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**Benefits of Creating an Inclusive Collections of Literature Books for K-8 Students at the
School Libraries**

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Abstract

Reading is an essential skill for students of all ages. The ability to read and comprehend what the text is saying helps with the ability to learn topics at a deeper level. This senior capstone project examines the benefits of having diverse and inclusive literature available in K-8 school libraries. Through the use of a literature review, interviews with 2 librarians, 1 teacher and 1 principal, the findings revealed that all the subject participants gave similar answers in that diverse and inclusive literature are extremely beneficial to students. It instills empathy and understanding in students, which brings a sense of belonging and personal growth. It is recommended that a variety of books should be available and easily accessible to young readers at the elementary and middle school levels.

Introduction and Background

The world looks different now than it did many years ago, especially in the US. Many changes have been made, including the education system, specifically the types of literature that are available in K-8 schools. Growing up I remember reading typical books like *Ramona and Beezus* (Beverly Cleary, 1955), *Junie B Jones* (Barbara Park, 1992), *Amelia Bedelia* (Peggy Parish, 1963), etc. These are only just a few examples of children's books growing up in the 2000s. While these books are great and nostalgic, the fact is that they are not very diverse. Since then, authors and publishers have gotten better at writing and publishing diverse and inclusive books. If I were to search for popular children's books in 2023, I would get more examples of diverse books than I would have found in the past. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (2023), out of 3,450 children/teen books submitted that were published in 2022, 40% of them had at least one creator who was a black, indigenous, or person of color. Creator being the author, illustrator or compiler.

Personally, I got my exposure to diversity and inclusivity from interactions growing up in settings that welcomed them both. While this was the case for myself, I know that it is not the same for many others. One way to easily introduce these topics to children in grades K-8, who may not get much exposure in person, is through books in their school libraries. The knowledge that both topics bring is so vital for children to start learning in early childhood and to become lifelong learners. Inclusivity and diversity help create empathy, understanding, a sense of belonging and personal growth amongst students. Garces-Bacsal (2022) makes this point in her journal article "Integrating such diverse narratives into SEL competencies also allows young readers to navigate their own racial and cultural identity, creating spaces to develop compassion, and helps children gain a more affective and nuanced understanding of people whom they may perceive to be different from themselves" (Garces-Bacsal, 2022, p. 69 as appeared in Kim et al, 2016). Schools providing the space to consume such literature creates a safe community for the students.

The process of choosing diverse and inclusive books can be overwhelming because it can become controversial if someone is offended by the selection. It is important for those making book selections to persevere even when others are not pleased. Especially when there is an abundance of resources on the internet and through other fellow educators who share their expertise. Lynch (2022) focused her Honor's project on the benefits of inclusive literature and included guides and resources. Lynch (2022) asserted that, "The Virtual Library I have created provides both well-vetted materials as well as guidelines for teachers to go forward and pick new material as it emerges to help teachers ensure the books they use are effective in their room" (para. 31). There are resources available that will help educators to begin their journey. With time and effort, they can find inclusive books.

As a future educator and someone who is passionate about books, diversity and inclusion, my primary research question being asked is: How does creating an inclusive collection of literature books benefit K-8 students at the schools? Followed by my secondary research questions:

1. What constitutes an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students at the school libraries?
2. What does research say about the benefits of having an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students?
3. What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the school libraries for K-8 students?
4. Are there multiple inclusive collections of literature books for students? Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?
5. According to school officials, how do the inclusive collections of literature books benefit K-8 students? If so, in what ways?
6. And lastly, what could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in

school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

I will begin to answer these questions by reviewing the academic literature.

Literature Review

When literature is easily accessible and in reach for students to obtain it creates a positive reading environment. This is good for the students' education and personal growth. There are benefits to having literature that is diverse and inclusive for students in K-8 schools at their libraries. They have representation of their cultures and awareness of other cultures which ties into their social and emotional learning. Diverse literature and inclusive literature can mean different things to different people. One definition of diverse literature is having a wide variety of characters that showcase differences, like races, ethnicities, social classes, religion, etc. Another definition of inclusive literature is using vocabulary that is kind, doesn't propagate stereotypes or is harmful to a group of people. For the sake of this literature research, the focus is going to be narrowed down into culture diversity, language inclusivity and disability inclusivity.

