



October 11, 2018

Tips and tools from your school library

# LOW HANGING FRUIT

## Mirrors and Windows

By Jeannie Standal

There is an old adage in libraries about how books are both mirrors and windows. We relate to some stories because we see ourselves in the characters or the circumstances—mirrors. Some because through them we can get to know other people, places, and ideas—windows. Both are incredibly important for young readers. But here's the catch: students, even if they look the same or are from the same community, may have different backgrounds, faith traditions, identities, and home environments.

A look around many Idaho classrooms might seem pretty homogenous, but if we broaden our definition beyond physical appearance, we can see that our kids are diverse in other ways. Consider this:

- Students may or may not live with one or both parents—they may want to read about families are more like theirs;
- Students may come from a low-income household—they may want to read about characters who face similar circumstances;
- Students may have visible or invisible conditions or disabilities—they might want to read about characters with similar challenges;
- Students may want a better understanding of another's feelings or situation—they need a book to help them empathize; and
- Students who look similar and live in the same town can still come from a range of walks of life.



The school librarian strives to include a variety of books with characters from different places and different walks of life, so that each student can either find people like themselves or they can learn about someone or something else. Diverse books can sometimes be difficult to find, but the publishing world is catching up. More and more books are being written by and about people of color, in the LGBTQ community, from different ethnicities, living situations, capabilities, and walks of life.

Some educators also find value in reading the literature intended for their students. Fiction can sometimes provide insights into truths that are beyond what we find in the data we collect from our students' classwork and behavior.

To learn more about the value of a diverse collection in the school library and how they support the development of all children, visit <https://diversebooks.org/> and [read this blog post by Chad Everett](#).

## LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



### Core Professional Values for the Teen Services Profession

Developed in 2013-2014 by the Professional Values Task Force of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). Includes nine core values for those who work with teens through libraries. Inclusion focuses on the many types of diversity of which librarians working with youth must strive to be mindful.

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/core-professional-values-teen-services-profession>

### 4 Tips for a Diverse School Library

Some thoughts on cultivating a school library that caters to different kinds of diversities from the National Association of Elementary School Principals:

<https://www.naesp.org/communicator-february-2017/4-tips-diverse-school-library>

## TREND TO TRY



### Human Library

Take student learning beyond the traditional, and go straight to the source! Collaborate with your school librarian on a Human Library, a collection of people acting as resources in a "speed dating" format. Students "check out" a human book, listen to his/her story, and ask questions. Human libraries create safe spaces that foster curiosity and, because questions are expected, curiosity is rewarded and learning happens. It's a novel approach to learning that provides opportunities to tackle tough topics, ask any question, and get real information. The worst that can happen? The book will decline to answer a question. Students practice interviewing skills, collect information from a primary source, and hit the ICS Speaking & Listening standard.

## DIGITAL TOOLS



### Gale Virtual Reference Library

GVRL's UXL Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes (found under Multicultural Studies) provides detailed studies of tribes from the United States and Canada, including small tribes and some that no longer exist. Gives accessible information on history, religion, art, government, economy, daily life, and social and political issues. Find this and other great resources for educators at:

<http://lili.org/dbs/category/18>.



