



A Missing Link in Closing Reading Achievement Gaps: Transitional Chapter Book Series with Primary Characters of Color

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Session Agenda

1. Review the research base on the role short chapter book series play in young children's reading development
2. Present the results of research study on diversity in transitional chapter book series
3. Review recommended series with primary characters of color
4. Discuss implications and actions



transitional chapter book series

What do we know?

Brainstorm titles and authors

Who are transitional readers?

- ✓ Have decoding skills
- ✓ Can read with fluency
- ✓ Are beginning to handle longer text
- ✓ Are at a crucial time in their reading development



What's so important about short chapter book series?

Transitional chapter books can play a critical “make-or-break” role in reading development of primary grades students
(Graves and Liang, 2004).

Short chapter book series...

Spark students' interest and motivation for reading



Short chapter book series...

Build fluency and developing stamina for reading longer and more challenging texts



Short chapter book series...

Provide plot and context familiarity that lends itself to focusing comprehension on more subtle details, character motivations, and figurative meanings (Roser, Martinez, Fuhrken, & McDonnold, 2007; Truby, 2003).



Short chapter book series...

Can provide an important source of reading material for struggling readers and English Language Learners
(Ivey, 1999; Worthy, 1996; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez Pons, 1992)

Practice Makes Perfect



But are they high quality?

“Light” reading is OK.

Provides motivation for more reading

- Students who read books in series develop reading fluency and the linguistic competence necessary to read higher quality material (Feitelson and Goldstein, 1986).

Becomes a stepping stone to further reading

- Increased reading proficiency and fluency makes it possible for students to read more complex material. Students must take the first step of developing reading fluency before they can take the second step of becoming avid readers.

Importance of culturally relevant literature

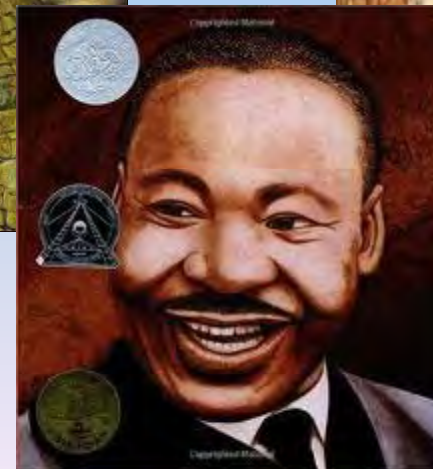
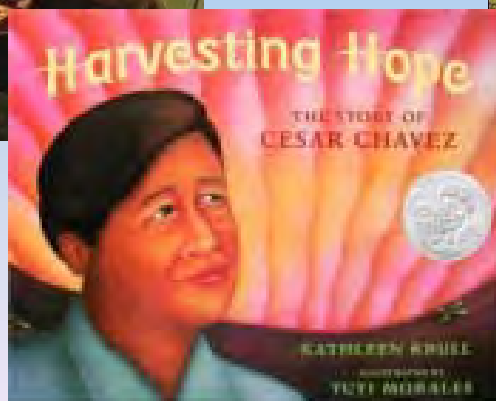
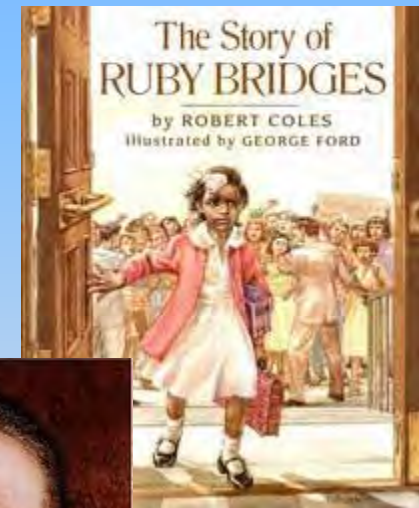
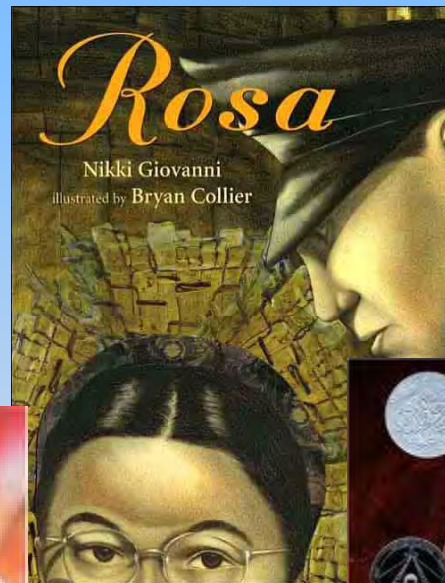
Books as a “mirror” and “window”

