</sup> For more information about reading, see Adlof & Perfetti, (2014); Blachman et al., (2014); Gough & Tunmer (1986); Hoover & Gough, (1990); [LiteracyEssentials.org](https://www.literacyessentials.org); Moats & Tolman (2019); and Stahl & Nagy, (2006).

appropriate rate, and with expression. A student who cannot decode the words at a pace that allows him or her to understand, cannot comprehend what is written. Failure to master these reading foundational skills might result in persistent difficulties with reading throughout a child’s educational career.

Educators can look for support to teach decoding in practices 4 and 5 in the [Literacy Essentials: Prekindergarten](#) and in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades K to 3](#), and practice 4 in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades 4-5](#).

### **Tips to support decoding**

For students who are struggling with decoding and word recognition, teachers must determine which component skills within the learning progression need to be the focus of instruction. Difficulties in this area are at the core of most reading difficulties. Students who struggle with decoding often have difficulty understanding that sounds in words are linked to certain letter patterns. This poor phonemic awareness leads to struggles with word recognition, fluency, and reading comprehension. Instruction and intervention vary at each phase of a student’s progress in learning to decode and supports may be needed regardless of the student’s age or assigned grade. Through proper screening and assessment, teachers can analyze the results to inform instruction and provide appropriate interventions.

Classroom instruction to scaffold students with decoding and word recognition into grade-level text can include having students listen to a recording or a fluent reader provide the content aloud. Incorporation of sets of texts written at varying reading levels into instruction can build background knowledge and can be used to engage students at all entry points of reading. Articles, music, novels, magazines, and online materials can be used to create text sets. These instructional strategies help students to become more automatic in recognizing words and mapping them into the brain.

To support students with fluency, teachers should model reading that demonstrates appropriate speed, expression, and accuracy. Creating opportunities for multiple, yet meaningful, re-reading of text will provide students with extra practice and improve reading fluency. Fluency practice can support students of all reading levels and can be done through incorporating practice in reading letter names, partial words, words, phrases, and sentences.

### **Language Comprehension (oral language, vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension)**

Oral language, vocabulary, and ongoing knowledge-building should be integrated into literacy instruction and content area instruction. An oral language foundation for success can be created by developing language comprehension through rich conversations with and among students and through activities like reading aloud books that are rich in academic vocabulary. Vocabulary and reading comprehension are highly connected to one another; knowledge of word meanings accounts for 50-60 percent of the difference in reading comprehension between successful and struggling readers. Vocabulary instruction should be purposeful in developing broad knowledge of many words and deep knowledge of some to support students in their ability to understand what they are reading. Comprehension relies on multiple skills that contribute to understanding what is read. Since the goal of reading comprehension instruction is to influence, support, and extend the thinking processes during reading, it is critical that instruction focus on both language comprehension and decoding skills.

Educators can look for support to teach language comprehension in practices 3 and 7 in the [Literacy Essentials: Prekindergarten](#) and in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades K to 3](#), practices 2 and 5 in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades 4-5](#) , and practices 3, 5, 7, and 8 of the [Disciplinary Literacy Essentials: Grades 6 to 12](#).

### **Tips to support language comprehension**

Poor vocabulary can cause barriers to a student’s access to grade-level text. In addition to ongoing teacher and student use of rich vocabulary and teaching word learning strategies as part of classroom instruction, teachers can focus on explicit instruction of academic vocabulary. Academic vocabulary words tend to have multiple meanings depending on the content area in which they are used. For example, when used in mathematics, the word “calculating” has a different meaning than when it is used in the context of describing a sneaky individual. This type of word can be confusing to a reader. Acknowledging the multiple uses that words have across contexts—for example, mapping words that are similar and opposite to the word “calculating”—can support a student in identifying what they already know and expanding their vocabulary.

## **Writing<sup>17</sup>**

### **Transcription (handwriting, spelling, conventions, keyboarding)**

Transcription skills include letter formation, handwriting and keyboarding fluency, spelling, and conventions including punctuation and capitalization. These skills are the foundation of written composition. Students need direct instruction in these skills, as well as time to process them and to develop and apply the skills for meaning. Spelling relies on attaching sounds to letters, breaking words into syllables, and attending to the parts of words that have meaning such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes. When students struggle in writing, it may be due to lack of mastery of one or more of the foundational transcription skills. Automaticity of transcription can allow written expression to increase in length and quality.

#### **Tips to support transcription**

Direct, explicit instruction with plentiful feedback is key for students who struggle with handwriting, spelling, and conventions. Writing production and quality suffer when students must pay close attention to letter formation, keyboarding, and spelling. While students are receiving intervention to support more automatic transcription, classroom teachers can provide scaffolds for students to access grade-level writing activities. One suggestion is to have the student dictate their writing. Providing word banks with key vocabulary can support students who struggle with spelling. In addition, breaking the writing task into smaller chunks can be helpful in supporting students so less writing must be generated at a time.

### **Translation (grammar, sentence structure, writing process, text structure)**

Translation involves generating and organizing ideas into written words, sentences, and paragraphs. It focuses more on the process of writing that includes planning, drafting, editing, and revising. For beginning and struggling writers, translation can be a taxing activity, so direct instruction and time to practice are important for writing success. Students who have not mastered transcription skills, might require greater teacher support throughout the planning process. Supports can include providing writing prompts and modeling translation behaviors. For students to achieve full mastery of writing, the teacher must provide instruction across various genres (narrative, informational, and opinion), explicitly focusing on the different text structures and sentence composition qualities of each genre.

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17 For more information about writing, see Graham et al., (2012); Moats & Tolman, (2019); and Treiman (2017).

### **Tips to support translation**

For students who struggle with generating and organizing their ideas, the scaffolds suggested for transcription can be useful. This area of skill also includes planning, drafting, and revising. Offering opportunities for short writing activities can be helpful for students who struggle with motivation and skill to write long passages. Examples of scaffolds include using sentence frames, stems, or prompts that provide structure so students can engage in more elaborate writing. Mentor texts that provide high-quality examples of writing can be used to support student-generated writing.

Equity in literacy instruction starts with educators who have deep knowledge of literacy development and evidence-based instruction practices. However, teacher knowledge alone is not enough to improve access to quality literacy learning for all students. Literacy development begins before birth and people continue to grow in literacy through their lifetime, so learning cannot happen only during the school day. Time for differentiation, intervention, independent reading and writing, and acceleration must be purposefully included during and outside of the school day. In all places where literacy learning happens, children can be encouraged by the adults in their lives to embrace the importance, purpose, and empowerment that comes with being a reader and a writer. To maximize learning opportunities, adults can work within school, family, and community partnerships to provide access to quality literacy learning.

Educators can look for support in teaching writing in practice 6 the [Literacy Essentials: Prekindergarten](#) and in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades K to 3](#), practices 2 and 5 in the [Literacy Essentials: Grades 4-5](#), and practices 3, 5, 7, and 8 of the [Disciplinary Literacy Essentials: Grades 6 to 12](#).

### ***What to Look For When Classrooms Provide Instruction on the Technical Aspects of Literacy Learning:***

1. High quality curriculum, materials, and resources that align to the grade-level progressions provide the foundation for classroom instruction.
2. Teachers refer to the suite of essential practices for literacy published by a partnership between the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF) to inform appropriate grade-level application of the reading and writing progressions.
3. The school provides interventions for students who are not making progress in reading and writing as defined by the grade-level progressions.
4. Teachers provide scaffolds to help struggling students more easily access grade-level reading and writing activities.



## SECTION 4: THE ROLE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### Supporting Family Engagement and Literacy<sup>18</sup>

Effective family engagement is associated with positive outcomes for students, including improved literacy outcomes. There are connections between literacy resources at home and students' literacy development. For instance, children from homes with more books and with more family reading experiences perform higher on reading achievement tests than children from less reading-rich environments. Additional benefits are seen when families work with their children on specific literacy skills, such as writing and phonics activities, as supported by classroom teachers. Other home activities that support literacy development include writing grocery lists and "thank you" notes; making trips to businesses in the community or to the park that spark conversations; and family discussions and debates. Children have more positive attitudes about reading and writing when families communicate the importance of literacy learning and the role of reading and writing for achieving present and future goals.

When educators and families partner, they become co-creators of environments and experiences that support students in ways that improve literacy outcomes and life success. Both educators and families can be supported by learning about family engagement strategies that improve student education experiences and literacy learning. This section addresses family engagement practices that educators can use to support student success; and more specifically, these practices support access to literacy in ways that serve to eliminate potential disparities of race, class, and ethnicity. Educators can increase the success of family engagement efforts by nurturing cultural responsiveness to the practices, values, traditions, understandings, and ideologies of the families they serve. The Michigan Department of Education [MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework](#) provides strategies for educators to expand and strengthen home-school partnerships. These strategies are described in the following examples.

### Home-School Partnerships<sup>19</sup>

Home-school partnerships support family engagement efforts. Educators use these partnerships to foster personal relationships, respect, and mutual understanding with families in ways that value and support home cultures. When families are engaged in partnerships that encourage and celebrate family culture, students receive richer learning experiences and experience enhanced learning outcomes. Through these partnerships, literacy learning can be strengthened by shared efforts among the family, educator, and community to support student achievement. The following section provides an overview of six types of activities that schools can use to promote engagement and student outcomes while honoring family cultures.

### Parenting

Educators can offer parenting activities to help families establish home environments that support students. Educators can offer workshops, videos, or social media messages to share age-appropriate parenting resources that support families in identifying and communicating goals and dreams for their children. Sharing those goals and dreams can help educators provide more individualized literacy supports for students. Family engagement strategies may also include workshops for families on ways to read aloud to children or help with literacy-related

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18 For more information about family engagement, see Auerbach (2009); Gest et al., (2004); Mapp & Kuttner, (2013); and Bryk et al., (2010).

19 For more information about school-family partnerships, see Epstein et al., (2019).



homework. The school might provide resources in family literacy to support adult reading and writing as needed. In addition, districts can offer workshops for educators on how to deepen their relationships with students' families.