Benefits of inclusive and diverse literature

As we know, representation is important. It is always nice to see aspects of oneself reflected in different settings. In literature, these types of books are typically called mirror books. Mirror books “are books that reflect different aspects of students' identity” (Flores & Osorio, 2021, para. 4). They help students to make connections about themselves, validate their emotions, show that their stories matter and can show them different possibilities for their lives. The other side to mirror books is window books. Window books “are books where children see aspects of a world that is different than their own” (Flores & Osorios, 2021, para. 14). These books help students to begin to introduce something they may not know about and perhaps start to have interest in learning about something different to themselves. “Experiencing mirrors and windows offers readers a way to better understand themselves in our multicultural world and gives them a place from which to encounter and engage alternative viewpoints and perspectives”

(Baldwin, 2018, p. 75). Mirrors, windows and even sliding glass doors are crucial for developing students to have access too. It is knowledge that will never be taken away once learned.

After representation comes awareness. When an unknown piece of information is introduced to a learner, it becomes new knowledge. This background knowledge can then be used as a building block to learn more about the subject. Disabilities, as an example, it is common knowledge that there are physical disabilities that we can see but there are some that are invisible. Literature books can help with spreading awareness of them “stories were seen as a good way of enhancing non-disabled children and adults’ understanding of the experiences of people with ‘invisible’ or poorly understood impairments” (Matthew & Clow, 2007, p. 69). Exposure to diverse and inclusive literature helps lead to awareness which is always a good thing.

Both representation and awareness tie into the social and emotional learning of students when both topics are presented. Social and emotional learning is “identifying and managing one’s emotions, demonstrating social awareness and a capacity to empathize with others, and establishing and maintaining positive relationships, particularly with those who are deemed as different by young children” (Garces-Bacsal, 2022, p. 69). They become well rounded people when they are able to learn and understand why diversity is important. Especially when in this day and age things aren’t so black and white anymore, the present is constantly changing.

Types of inclusive and diverse literature

Culture is often the topic most people think of when they hear the word diversity. They aren’t wrong, culture diversity is very important because while cultures can have similarities to each other, they also have differences. It is important to learn about it all, even if it is just a small amount knowledge. Culture diversity and children’s literature is a dissertation that reiterates how “early childhood is an important time in the formation of children’s attitudes to themselves and to others, thus the nature of children’s books is important to ensure the provision of an environment in which diversity is reflected, valued and explored” (Adam 2019, p. 28).

When children are exposed to something different than themselves, and it's explained in an easy and positive manner then that knowledge is locked in. They see it as something new and exciting which then leads to children beginning to “think beyond their own world and become more interested in learning about others” (Leavitt, 1996, para. 13).

Similar to culture diversity, there also needs to be more disability diversity and inclusivity in children's books. Having different disabilities being included in children's books can help. With books being the first step at exposure to children who may not know anybody with disabilities. Because when the time comes to learn, they will already have a little bit of knowledge and “Regardless of whether children are in inclusive settings or not, providing exposure to books and discussions can help facilitate the formation of positive attitudes” (Ostrosky, Dorsey, Favazza, & Leboeuf, 2015, p. 34). Inclusion also helps children with disabilities to get their own representation and mirror book moments like their non-disabled counterparts, “Literature portraying characters with disabilities can help children and young adults develop the habit of reading for pleasure about characters like themselves, and it can support the development of personal power by portraying these characters as strong and believable” (Wopperer, 2011, p. 28). The visually impaired also need to be considered with disability inclusions because they face the same challenge as everyone else, “The self-affirming and social awareness benefits of culturally diverse books extend to both sighted and visually impaired children” (Coleman & Harrison, 2022, p. 128).

