

2021

Justice through Practice: Inquiry on the Development of Preservice Teachers' Teaching for Social Justice

Bethany Silva

University of New Hampshire, bethany.silva@unh.edu

Elyse L. Hambacher

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus, elyse.hambacher@unh.edu

Ruth Wharton-McDonald

University of New Hampshire, ruth.wharton@unh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jpr>



Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Social Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Silva, Bethany; Hambacher, Elyse L.; and Wharton-McDonald, Ruth (2021) "Justice through Practice: Inquiry on the Development of Preservice Teachers' Teaching for Social Justice," *Journal of Practitioner Research*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

<https://doi.org/10.5038/2379-9951.6.2.1173>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jpr/vol6/iss2/4>

This Practitioner Research is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Practitioner Research by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Justice through practice: Inquiry on the development of preservice teachers' teaching for social justice

Abstract:

This article reports on a collaboration among three teacher educators to facilitate pre-service teacher (PST)s' equity literacy through a social-justice themed afterschool program for elementary-aged children that was embedded in PSTs' coursework. The teacher educators engaged in practitioner inquiry (e.g., Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), posing the question, "What happens when preservice teachers use justice-oriented children's literature to facilitate discussions about inequity with young children?" We used inductive analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to observe themes across 17 PSTs' written and videotaped reflections, collected over two semesters. Reflections pointed to a fear of the unknown and discomfort with and avoidance of difficult or uncomfortable encounters with students. PSTs' slowly developing understandings of teaching for social justice suggest that in-course examination of potential scenarios, explicit cultivation of brave spaces (Arao & Clemens, 2013), and multiple justice-oriented experiences over time are ways we, as teacher educators, may be able to support PSTs as budding co-conspirators.

Introduction

Scholars note the significance of social justice as a critical component of teacher preparation, and researchers have most often studied this in the context of preparing mostly white teachers to teach diverse populations of students (e.g., Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, & Sonu, 2010; Reagan, Chen, & Vernikoff, 2016; Rojas & Liou, 2018). However, in our particular context, most of our preservice teachers (who are mostly white women)¹, graduate and go on to teach in schools where the students are also mostly white². In our work preparing teachers, it is paramount to create classroom spaces where children who are white will learn to identify and critique dominant, deficit, historical and social narratives that perpetuate oppression.

¹ In 2019, the most recent year for which data are available, 96% of the graduating pre-service teachers identified as white; 76% identified as female (University of New Hampshire Department of Education, 2020).

² From 2015-2019, 80% of graduates eligible for certification obtained teaching jobs in NH, where 84% of public-school students identify as white (University of New Hampshire Department of Education, 2020).

Sensitizing privileged individuals to issues of societal injustice is a crucial strategy in interrupting oppression and can play a key role in liberation because of the political power held by white, often wealthier, communities relative to low-income communities and communities with majority people of color (Freire, 1970). It has been argued that the education of white, privileged children is particularly essential, given that children from these communities are likely to occupy positions of power later in life (Swalwell, 2013). To change how we teach white children is directly connected to how teachers, who are predominantly white and female, are prepared to teach for social justice. Indeed, many education scholars point to the salience of teacher preparation in addressing equity and justice in P-12 contexts (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1991, 2004, 2010; Gorski & Pothini, 2014; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2010). With this in mind, this project seeks to call in white educators and children to join the crucial work of interrupting injustice.

This article reports on a project in which we, as teacher educators, attempted to extend preservice teachers' equity literacy with justice-oriented children's literature in an afterschool program. By equity literacy, we are referring to "the skills and dispositions that enable us to recognize, respond to and redress (i.e., correct for) conditions that deny some students access to the educational opportunities enjoyed by their peers." (Gorski, 2014, para. 7). Equity literacy asks educators hard questions about whether all students have equal opportunities to succeed and how schools may contribute to inequity. Equity literate teachers recognize social stratification in society and work to create just learning environments for students, embracing students' families in this process (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). As we inquire into our own practice as New Hampshire teacher educators who teach mostly white female pre-service teachers (PSTs), likely to go on to teach in schools attended by mostly white students, we wondered, *What happens when preservice teachers learn to use justice-oriented children's literature to facilitate discussions about inequity with young children?* We begin by defining the concept of teaching for social justice, which provides the backdrop for the study. Then, we discuss the research design and specific data collection and analysis methods used to address our question above. The article concludes with a discussion of implications both for our own practice and for other teacher educators committed to social justice.

Positionality

This practitioner inquiry project stems from our interests as teacher educators in a predominantly white institution (PWI) who seek to teach for social justice with PSTs and to improve our own teaching practice. Bethany is a white

woman who has taught in many contexts, from predominantly white environments to racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse environments. Upon moving to New Hampshire, the predominately white context made visible that social justice work is driven by context; she wanted to investigate what it means to center social justice in her practice in this new place. Elyse is biracial and taught racially and ethnically diverse young children in South Florida. Like Bethany, her move to a mostly white context led her to wonder how she approaches teaching for social justice with white educators who are more than likely to teach in mostly white, privileged communities. Ruth, a white woman who grew up in urban and suburban Chicago, worked with racially and ethnically diverse children in the Northeast as an elementary classroom teacher and as a literacy specialist. While she has used children's literature to address issues of social justice with *children* throughout her career in elementary schools and with preservice teachers at the university, the strategy of using these texts to address social justice explicitly and intentionally - with the largely white preservice teachers who populate our program - has evolved more recently as an area of focus.

