Building the culturally and academically relevant classroom library: How to organize, what to select, where to look

Dr. Jane Fleming, Erikson Institute
Dr. Susan Catapano, University of North Carolina-Wilmington
November 21, 2009
Session Overview

- The importance of building a high-quality, culturally relevant collection
- Selecting high quality urban and multicultural children’s literature
- Organizing, managing, and maintaining the classroom library
Selecting high quality multicultural children’s literature

What do we know?
Brainstorm titles list – Realistic Fiction

| picture books with characters of color | picture books with city settings |
The well-stocked library

- Range of text types (narrative, expository, environmental)
- Range of formats (big books, picture books, wordless books, collections, class-made)
- Range of genres (concept books, realistic fiction, traditional tales, fantasy, poetry, information, etc.)
- Range of books appropriate for children at different levels of emergent/beginning literacy
- Range of selections reflecting the lives and experiences of children in our classrooms
What’s so important about familiar texts?

- Emergent literacy skills/oral language and literacy
  - Concepts about print
  - Relating speech to print
- Familiar schema for story comprehension
- Maintaining interest and motivation
- Seeing self, family, community represented and valued
- Authors and illustrators like me
Characteristics of high quality picture books: Realistic fiction

General characteristics
  Cover
  Character
  Plot
  Theme
  Language
  Illustrations

Urban-specific characteristics
  Accuracy of characters
  Familiar Context
  Familiar Language
  Authentic Urban Scenery
  Diversity of Characterization
  Diversity of Setting

(see handout for details)
Urban Children’s Literature

**Urban-specific characteristics**
- Accuracy of characters
- Familiar Context
- Familiar Language
- Authentic Urban Scenery
- Diversity of Characterization
- Diversity of Setting
Accuracy of characters

but I don’t know exactly what they mean.
“What does ‘brave’ mean, Daddy?” I ask.
“It just means that you’re not afraid,” Daddy says.
When we sit down, I practice being brave.
Familiar Context
Familiar Language

Abuela
by Arthur Dorros
illustrated by Elisa Kleven
Today we’re going to the park.
“El parque es lindo,” says Abuela.
I know what she means.
I think the park is beautiful too.
Authentic Urban Scenery

BLACK CAT

BY CHRISTOPHER MYER
crossing basketball courts and no-netted hoops
past the school,

Then they left.
Diversity of Characterization
Diversity of Setting

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL
Sharon Dennis Wyeth  Illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet
Selected Picture Book Recommendations – Realistic Fiction, Concept Books, Poetry

www.kidslikeus.org
Realistic Fiction

Jan Wahl
Candy Shop
Illustrated by Nicole Wong

ALEXIS O’NEILL
Estela’s Swap
Illustrated by ENRIQUE O. SANCHEZ

Quinito’s Neighborhood
El Vecindario de Quinito
Illustrations: JOSE RAMIREZ
Story/Cuento: INA CUMPiano

CT-NATION
WILLIAM LOW
Concept Books

- The City ABC Book by Zoran Milich
- City by Numbers by Stephen T. Johnson
- Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Price; Illustrations by B. Gregory Christie
Poetry

*Angels Ride Bikes*

*Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta*

*DeShawn Days*

*My Feet Are Laughing*
Featured authors

Nina Crews

Snowball

one hot summer day

NINA CREWS

The Neighborhood MOTHER GOOSE

Nina Crews
Featured Illustrators

HOT DAY

ABHOTT AVENUE
by Karen English
illustrated by Javaka Steptoe

THE JONES FAMILY EXPRESS

Javaka Steptoe
III. Building, organizing, and utilizing a high-quality classroom library

- Creating an inviting space
- Building a high-quality collection (where to get books)
- Organizing and labeling
- Management
- Check in/out systems
- Opening the classroom library
- Scheduling time
- Maintaining the library
- Generating interest – effective read alouds and book talks
Sharing ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating an inviting space</th>
<th>Building the collection: where to find books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating an inviting space

- Shelving, crates, bins in designated space
- Create comfortable space for 3-4 children
- Rug, pillows, other seating
- Stuffed animals, puppets, other props?
Comfortable space with soft items
Face forward, inviting displays
Where to get books?

- Books
- Furniture
- Other supplies
How many books?

- Minimum 10 per child (Fractor et al, 1993) in the collection
- You can have too many books
- Rotate books in and out
  - curriculum unit themes
  - student use
  - student growth
Less is more
Rotation bins
Organizing texts

- Create an appealing, inviting display
- Consider developmental level
- Sort out appropriate reading/viewing range
- Organize by
  - Format (big books, board books, picture books, wordless)
  - Topic/Type
- Complexity depends on developmental level
Book “gutter” for display
Labeling

- Developmentally appropriate labels
- Clip art and other visuals
- Label bins and books
- Key: the children know how books are displayed and why
Topic bins
Opening the library

- Observation first (organization, quality, etc.)
- Teach and practice the system (finding books of different types, check in/out, return and reshelving, etc.)
- Map or chart of library organization
- Selection strategy suggestions
Check in/out

Pros and cons
- traditional card pockets and catalog
- bulletin board with card/title holder
- reading log (title, author, topic)
- book place holders

Reshelving bin or placeholders
Book “hospital”

Suggestions
- make it easy
- goal is for children to use independently and responsibly
- use system that allows for monitoring selections
Tracking use

- Anecdotal observation
- Check-out log
- Conferencing around individual selections
- Sharing time (e.g., pick of the week)
Troubleshooting

- Practice makes perfect (guided and independent)
- Monitor the collection (assign jobs – reshelver, bin checker, etc.)
- Brainstorm remedies with the class
Hands On Activities with Multicultural Children’s Literature

Tan to Tamarind
Self-portraits

Isadora fairy tales/fables
Author study with paper cutting and collage

ABeCedarios/Opuestos
Dough animal carvings