Lastly, another important type of inclusion is that of language and global literature. In schools who have a primarily English-speaking demographic, getting popular books with translations in other languages for students who do not speak English as their primary language, is not always prioritized. This leaves students excluded from being able to read for pleasure, and not feel included or represented. Sometimes these students may be immigrant students as well, so popular books here in America may not interest them like popular books from their home countries. Having books from other countries that are either in their original language or are

translated to English it is “able to effectively portray world views and images that expand children’s sensibilities beyond those which they are ordinarily accustomed to” (Garces-Bacsal, 2022, p. 70). This benefits the students by helping to create more well-rounded individuals.

Methods and Procedures

The first thing that needed to be done for this research project was finding a topic. There were a few general ideas I had in mind after the first class with Professor Paoze Thao. After the first week of class, those ideas were focused down to something with literature and diversity, as I am passionate about both. During the one-on-one meeting with professor Paoze, it was solidified that my topic was going to be about the benefits of diverse literature in K-8 school libraries. Specifically K-8, because I am personally looking for a job around those grades and it was going to be slightly easier for me to visit campuses to conduct my data gathering. Along with finalizing my topic during the meeting, my primary and secondary research questions were also discussed and finalized.

After the final selection of my topic, it was time to collect research. The first portion was looking for and reading other scholar’s works. Primarily using the CSUMB library database, I found multiple peer reviewed scholarly journal articles. I also ventured out and used Google for both academic articles and websites that aided in answering my research questions. While it was easy to copy and paste my primary research question into the search bars, finding articles that I felt were useful was not. I had to get creative in what I typed into the search bars. Many of the words or sentences were shortened versions of my title. For example, diverse middle school literature or benefits of inclusive literature, etc. Each time something different was typed I would get different results which was amazing for research purposes and because it showed just how many people believe in the same thing; diversity and inclusion in literature is important and vital.

After finishing writing my prospectus paper, I noticed semi patterns in which readings I selected. The most obvious patterns were types of diversity/inclusion and benefits after that everything else fell into subcategories. The first subcategories are culture diversity, language

inclusivity, disability inclusivity, and family diversity. The second subcategories are representation, awareness, interest, social and emotional learning. Overall, they tied into each other, which was very interesting to learn and read about.

Reading articles on a topic is one thing, going out and speaking to educators who work firsthand with students is another. For the second portion of my data collection, I decided that interviewing educators and administrators was something I needed to try and make happen. Knowing that all school districts work differently I decided to interview librarians, teachers and principals from at least two different districts. I decided to provide potential interviewees with two options; an in-person interview or email interview. Two chose in-person and two others chose the email interview. The potential interviewees were people that I had previously interacted with through family members. This helped the process because there was an already established acquaintanceship, so when they were asked to participate, they knew they would be of help. I was able to receive two librarian interviews from district 1 but different grades, one principal from district 1 and one teacher from district 2. All of them were asked my secondary research questions, although the questions were tailored depending on which professional title they held. The questionnaire was typed out and sent in via an email. In-person interviews were recorded via a google doc and their responses were paraphrased for efficiency.

Results and Discussions

There is an unsaid agreement that diverse and inclusive literature is beneficial for the world of learning. Having a variety of literature available to K-8 students helps in their development by introducing topics they may not have any knowledge about. All the readings I have gathered and interviews I have conducted help to prove the point that inclusive collections of literature benefit students. Below are my secondary research questions, which were tailored for the interview portion of my research gathering and kept the same for reading scholarly work. The first question is:

1. What constitutes an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students at the

school libraries?

Having a variety of literature collections available and easy to identify for students of any age at the school when they make a visit to the library. Variety meaning that “you must have selections that serve all students as relatable to them, and also selections that allow them to explore the experiences of others that are unknown to their own lives, so that they may be exposed to the new perspectives of others, and the lives of others that are unknown to them like cultures, places, traditions, norms, as well as ethics and morals.” (Librarian Appendix 2, personal communication, 6 October 2023). The books should also aim to meet the important criteria of “The authors of these books should be people of color, as well as the illustrators. There should be authentic voices, not only European voices telling the story.” (Librarian Appendix 3, personal communication, 3 October 2023). Representation extends beyond the story that is told. Who is telling the story matters, who the characters are, what challenges the characters face, what languages the books are translated into, etc.