Preparing Teachers to Teach for Social Justice

In her book *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks writes that “The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (1994, p. 12). These words signal to the fertile grounds of teacher education coursework to prepare PSTs to teach for social justice. More recently, however, teaching for social justice has been characterized as “anything and everything” (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2008, p. 627) and regarded as a sloganized term that has lost its meaning, “represent[ing] a variety of ideological and political commitments, including some that are not critical of the current social order or representing a change from the status quo” (Zeichner, 2009, p. 25). Teaching for social justice, then, is not an amalgamation of strategies and tools but an embodied stance that represents

how teachers think about their work and interpret what is going on in schools and classrooms; how they understand competing agendas, pose questions, and make decisions; how they form relationships with students; and how they work with colleagues, families, communities, and social groups. (Cochran-Smith, 2010, p. 454)

A teacher educator committed to teaching for social justice considers the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that prepare teachers to become agents of change both in their personal and professional lives.

Cochran-Smith (2010) asks how teacher educators can conceptualize teacher preparation to enact practices that enhance social justice. Teacher

preparation for social justice must challenge the status quo and be transformative. In her extensive work on teaching for social justice, she outlines a theory of teacher preparation which argues that teacher preparation should be theorized in terms of four key issues: 1) recruitment/selection/retention of teacher candidates, 2) curriculum and pedagogy, 3) contexts, structures, and collaborators, and 4) outcomes. For the purposes of our practitioner research, we were specifically interested in two and three, preparing PSTs to use justice-oriented literature books to elicit discussions about social injustice and doing so in the context of teacher educators and critical friends who are also engaged in the life-long process of “teaching against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991).

The use of justice-oriented children’s literature provides powerful opportunities for teacher educators, PSTs, and students to engage in important conversations about race, class, gender, and other markers of identity. In their review of the scholarship on the use of children’s literature to prepare K-12 teachers to disrupt technocratic teaching approaches, Flores, Vlach, and Lammert (2019) found that some teacher educators used children’s literature to enhance PSTs critique and evaluations of the literary canon and technocratic approaches to literacy instruction. A majority of the studies in their review also showed how teacher educators used children’s literature specifically as a tool to bolster the development of PSTs as transformative intellectuals who engage students’ agency. Teacher educators in these studies supported PSTs in their work as transformative intellectuals by challenging them to engage in conversations that centered minoritized voices, examine their own biases and assumptions, and recognize the influence of this on their teaching practice.

One example is the work of Haddix and Price-Dennis (2013), two teacher educators of color, who described working with PSTs in an adolescent literature course to examine how urban fiction and multicultural literature texts were used as tools to engage in conversations about race, gender, sexuality, and class. Using this literature, they were able to expand the definition of literacy practices, introduce counternarratives to traditional power discourses, and discuss issues of discrimination, race, and power within the literacy curriculum (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). Although their work is framed with an urban lens, their study has implications for preparing white teachers who will likely go on to teach in mostly white communities.

Lohfink (2014) and Landa and Stephens (2017) examined the use of children’s literature as a tool to teach for social justice with elementary PSTs. Lohfink (2014) analyzed 54 PST reflective responses to understand the impact of a school-university “multicultural read-aloud project” on PSTs’ pedagogical

understandings. Their reflections revealed that the read-alouds helped them to better understand their own identities, other cultures, and their students. Landa and Stephens's (2017) case study of one elementary education PST also described similar understandings but also led to greater empathy and advocacy for her students. For example, in a lesson using justice-oriented children's literature related to the Los Angeles riots, the PST changed her instruction so her students could reflect and discuss their own experiences dealing with racism. The use of justice-oriented children's literature in teacher education points to the possibilities of designing rich learning opportunities for teachers to teach for social justice (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Howrey & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Landa & Stephens, 2017; Lohfink, 2014; Martin & Spencer, 2020).

Focusing on cultivating environments for social justice praxis, Bondy, Beck, Curcio, and Schroeder (2017) propose a theory of "justice praxis" for teacher educators to guide praxis, which Freire (1970) describes as critical reflection *and* action to transform social justice dispositions into effective actions. The authors use the term *justice praxis* to acknowledge that justice is threaded through theory, action, and outcome. They argue that justice itself must be surrounded by two dimensions-- radical hope and democratic processes-- as they are the essentials in which justice is embedded. The remaining five dimensions - restorative, critical sociological, wholly engaged, liberatory, and immersed in inquiry - offer educators guidance for "determining ways to transform injustice, rather than just mitigate it" (Gorski, 2015, as cited by Bondy et al., 2017). In other words, these five dimensions suggest a means for action against injustice. Although the dimensions are presented separately, they are intertwined and overlapping in nature, which is consistent with conceptualizing justice as complex and ever evolving (see Bondy et al.'s article for an in-depth explanation of their justice praxis framework).

Teacher preparation grounded in justice calls for teachers and teacher educators to embody the role of transformative intellectual, viewing PSTs, inservice teachers, and P-12 students as critical agents who "question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 215). Duncan-Andrade's (2009) critical hope reminds us of the structural inequities of our existing education system and the larger conditions of an unjust society. Indeed, educators who lack political clarity (Bartolomé, 2009) and ignore systemic oppression fail to see the many struggles their students face. A critical hope depends upon high-quality teaching and learning experiences as a way to teach toward greater justice—a hope that shares the pain of living within the confines of structural oppression, works with students to imagine future possibilities, and foregrounds authentic, caring relationships. In the words of Giroux (1985), we are

interested in preparing PSTs to “develop a discourse that unites the language of critique with the language of possibility” (p. 379).

Designing with Equity Literacy in Mind

As we developed the course in which this study is situated, we sought to connect our activities to equity literacy, which recognizes, responds to, and redresses even the subtlest forms of inequity related to race, class, gender identity (dis)ability, language, religion, immigration status, and other factors (Gorski, 2014; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). As part of their coursework, PSTs read and discussed articles by Giroux (1985), Sato & Lensmire (2009), Weiner (2006), and Ladson-Billings (2007), which introduced critical concepts in education, interrogated dominant narratives, made concepts of deficit thinking visible, and questioned terms like ‘achievement gap’. To make visible the systemic nature of injustice within narrative, PSTs watched Adichie’s *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009), engaging in discussion about where dominant narratives emerge and why they are so ingrained in our society. To help PSTs recognize and address issues of equity in their own read-alouds, we modeled this dimension when we demonstrated read-alouds, asking critical questions like, “Is this problem solved? Where do we continue to see the injustices that we just read about in the world today?”