Inclusion in the conversations of schooling; Reading is about and for me (Sims Bishop, Nieto, Cummins, Shields)



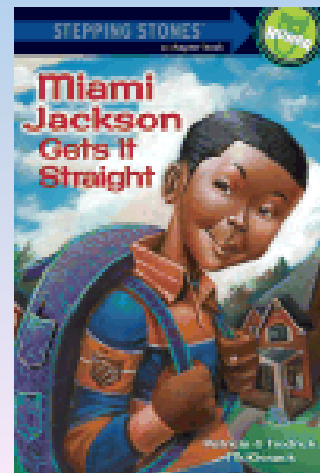
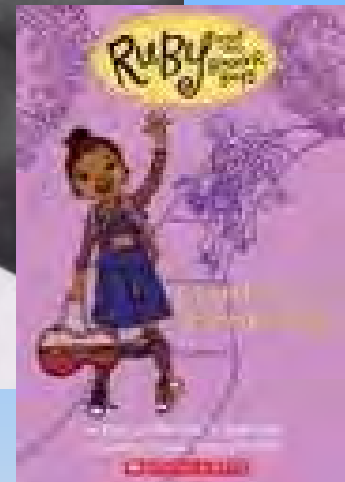
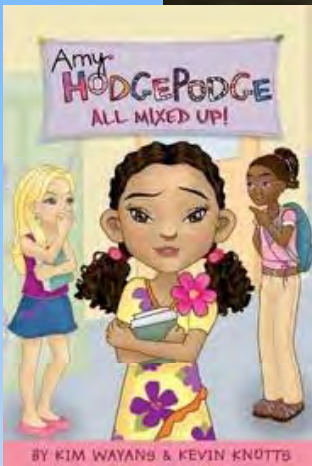
Importance of culturally relevant literature

- Getting beyond curricular segregation (e.g., M. Martin “everyday”)



Importance of culturally relevant literature

Seeing authors and illustrators like me;
imagining myself as an author or illustrator



Transitional chapter books defined

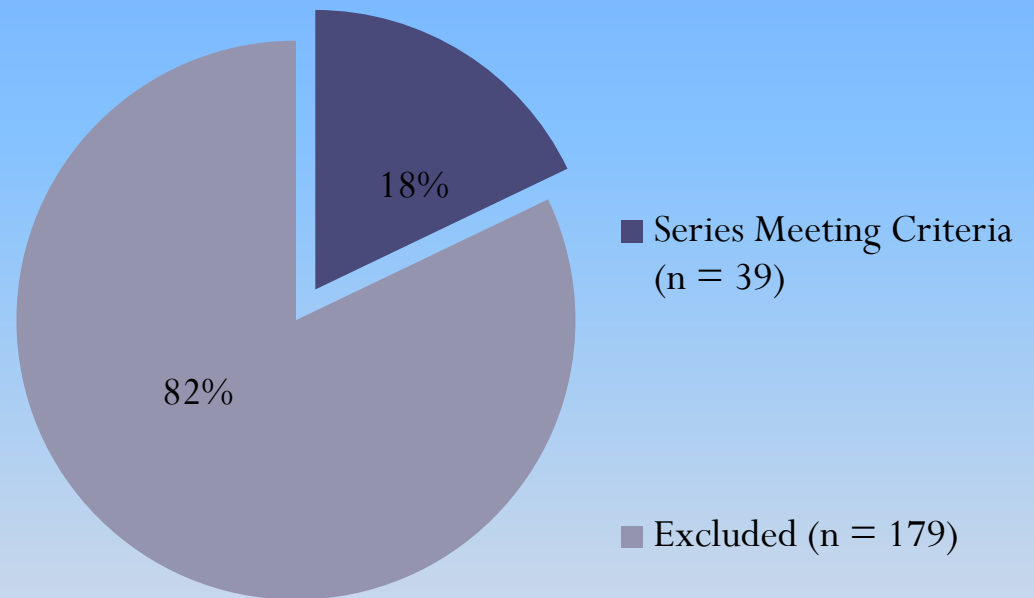
(Szymusiak, Sibberson, & Koch, 2008; Hughes-Hassell, Koehler, & Barkley, 2010)

Series that...