2. What does research say about the benefits of having an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students?

It is widely known and accepted that it is important for students to see aspects of themselves in literature to help promote self-awareness, self-confidence and a sense of belonging. It is also important for students to see the aspects that are different from them. It promotes awareness of others, a sense of empathy and understanding of that which is different from them. In the benefits of using inclusive literature in kindergarten through fifth grade honors project paper it states, “Children’s books allow students to see and understand the similarities and differences of those who surround them. Additionally, inclusion within children’s literature provides students with representation and the opportunity to develop a greater sense of self and belonging which ultimately leads to empathy and acceptance of others” (Lynch, 2022, p. 2). The students who are exposed to diverse and inclusive literature have the higher potential of growing up to be intelligent, well-rounded individuals.

3. What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the local school libraries for K-8 students? Are there inclusive collections of literature books for students?

Each local school has a plethora of books waiting to be read in their library. The types of collections of literature will depend on the region of the school, the demographic of students and the leadership in the area. In district 1, the schools have diverse student bodies, and their libraries reflect that diversity by having vast collections of literature. The principal from appendix 4 briefly spoke about what type of collections of literature books may be seen in their school library. Briefly looking around their library it is easy to spot the multiple marked sections that had “The representation of different cultures, books in different languages, books with gender equity” (Principal Appendix 4, personal communication, 3 October 2023). While their library is on the smaller side, it sure is rich in different types of literature.

As for district 2, a little research into the school district shows that the student body is majority Hispanic. Which leads to believe that the schools would have representation in their library for their students. Never having visited in person I can only go off what my interviewee answered, “Most of the books are from predominantly Anglo society followed by a few Hispanic collections. There’s also a huge discrepancy about Spanish, where our students' majority population consists of ELLs (Students that English was not their first language)” (Teacher Appendix 1, personal communication, 6 October 2023). Slightly disappointed to hear that the representation is not where it should be at, especially for the English language learners. Although the teacher from district 2 did make a note that their new librarian was trying their best to fix the discrepancy.

4. Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?

The decision on what literature books become a part of the school libraries catalog does not fall only onto one person, there are recommendations and suggestions from many different people. Teachers at the school may give the librarian their opinions on books, administrators may give their thoughts on what books are in the library, students may give a suggestion or two

on what they would like to see be added to the library's collection. There is also the possibility of input from the local school district board, who may or may not want to have certain books in all the local schools that fall within district lines. "The district helps by sending packets of books that are inclusive to be used by the librarians if they wish." (Principal Appendix 4, personal communication, 3 October 2023). In the end, the librarians have the most say in what enters or exits their libraries. If they happen to lean more into open mindedness and make use of suggestions from others, then their library includes more inclusivity and diversity.

"Responsibility of the selection of literature [is given] to the teacher librarian, who can collaborate with their administration and teachers, as well as the interests and feedback of students to meet the needs of their school's student population." (Librarian Appendix 2, personal communication, 6 October 2023). However, if the librarian happens to be narrower minded and ignores the suggestions from those trying to help then their library reflects that with less diversity and inclusion.

5. According to school officials, how do the inclusive collections of literature books benefit K-8 students? If so, in what ways?

Inclusive collections of literature books provides knowledge on people that differ from oneself, knowledge of the world outside of where one calls home, and information about oneself that may not have been apparent before. All of which provide a great learning experience to create a more well-rounded individual who will be prepared for whatever they face in the world. For example, when there is accessible literature on multiple cultures it gives room for curious students to either read about a culture that is not their own or to learn more about their culture from a different perspective. "Books that represent their culture can boost their self-confidence and their interest in reading. I have seen the difference in engagement when we read "Esperanza Rising" and when we read "The Wizard of Oz." They feel the connection between them and Esperanza, while they get disconnected from the Wizard of Oz." (Teacher Appendix 1, personal communication, 6 October 2023). As we can see, having books that represent the different

cultures each student brings to the classroom really benefits the students. They can connect with what they are reading and can contribute generously to the discussions had with peers.