To approach justice as a continual process centered on wondering and questioning, we asked PSTs to put the course content in conversation with their experiences working with children through written responses and classroom discussions. Additionally, the course’s main text, *Black Ants and Buddhists* (Cowhey, 2006), modeled ways to teach for social justice. Cowhey’s book is a practitioner’s account of centering her early elementary students’ curricula on inquiry, critical thinking, and action. Through class discussions and activities engaging with the text, PSTs used Cowhey’s narrative as a mentor text in preparing a lesson for the afterschool book program. They were asked to attend to Cowhey’s pedagogical moves in relation to social justice to envision what their own pedagogical moves during the afterschool book program might be.

Developing equity literacy and teaching for social justice is more than simply an intellectual exercise. Scholars point to the embodied nature of injustice and exhort that we must use our whole bodies (not only our intellect) to examine and disrupt it (Bondy et al., 2017; hooks, 1998). We sought for whole-body engagement in two ways. First, we wanted the PSTs to physically experience the teaching of social justice lessons. Second, rather than only learning about issues of injustice from books, we wanted the young children taking part in the book discussion to use their entire bodies to explore the topics in the books. To do this,

we merged interactive read-alouds and art-making. Children's dialogue during interactive read-alouds supports engaged meaning-making both around text comprehension and critical issues (Barrentine, 1996; Howard & Ticknor, 2019). Engagement with the arts amplifies this engaged meaning-making, asking students to use their whole bodies as they interact with a text (Fowler, 1994).

Context

This project took place over the course of two semesters at a university in a rural college town where 92% of students identify as white. The course, *EDUC500: Exploring Teaching*, is an introductory-level, practicum-based course where PSTs explore teaching through a social justice frame. Seeking to engage in a collaboration that would merge critical reflection and action, the authors collaborated to create a 3-week afterschool program that would be facilitated by the PSTs. The original program, called *Book to Art*, had been run previously – with the assistance of college volunteers and without an explicit emphasis on social justice – at the university's Community Literacy Center (CLC). The CLC is a university-housed entity that runs youth programming and teacher professional development throughout the year. Situated within the education department, and directed by Bethany, the CLC was created to promote innovative collaborations that benefit PSTs, youth and families, and practicing educators. Prior to the intervention described here, a typical *Book to Art* session consisted of an interactive read-aloud, in which children were encouraged to focus on a particular aspect of the text (e.g, rhyming words, characters' feelings, or a central theme). Following the read-aloud and discussion, children participated in an art project related to the book. In modifying the program for this project, we maintained the general format, but focused the book titles and discussions on themes of social justice. The program described here was free and open to all children in P-5th grade; it met for one hour a week for 3-week sessions.

Navigating the Details

Our planning for the project unfolded along two intersectional tracks: The first was our commitment to nurturing equity literacy and an understanding of social justice among our PSTs; the second consisted of the challenges of preparing PSTs in their first education course to run an instructional program. Below, we describe the methods used to implement the project with PSTs across two cycles of inquiry (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011) — the first in fall, 2018, and the second in spring, 2019.

Inquiry Cycle One

For the first cycle of the project, Elyse taught the course (*Exploring Teaching*). As described above, the primary text was Mary Cowhey's (2006) *Black Ants and Buddhists*, accompanied by articles and blog posts on topics such as deficit thinking, reframing the achievement gap as an opportunity gap, critical teacher care, talking about race with young children, and the concept of teachers as transformative intellectuals (e.g., Giroux, 1985). PSTs also explored lesson planning and observed lessons in the elementary classrooms where they were observing. Before developing their own instructional plans, PSTs attended an ongoing session of *Book to Art* at the CLC, where they observed the format of an interactive read aloud modeled for them and had an opportunity to pose questions to the first author, who led it.

In preparation for the *Book to Art* program in Cycle 1, the three authors worked together to identify an initial set of 10 social justice-themed picture books from which the PSTs would select six books to teach. This initial set of books was identified based on a combination of professional knowledge and suggestions provided by the following resources: *The Brown Bookshelf* (n.d.), *Learning for Justice* (n.d.), and *The Educator's Playbook's* "Best Books for Young Readers" - a list of diverse books curated annually by children's literature expert Ebony Thomas (e.g., Thomas, 2016; Thomas, 2017; Thomas, 2018). The set of books presented to PSTs in Cohort 1 appears in Appendix A. Students read (or listened to) the ten books in the initial set and considered them from the perspective of their social justice goals and pedagogy. Ultimately, the six groups of PSTs in the class identified six of the ten books to share with children (see Appendix A).

The *Book to Art* program had a section for children in grades 2-5 and a section for children in P-1. Each PST group was assigned to prepare the lesson for one day of the three-week program (three groups worked with children from P-1 and three groups worked with the older children). Those who were not leading the program on any given day were observers. After selecting books, PSTs worked in their groups to create lesson plans intended to facilitate discussion and highlight issues of social justice. The plans were reviewed by Elyse (the instructor), revised, and ultimately, approved. In the final week before the start of the program, we invited local teachers, doctoral students, and education professors (including Bethany and Ruth) to listen to the PSTs' interactive read-alouds and give feedback as critical friends. PSTs also practiced the accompanying art projects, creating exemplars to show to the *Book to Art* participants.