A family engagement liaison can be hired by districts to develop and expand positive culture and climate in schools. The liaison can develop and implement strategies that support family and school relationships. Like other staff members, this individual can help create welcoming school climates, foster relationships among families, develop a social network for families within the school, and support connections to the community. Through these efforts, the family liaison can support cultural responsiveness in the school community and can help families navigate the school system to advocate for their children.

### ***What to Look For When Schools Engage Families in Parenting Activities:***

1. Schools provide opportunities to build relationships with families in ways that inform educators about the goals, strengths, and talents of the students.
2. Educators offer family and parenting workshops that are accessible to the family.
3. Family and parenting workshops address topics and issues that parents request through surveys and interviews prior to the event.
4. Educators provide families with information and resources on how to develop home conditions that support learning.
5. Schools provide a family engagement liaison to help families navigate the school system and advocate for their children.
6. Educators offer families home visits to better understand a student and his/her family.

### **Communicating**

Home-school partnerships are strengthened when schools create patterns for two-way communication between educators and families. Districts can provide educators with training that supports effective family communication practices. Schools can design communication plans for educators to share information about school programs and class instruction and for families to provide information on the progress of their students. School personnel can encourage two-way communication by making positive remarks about students during in-person conversations, phone calls, texts, or emails with families. Educators increase two-way communication by using technology such as text and email, so parents can interact easily with them. To support communication with families who do not speak English, schools can provide printed and digital materials in the home language and arrangements can be made for translation during conversations.

Communication efforts are important in supporting students' literacy learning. Families need to know about their child's success on grade-level learning goals. Educators can share literacy learning data and information on how they are supporting students and how families can reinforce that support. Families also need access to communication channels for sharing any concerns they have about their child's literacy progress. Educators might consider offering literacy learning workshops at the beginning of the school year to share reading and writing goals, offer specific homework expectations, and provide ways for families to contact the school for additional literacy supports.

### ***What to Look For When Schools Engage Families Through Communication:***

1. The school provides parent-teacher-student conferences on literacy goals and progress. Depending upon the age and capability of the student, some of these conferences are led by the students themselves. In all cases, the conferences include successes and challenges and what the teacher and family can do to support literacy success.
2. Language translators are available for families.
3. Clear information is available on school policies, available programs, reforms, and transitions for students.
4. A parent portal is available for families to support home learning, safety, and social connections.

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering opportunities strengthen home-school partnerships. Schools can recruit, train, and organize family volunteers in ways that support students. Through volunteering, families and others who can share their time and talents are mobilized to support student activities. Volunteer activities can occur at the school or in other locations that are convenient to families such as a community center or public library. Volunteers can assist individual teachers by helping students practice specific literacy skills, or can help in the school library or media center. Teachers could support volunteers to provide tutoring: before, during, or after school or during the summer with learning that connects to the classroom and student needs.

### ***What to Look For When Schools Engage Families in Volunteering:***

1. A school or classroom volunteer program is developed and promoted to support students and their families. The program may include peer coaching and supports or opportunities to provide individualized supports for students.
2. A parent room or family center is available for volunteers to do work, lead and participate in meetings, and to house resources for families.
3. Family volunteers are recruited (and supported) to read to and with the students, serve as literacy tutors, or support learning in after-school programs.

### **Learning at Home**

Educators can build home-school partnership by providing information, support, and resources to families about how to help their children learn at home. Activities for learning at home might include daily activities such as measuring for a recipe, creating a shopping list, and writing “thank you” notes. Other learning at home supports can include setting aside time for homework and a quiet place to learn. Educators can offer resources and options for summer programs or other learning opportunities that will support reading and writing success. Educators can also provide suggestions for how families can engage in conversations with their children about school progress and identify learning goals.

### ***What to Look For When Schools Engage Families by Supporting Learning at Home:***

1. Information is provided to families about skills required at each grade level.
2. Families are invited to plan and participate in literacy nights where reading and writing activities that can be done at home are demonstrated.
3. Access is provided to books, learning guides, and other materials that allow students to see themselves and their family in texts.



4. Educators share information with families on homework policies and how to monitor, discuss, and help with schoolwork at home.
5. Resources are provided to families on how to help students improve specific literacy skills.

### **Decision-Making**

Home-school partnerships are strengthened when school leaders involve families in decision-making. Decision-making activities can range from parent-perception surveys to engagement on leadership teams. The activities must allow families to participate in meaningful ways that influence school policies, programs, and practices that affect their own and other children. School leaders can recruit and support family members to serve on a School Improvement Team, Parent-Teacher Association/Organization, or on other teams and committees. These opportunities allow educators to engage in collaborative activities with families. Decision-making activities include a diverse range of family and community voices that represent the families being served and the community where the school is located. Family involvement must be inclusive of language and cultural representation; a school's family liaison might be helpful in supporting all families engage in decision-making activities.

#### ***What to Look For When Schools Engage Families in Decision-Making:***

1. Families are recruited and supported to serve on school leadership teams.
2. Leadership workshops are provided to help family members and students be confident in their collaboration with the school.
3. Family liaisons help ensure that parent surveys are completed and barriers are overcome so family members can successfully serve on leadership teams.

### **Collaborating with the Community**

Community collaboration activities can be explored to strengthen home-school partnerships. Educators can identify and integrate resources and services from the community to enhance school programs, family practices, and student learning. Collaboration with the community supports the relationship of schools and families with community groups, organizations, agencies, and individuals. Community resources can assist and enrich literacy learning among students strengthen the community.

Schools and communities can collaborate to identify and or develop literacy-connected programs and services that are available to families, educators, and students. Educators can also collaborate with businesses and agencies on special projects to support literacy. Some school partnerships include working with barbershops, salons, and laundromats to offer books for children to read while waiting.

#### ***What to Look For When Schools Collaborate with Families and the Community:***

1. Educators partner with a local library, museum, or businesses to present a "Literacy Night" event for students and their families. Families are given free passes and/or transportation to the attraction to encourage return visits.
2. Educators collaborate with business partners to build book collections for classroom and school libraries and books for students to take home.
3. A project is organized for students to read to senior citizens at a local center or facility.



## SECTION 5: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT EQUITY IN LITERACY

This guidance document addresses multiple aspects of student engagement, literacy learning, and family partnerships to ensure evidence-based practices are used to improve access to literacy in ways that reduce class, racial, and ethnic disparities. The suggestions offered are not inclusive of all possibilities for supporting literacy learning. For that reason, there are reference links throughout the guide, along with several appendices to support educators in deepening their learning and ability to support students and their families. The appendix resources are summarized below.

### **Appendix A: Celebrating Authors of Color and Their Works of Literature**

This document was developed by the Michigan Department of Education to share and honor authors of color and their literary works. The authors and their works are categorized by the age or grade level of the reading material. This list will be expanded over time.

### **Appendix B: Resources to Support Equity in Literacy**

The resources in the annotated list in Appendix B support the topics addressed in this document. They include additional research, tools, and information to support educators in their own development of literacy and approaches to instruction to increase students' engagement and ultimately student success in literacy learning. The resource list will be updated and revised over time.

### **Appendix C: Equity Training Opportunities and Resources**

To fully value the diversity of the students being served, educators must explore and address their implicit, and often unintentional, biases. Professional learning is a tool that can be used to help educators in their ongoing journey to increase their cultural competency, use inclusive teaching practices, and improve action towards anti-racism. The resources in Appendix C include suggestions for online and face-to-face efforts in equity learning. The examples included are not exhaustive, but offer considerations for school-based professional learning communities and opportunities for personal learning sessions.

## The Role of Libraries

### School Librarians

Multiple studies<sup>1</sup> in over 20 states, including Michigan, show that schools with a school library staffed by a full-time certified teaching school librarian have a high impact on increasing student achievement. These benefits are gained regardless of socio-economic or education levels of the community. Additionally, at-risk students benefit more than not-at-risk students from the presence of a full-time certified school librarian.<sup>2</sup>

Library-media specialists are specifically trained not only to build and maintain collections that support K-12 curriculum and self-directed learning opportunities; they also curate diverse collections that include multiple perspectives and culture. A diverse collection enables students to see themselves and people different from them in literature, to help build empathy and respect for others.<sup>3</sup>

### Public Libraries

Public libraries offer equal and open access to information to meet the needs of all students and their families/caregivers. Public librarians are at the forefront of efforts for digital inclusion, including offering internet hot spots and digital devices for use by families and children without digital access, as well as e-books and other electronic resources.

Established public library programs are an excellent resource for teachers, students, and parents. The 2014 American Library Association's (ALA) [Digital Inclusion Survey](#)<sup>4</sup> found that:

- virtually all libraries (98 percent) offer free public Wi-Fi access
- 95 percent of libraries offer summer reading programs to forestall the “summer slide” in reading achievement experienced when learning “takes a holiday” between school terms
- close to 90 percent of libraries offer basic digital literacy training, and significant majorities of them support training related to new technology devices (62 percent), safe online practices (57 percent), and social media use (56 percent)
- a significant majority of libraries host social connection events for adults (61 percent) and teens (60 percent), such as book discussion groups or gaming programs
- 45 percent of libraries provide early-learning technologies for pre-K children.
- more than one-third of all libraries provide literacy, GED prep, STEAM, and afterschool programs

Not only do public libraries offer access to learning, but they encourage a love of reading through engaging programs and their diverse collections. In 2019, Michigan's 651 public libraries offered a combined total of 101,619 programs aimed at youth; the programs supported classroom visits, early literacy storytime sessions, information literacy trainings, STEM programs, summer reading, teen engagement, and more.

The digital resources, programming, and diverse collections provided to communities by their public libraries offer meaningful collaboration opportunities for schools. Such partnerships create a community in which students can not only discover the love of reading but can also see themselves

reflected in and supported by the community where they live. Educators are encouraged to use the [Michigan Library Directory](#) to contact their local public library directly, to learn about their resources and discuss collaboration opportunities.