It also creates an interest in reading, which is important for the student's educational growth. "School officials want students reading, period. Students who read do better in school, are more likely to pursue education past high school, less likely to be incarcerated, poor, make more money as adults, and so, so much more! And of course, reading provides a huge benefit to testing scores, which school officials cannot get enough of!" (Librarian Appendix 2, personal communication, 6 October 2023). Educational growth then goes hand in hand with personal growth. The more that is learned and understood with books helps in the personal lives of the students. Perhaps they are in a situation similar to something they have read before; they will then have some tools and knowledge to assist them if needed. Although, there is also the possibility that students end up going through something personal and when picking a book to read they gravitate towards books with similar plot points of the personal situation. Reading then becomes a way for students to learn how to deal with their personal situations if they wish.

6. What could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in local school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

An intentional push to find more books that showcase diversity and inclusion for all K-8 students. As society keeps progressing, more and more content is coming out. Therefore, new literature is always being written and published by many different people, providing many different perspectives. All of which holds different levels of importance to whoever consumes literature. During the search for more books, it is imperative to take note of who the author is, if the story being told is authentic, if the book is translated in multiple languages, etc. "Only a few librarians really research more deeply about the books. Like who the authors are, are they telling an authentic story, etc." (Librarian Appendix 3, personal communication, 3 October 2023).

While doing a deeper research dive into the books shouldn't fall only on the librarian, it is the librarian's job having the final say on what enters their school library. They have a responsibility

to harbor the growth of a student's education and create accessibility to multiple collections of literature books for the purpose of learning.

Having funding to be allocated specifically to the school library for all the K-8 students. With the lack of proper funding for libraries it creates a restriction on the librarians for how diverse and inclusive they can make their libraries with new materials. As well as prevent little events that the librarians can put on to shed light on different cultural groups. "More funding is needed to allow libraries to provide these materials to students, and school libraries need to study their student populations closely, so they can explore both what is familiar to them and what is unknown." (Librarian Appendix 2, personal communication, 6 October 2023). The older books are in the library, the harder it is for new generations of students to connect. There is no interest in reading any material that is not familiar to them. Proper funds will allow for buying new books while getting rid of the older, not relevant ones. In addition to receiving new books, librarians can also use the money to have a small event when there is an awareness day or month for cultures or disabilities. "More events to help highlight different cultures in the library." (Principal Appendix 4, personal communication, 3 October 2023). Informational events help boost visibility and can be a new way to engage students. Engagements then help with the learning students receive.

More support and training for staff when choosing books to bring into the library that showcase inclusion and diversity. Many teachers and librarians do not have confidence in what they are doing when it comes to picking appropriate books that have diversity. "Librarian feels she could do more with guidance. Hard with the budget that is given and trying to cover all the different groups. Not having any training on what could be important to students and their lives." (Librarian Appendix 3, personal communication, 3 October 2023). When there is not help and guidance from administration it is easy to feel lost and not have the motivation to continue trying to better student life. "I believe that there should be training for librarians and teachers to work together towards this goal." (Teacher Appendix 1, personal communication, 6 October 2023).

All staff, the administration, the librarian and the teachers must build a comfortable relationship with each other. Having multiple training courses with team building and knowledge on diversity and inclusion only serves to improve students' educational and personal growth.

Reaching out to the authors of books is not always the first thought many people have but the reward that comes with receiving a reply is the best feeling. Reaching out to authors can provide students with the opportunity to get firsthand experience crafting professional correspondence, interact with a person directly from the profession, and ask any question that they had when reading the book to get a direct answer from its author. “To teachers and librarians: Authors are eager to connect with young readers. If there's a book that's perfect for your students, reach out to the author” (Doshi, 2022, para. 15). No harm comes from trying to connect with an author. The worst that can happen is not receiving a response and the best is receiving a response and possibly an appearance as a guest speaker.