Inquiry Cycle Two

For the second cycle of the project, in the spring of 2019, Bethany taught the course and ran the afterschool program, and Elyse and Ruth continued to collaborate with planning, executing the program, and analysis. Consistent with the iterative nature of practitioner inquiry (Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011), some changes were made to the preparation and program in the second cycle. Based on feedback from the first group of PSTs, the class did not observe a regular session *Book to Art*. Also, in response to the PSTs' concerns about developing content knowledge across a wide range of topics (e.g., civil rights, gender stereotypes, immigration, Autism spectrum, poverty), PSTs in the second cycle selected a common theme of immigration. This time, we pre-selected 20 picture books, using the same (updated) resources, and PSTs also submitted potential titles based on their own internet searches. As the PSTs read the selections, they considered which would make the best interactive read-alouds and considered the ways in which the selected set would work together to inform children about the common theme (immigration). The book list for Cycle 2 can be found in Appendix B. Rather than developing individual lesson plans, class members selected roles including: Readers, Discussion leaders, Art leaders, and Emcees. PSTs worked within and across roles to prepare the components of the project: the three discussion leaders worked together to prepare discussion content and protocols, and they also worked with the readers, art leaders, and emcees of their leadership week to ensure a connected daily lesson. In the final week before the program's start, the class completed a 'dress rehearsal' of both the interactive read-aloud and the art project, acting out possible student behaviors including silence, disruption, and complicated questions. The class developed possible responses and practiced language to discuss topics from the books like incarceration, slavery, and the treatment of indigenous peoples.

Research Methods

Our project draws on theories of practitioner inquiry (e.g., Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and educating for social justice (e.g., Bondy et al., 2017; Cochran-Smith, 2010; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013) to investigate how we can improve our work as teacher educators and how PSTs engaged with issues of social justice in practice.

Data Collection

When researching our own practice, we “inevitably face conflicts of interest that jeopardize the best interests of our students” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 47). In considering these conflicts, we sought to prioritize our PSTs’ interests by reducing the impact of the research on PSTs’ classroom experience. For example, consent documents were presented by a team-member who was not the teacher of record; consent documents were collected from all students, whether signed or not; and, responses were not shared with the teacher of record until after grades had been submitted. Additionally, we used PSTs’ reflective assignments, completed by all class members, as our data source, analyzing only the assignments of PSTs who granted consent. PSTs’ reflective documents were an appropriate data source for our research questions as we were interested in how PSTs expressed understandings of educating for equity rather than in how they enacted it. The interpretations, language, and omissions in their reflections allowed us to observe their understandings of their developing equity literacy without creating a burden on their time.

Our data sources include both individual and group reflections, completed at different stages during the project:

- 17 individual, written pre-teaching reflections
- 17 individual post-teaching reflections, either written or via Flipgrid video
- 9 group public reflections, either blog post or bulletin board

Although our choice to pursue analyses of data provided by PST reflections might be considered a limitation, it reflects our focus on their expression of their understandings and reflections, rather than their behavioral changes. The reflections asked PSTs to engage in textual, video, and visual modalities and included a variety of authorship stances (individual, group) and audiences (teacher, education building, world). This allowed us to see if modality, authorship stance, and audience impacted the ways PSTs expressed their understandings of equity literacy.

Data Analysis

As a research team, we engaged in an inductive analysis as described by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014). Each team member engaged in an initial read-through of data in temporal order (individual pre-reflection, individual post-reflection, and group public post-reflection) to develop emic codes (Maxwell, 2013). Exploring the data over time gave us insight into PSTs’ changing perceptions of enacting social justice curricula with young children. Coding was an

iterative process that occurred over the course of 14 research team meetings. During these meetings, we worked through the data by discussing similarities and differences across all the reflections. Codes were simple and taken from the participants' words as much as possible, so as to refrain from making conceptual leaps at the initial stage of analysis.

From the codes, we derived five themes (understandings of what teachers do; engagement; behavior management; fear of the unexpected or unknown; discomfort with and avoidance of difficult conversations). Using the five themes, we re-read the data, critiquing and revising definitions of the themes to best reflect the data. For example, we defined the theme "discomfort with and avoidance of difficult conversations" as "the uneasiness PSTs felt during discussions of injustice and oppression. PSTs referenced silence from the students as well as the omission of questions and comments they had thought about raising but chose not to because of their own discomfort." Each research team member then re-read the full body of data individually, using the codes, themes, and definitions we had created. Of our five themes, two intersected with social justice, which we discuss in this paper. See Table 1 for examples of codes and definitions of those two themes.

Table 1
Visual Representation of Data

Example codes representative of the theme	Theme	Defining the theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responding to unexpected comments ● Not knowing how to respond ● Nervous ● Don't know what to expect ● Managing the unexpected 	Fear of the unexpected or unknown	Fear of the unexpected or unknown describes PSTs efforts to manage or deal with the unforeseen in teaching situations. This includes apprehension prior to teaching, and the growing acceptance of teaching as a process that necessarily includes some unexpected circumstances, responses, and outcomes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wanting to avoid harm ● Don't discomfort the children ● Becoming emotional or distraught ● Feeling awkward and uncomfortable ● Playing it safe 	Discomfort with and avoidance of difficult conversations	Discomfort with and avoidance of difficult conversations is the uneasiness PSTs felt during discussions of injustice and oppression. PSTs referenced silence from the students as well as the omission of questions and comments they had thought about raising but chose not to because of their own discomfort.

We sought dialogic trustworthiness as described by Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen (2007), who note that bias and subjectivity impact research on our classrooms due to practitioners' closeness to the subject matter. They observe that, "The key is that these experiences and beliefs need to be critically examined rather than ignored" (p.43). To critically examine our experiences and beliefs, we partnered as a research team that included the teacher of record and two researchers familiar with, yet removed from, the setting (Mills, 2003). We engaged in many meetings of peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which helped us to uncover our perspectives and assumptions about the data. Peer debriefing also provided us the opportunity to identify confirming and disconfirming evidence within the larger themes we created.