- * have familiar characters, settings, and plots that support comprehension
- * have short chapters that can be read in a single sitting
- * contain illustrations that support text
- * have certain features that assist readers, such as initial chapter(s) that provide explicit introductions to character and setting

Inclusion Criteria

1. Contemporary Realistic Fiction
2. Transitional chapter book (short, illustrated text)
3. At least 3 books in the series
4. Consistent primary character
5. Rdg level 2nd-4th; F&P J-P
6. Published in past 10 years



Representations of diversity in short chapter book series

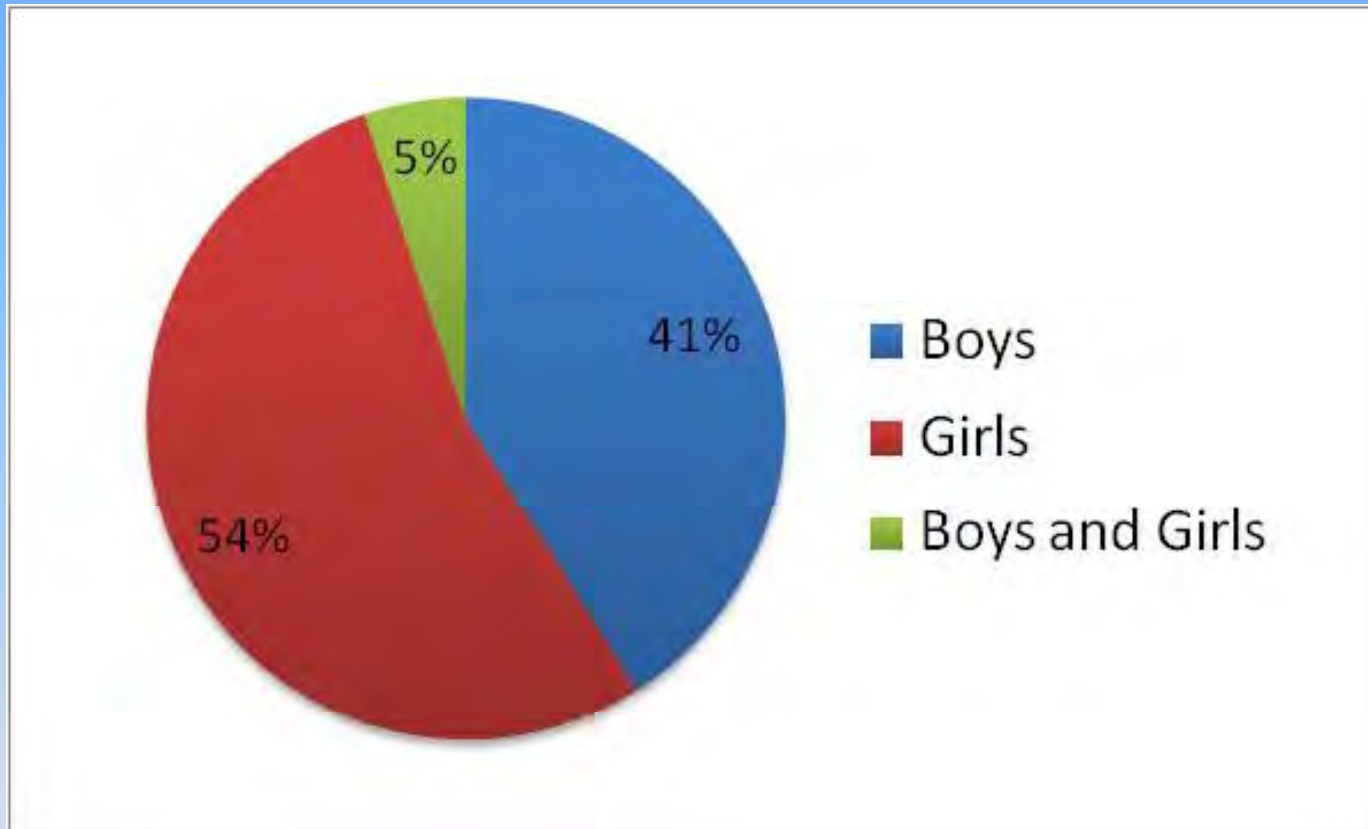
Gender

Race and Ethnicity

Family structure

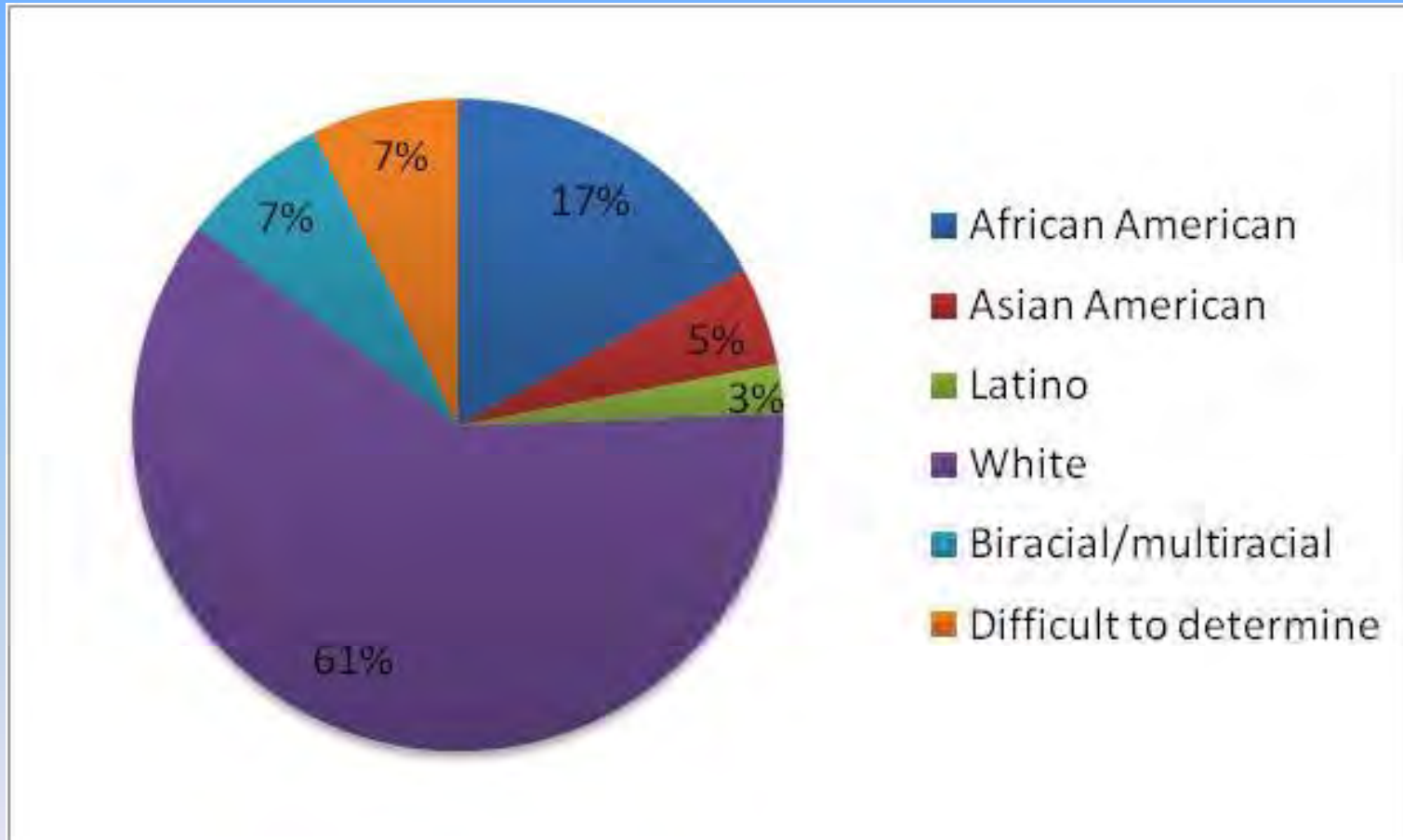
Perceived SES

Gender of Primary Character

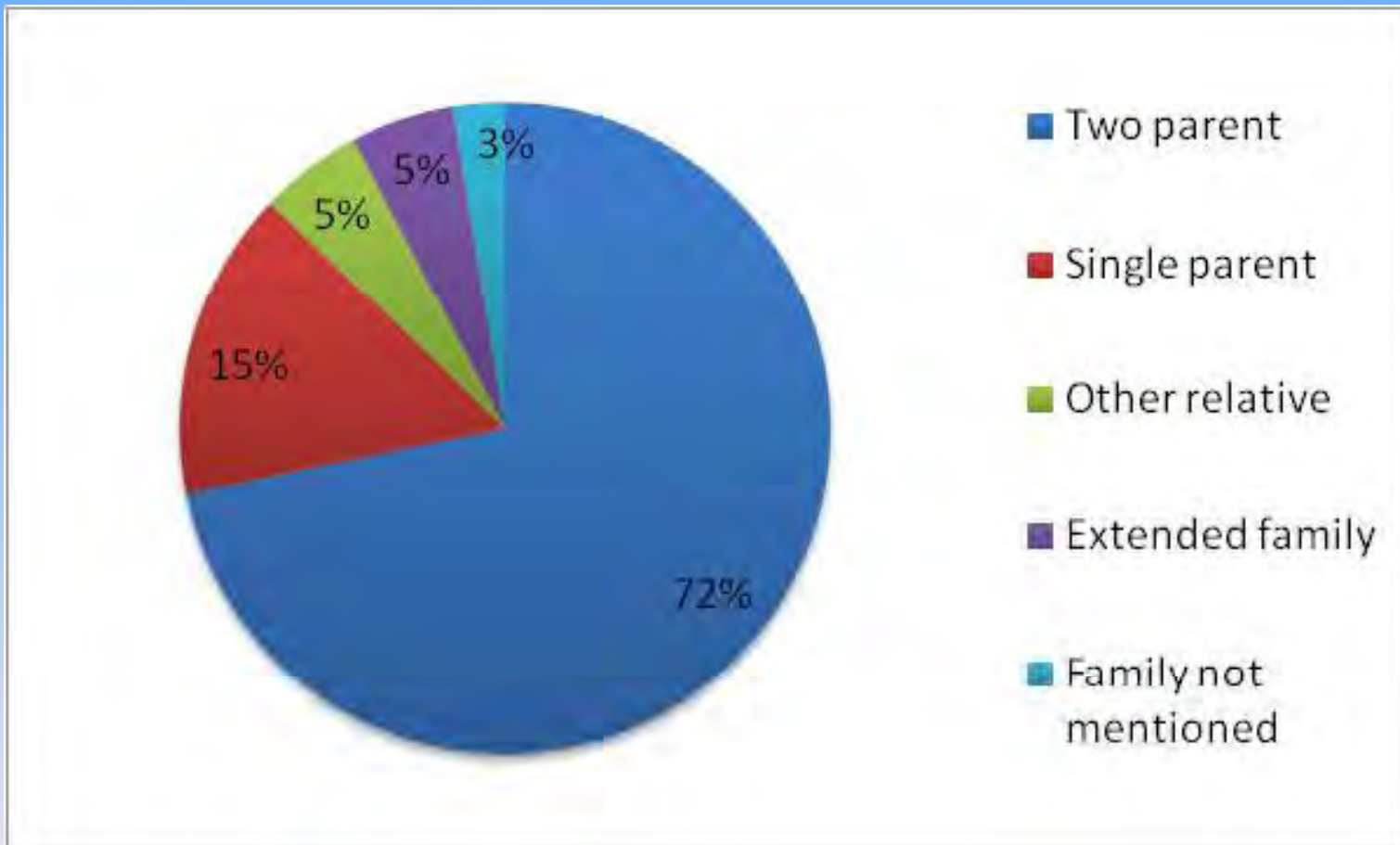


Race and ethnicity

Race of Primary Character