Problems and Limitations

There weren't any major problems that I came across once I started my research that affected my progress. There were however a few minor limitations. One that was most notable, was no responses after initiating email contact to potential interviewees. I reached out to my network asking for contact information of any potential candidates who would fit my parameters. I then initiated contact via email detailing my capstone project and asking if they would be willing to participate. If they agreed, I would send the consent form and the interview questions. Two responded that they'd prefer in-person interviews and scheduled a time. Two others responded back with signed consent forms and answers to the questions. The others either didn't respond at all or didn't respond with signed forms and answers.

The next minor problem was that I did not interview more librarians from different districts. I did my best to work with what was available to me, but I wish I was able to reach out to other possible candidates. It would have been interesting to see the comparison between the K-8 school libraries from different school districts in California. From what I quickly researched

they operate somewhat similarly to keep up with state regulations but on the local side there are differences depending on area and districts. Because of the cultural diversity in California, some cities have a majority culture group, and some schools try to reflect that within by having certain books or a section of curriculum.

The last limitation was not taking the time to look through the school libraries to see the types of books available. I know that for the email interviews this would have been difficult but maybe if I had made it a priority, it could have been attainable. As for the in-person interviews, there wasn't much time to look through the books as there were students going in and out of the library. Seeing the types of collections of literature and how they are placed in the library would have provided more insight. Now that I am wrapping up this research project there are things that I reflect on that could have been done differently. Although, for the amount of time that was given to complete the project I believe that I did a decent job and gained more knowledge.

Recommendations

Based on all my research, the first thing I recommend is that educators always comb through the internet for resources, book recommendations, lesson plans centered around a book, etc. When having a mental block on how to start or continue looking for better diversity and inclusion in books, the internet is always an available primary source. The internet and especially social media are so accessible and easy enough to navigate. There is a variety of people willing to help by sharing what they have found, what they do when looking for specifics, who they follow along with when they need resources. Most of the time they give help with step-by-step instructions with links and visuals for whoever needs it. Searching through the internet can also provide a learning moment to teach media literacy to students. Everybody could do with media literacy teaching, especially when new generations of students are becoming media reliant.

My next recommendation is asking the students and their families for potential appropriate book recommendations. There is no better way to create a book list full of books from different cultures and different life situations than to ask directly from a source. On the student side, it is

encouraging to see when their opinions and thoughts are taken into consideration. Even the quietest student can feel seen and acknowledged. On the family side, it is nice to get them involved in their child's education and it could be rewarding if they are from a different culture than others in the class. A positive environment is created around reading, which then helps encourage the interest to read.

My last recommendation is to always communicate with the network educators have built. Whether it is at a current school, a past one, or a school that a friend works at. Fellow educators are more likely than not always ready to lend a helping hand when aid or advice is needed. Teachers who have years under their belt working in a classroom are filled with knowledge and having them on speed dial is beneficial.

Conclusion

Diversity, inclusion and reading are topics that I am passionate about. As it happens tying education into the mix makes everything sweeter. Each topic is intertwined together not only in this research paper but also in life. Reading is pivotal in education; educational growth is always occurring and with the help of reading there is no limit. Diversity and inclusion are vital to life, reading about them helps bridge the gap of unawareness and learning about them in schools helps create a safe space to ask questions.

After all my research, there is indication that there are multiple benefits to having diverse literature collections in K-8 school libraries. A few big benefits happen to be cultural representation, disability awareness, and language inclusivity. Each of the benefits all interconnect, and it is important not to overlook any of them because they all hold an equal amount of importance. Having these representations leads to social and emotional learning, educational and personal growth and helps create connections with others. When students feel heard, seen and accepted their interests in school and learning boosts. We do not want a moment where one or more types of representations are left out and the students who align with said representation end up feeling less than their counterparts. Each and every⁰⁸ matters, as people

and as OBJ

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[%20as%20they%20introduce%20readers.provide%20powerful%20moments%20of%20recognition.](#)

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Appendix 1

District 2 AUSD Elementary School teacher (Email Exchange)

- 1) What constitutes an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students at the school libraries?