Findings

We identified five broad themes (listed above) from the data. In this paper, we focus on the two themes most closely related to the goal of developing equity literacy: fear of the unexpected or unknown, and discomfort with and avoidance of difficult conversations.

In course meetings, PSTs worked to identify indicators of oppression and planned for constructive conversations on these topics in the context of "facilitative texts" (Howard & Ticknor, 2019). However, even in the context of intentional content learning and careful planning, the most dominant themes in PSTs' reflections - both before and after teaching - were fear of the unknown and discomfort with (and avoidance of) difficult or uncomfortable encounters with students. This took several forms.

Fear of the Unexpected or Unknown

Consistent with research on beginning teachers (E. Corcoran, personal communication, 1998; Joseph & Heading, 2010; Wharton-McDonald, 2008), PSTs were often apprehensive about encountering unexpected situations or responses in their teaching. They had not yet developed the flexibility - the ability to think on their feet - associated with more experienced, expert teachers. For some, this fear of the unexpected focused on general behavior, as captured by Yvette³, the English Teaching major who worried, "What should we do if some children cry or refuse to join the activity?" Several PSTs expressed apprehension related to their

³ All PST names are pseudonyms and all language in quotations has been preserved in participants' original language, including grammar and spelling.

unfamiliarity with the developmental characteristics of young children. Beth, for example, described her planning process as, “. . . a challenge to envision what the kids would be capable of for the art portion of the project.”

In many cases, the PSTs' fear of the unknown centered specifically on managing discussions about social justice topics. Reflecting on her group's planned discussion of the book *Sparkle Boy* (Newman, 2017), Beth captured this theme when she said, “I think the hardest part about implementing the lesson will be to respond to the unexpected comments or actions.” Jessica echoed these sentiments as she was planning for a discussion about *Mama's Nightingale* (Danticat, 2015), a book centered on a mother's illegal detainment by ICE: “. . . I am worried about the unpredictability of a child saying something that I'm not prepared for or that I do not have the language to respond with.” After she had taught the lesson, Beth again identified fear of the unknown as the most salient obstacle in her preparation: “. . . the biggest challenge [in planning] was the unknown. Not knowing how the children will respond to our questions makes it tough to know what to ask them.”

For most PSTs, this was their first experience planning and teaching, and they were uncomfortable with the unpredictability of student behavior and engagement. Novice thinking across fields, and particularly in teacher development, is generally less flexible - less opportunistic - than that of experts (Berliner, 2001; Gagne, 1988; Li, 2017). While these fears dominated the pre-teaching reflections, many of the same PSTs also acknowledged at the end of the semester that teaching necessarily involves the unexpected, and they described an increasing acceptance of or comfort with this. In her post-teaching reflection, Beth expressed acceptance of the unexpected, writing, “. . . I realized that there is no way to predict what will really happen from what actually happens.” Jane, another PST, expressed a growing comfort with the unexpected, writing, “From this experience I learned that it does not always go as planned. I also learned that you just have to go with the flow and expect that changed will be made throughout the process.”

In addition to fears of unexpected student questions, PSTs also described fear of the unknown specific to the themes of social justice they were planning to explore with their students. Jessica reflected, “I personally have never witnessed a classroom when it gets into an issue like detainment or even slavery, so I am nervous because I don't know what to expect.” During the planning phase, Mary wrote that, “I think the hardest part of implementing the lesson is going to be explaining the definition of immigration and why the United States is strict about making immigrants have the correct documents in order to live here.”

Participants often expressed a fear of the unknown in relationship to *harming* the children in the context of exploring equity. In her planning reflections, Rebecca wrote, “I’m not sure if some students will be able to conceptualize this without becoming too emotional or distraught.” Rebecca’s thinking reflects a common stance among members of privileged groups (e.g., white, able-bodied, US-born) that children are too young to talk about social justice topics. Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) note that this stance is often generated from internalized beliefs that they, themselves, exist outside of race and diversity, and because they are not forced to consider their racial, physical, or citizenship status as they proceed through life, they assume that being forced to consider these concepts might, in fact, be harmful to children.

Discomfort with and Avoidance of Difficult Conversations

Boler and Zembylas (2003) note that a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999) demands emotional labor and is thus often avoided. We observed many instances of this response as our PSTs navigated their discussions of social justice with children. In some cases, PSTs seemed to be motivated by the need to minimize their own discomfort; in other cases, they seemed to want to minimize what they anticipated to be children’s discomfort (and thereby, their own). While there may well have been instances of sanitizing or censorship that took place on an unconscious level, we observed many cases in which it took place as the result of a deliberate consideration of the topics and students. In the comment below, Jessica acknowledged both her responsibility to address a difficult topic (the reality of U.S. immigration practices) and her apprehension about doing so:

More specifically, I am worried about *Mama’s Nightingale* (Danticat, 2015) because the book addresses the issue of detainment which is something very recent and controversial. It means that we have to confront the reality that immigration is not always pretty which is something most teachers tend to avoid.

Jessica accurately acknowledges the common classroom practice we were trying to disrupt: avoiding difficult conversations by simple omission.