## Michigan eLibrary

Statewide support for digital equity is provided by the Michigan eLibrary (MeL), which offers resources to all schools and libraries across Michigan. MeL offers “24/7/365” access to reading and research materials for students who are learning at a distance. Whether the focus is on content-specific curriculum, [Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy](#) or the [Michigan Integrated Technology Competencies for Students](#), MeL has eResources that support teaching and learning at every grade level. Connections to Google Drive and Google Classroom also support remote learning. Educators can learn more about MeL eResources through a [MeL’s Educator Guide](#). They can connect to [Grades K-5](#) and [Grades 6-12](#) eResources by visiting [MeL.org](#).

1 <https://bit.ly/evidSLib>

2 <http://bit.ly/MiSLiteracy>

3 For more discussion on the importance of learners experiencing “windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors”, see Bishop, R. (1990).

4 Clark & Perry (2015)

## Conclusion

This guidance document is a compilation of evidence-based literacy strategies, initiatives, and programs to improve access to literacy and literacy proficiency, with special attention to reducing class, racial, and ethnic disparities. In some regards, this document is a starting point in looking at literacy beyond simply the technical literacy skills to be taught to a consideration of the children whom we are teaching and of the contexts from which they come to us each day to be educated.

Teachers, literacy coaches, literacy coordinators, principals, superintendents, and other educators begin to establish a school culture that champions equity and inclusion when they engage in their own learning and self-study. To fully engage children, especially children who are historically marginalized and thus often not served well in schools, educators must help students to feel that they are seen and heard in the classroom. This effort takes intentionality and is easier said than done. Educator commitment to professional growth in how to engage historically marginalized children, and particularly children of color, is essential to student success. Students need to engage actively in literacy, to learn to shape ideas through acts of reading and writing. School leaders and educators are encouraged to use this guide to support their own journey and by extension the journeys of their students in bringing equity to the teaching of literacy.



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## APPENDIX A: CELEBRATING AUTHORS OF COLOR AND THEIR WORKS OF LITERATURE



The celebration of authors of color and their works of literature is an important way to emphasize and pay tribute to authors who have, and continue to, provide insight into the struggles, triumphs, challenges, and successes that are a part of daily living for people of color in America.

Literature provides a personal and intimate instrument by which to learn about the rich culture of people along with their major roles in the world and the history of our country. An important factor in developing and supporting a life-long love of reading is ensuring that all children see themselves in literature that reflects their lives and the world's diversity. As students read about and learn that people of color are an integral and important part of the very fiber of our country, another step toward the eradication of racism in America can be made.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is committed to helping educators become aware of and familiar with literature by authors of color and literature that provides an accurate account of the experiences of people of color.

## Authors of Color – A Living List of Literature

MDE's *Authors of Color – A Living List of Literature* list will grow and expand as it is updated on an ongoing basis. The authors and their selected works are categorized by the level of the reading material. In addition to the author's name a sample title of their work and a short statement about them is included. Michigan authors are noted with a Michigan map icon (like the one shown).



This list is provided only as a resource for educators to explore, and that the selection of these texts is not mandated for local curriculum use. As with all great literature, there are many different views and perceptions of pieces of work and what reaches one student may have a different effect on another.

Educators are encouraged to explore other available media resources and literary recommendations for guidance in establishing and maintaining inclusive classroom libraries including, but not limited to, those provided by:

- Michigan Association for Media in Education: [MAME MISelf in Books 2020 List](#)
- Detroit Public Library: [DPL 2020 African American Book List](#)
- Colours of Us: [500+ Multicultural Children's Books by Age and Ethnicity](#)
- Imagination Soup: [OwnVoices Books for Kids](#)

*As students read about and learn that people of color are an integral and important part of the very fiber of our country, another step toward the eradication of racism in America can be made.*

The *Authors of Color – A Living List of Literature* is offered for educator reflection and consideration as you continue to research and identify materials for possible integration into local curriculum. Works included are based upon recommendations and input from multiple professionals. We appreciate the input, guidance, and support provided by the following individuals in the development of this list:

## Library of Michigan

- Tim Gleisner, Head of Special Collections
- Kendel Darragh, Reference Librarian

## Michigan Department of Education

- Kelly Alvarez, English Learner Consultant, Special Populations Unit
- Dr. Brandy Bugni, Literacy Manager, Curriculum & Instruction Unit
- Dr. Corinne Edwards, Regional Consultant, Regional Supports Unit
- Jennifer Huisken LaPointe, Initiative Director, Indigenous Education Initiative
- Dr. Paula Daniels, Director, Office of Educational Supports

## Tribal Partners

- Anne Heidemann, Tribal Librarian, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
- Rachel Kolkman, Tribal Librarian, Gun Lake Tribe
- Susan Doyle, Marisela Goodrich, Skye DePaul, & Kristie Bussler Simon Pokagon Memorial Research Library, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Camie Castaneda, Northern Office Supervisor, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi
- Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors (CMTED) Leadership Team

If you would like to recommend authors or books to be included in future updates, please send the author's name and book title to [EdwardsC7@michigan.gov](mailto:EdwardsC7@michigan.gov), using the subject line *Authors of Color - A Living List of Literature*. Along with your recommendation(s), please include the recommended category of placement for the work and share why you believe the recommended work makes a significant contribution toward lifting up and representing the voices of people of color.



# Authors of Color - A Living List of Literature

## Preschool/Picture Books


Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Asim, Habari J.	<p>Asim is an author, poet, playwright, and associate professor of writing, literature and publishing at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts.</p> <p>Awards he has received for his work include: Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts; US &amp; Canada (2009) Nominations; NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work - Children's (2013).</p>	<p><i>Whose Knees Are These?</i>  <i>Whose Toes Are Those?</i></p> <p>Picture books</p>
Barnes, Wiley	<p>Barnes, Chickasaw, has spent years forging a career in publishing, writing, printing, and graphic design, with the last eleven years at the Chickasaw Nation. <i>C is for Chickasaw</i> espouses Chickasaw culture using the letters of the alphabet, rhyming verse and expanded text that engages readers in cultural non-fiction.</p> <p><i>C is for Chickasaw</i>, his first children's book, received a Gold Benjamin Franklin for Best New Voice: Children's/Young Adult, a Bronze Moonbeam for Multicultural Nonfiction Picture Book, and was an Oklahoma Book Award Finalist.</p>	<p><i>C is for Chickasaw</i></p> <p>Non-fiction picture book</p>
Booker, Tomishia	<p>Booker, CEO/ Owner of Hey Carter! Incorporated, began writing her first series in 2016 called <i>Hey Carter!</i>, Children's Book Series. She is passionate about diversity and inclusion in children's entertainment. Her book <i>Brown Boy Joy</i> has been featured in Essence, NBC, and Netflix Family.</p> <p>Her background in counseling serves as a foundation for writing books focused on building self-confidence and pride among children of color.</p>	<p><i>Brown Boy Joy</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
<p>Boston Weatherford, Carole</p> <p>Illustrated by Eric Velasquez</p>	<p>Boston Weatherford is a children's book author and poet who's books tell the stories of African American historical figures such as Harriet Tubman, Jesse Owens, and Billie Holiday. Other books recount historical events such as the Greensboro Sit-ins and the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.</p>	<p><i>Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library</i></p> <p>Biography</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Cherry, Matthew	<p>Cherry, an American film director, writer, producer, and former American football player. He is best known for the 2019 Academy Award-winning animated short film, <i>Hair Love</i>.</p> <p>Amelia Bloomer Book List (Honor)</p>	<p><i>Hair Love</i> Fiction</p>
Child, Brenda J.	<p>Child, Red Lake Nation Ojibwe, is a Northrop Professor and former Chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of Minnesota and the Department of American Indian Studies.</p> <p>She has written several award-winning books in American Indian history. The bilingual book, <i>Bowwow Powwow</i> creatively illustrates modern-day Ojibwe culture with a combination of dreams and realism featuring dogs at a powwow.</p> <p><i>Bowwow Powwow</i> won the American Indian Youth Literature Award for Best Picture Book</p>	<p><i>Bowwow Powwow: Bagosenjige-niimi'idim</i> Fiction picture book</p>
Dungy, Tony	<p>Number 1 New York Times bestselling author whose books include <i>Quiet Strength</i> and children's book <i>You Can Do It!</i>. He led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory on February 4, 2007, the first such win for an African American head coach. He is active with Mentors for Life, Family First, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and the Boys and Girls Club of America.</p>	<p><i>You Can Do It!</i> Fiction</p>
<p>Engle, Margarita Illustrated by Rafael López</p>	<p>Engle is a Cuban American poet and author of many award-winning books for children, young adults and adults. Most of Engle's stories are written in verse and are a reflection of her Cuban heritage and her deep appreciation and knowledge of nature.</p>	<p><i>Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music</i> Picture book</p>
Farina, Matthew	<p>Farina, an American painter and writer lives and works in New York City where he is the director of admissions at the School of Visual Arts (SVA).</p> <p>Ezra Jack Keats Award Honor and Illustrator Honor</p>	<p><i>Lawrence in the Fall</i> Fiction</p>
Flett, Julie	<p>Flett, a Cree-Metis Canadian author, illustrator, and advocate for women has won multiple awards for her children's books. Her works feature modern themes and gives an authenticity to American Indians's voices.</p> <p><i>Birdsong</i> has earned the Best Book of the Year by Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, Kirkus Reviews, and Horn Book and the American Indian Youth Literature Picture Book Honor</p>	<p><i>Birdsong</i> <i>When We Were Alone</i> Fiction</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
<p>Gibbons, Janine</p> <p>Illustrated by Janine Gibbons</p>	<p>Gibbons a local Petersburg artist illustrated two children’s book with ancient stories from the Tlingit and Haida native tribes. The goal in her work is to connect people with symbols, shapes and patterns. This selection is based on ancient Northwest Coast Raven stories. This story was adapted for children from the works of the late Nora and Dick Dauenhauer, who transcribed it from Tlingit Elders Susie James’ and Robert Zuboff’s oral accounts.</p> <p>American Indian Youth Literature Picture Book Honor</p>	<p><i>Raven Makes the Aleutians</i></p> <p>Oral Tradition/Picture Book</p>
<p>Hughes, Langston</p>	<p>Hughes, is an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri. He moved to New York City as a young man, where he made his career. One of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance.</p>	<p><i>Lullaby for a Black Mother</i></p> <p>Poetry</p>
<p>Johnson, Angela</p>	<p>Johnson, is an American writer of children’s books and poetry, with over 40 books to her credit since beginning her writing career in 1989. Her children’s picture books are simple yet poetic stories about African American families, friendships, and common childhood experiences such as moving. Her books for older children revolve around similar themes but also explore deeper issues.</p>	<p><i>Daddy Calls Me Man</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
<p>Kotb, Hoda</p>	<p>Kotb is an Egyptian American broadcast journalist, television personality, and author. She is a main co-anchor of the NBC News morning show Today.</p> <p>Arab-American Book Award</p>	<p><i>I’ve Loved You Since Forever</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
<p>Lindstrom, Carole</p>	<p>Lindstrom is tribally enrolled with the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe. She was born and raised in Nebraska and currently makes her home in Maryland. She has been a voracious reader and library geek ever since she was growing up in Nebraska. On weekends you could usually find her at the library lost in the book stacks or holed up in her bedroom with a good book. It wasn’t until she had her son, that she discovered her love of writing for children and began to work seriously on her writing.</p> <p>Her works feature courageous Native children who are not afraid to stand up to forces much bigger than themselves.</p>	<p><i>We Are Water Protectors</i></p> <p>Picture book</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Mckissack, Patricia C. Illustrated by April Harrison	Mckissack is an acclaimed author writing for children today. She has written many award-winning books, including <i>Never Forgotten</i> , a Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book; <i>Porch Lies</i> , an ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Book.	<i>What is Given From the Heart</i> Fiction
McLeod, Elaine Illustrated by Colleen Wood	McLeod is a teacher who has lived and worked in many parts of the world. She was born in Mayo, Yukon, and is a member of the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation. The stories she writes were originally told to her children so that they would know their history and understand their roots.	<i>Lessons from Mother Earth</i> Oral Tradition
Minnema, Cheryl	Minnema (Waabaanakwadookwe) is a member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. She was born in Minneapolis and raised on the Mille Lacs Reservation. Along with writing children’s literature and poetry, she creates Ojibwe floral beadwork and nature photography.  She is author of <i>Hungry Johnny</i> , which was a 2015 Native America Calling book club selection.	<i>Johnny’s Pheasant</i> Picture book
Mora, Pat	Mora is a Mexican American poet and author of books for adults, teens and children. Her grandparents came to El Paso from northern Mexico. A graduate of the University of Texas at El Paso, she received Honorary Doctorates from North Carolina State University and SUNY (Buffalo), and is an Honorary Member of the American Library Association. A literacy advocate, in 1996, she founded Children’s Day, Book Day, in Spanish, El día de los niños, El día de los libros now celebrated.	<i>Sweet Dreams/Dulces Suenos: Bilingual Spanish-English Children’s Book (My Family: Mi Familia)</i> Picture Book
Nyong’o, Lupita	Nyong’o is a Kenyan actress and producer. Her first feature film role was in the film <i>12 Years a Slave</i> , for which she received the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress as well as multiple accolades, including the Screen Actors Guild Award, the Critics’ Choice Award, the Independent Spirit Award, Coretta Scott King Award, and the NAACP Award.	<i>Sulwe</i> Fiction
Obama, Barack	Author of children’s picture book <i>Of Thee I Sing</i> , a message to his daughters. Obama, the 44th President of the United States, is also the author of the New York Times bestsellers <i>Dreams from My Father</i> and <i>The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream</i> .	<i>Of Thee I Sing</i> Picture Book



Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Perry, LaTasha 	Perry is a Flint, MI native and the Founder / CEO of Kids Like Mine. She is the author of the “...Like Mine” children’s picture book series. She is also committed to enriching and empowering the lives of children through positive affirmations and self-imagery.	<i>Skin Like Mine</i> Fiction
Robertson, Joanne	Robertson is AnishinaabeKwe and a member of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. Her passion for clean water led her to found the Empty Glass for Water Campaign. She currently helps water protectors and water walkers through live GPS spotting to make sure the water is safe on their journeys. Joanne lives near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.  Her book, <i>The Water Walker</i> has won multiple awards including First Nation Communities READ Indigenous Literature Award for Children’s Book.	<i>The Water Walker</i> Picture book
Steptoe, John	Steptoe is an award winning author—recipient of several awards, including: Time AALBC.com Bestselling Book, Coretta Scott King Award Winning Book, Caldecott Medal Winner of Honor.	<i>Baby Says</i> Read along
Tallie, Mariahadessa Ekere	Tallie is a poet, writer, and educator. Her work focuses on women, race, ancestry, violence and the healing power of art.  Ezra Jack Keats Award for Illustrator and Writer Honor	<i>Layla’s Happiness</i> Fiction
Tarplay, Naasha	Tarpley is the author of the best-selling picture book, <i>I Love My Hair</i> , as well as other acclaimed titles for children and adults. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship among other awards.	<i>I love My Haircut</i> Picture Book
Wood, Colleen (Illustrator)	Wood is a Ph.D. student at Columbia University, and children’s book Illustrator. Her research focuses on identity, migration, and the state in Central Asia. She writes about Central Asian society and politics for The Diplomat and is also a blogger for the 2019 MPSA conference in Chicago.	<i>Lessons from Mother Earth</i> (with Elaine McCleod) Oral Tradition



## Elementary

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Alexander, Kwame Illustrated by Kadir Nelson	Alexander is an American writer of poetry and children's fiction. His verse novel <i>The Crossover</i> won the 2015 Newbery Medal recognizing the year's "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." It was also selected as an Honor book for the Coretta Scott King Award.	<i>The Undefeated</i> Fiction
Anika Aldamuy, Denise	Anika Aldamuy writes stories that tickle her funny bone, tug her heartstrings, feed her curiosity, and celebrate her bicultural Puerto Rican-Italian heritage. Her picture book biography, <i>Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré</i> , illustrated by Paola Escobar, received a 2020 Pura Belpré Author Honor, an NCTE 2020 Orbis Pictus Honor.  Américas Award Commended Title	<i>Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré</i> Oral Tradition
Argueta, Jorge	Argueta (born in El Salvador and a Pipil Nahua Indian) is a Salvadoran award-winning poet and author of many highly acclaimed bilingual children's books and short stories, covering themes related to Latino culture and traditions, nature, and the immigrant experience. He immigrated to the United States in the 1980s during the Salvadoran Civil War. Américas Award Commended Title.	<i>Fuego Fuego/ Fire, Little Fire/ Tit, Titchin</i> Oral Tradition / Poetry
Auger, Dale	Auger is a Sakaw Cree from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta. He is a playwright, speaker, visual artist, and holds a doctorate in education. He addresses a range of topics from the modern everyday to the sacred, interpreting his culture through his artwork.  He began his education as a young boy when his mother would take him to be with the elders. He used to say "Why is she leaving me with these old people?" He now realizes he was being taught traditions or "the old way".	<i>Mw,kwa Talks to the Loon: A Cree Story for Children</i> Oral Tradition

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Boston-Weatherford, Carol	<p>Boston-Weatherford holds an M.A. in publications design from University of Baltimore and an M.F.A. in creative writing from University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She is a Professor of English at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina.</p> <p>Her books have received numerous awards including: Caldecott Honors, NAACP Image Awards, SCBWI Golden Kite Award, a Coretta Scott King Author Honor, and many other honors.</p>	<p><i>You Can Fly – Tuskegee Airman</i> Non-Fiction</p>
Brown-Wood, Janay	<p>Brown-Wood is a new young publisher whose first publication was the winner of the NAESP Children’s Book of the Year Award. She has many new books coming out soon, and she has sold poetry to Highlights for Children (magazine). She is a member of the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, and is someone who truly enjoys hearing, writing, and telling stories!</p>	<p><i>Imani’s Moon</i> Fiction</p>
Charles, Tami	<p>Charles, a former teacher, is a full-time author of picture books, middle grade and young adult novels, and nonfiction works. As a teacher, she made it her mission to introduce her students to all types of literature, but especially diverse books.</p> <p>Américas Award Honorable Mention Title</p>	<p><i>Freedom Soup</i> Historical Fiction</p>
Copeland, Misty Illustrated by Christopher Myers	<p>Copeland, the first African American Female Principal Dancer with the prestigious American Ballet Theatre, is also an acclaimed author of children’s books.</p>	<p><i>Firebird</i> Non-fiction / Picture Book</p>
Duncan, Alice Faye	<p>Duncan is the author of several books, including the classic NAACP Award–nominated board book, <i>Honey Baby Sugar Child</i>, and <i>Just Like a Mama</i>. Ms. Duncan is a school librarian in Memphis, Tennessee, and conducts writing workshops for parents and educators. Her latest picture book, <i>Memphis, Martin and the Mountaintop</i>, received a starred review from Kirkus Reviews.</p> <p>Amelia Bloomer Book List</p>	<p><i>A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks</i> Poetry</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Gonzales, Debbie	<p>Gonzales is a freelance educational consultant, a podcaster. She is the author of six “transitional” readers for New Zealand publisher, Giltedge, and the author of a non-fiction picture book titled <i>Girls With Guts: The Road to Breaking Barriers and Bashing Records</i> (Charlesbridge, 2019). She earned her MFA in writing for children and young adults from the Vermont College of Fine Arts.</p> <p>Amelia Bloomer Book List</p>	<p><i>Girls with Guts! The Road to Breaking Barriers and Bashing Records</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction</p>
Guity, Rene	<p>In this book, Mr. Guity writes a much needed message of a FATHER’S love and devotion to his children. <i>Our Daddy</i> has the potential of becoming a classic “must have” in home libraries across the nation.</p>	<p><i>Our Daddy</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Harrison, Vashti	<p>Harrison, author, Illustrator, and filmmaker is an artist originally from Onley, Virginia. She has a background in cinematography and screenwriting and a love for storytelling. She earned her BA from the University of Virginia with a double major in Media Studies and Studio Art with concentrations in Film and Cinematography. Now, utilizing both skill sets, she is passionate about crafting beautiful stories in both the film and children’s literature worlds.</p> <p>In the “Little Legends...” books, Harrison shines a bold, joyous light on black men and women through history.</p>	<p><i>Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black/ History</i></p> <p><i>Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction</p>
Kamkwamba, William	<p>Kamkwamba is a Malawian inventor and author. He gained fame in his country in 2001 when he built a wind turbine to power multiple electrical appliances in his family’s house in Wimbe, 32 km (20 mi) east of Kasungu, using blue gum trees, bicycle parts, and materials collected in a local scrapyard.</p>	<p><i>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</i></p> <p>Non-fiction</p>
Kinew, Wab	<p>Wab Kinew, Onigaming First Nation, was named by Postmedia News as one of “9 Aboriginal movers and shakers you should know.” He is the Associate Vice-President for Indigenous Relations at The University of Winnipeg.</p>	<p><i>Go Show the World: A Celebration of Indigenous Heroes</i></p> <p>Non-fiction</p>
Marable, Crystal	<p>Marable has had a love for writing since she was a young teenager writing poetry and keeping a daily journal. She also has a heart and a desire to encourage and motivate girls to succeed in their lives. She encourages the development of positive thinking, positive knowing and positive doing.</p>	<p><i>Graceful Gabby</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>


Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
<p>Meuse-Dallien, Theresa</p> <p>Illustrated by Arthur Stevens</p>	<p>Meuse-Dallien is a member of the Mi'kmaq First Nation community of Bear River. On December 8, 2007, she and two other females became the first all-female council in her band. She currently works as an Aboriginal student support worker for three schools.</p> <p><i>The Sharing Circle: Stories about First Nations Culture</i> is researched and written by Meuse-Dallien, and illustrated by Arthur Stevens, Mi'kmaw. Her books explore First Nations cultural practices and teaches children about Mi'kmaq beliefs and heritage.</p>	<p><i>The Sharing Circle: Stories about First Nations Culture</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction/ Short Stories</p>
<p>Myers, Walter Dean</p>	<p>Myers is the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. He has won the Coretta Scott King Award five times and received two Newbery Honors. His book, <i>Monster</i>, was the first winner of the Michael L. Printz Award, a National Book Award Finalist, and a New York Times Bestseller. He delivered the 2009 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, a distinction reserved for an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of children's literature. Most recently, he served as the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, a post appointed by the Library of Congress.</p>	<p><i>We Are America: A Tribute from the Heart</i></p> <p>Poetry</p>
<p>Norwood, Arlisha</p>	<p>Norwood received her Ph.D. in history from Howard University. Her research examines the experiences of single African American women in post-Civil War Virginia. She has written several publications on the topic including, "A Father in My Affliction: African American Women and their Wartime Letters to President Lincoln", featured in Lincoln Lore magazine and "African American Widows in Post-emancipation Maryland".</p>	<p><i>Black Heroes: a Black History Book for Kids: 51 Inspiring People from Ancient Africa</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction</p>
<p>Obama, Barack H.</p>	<p>On November 4, 2008, Obama became the 44th President-Elect of the United States – the first African American to hold such honor. He is also the author of the New York Times bestsellers <i>Dreams from My Father</i> and <i>The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream</i>.</p> <p>NAACP Image Award</p>	<p><i>Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Perkins, Mitali	Perkins has written many novels for young readers, including <i>You Bring the Distant Near</i> (nominated for the National Book Award), <i>Rickshaw Girl</i> (a NYPL best 100 Book for children in the past 100 years, film adaptation coming in 2021), <i>Bamboo People</i> (an ALA Top 10 YA novel), and <i>Tiger Boy</i> , which won the South Asia Book Award for Younger Readers.  Américas Award Winner	<i>Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border</i>  Fiction
Pinkney, Sandra L	Pinkney, along with her husband Myles, is the creator of the NAACP Image Award winning <i>Shades of Black</i> , along with <i>A Rainbow All Around Me</i> , and <i>Read and Rise</i> , a collaboration with the National Urban League. Each title was created in a dazzling multicultural photo essay style. They show the diversity of skin color and other characteristics of African American children, and feature appearances by their own children, Myles ("Leon"), Charnelle-Rene and Rashad.	<i>Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children</i>  Non-fiction
Rendon, Marcie	Rendon, a playwright, poet, author, and community arts activist is based in Minneapolis. She is an enrolled member of the White Earth Anishinabe Nation. She is the founder of Raving Native Productions (theatre), and is the author of plays and books for audiences of all ages.	<i>Powwow Summer</i>  Non-Fiction
Robinson Peete, Holly	Robinson Peete, in addition to writing, is best known for her work on <i>21 Jump Street</i> (1987), <i>For Your Love</i> (1998) and <i>21 Jump Street</i> (2012). She is married to NFL great Rodney Peete. They have four children.	<i>My Brother Charlie</i>  Realistic Fiction
Wanbli Weiden, David Heska	Wanbli Weiden, an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota nation, received his MFA in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts, his law degree from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, and his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin. He's Professor of Native American Studies and Political Science at Metropolitan State University of Denver, and lives in Colorado with his two sons.	<i>Spotted Tail</i>  Biography

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Woodson, Jacqueline Illustrated by Rafael López and Nancy Paulsen	American writer of books for children and adolescents. Woodson is best known for <i>Miracle's Boys</i> , and her Newbery Honor-winning title <i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> . Some awards she has won include: Hans Christian Anderson Award, Addams Children's Book Awards for Books for Older Children, Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA).	<i>The Day You Begin</i> Fiction

## Middle

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Adero, Malaika	Adero, of Adero's Literary Tribe, LLC, works with writers and organizations developing and promoting books. She is the coauthor of <i>The Mother of Black Hollywood</i> with Jenifer Lewis (Amistad) and <i>Speak, So You Can Speak Again: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston</i> (Doubleday).	<i>A Black Woman Did That</i> Non-fiction
Argueta, Jorge	Argueta (born in El Salvador and a Pipil Nahua Indian) is a Salvadoran award-winning poet and author of many highly acclaimed bilingual children's books and short stories, covering themes related to Latino culture and traditions, nature, and the immigrant experience. He immigrated to the United States in the 1980s during the Salvadoran Civil War. Américas Award Commended Title	<i>Caravan to the North</i> Non-Fiction
Bryan, Ashley	Bryan is a writer and illustrator of children's books. Most of his subjects are from the African American experience. He was U.S. nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2006 and he won the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award for his contribution to American children's literature in 2009. His work, <i>Freedom Over Me</i> was short-listed for the 2016 Kirkus Prize and received a Newbery Honor. Coretta Scott King Award	<i>Infinite Hope: A Black Artist's Journey from World War II to Peace</i> History
Craft, Jerry	Craft, a Connecticut-based children's book author and illustrator shows how his identity as an African American man influences his work, and how he hopes young readers are affected by his books. Coretta Scott King Award Newberry Book Award	<i>New Kid</i> Non-Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Curtis, Christopher Paul 	Curtis, is a native of Flint, MI. He is known for the Newbery Medal-winning books <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> and <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i> – 1963, which was adapted into a made-for-TV movie. He is also the winner of the Coretta Scott King Award.	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i> <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> Fiction
Daud, Somaiya	Daud is a twenty-something writer and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington. A former bookseller in the children's department at Politics and Prose in Washington, DC, Somaiya is passionate about Arabic poetry and the cosmos. <i>Mirage</i> is her debut novel.  Arab-American Book Award	<i>Mirage</i> Fiction Series
Hughes, Langston	James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. One of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. <i>Selected Poems</i> is made up of Hughes' own choice of his poetry, published first in 1959. It includes all of Hughes' best-known poems including "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", "The Weary Blues", "Song for Billie Holiday", "Black Maria", "Magnolia Flowers", "Lunch in a Jim Crow Car" and "Montage of a Dream Deferred". Over the years Langston received numerous awards, scholarships, and honorary degrees including the Anisfield-Wolf Award in 1953.	<i>Selected Poems of Langston Hughes</i> Non-Fiction
Kadarusman, Michelle	Kadarusman grew up in Melbourne, Australia, and has also lived in Indonesia and Canada. Her 2019 middle-grade novel <i>Girl of the Southern Sea</i> was a Governor General's Literary Award finalist. Michelle lives in Toronto, Canada, and is looking forward to soon spending more time in Australia. Amelia Bloomer Book List.	<i>Girl of the Southern Sea</i> Fiction
Kim, Patti	Kim is a Korean American writer, a Diane Cleaver fellow and the author of the award-winning novel <i>A Cab Called Reliable</i> (St. Martin's Press), children's picture book <i>Here I Am</i> (Capstone), middle grade novel, <i>I'm Ok</i> (Simon & Schuster), and middle grade novel, <i>It's Girls Like You, Mickey</i> (Athenium). Asian/Pacific American Award for Children's Literature Honor Title.	<i>I'm OK</i> Fiction



Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Mbalia, Kwame	<p>Mbalia expertly weaves a meaningful portrayal of family and community with folklore, myth, and history - including the legacy of the slave trade - creating a fast-paced, heroic series starter.</p> <p>His works have received the Coretta Scott King Award.</p>	<p><i>Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky</i></p> <p>Folklore</p>
Michener, Tara	<p>Michener, who currently resides in Novi, MI, is an author, counselor, and speaker who loves reading, writing, Twizzlers &amp; Diet Coke. Her first series the “Who Am I Series”, was published in 2008. Her first chapter book was published in 2010, <i>Summer Camp Survival</i>. Other titles include <i>No Longer Besties</i> and <i>other assorted teenage drama and Teen Life Crisis</i>.</p>	<p>“Who I Am” series, which includes the books <i>Who I Am Not What I Am</i> and <i>100% Real</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Moore Ramee, Lisa	<p>Ramée was born and raised in Los Angeles, and she now lives in the Bay Area of California, with her husband, two kids, and two obnoxious cats. She is the author of <i>A Good Kind of Trouble</i> and <i>Something to Say</i>. Her awards and honors include: 2020 Walter Awards; Goodreads Awards; and Amelia Bloomer Book List.</p>	<p><i>A Good Kind of Trouble</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Myers, Walter Dean	<p>Myers is the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. He has won the Coretta Scott King Award five times and received two Newbery Honors. His book, <i>Monster</i>, was the first winner of the Michael L. Printz Award, a National Book Award Finalist, and a New York Times Bestseller. He delivered the 2009 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, a distinction reserved for an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of children’s literature. Most recently, he served as the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, a post appointed by the Library of Congress.</p>	<p><i>Blues Journey</i> (2003) – the African experience in America is celebrated with a soulful, affecting blues poem that details the long journey from the Middle Passage to life today</p> <p>Poetry / Historical</p>
Parker Rhodes, Jewell	<p>Parker Rhodes is the award-winning author of <i>Magic City</i>, <i>Douglass’ Women</i>, <i>Season</i>, <i>Moon</i>, and <i>Hurricane</i>. She is also the Virginia G. Piper Endowed Chair and Founding Artistic Director of Arizona State University’s Piper Center for Creative Writing and has written many award-winning books for children.</p>	<p><i>Black Brother, Black Brother</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>


Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Ramey Berry, Daina and Gross, Kali Nicole	Berry and Gross, two award-winning black historians seek both to empower African American women and to show their allies that Black women’s unique ability to make their own communities while combatting centuries of oppression is an essential component in our continued resistance to systemic racism and sexism. Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross offer an examination and celebration of Black womanhood, beginning with the first African women who arrived in what became the United States to African American women of today.	<i>A Black Women’s History of the United States</i> History
Robertson, Sebastian	Robertson, of Mohawk descent, is an American non-fiction children's author, musician, composer, and studio engineer. Robertson has written the biographical children’s book “Rock and Roll Highway” (2014), about his father, The Band co-founder Robbie Robertson. Influenced by his First Nation heritage, Robbie formed his first band at the age of 13.  His awards include Best in the Month in Non-Fiction by Amazon.com and Rolling Stone’s 20 best Music Books of 2013	<i>Rock and Roll Highway: The Robbie Robertson Story</i> Non-fiction
Rushing, Kesha	Rushing, is a writer, wife, mother, Certified Health Coach and Family Nurse Practitioner. She writes books that bring history and travel alive to young readers. If Mrs. Rushing could travel anywhere in time, she would journey to ancient Egypt to meet Queen Nefertiti.	<i>Terrell and Keke’s Adventures Through Time: Traveling the Underground Railroad</i> Fiction
Shabazz, Ilyasah and Watson, Renee	<i>Betty Before X</i> depicts the life of Dr. Betty Shabazz before she became the wife of Malcolm X. It was penned by her daughter, Ilyasah Shabazz, and co-written by Renee Watson, the award-winning author of <i>Piecing Me Together</i> (2017). While it is a work of fiction, it was inspired by real-life events with characters that are based on real people. This fictionalized account from Shabazz’s daughter Ilyasah follows Betty through four important years of her childhood. Beginning in 1945 Detroit, where Betty starts volunteering for the Housewives League and sets out on her path toward activism.	<i>Betty Before X</i> Historical Fiction


Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Shetterly, Margot Lee	Shetterly, is an American non-fiction writer who has also worked in investment banking and media startups. Her first book, <i>Hidden Figures: The Story of the African-American Women Who Helped Win the Space Race</i> received critical acclaim, and later was made into the award-winning feature film and box-office smash <i>Hidden Figures</i> (2018).	<i>Hidden Figures: The Story of the African-American Women Who Helped Win the Space Race</i> Historical
Takei, George	Takei, is an American actor, author, and activist. He is best known for his role as Hikaru Sulu, helmsman of the USS Enterprise in the television series <i>Star Trek</i> . He also portrayed the character in six <i>Star Trek</i> feature films and one episode of <i>Star Trek: Voyager</i> . Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature	<i>They Called Us Enemy</i> Historical
Ward, Jesmyn	Ward is an American novelist and an associate professor of English at Tulane University. She won the 2011 National Book Award for Fiction for her second novel <i>Salvage the Bones</i> . She also received a 2012 Alex Award for this story which is about familial love and community displayed in facing Hurricane Katrina.	<i>The Fire This Time</i> Non-Fiction / Poetry
Williams, Alicia D.	Williams is an American teacher and author. Her debut novel, <i>Genesis Begins Again</i> , published in 2019, received wide praise by several publications, was a finalist to a William C. Morris Award, and received a Newbery Honor in 2020. Her love for education stems from conducting school residencies as a Master Teaching Artist of arts-integration. Alicia D. infuses her love for drama, movement, and storytelling to inspire students to write.  Coretta Scott King Award	<i>Genesis Begins Again</i> Fiction
Williams-Garcia, Rita	Williams-Garcia, author of four award winning novels, continues to break new ground in young people's literature. Her books are known for their realistic portrayal of teens of color. She won the 2011 Newbery Honor Award, Coretta Scott King Award, and Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction for her book, <i>One Crazy Summer</i> . She has also won the PEN/Norma Klein Award. Her 2013 book, <i>P.S. Be Eleven</i> , was a Junior Literary Guild selection, a New York Times Editors Choice Book, and won the Coretta Scott King Award in 2014. In 2016 her book <i>Gone Crazy in Alabama</i> won the Coretta Scott King Award.	<i>One Crazy Summer</i> Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Willing McManis, Charlene with Traci Sorrell	<p>The late Charlene Willing McManis (1953-2018) was born in Portland, Oregon and grew up in Los Angeles. She was of Umpqua tribal heritage and enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Charlene received a mentorship with award-winning poet and author Margarita Engle through We Need Diverse Books. That manuscript became <i>Indian No More</i>, which is based on her family's experiences after their tribe was terminated in 1954. She died in 2018, knowing that her friend Traci Sorell would complete the revisions Charlene was unable to finish.</p> <p>Amelia Bloomer Book List, American Indian Youth Literature Award for Best Middle Grade</p>	<p><i>Indian No More</i> Historical Fiction</p>
Zoboi, Ibi	<p>Zoboi was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and holds an MFA in writing for children and young adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her novel <i>American Street</i> was a National Book Award finalist and a New York Times Notable Book.</p>	<p><i>My Life as An Ice Cream Sandwich</i> Fiction</p>

## High School

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Acevedo, Elizabeth	<p>Acevedo is a Dominican-American poet and author. She is the author of <i>The Poet X</i> and <i>With the Fire on High</i>. <i>The Poet X</i> is a New York Times Bestseller, National Book Award Winner, and Carnegie Medal winner. She is also the winner of the 2018 Michael L. Printz Award, the 2018 Pura Belpre Award, and the Boston-Globe Hornbook Award Prize for Best Children's Fiction of 2018.</p> <p>Amelia Bloomer Book List</p>	<p><i>With the Fire on High</i> Fiction</p>
Angelou, Maya	<p>African American writer known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her life experiences. <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> (1969), tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.</p>	<p><i>I know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> Non-Fiction</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Baldwin, James	James Arthur Baldwin was an American novelist, playwright, essayist, poet, and activist. His essays, as collected in <i>Notes of a Native Son</i> (1955), explore intricacies of racial, sexual, and class distinctions in Western society, most notably regarding the mid-twentieth-century United States.	<i>The Fire Next Time</i> Fiction
Baraka, Amiri	Amiri Baraka, previously known as LeRoi Jones and Imamu Amear Baraka, was an American writer of poetry, drama, fiction, essays, and music criticism. He was the author of numerous books of poetry and taught at several universities, including the University at Buffalo and Stony Brook University. He received the PEN/Beyond Margins Award in 2008 for <i>Tales of the Out and the Gone</i> . <i>S O S: Poems 1961–2013</i> , is one of the New York Times Book Review’s 100 Notable Books with an appendix of never-before published work. This volume comprises the fullest spectrum of his rousing, revolutionary poems, from his first collection to unpublished pieces composed during his final years. All along, his primary focus was on how to live and love in the present moment despite the enduring difficulties of human history.	<i>S O S: Poems 1961–2013</i> Non-Fiction
Brooks, Gwendolyn	Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks was an American poet, author, and teacher. Her work often dealt with the personal celebrations and struggles of ordinary people in her community. <i>Selected Poems</i> is the classic volume by this distinguished and celebrated poet, winner of the 1950 Pulitzer Prize, and recipient of the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. This compelling collection showcases Brooks’ technical mastery, her warm humanity, and her compassionate and illuminating response to a complex world.	<i>Selected Poems</i> Non-Fiction
Buchanan, Shonda 	Buchanan’s memoir is an inspiring story that explores her family’s legacy of being African Americans with American Indian roots and how they dealt with not just society’s ostracization but the consequences of this dual inheritance. Buchanan, of Choctaw, Coharie, Cherokee and African heritage and originally from Kalamazoo, shares reflective stories of race, ethnicity, migration, gender, and landscape.	<i>Black Indian: Memoir</i> Non-Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Coates, Ta-Nehisi	Coates, a 2015 winner of the National Book Award for non-fiction and renowned journalist and writer, pens a profound letter to his son about what it means to be Black in America in the 21st century—a place in which you struggle to overcome the historical trauma of your people while trying to find your own purpose in the world.	<i>Between the World and Me</i> Non-Fiction
Courtney, Nadine Jolie	Courtney is a Circassian-American, a Muslim, and a believer that compassion and education can make the world a better place.  <i>All-American Muslim Girl</i> —is designed as a tonic for other confused or curious cross-cultural kids, eager to finally embrace their own heritage. <i>All-American Muslim Girl</i> has received four starred reviews, with Kirkus Reviews honoring it as one of the Best YA Books of 2019, and Barnes & Noble Teen dubbing it “a remarkable entry into the contemporary canon.”  Amelia Bloomer Book List	<i>All-American Muslim Girl</i> Fiction
Cullen, Countee	Cullen began writing poetry at the age of fourteen. Cullen entered New York University after high school. Around the same time, his poems were published in <i>The Crisis</i> , under the leadership of W. E. B. DuBois, and <i>Opportunity</i> , a magazine of the National Urban League. He was soon after published in <i>Harper's</i> , the <i>Century Magazine</i> , and <i>Poetry</i> . Cullen was celebrated as the golden exemplar of a campaign by black political and cultural leaders who sought to engineer a new image of black people in America.	<i>On These I Stand: An Anthology of the Best Poems of Countee Cullen</i> Poetry
DeWoskin, Rachel 	DeWoskin was raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The daughter of a Sinology professor at the University of Michigan, she majored in English and studied Chinese at Columbia University in New York City. Rachel lived in Beijing in her twenties, where she became the unlikely star of a Chinese soap opera called <i>Foreign Babes in Beijing</i> . She spent the last six summers in Shanghai, where she researched and wrote <i>Someday We Will Fly</i> .  Sydney Taylor Book Award	<i>Someday We Will Fly</i> Historical Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
DuBois, W. E. B.	DuBois, (born February 23, 1868, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, U.S.—died August 27, 1963, Accra, Ghana). Author, editor, and activist who has been hailed as the most important Black protest leader in the United States during the first half of the 20th century.	<i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> Non-Fiction
Dungy, Tony	Number 1 New York Times bestselling author whose books include <i>Quiet Strength</i> and children’s book <i>You Can Do It!</i> . He led the Indianapolis Colts to Super Bowl victory on February 4, 2007, the first such win for an African American head coach. He is active with Mentors for Life, Family First, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, and the Boys and Girls Club of America.	<i>Quiet Strength</i> Non-Fiction
Haley, Alex	Haley (born Alexander Murray Palmer Haley), was an American writer and the author of the 1976 book <i>Roots: The Saga of an American Family</i> . ABC adapted the book as a television miniseries of the same name.	<i>Roots</i> Historical Fiction
Hansberry, Lorraine	Hansberry, noted playwright and acclaimed writer, was the first African American female author to have a play performed on Broadway. Her best-known work, the play <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , highlights the lives of Black Americans living under racial segregation in Chicago.	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Fiction / Play
Hovak Johnston, Angela	Hovak Johnston is an Inuk woman who was raised on the land in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut until she was sent away to school. Using her Inuinnaqtun name given to her at birth is her way of carrying on a past relative’s name and the characteristics of that ancestor.  American Indian Youth Literature Young Adult Honor	<i>Reawakening Our Ancestors’ Lines: Revitalizing Inuit Traditional Tattooing</i> Oral Tradition



Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Hughes, Langston	James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. One of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. <i>Selected Poems</i> is made up of Hughes' own choice of his poetry, published first in 1959. It includes all of Hughes' best-known poems including "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", "The Weary Blues", "Song for Billie Holiday", "Black Maria", "Magnolia Flowers", "Lunch in a Jim Crow Car" and "Montage of a Dream Deferred". Over the years Langston received numerous awards, scholarships, and honorary degrees including the Anisfield-Wolf Award in 1953.	<i>Selected Poems of Langston Hughes</i> Non-Fiction
Hurston, Zora Neale	Hurston, an author, anthropologist, and filmmaker, is best known for how she depicted racial struggles in the south. She wrote more than 50 short stories, plays, and essays. She is best known for her novel, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> .	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Fiction
James, Marlon	James' epic fantasy honors African mythology and history - it is already being called one of the best books of the year. In it, a hunter named Tracker must find a mysterious missing boy with the help of a rag-tag group of mercenaries. The first of a planned trilogy, some are calling it the "African Game of Thrones." And Black Panther star Michael B. Jordan just earned the film rights for the book through his production company, Outlier Society.	<i>Black Leopard, Red Wolf</i> Fiction
King, Reverend Dr. Martin L.	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Peace Prize laureate and architect of the nonviolent civil rights movement, was among the twentieth century's most influential figures. One of the greatest orators in U.S. history, King also authored several books, including <i>Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story</i> , <i>Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?</i> , and <i>Why We Can't Wait</i> .	<i>Strength to Love</i> Non-Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Leitch Smith, Cynthia	<p>Leitch Smith, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, is the New York Times bestselling, acclaimed author of books for young readers, including <i>Hearts Unbroken</i>, which won the American Indian Library Association’s Youth Literature Award. Most recently, she was named the 2021 NSK Neustadt Laureate. In addition, Cynthia is the author-curator of Heartdrum, a Native-focused imprint at HarperCollins Children’s Books, and serves as the Katherine Paterson Inaugural Endowed Chair on the faculty of the MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College of Fine Arts.</p> <p>American Indian Youth Literature Award Best Book for Young Adults</p>	<p><i>Hearts Unbroken</i></p> <p>Realistic Fiction</p>
Myers, Walter Dean	<p>Myers won the Council on Interracial Books for Children contest in 1969, which resulted in the publication of his first book, <i>Where Does the Day Go?</i>. Since then, he has won more awards than any author for young adults, and is one of the most prolific writers, with more than 110 books to his credit.</p> <p>He is the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. He has won the Coretta Scott King Award five times and received two Newbery Honors. He served as the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature; a post appointed by the Library of Congress.</p>	<p><i>On A Clear Day</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Obama, Barack H.	<p>On November 4, 2008, Obama became the 44th President-Elect of the United States – the first African American to hold such honor. He is also the author of the New York Times bestsellers <i>Dreams from My Father</i> and <i>The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream</i>.</p> <p>NAACP Image Award</p>	<p><i>Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream</i></p> <p>Non-Fiction</p>

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Obama, Michelle L.	Michelle Obama is an American attorney and author who was the first lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. She is married to the 44th President of the United States, Barack H. Obama. Her book, <i>Becoming</i> has won critical acclaim for her candid and poignant reflections as a woman of color, about her personal (and professional) journey to becoming her “best self”.	<i>Becoming</i> Non-Fiction / Help Book
Quigley, Dawn	Quigley, Ph.D., is a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe, ND, and is an assistant professor in the Education Department at St. Catherine University. She taught English and reading for 18+ years in the K-12 schools along with being an Indian Education program co-director. In addition to her debut coming-of-age Young Adult novel, <i>Apple in the Middle</i> (NDSU Press), she has over 28 published articles, essays and poems. Dawn lives in Minnesota with her family.  American Indian Youth Literature Young Adult Honor	<i>Apple in the Middle</i> Fiction
Reese, Debbie	Reese is Pueblo Indian, from Nambe Pueblo in northern New Mexico. The focus of her research is on the ways in which Native Americans are represented in children’s books. She is a book reviewer for Horn Book Inc. and Multicultural Review, and she has taught children’s literature at the University of Illinois College of Education.  American Indian Youth Literature Young Adult Honor	<i>An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People</i> Non-Fiction / History
Reynolds, Jason	New York Times best-selling author of <i>All American Boys</i> , the Track series, <i>Long Way Down</i> , <i>For Everyone</i> , and Miles Morales - <i>Spiderman</i> . He is an American author who writes novels and poetry for young adult and middle-grade audiences, including <i>Ghost</i> , a National Book Award Finalist for Young People’s Literature.	<i>Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks</i> Fiction

Author	Author Highlight / Book Award(s)	Sample Title by Author / Genre
Spillet, Tasha	<p>Spillet draws her strength from both her Nehiyaw and Trinidadian bloodlines. She is a celebrated educator, poet, and emerging scholar. Tasha is most heart-tied to contributing to community-led work that centers on land and water defense, and the protection of Indigenous women and girls.</p> <p>American Indian Youth Literature Young Adult Honor</p>	<p><i>Surviving the City, Volume 1</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Thomas, Angie	<p>Thomas, an American young adult author, is best known for writing <i>The Hate U Give</i> (2017). Her second young adult novel is <i>Come Up</i>. Awards received include William C. Morris Award, Michael Printz Award, and the Coretta Scott King Award.</p>	<p><i>The Hate You Give</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Wright, Richard	<p>Wright was an American author of novels, short stories, poems, and non-fiction. Much of his literature concerned racial themes, especially related to the plight of African Americans during the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, who suffered discrimination and violence in the South and the North. Literary critics believe his work helped change race relations in the United States in the mid-20th century.</p>	<p><i>Native Son</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>
Yoon, David	<p>Yoon is the author of the New York Times bestseller <i>Frankly in Love</i>, a William C. Morris Award finalist and Asian/Pacific American Award for Young Adult Literature Honor book, as well as the upcoming YA novel <i>Super Fake Love Song</i> and adult thriller <i>Version Zero</i>. He also drew the illustrations for his wife Nicola Yoon's #1 New York Times bestseller <i>Everything, Everything</i>.</p> <p>Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature</p>	<p><i>Frankly in Love</i></p> <p>Fiction</p>



## APPENDIX B: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT EQUITY IN LITERACY

### Resources for Culturally Responsive Teaching

The *Culturally Responsive Teaching: What You Need to Know* [article](#) defines culturally responsive teaching and describes what this approach to teaching looks like in the classroom. The strategies for culturally responsive teaching addressed on this website include identifying student assets, creating a supportive classroom, examining the curriculum for relevance and rigor, learning more about your personal perspectives as an educator, and connecting with families.

Brian Williams of Georgia State University shares his story of disenfranchisement in the classroom and his journey to become an equity-centered educator in the [video](#) “Reimagining the Classroom.” In this video, he shares his personal schooling experience and his philosophy that education is a way of growing the next generation of leaders, critical thinkers, and artists.

Ivelisse Ramos-Brannon and Gholdy Muhammad share this online [essay](#) to describe the four standards outlined in Muhammad’s book “Cultivating Genius.” The HILL model is described as a teaching response to students’ histories, identities, literacies, and liberation.

The Abolitionist Teaching Network has [online](#) resources including a recorded webinar describing the approach to teaching. The website also includes a [tool](#) called a Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning.

Teaching at the Intersections is an [article](#) from that addresses how to honor and teach about students’ multiple identities associated with income, race, gender, and class. Author Monita Bell provides a definition of intersectionality and includes a video to provide more clarity. The article highlights students’ experiences and offers strategies for navigating the identity-based intersections of students’ lives.

Additional suggestions for supporting diversity in the classroom: 7 Ways to Support Diversity in the Classroom (with examples) are available in this [article](#). The strategies for supporting diversity include examining the teaching materials, getting to know the students, willingness to address inequality, connecting with families and community, meeting diverse learning needs, hiring diversely, and supporting professional learning. Videos are embedded on the website to enhance understanding of the strategies.