An inclusive collection consists of a vast variety of books that represent most cultures around the world.

- 2) What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the local school libraries for K-8 students?

In our school library, as I've mentioned before, most of the books are from predominantly Anglo society followed by a few Hispanic collections. There's also a huge discrepancy about Spanish, where our students' majority population consists of ELLs (Students that English was not their first language). Luckily, we just have a new librarian who is trying to increase this collection.

- 3) Are there multiple inclusive collections of literature books for students?

I would say not to the extent where it should be. Getting better, but still, a long way to go.

- 4) Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?

I would think the librarian is in collaboration with the principal. Sometimes teachers have an input about what kind of books to buy.

- 5) According to school officials, how do the inclusive collections of literature books benefit K-8 students? If so, in what ways?

As mentioned before, by having an inclusive collection of children's books, our students will be able to understand that there is a vast number of cultures around the world. Our students sometimes do not get to leave Salinas until they go to college and what happens to them is they get a cultural shock that sometimes makes them feel insecure by not being exposed to it. Also, books that represent their culture can boost their self-confidence and their interest in reading. I have seen the difference in engagement when we read

“Esperanza Rising” and when we read “The Wizard of Oz.” They feel the connection between them and Esperanza, while they get disconnected from the Wizard of Oz.

- 6) What could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in local school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

I believe that there should be training for librarians and teachers to work together towards this goal. Our students must be exposed to all types of books, especially books that represent them and can make them feel the connection between reading and the representation of themselves.

- 7) How does creating an inclusive collection of children’s books in school libraries benefit elementary school students?

Salinas is a narrow multicultural society where most people are descendants of Mexico, which means that most of our students do not get to be exposed to various cultures. Many of our library books are either from the predominantly Anglo society or now beginning to expand to Hispanic. It’s hard to find books that reflect other cultures. This creates a barrier for our students who do not have the privilege of traveling around the world as rich kids do. This in the long term will become a cultural shock once they move to another city or country. Another barrier is that by not having enough books that represent our society, students will lose interest in reading.

Appendix 2

District 1 FUSD Middle School librarian (Email Exchange)

- 1) What constitutes an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students at the school libraries?

There is a lot to consider with creating an inclusive collection of literature. To be inclusive, you must have selections that serve all students as relatable to them, and also selections that allow them to explore the experiences of others that are unknown to their own lives, so that they may be exposed to the new perspectives of others, and the lives of others that are unknown to them like cultures, places, traditions, norms, as well as ethics and morals.

Another aspect of inclusivity is having a collection that all can access. This means having reading materials available to support a broad range of grade levels. For example, I have Dr. Seuss books even though my site is a K-8th grade school. Students are also offered diverse ways to read aside from in-print literature like eBooks and audiobooks. This is offered by my own school library, the district's digital reading library app called Sora and the Fresno County Public Library's online library also. Both offer an incredible amount of literature at all levels.

- 2) What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the school library for the K-8 students? Are there multiple inclusive collections of literature books for students?
My library offers a robust non-fiction section and multiple databases that allow for students to investigate facts and auto/biographies. Again, there are many reading levels offered, but the databases offered allow students to adjust their reading level and will read the information for them. This provides inclusivity by allowing students to have access to a myriad of resources, which gives students a greater likelihood of seeing things from more than one viewpoint, assessment, or bias. In other words, they have a broader exposure to information, and it is available for anyone with any reading ability.

There is also a large fiction section that is divided into genres rather than alphabetically, meaning a student interested in mysteries can go to bookshelves that house books that are solely reserved for mystery books. There has been a section created for fantasy, adventure, humor, horror, mystery, romance, graphic novels, manga, historical fiction, science fiction (dystopian), and realistic fiction.

The sky's the limit when it comes to curating collections! For example, for Native American Heritage Month, a collection of Native stories, fiction selections, and informational texts can be created by pulling books I already have from both my fiction and non-fiction sections, easily using my online collection database to create a list and telling me where to find them on my shelves.