Although some PSTs, like Jessica, recognized and planned for discussions about difficult topics (e.g., the reality of U.S. immigration policies for families), most were not yet ready to bring those discussions to life. In the moment of teaching, most left oppression out of the discussion. Reflecting on his experience with the book, *We Came to America* (Ringgold, 2016), Jonathan described his preparation and teaching in this way:

. . . So I selected a few of the other pages. One in particular depicted slaves in chains. I thought of questions concerning slavery and then I chickened

out. I decided not to mention the slaves, to gloss over the silver-gray chains. I asked a different question. One concerning different immigrants, I asked about who came before, I asked about who was already here. The responses didn't carry the theme, they weren't relevant. . . and then, on the day of [the read-aloud], I cut the page completely from the discussion. I was afraid of the answers the children would give to an admitted blatant misdirection on my part and left out an important element of the book's narrative. I felt I was playing it safe, I was playing it wrong... I asked questions about other pages, I asked questions about other pictures, but the picture of slaves and chains deserved a discussion... I sanitized, I removed an important contextual element. I can look back now and see what I did, how I failed to allow a full exploration, a more complete understanding. The children came for an interactive reading concerning immigration but I was the one learning a lesson, a lesson about the importance of overcoming difficult questions, of posing such questions with an eye toward historical honesty and contextual relevance.

Even after careful planning, Jonathan was unable – in the moment – to risk the discomfort of discussing slavery with young children. His reflection - that he “failed to allow a full exploration, a more complete understanding” - recognizes the omission as a teaching failure, and he seems prepared to embrace the discomfort in the future.

Another PST, planning an interactive read-aloud with the book, *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2015), explained her group's avoidance of what they anticipated to be a difficult conversation about segregation in this way:

For example, at the end of the book, we wanted to ask them if things are fair now, this caused some problems because this question could bring up very controversial topics. It requires the children to understand racism and how although things have improved from how they used to be, it is still not fair today. To address this problem, we decided to change the question to ask them how they can work to make things fair today (Irene).

Thus, rather than engage in a potentially difficult conversation about *systemic* racism – past and present – the PSTs avoided the topic before them (and the “problem” posed by that conversation) and instead chose to focus the discussion on children's *individual* actions to help with the much more general (safer) concept of “fairness” in their lives. Not surprisingly, this rather vague question led to limited discussion among the children (See Hambacher, Silva & Morelli, 2020, for an extended reflection on the discussion).

Discussion and Next Steps

As agents of societal change, schools play a critical role in fostering social justice and abolishing racism and other forms of oppression. If we are to move toward a culture of equity, teachers must be active participants - what Garza (2018) and Love (2019) refer to as co-conspirators - in the process. Recent events and renewed attention to the disparities in opportunities, resources, and the very value of minoritized groups highlight the enduring *lack* of social justice in American society and the urgency to address this call. Much of this work in teacher education programs has taken place in urban settings where PSTs are preparing to teach racially and ethnically diverse students. Less attention has been paid to the preparation of teachers who are white and will go on to teach in schools with predominantly white populations.

As we reflect on our practice to inform future iterations of teacher preparation, we ask ourselves, how can we, as teacher educators, improve our work in helping PSTs to develop their equity literacy? Our data support the understanding that the kind of teaching needed to prioritize social justice principles and promote equity literacy is hard work. And it is not only PSTs who find it difficult to enact social justice in the classroom; experienced teachers and teacher educators also struggle to engage directly in discussions of oppression, systematic racism, and inequity. With reference to practicing teachers, Kavanagh (2018) notes that “the work of teaching for social justice is a fine-grained, everyday occurrence. It occurs within the quick choices a teacher makes following an unexpected student comment . . .” (p. 158). For our PSTs, this challenge was compounded by a fear of the unknown and the limited flexibility that characterizes many beginning educators.

Our PSTs’ reflections, as exemplified by Beth, who repeatedly noted the challenge of not being able to anticipate students’ responses to discussion of social justice, made visible that the fear of the unknown is a characteristic of developing flexibility with teaching social justice topics, and as teacher educators, we can adjust our instruction to address this characteristic more explicitly. The PSTs’ lack of mental models for what social justice-themed discussions could actually look like was apparent in their reflections, as, for example, with Jessica and Mary who observed that they didn't have language around social justice topics that they felt was appropriate for children. Without a mental model, PSTs had difficulty transforming their ideas and plans into meaningful discussions. In future iterations of this project, we will plan for more opportunities to frame discussions and develop the language they will use to address social justice and equity with young children. One possible modification for future iterations of this project would be including Gorski and Pothini’s (2014) equity literacy case analysis approach as part of the

PSTs planning process. By considering cases that might take place during Book to Art, our PSTs might be better prepared to react in the moment.

Venturing into difficult conversations with children is intimidating for PSTs, perhaps more so today, in our highly polarized society, than ever before. As demonstrated by Rebecca, who worried that talk about social justice topics would cause children to become too emotional or distraught, some PSTs feared upsetting students or creating discomfort for anyone in the room. Like our PSTs, teacher educators also tend to teach in ways that keep discomfort to a minimum. Scholars have argued for “safe spaces” (Holley & Steiner, 2005; Kay, 2019) where participants can express themselves and pose critical questions, presumably without risk. However, given the enormity of the task at hand, it seems likely that avoiding risk is simply not possible for our white students of privilege, and never was possible for our students from marginalized groups. Arao and Clemens (2013) argue that the avoidance of risk, as promised by the concept of “safe spaces,” is not an “appropriate or reasonable expectation for any honest dialogue about social justice” (p. 139). Rather, the expectation of safety represents the privilege of those whose safety is rarely in question; it is an expectation *not* afforded to most members of minoritized communities. In lieu of safe spaces, Arao and Clemens propose brave spaces: environments where participants learn to embrace vulnerability and exposure, leaning into *bravery*, rather than safety (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Boostrom, 1998). This inquiry has taught us that our PSTs need more experiences operating within brave spaces - where they learn to embrace the discomfort that necessarily accompanies a plan to dismantle injustice and oppression. This is hard work - it demands not only the ideational work of an ally, but the courage of a co-conspirator. In any future iteration of this project, we plan to open the course by asking PSTs to interrogate the concept of brave spaces, incorporating reflection on how we are constructing our seminar community as a brave space throughout the semester, so that our PSTs will be able to sustain them in their classrooms in the future.