This [article](#) provides 4 Ways to Help Your Students Embrace Diversity. The suggestions for embracing diversity include showing students that all people don’t look and act alike, providing examples of multicultural role models, providing visuals to create a culturally diverse environment, and helping students embrace their own cultural identities.

This [episode](#) of the Harvard EdCast provides strategies for educators to counter their own unconscious biases in schools and classrooms. The interviewees include the authors of the book *Unconscious Bias in Schools* and provides examples of how educators can address issues of bias in their schools.

## Resources for Creating Purpose for Literacy Learning

The Edutopia [website](#) provides suggestions for social justice projects in the classroom. Social justice projects intend to raise student awareness about issues while also providing advocacy and aid opportunities. Some of the examples included in this online article are activities that get at awareness, choice and voice, blog writing, and video creation.

Django Paris addresses culturally sustaining pedagogy and teaching for justice in this [podcast](#). Dr Paris identifies four facets of culturally sustaining learning settings, which include critical centering on community languages and knowledge, accountability to the students and families being educated, addressing historic context with instruction, and addressing oppression in the school system.

## Resources on Student Intersectionality

The [Social Justice & Anti-Racist Educator Resources](#) document is intended to fulfill the commitment to make anti-racism more accessible. Understanding that educators are busy, particularly in this time of overwhelming uncertainty and change, the Governor’s Educator Advisory Council (GEAC) compiled these resources for all educators. Most importantly, this is a living document—one that the GEAC plans to update with educator input. While this moment is especially ripe for anti-racism education, we hope that these resources become a permanent part of every educator’s pedagogy until the need for them becomes history.

Educators4SocialChange has put together a resource list titled [Teaching About Intersectionality](#). It recognizes that educating about intersectionality and with an intersectional lens moves society towards a future where each student values the personhood and individuality of themselves and others. Creating new social structures based on equity, justice, and empathy can begin in the classroom and continue in the world with students who learn to be change agents and civic leaders.

This guide from Salisbury University Libraries called [Diversity and Inclusion Resources for Curricula: Intersectionality](#) was created by the Social Justice, Equity, and Teaching Transformation Faculty Learning Community (SETT-SU FLC) and Angeline Prichard, Research & Instructional Librarian. SETT-SU FLC is made up of faculty members from various departments across campus who share an interest in learning how to effectively teach topics of diversity and implement pedagogical choices that respect and affirm diversity in our classrooms.

## Resources for Differentiating Literacy Instruction

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading [website](#) addresses community issues such as school readiness, attendance, summer learning, parent support, and more to support literacy starting in the earliest years. These solutions are paired with strategies of parent engagement, health readers, and state-level outreach. These community and state-level strategies help ensure students are reading at grade level.

The Knowledge Matters Campaign [website](#) offers research and resources for support in offering knowledge-building instruction. This campaign acknowledges that content knowledge is vital to language comprehension. The resources offered advocate for all students to be taught history, science, geography, art, music, and more.

## Resources on the Technical Aspects of Literacy Instruction

The suite of *Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy* and online learning modules are located on the LiteracyEssentials.org [website](#).

## Resources for Family Engagement

The *MiFamily: Michigan's Family Engagement Framework* can be accessed on the MDE [website](#). Included are Michigan's definition and 5 guiding principles for engaging families. There is also a 10-minute video giving the overview of the framework as well as contact information.

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) has released the document [Sustain and Gain: Blueprint for a Long-Term Thriving Family Literacy/Parent Engagement Program](#). This document supports the development of lasting home, school, and community partnerships to support literacy success.

## Resources for Using a Critical Approach to Literacy Learning

A tool for selecting diverse texts is available on the Teaching Tolerance [website](#). The tool addresses four considerations of text choice. These considerations include complexity (word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion), diversity and representation (author and character contribution to inclusion), critical literacy (requirement of readers to engage in questioning social norms and institutions), and reader and task consideration (texts that reflect your own identity and the identify of others).

A tool for Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials is available on the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center [website](#). This tool allows educators to decide if curriculum materials address educational equality. There are seven domains of the tool which include stereotyping, historical whitewashing, and linguistic bias.

The Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard is a tool to determine the extent to which students are being reflected in the current curriculum. The tool is made available online from the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools and provides a process for reviewing materials used by the school.

## Resources About and for Libraries

The video [Administrators on EDI and School Libraries](#) produced by the American Association of School Libraries includes administrators talking about how their school librarians are central to the equity initiatives in their schools.

In the Teaching Tolerance [article](#) "Check it Out: Want help boosting cultural responsiveness at your school? Ask your librarian!": Dr. Kafi Kumasi from Wayne State University states, "Literacy is a civil right" and "If we think of school libraries as natural repositories and agents of literacy, then by extension libraries are also a civil right, and having a school librarian is a civil right. Our role is as instructional partners with teachers."

The Michigan Department of Education has had several [initiatives](#) to help strengthen access to school libraries for all students.



For help with ensuring access to a library media specialist, please see 1) the MDE Effective School Library [Toolkit](#) for Administrators and 2) the School Library 21 (SL21): Measurement Benchmarks for Michigan School Libraries for 21st Century Schools that are available [online](#).

The Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME) has an [initiative](#) called the “MIself in Books” Book List which is a list of diverse books selected by a committee of MAME Members each year. A new list will be announced each year at the MAME Annual Fall Conference. The list will be made widely available to help other educators select and use diverse books with their learners.



## APPENDIX C: EQUITY TRAINING AND RESOURCES

### The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CCRTL) exists for making cultural responsiveness a meaningful aspect of daily life. The center offers a wide variety of professional development offerings and online resources including videos and articles.

Information about professional development and resources can be found on the Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning [website](#).

### Deep Equity

Deep Equity is a comprehensive professional development process to produce deep personal, professional, and organizational transformation necessary to create equitable places of learning for all children. The program was developed by Gary Howard and is an evidence-based, capacity-building model. The companion Youth Equity Stewardship (YES!) program can be included to include more youth perspectives for a wider diversity lens.

More information about the Deep Equity program can be found on the Corwin professional development [website](#).

### The Equity Collaborative

The Equity Collaborative is a national consulting firm focused on helping educational and youth development organizations. The collaborative has offices in North Carolina and California and is available to assist schools and school systems across the United States. Their services include equity leadership development, culturally responsive workshops, and student voice supports.

Information on the Equity Collaborative is available on their [website](#).

### Equity Literacy Institute

The Equity Literacy Institute offers professional learning workshops, online learning, facilitator training, and equity tools, as well as leadership and coaching support. The institute is founded by Paul Gorski who has over 20 years of experience helping educators and others with their equity efforts. The institute offers free, self-paced mini-courses on equity and equity literacy.

Resources and training information can be found on the Equity Literacy Institute [website](#).

### Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools

The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and Transformation of Schools is a university-based center that focuses on education research, policy, and practice. The center serves as a local and national resource for strengthening and improving access, opportunity, and the quality of education in schools. Services from the center includes technical assistance and professional development on culturally responsive curriculum and instruction.

Information on the Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change supports can be found on the center's [website](#).

## Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center

The Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP) is an equity center funded by the United States Department of Education. The center provides technical assistance and training in the areas of race, sex, national origin, and religion to promote equitable educational opportunities in the areas of civil rights, equity, and school reform. These trainings include the Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Learning Network Cohorts.

General supports and resources can be found on the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center [website](#).

The Equity Fellow Spotlight video series is available online. The videos and interactive learning tools can be used to boost equity knowledge.

## National Equity Project – Center for Equity Leadership Courses

The National Equity Project is a leadership and systems change organization committed to increasing capacity of people to achieve self-determining, educated, and just communities. Online courses are offered for equity around designing and facilitating meetings, coaching, leadership teams, and individual leaders.

Find the courses online at the National Equity Project [website](#).

## Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth

Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth is a program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services at the University of North Carolina At Chapel Hill. The Project Ready Online Curriculum website hosts free, online professional development modules for those interested in improving knowledge about race and racism, racial equity, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. The curriculum is on improving relationships with, services to, and resources for youth of color and Native youth.

The Project READY curriculum can be on the group's [website](#).

## The Pyramid Model Consortium

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) was funded by the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care to disseminate research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs in the country. CSEFEL developed the Pyramid Model to support social and emotional competence in infants and young children. The Pyramid Model Consortium offers a module on culturally responsive practices to reduce implicit bias, disproportionality, and suspension & expulsion.

You can access the Pyramid Model Consortium module on culturally responsive practices on their [website](#).

## Teaching Tolerance

Teaching Tolerance provides free resources for K-12 educators to support civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued, and welcome participants. The organization provides a range of materials for educations, including learning modules, presentations, and hands-on workshops with experts.

Professional development resources from Teaching Tolerance can be accessed through their [website](#).

## Local Michigan Opportunities

### Michigan Department of Education African American Student Initiative

The Michigan Department of Education leads the African American Student Initiative. There are two phases to the program. Phase one focuses on personal and professional transformation and addresses common vocabulary and understanding of topics including race, racism, microaggressions, privilege, implicit bias, equity, and inclusion. Phase 2 is an extension of the learning and self-reflection of phase one. The focus is on examination and dismantling of systemic barriers of race, power, and privilege in educational spaces.

For more information on the initiative and connected training opportunities, contact the AASI team by [email](#).

### Suggestions for Developing District or Building Level Professional Learning

Leverage existing school structures – Create a trainer of trainer models of in-house professional learning that allows key staff and administrators to engage in learning that builds their capacity to support establishing ongoing professional learning for all staff and administrators in an ongoing fashion.

Use the Teachers Learning Together Model (Kevin Feldman) to support teachers by getting them into one another's classrooms to model culturally sustaining practices.

Engage in the *Seven Experiences* by Andreal Davis to gain a deeper understanding of diverse cultures. The *Seven Experiences* tool and linked resources are available through the Wisconsin RTI Center [website](#).

Employ current system structures such as professional learning communities and coaching to provide more learning about pedagogies that support equity.



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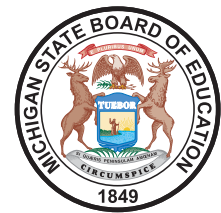
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