I can purchase more if I am deficient in an area. I am thankfully given an excellent budget courtesy of the school board funding us handsomely. Many publishing companies allow you to upload your collection to their websites and they will provide a free, comprehensive analysis of what you already have. You can dive into that data about your collection and find areas of need quickly.

3) Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?

The FUSD School Board has given this responsibility of the selection of literature to the teacher librarian, who can collaborate with their administration and teachers, as well as the interests and feedback of students to meet the needs of their school's student population.

4) According to school officials, how do the inclusive collections of literature books benefit their K-8 students? If so, in what ways?

Libraries will continue to purchase things that are relevant, interesting, and impactful to the reader, and checked out by their patrons. School officials want students reading, period. Students who read do better in school, are more likely to pursue education past high school, less likely to be incarcerated, poor, make more money as adults, and so, so much more! And of course, reading provides a huge benefit to testing scores, which

school officials cannot get enough of!

- 5) What could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in local school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

More funding is needed to allow libraries to provide these materials to students, and school libraries need to study their student populations closely, so they can explore both what is familiar to them and what is unknown. Familiar subjects are attractive to students because they can see themselves in the books which makes them attracted to it; unfamiliar books are as important so that students can learn about the unknown and sharpen their intellect by being confronted by something new to them.

Thankfully, the characters and experiences of the characters in these stories is increasingly diverse every day, making literature richer for it. From what I can foresee, school libraries will just continue to get more inclusive because that is what is being written now. School officials need to make sure that they are strongly supporting their libraries' selections when they are challenged by the few who want to remove books from shelves. A library is simply a source for people to find information and its role is to be completely impartial when providing the information. Libraries are to provide something for everybody regardless of who they are or what they believe.

Librarians/libraries neither support nor decry information, they are just a place that provides information. After that, people have the liberty to do what they would like with that information. For that reason, when things are challenged, libraries need support from others because people should be allowed to have access to all information. Not all have to like it or read it, but "some" should never be allowed the right to take information away from "all."

Appendix 3

District 1 FUSD Elementary School librarian (Verbal Interview)

- 1) What constitutes an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students at the school libraries?

Students being able to see themselves in books, seeing students' faces light up when their cultures are taught about. Everyone needs to be represented and authentic stories need to be seen. The authors of these books should be people of color, as well as the illustrators. There should be authentic voices, not only European voices telling the story.

- 2) What does research say about the benefits of having an inclusive collection of literature books for K-8 students?

Librarian would imagine that the research would all be positive.

- 3) What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the local school libraries for K-8 students?

Women's stories (little leaders), autobiographies of women, black children stories that are positive, highlight positive children of color, large LGBTQ picture books, Spanish book collection (language matters), popular books in English should be available in other languages.

- 4) Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?

Librarian makes the decision for this local school library. Most Fresno unified librarians make their decisions, they do not need approval from anyone.

- 5) What could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in local school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

Librarian feels she could do more with guidance. Hard with the budget that is given and trying to cover all the different groups. Not having any training on what could be important to students and their lives. Only a few librarians really research more deeply about the books. Like who the authors are, are they telling an authentic story, etc.

Appendix 4

District 1 FUSD Elementary School principal (Verbal Interview)

- 1) How does creating an inclusive collection of literature books benefit K-8 Students at the schools?

Students are able to see themselves being represented. It helps build self-esteem when their characteristics are being valued. It also helps students in being more accepting of others.

- 2) What kinds of collections of literature books are available in the local school libraries for K-8 students?

The representation of different cultures, books in different languages, books with gender equity.

- 3) Who makes the decision to have inclusive literature books for local school libraries?

The district helps by sending packets of books that are inclusive to be used by the librarians if they wish. They are sent to both principals and librarians but mostly to the principals. In turn the principal then sends the information to the librarian.

- 4) What could be done to create more inclusive collections of literature books in local school libraries to benefit K-8 students?

More events to help highlight different cultures in the library.