Through their reflections, our PSTs also demonstrated the ongoing nature of developing one’s social justice understanding. Bettina Love explains that in the pursuit of antiracism and equity, “a coconspirator functions as a verb, not a noun (Love, 2019, p. 117).” As such, this work demonstrated how PSTs’ equity literacy might grow and change over the course of a semester, but for PSTs to take on a stance of lifelong becoming requires preparation for equity literacy throughout all aspects of a teacher preparation program. To accomplish this, teacher educators can design programs that intentionally provide multiple opportunities - distributed across time and setting - for PSTs to develop their equity literacy and reflect upon that process.

This project directs our attention to future areas of inquiry. How do teacher educators provide multiple opportunities for PSTs to develop mental models that help them to engage in justice-oriented discussions with young children? Research on how teacher educators create brave spaces for discussions about injustice is necessary in preparing PSTs to become agents of change by transforming inequitable structures and policies in schools and society. Our efforts as critical teacher educators remind us of the importance of always wondering, questioning, and engaging as we take a stance of lifelong becoming in relationship to social justice.

References

- Adichie, C. N. (2009, July). *The danger of a single story* [Video]. TED. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
- Agarwal, R., Epstein, S., Oppenheim, R., Oyler, C., & Sonu, D. (2010). From ideal to practice and back again: Beginning teachers teaching for social justice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(3), 237-247.
- Anderson, G., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research*. Corwin Press.
- Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. In L. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators* (pp. 135–150). Stylus.
- Ayers, W. (2009). Teaching for democracy. *DePaul Journal for Social Justice, 3*(1), 1-8.
- Barrentine, S. J. (1996). Engaging with Reading through Interactive Read-Alouds. *The Reading Teacher, 50*(1), 36-43.
- Bartolomé, L. (2009). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. In A. Darder, M. P. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (2nd ed.) (pp. 338-355). New York: Routledge.
- Berliner, D. C. (2001). Learning about and learning from expert teachers. *International Journal of Educational Research, 35*(5), 463-482.
- Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Theorizing emotions and social control in education*. Routledge.
- Boler, M., & Zembylas, M. (2003). Discomforting truths: The emotional terrain of understanding difference. In P. P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social justice*. Routledge Falmer.
- Bondy, E., Beck, B., Curcio, R., & Schroeder, S. (2017). Dispositions for Critical Social Justice Teaching and Learning. *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis, 6*(3), 1.
- Boostrom, R. (1998). "Safe spaces": Reflections on an educational metaphor. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 30*(4), 397-408.
- The Brown Bookshelf. (n.d.). *About the Brown Bookshelf*. <https://thebrownbookshelf.com/>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (1991). Learning to teach against the grain. *Harvard Educational Review, 61*(3), 279-311.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Toward a theory of teacher education for social justice. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.). *Second*

- international handbook of educational change*, Springer International Handbooks of Education (pp. 445-467). Springer.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Barnatt, J., Lahann, R., Shakman, K., & Terrell, D. (2008). Teacher education for social justice: Critiquing the critiques. In W. Ayers, T. Quinn, & D. Stovall (Eds.) *Handbook of Social Justice in Education*. (pp.625—639). Taylor & Francis.
- Cowhey, M. (2006). *Black ants and Buddhists*. Stenhouse.
- Dana, N. F., Thomas, C., & Boynton, S. (2011). *Inquiry: A districtwide approach to staff and student learning*. Corwin Press.
<https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781483387505>
- Danticat, E. (2015). *Mama's nightingale: A story of immigration and separation*. Dial.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 181-194.
- Flores, T. T., Vlach, S. K., & Lammert, C. (2019). The role of children's literature in cultivating preservice teachers as transformative intellectuals: A literature review. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 51(2), 214-232.
- Fowler, C. (1994). Strong arts, strong schools. *Educational Leadership*, 52(3), 4-9.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Gagne, R. (1988). Some reflections on thinking skills. *Instructional Science*, 17, 387-390.
- Garza, A. (2016, September 7). *Ally or co-conspirator?: What it means to act #InSolidarity*. [Video]. Move to End Violence.
<https://movetoendviolence.org/blog/ally-co-conspirator-means-act-insolidarity/>
- Giroux, H. A. (1985). Teachers as transformative intellectuals. *Social Education*, 49(5), 376-79.
- Giroux, H., & McLaren, P. (1986). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3), 213-239.
- Gorski, P., & Pothini, S. (2014). *Case studies on diversity and social justice education*. Routledge.
- Gorski, P. & Swalwell, K. (2015). Equity literacy for all. *Educational Leadership*, 72(6), 34-40.
- Gorski, P. (2014, April 10). *Imagining equity literacy*. Learning for Justice.
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/imagining-equity-literacy>
- Grant, C. A. & Sleeter, C. (2007). *Doing multicultural education for achievement and equity*. Routledge.

- Haddix, M., & Price-Dennis, D. (2013). Urban fiction and multicultural literature as transformative tools for preparing English teachers for diverse classrooms. *English Education, 45*(3), 247-283.
- Hambacher, E., Silva, B., & Morelli, G. (2020). "There was complete silence": Reflections on teacher preparation for social justice education in a predominantly white community. *Multicultural Perspectives, 22*(4), 201-209.
- Holley, L. C., & Steiner, S. (2005). Safe space: Student perspectives on classroom environment. *Journal of Social Work Education, 41*(1), 49-64.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.
- Howard, C. M. & Ticknor, A. S. (2019). Affirming cultures, communities and experiences: Teaching for social justice in teacher education literacy courses. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 92*(1-2), 28-38.
- Howrey, S. T., & Whelan-Kim, K. (2009). Building cultural responsiveness in rural, preservice teachers using a multicultural children's literature project. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 30*(2), 123-137.
- Joseph, D. & Heading, M. (2010). Putting theory into practice: Moving from student identity to teacher identity. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 35*(3), 75-87.
- Kavanagh, S. S. (2018). Practicing resistance: Teacher responses to intergroup aggression in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 51*(2), 146-160.
- Kay, M. (2019). Demystifying the "safe space:" How to lead meaningful race conversations in the classroom. *American Educator, 43*, 31-34.
- Kumashiro, K. (2015). *Against common sense: Teaching and learning toward social justice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2007). Pushing past the achievement gap: An essay on the language of deficit. *The Journal of Negro Education, 76*(3), 316-323.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2015). Justice... just, justice. In *Lecture presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL*.
- Landa, M. S., & Stephens, G. (2017). Promoting cultural competence in preservice teacher education through children's literature: An exemplary case study. *Issues in Teacher Education, 26*(1), 53-71.
- Learning for Justice. (n.d). *Student texts*.
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts>
- Li, L. (2017). *Social interaction and teacher cognition*. Edinburgh University Press.

- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
- Lohfink, G. (2014). The impact of a school-university multicultural read-aloud project on preservice teachers' pedagogical understandings. *School-University Partnerships*, 7(2), 34-47.
- Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.
- Martin, A. D., & Spencer, T. (2020). Children's literature, culturally responsive teaching, and teacher identity: An action research inquiry in teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(4), 387-404.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Mills, G. E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (2nd ed.). Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Milner, H. R. (2010). What does teacher education have to do with teaching? Implications for diversity studies. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 118-131.
- Newman, L., & Mola, M. (2017). *Sparkle boy*. Lee & Low Books Incorporated.
- Reagan, E. M., Chen, C., & Vernikoff, L. (2016). "Teachers are works in progress": A mixed methods study of teaching residents' beliefs and articulations of teaching for social justice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 59(1), 213-227.
- Ringgold, F. (2016). *We came to America*. Knopf.
- Rojas, L., & Liou, D. D. (2018). Teaching for social justice: The promise of transformative expectations for urban Chicana/Latina youth. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 51(2), 161-181.
- Sato, M., & Lensmire, T. J. (2009). Poverty and Payne supporting teachers to work with children of poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(5), 365-370.
- Sensoy, O., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). *Is everyone really equal?: An introduction to key concepts in social justice education*. Teachers College Press.
- Swalwell, K. M. (2013). *Educating activist allies: Social justice pedagogy with the suburban and urban elite*. Routledge.
- Thomas, E. E. (2016). *Ebony Elizabeth Thomas picks the best books of 2016 for young readers*. Educator's Playbook. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook/ebony-elizabeth-thomas-picks-best-books-2016-young-readers>
- Thomas, E. E. (2017). *The best books of 2017 for young readers*. Educator's Playbook. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook/best-childrens-books-2017>

- Thomas, E. E. (2018). *The best books of 2018 for young readers*. Educator's Playbook. <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/Ebony-Elizabeth-Thomas-best-books-2018-young-readers>
- University of New Hampshire Education Department. (2020). *Professional Educator Preparation Program Self-Assessment Report*.
- Weiner, L. (2006). Challenging deficit thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), 42-45.
- Wharton-McDonald, R. (2008). The dynamics of flexibility in effective literacy teaching. In K.Cartwright (Ed.), *Literacy Processes: Cognitive Flexibility in Learning and Teaching* (pp. 342-357). Guilford Press.
- Woodson, J. (2001). *The other side*. Penguin.
- Zeichner, K. (2009). *Teacher education and the struggle for justice*. Routledge.

Appendix A

Social Justice-themed Picture Books Initially Presented to PSTs in Cycle 1

Book Title	Author	Publication Year
<i>Last Stop on Market Street*</i>	Matt de la Peña	2015
<i>Benny Doesn't Like to be Hugged*</i>	Zetta Elliot	2017
<i>I Dissent</i>	Debbie Levy	2016
<i>Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909</i>	Michelle Markel	2013
<i>These Hands*</i>	Margaret H. Mason	2015
<i>Sparkle Boy*</i>	Leslea Newman	2017
<i>A Different Pond*</i>	Bao Phi	2017
<i>Separate is Never Equal</i>	Duncan Tonatiuh	2013
<i>Freedom Summer</i>	Deborah Wiles	2005
<i>The Other Side*</i>	Jaqueline Woodson	2001

*Books selected for use in the afterschool book program

Appendix B

Immigration-themed Picture Books Initially Presented to PSTs in Cycle 2

Book Title	Author	Publication Year
<i>Two White Rabbits</i>	Jairo Buitrago	2015
<i>How Many Days to America?</i>	Eve Bunting	1990
<i>One Green Apple</i>	Eve Bunting	2006
<i>The Name Jar</i>	Yangsook Choi	2003
<i>Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation*</i>	Edwidge Danticat	2015
<i>My Beautiful Birds</i>	Suzanne Del Rizzo	2017
<i>Island Born</i>	Junot Diaz	2010
<i>The Seeds of Friendship</i>	Michael Foreman	2015
<i>My Two Blankets</i>	Irena Kobald	2015
<i>Lost and Found Cat</i>	Doug Kuntz	2017
<i>Lubna and Pebble</i>	Wendy Meddour	2019
<i>Dreamers</i>	Yuyi Morales	2018
<i>My Diary from Here to There</i>	Amanda Irma Perez	2009
<i>My Name is Yoon</i>	Helen Recorvits	2014
<i>We Came to America*</i>	Faith Ringgold	2016
<i>Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey</i>	Margrit Ruurs	2016
<i>The Journey</i>	Francesca Sanna	2016
<i>Grandfather's Journey</i>	Allen Say	2008
<i>The Quiet Place</i>	Sarah Stewart	2012
<i>My Name is Sangoel*</i>	Karen Williams & Khadra Mohammed	2009

*Books selected for use in the afterschool book program