Family Structure



SES

Definitions from classmatters.org

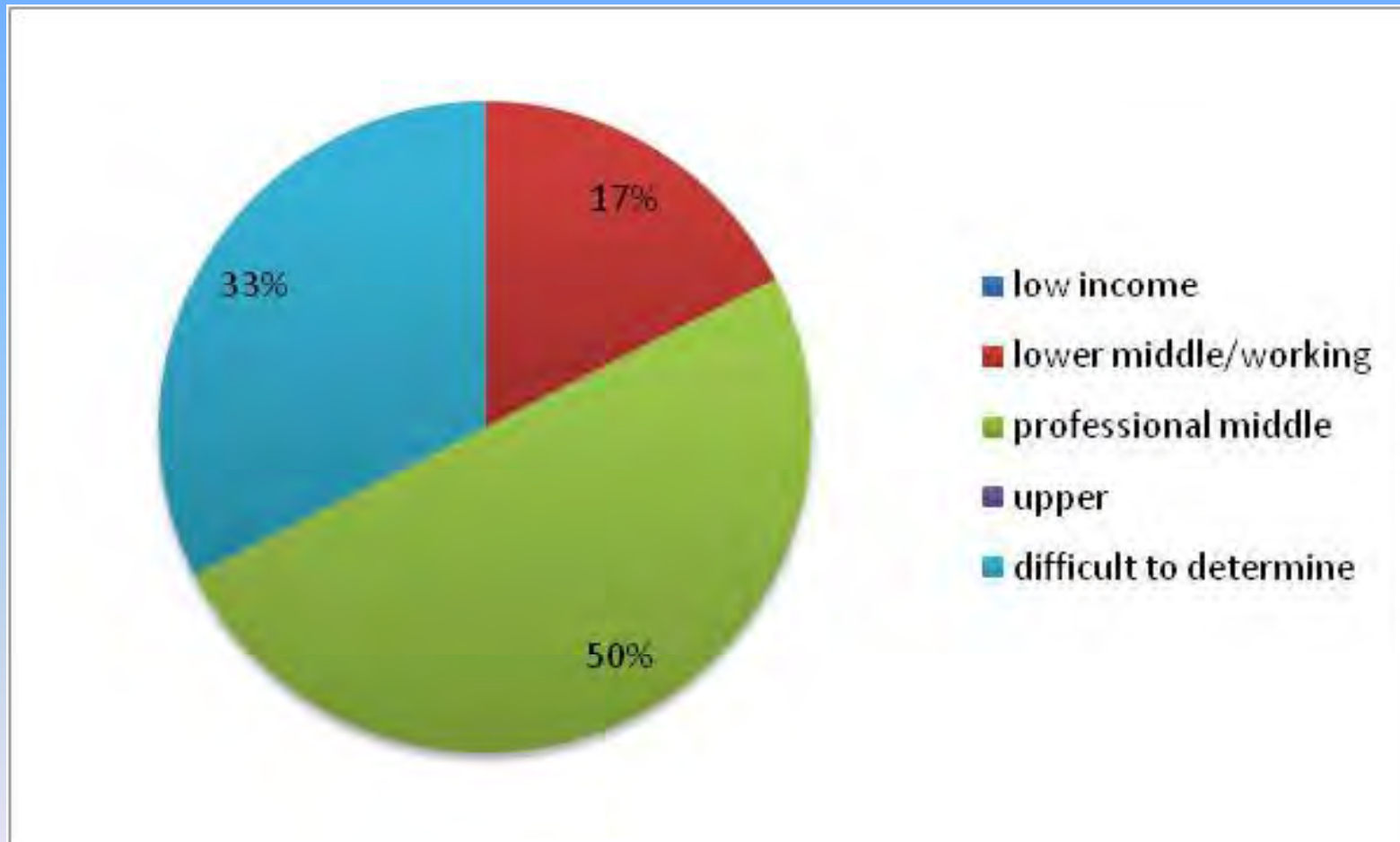
Low-income: Family shows signs of struggling to cover basic needs

Lower Middle: While these families are able to pay for necessities, they have little flexibility (ex: shift work) in the workplace and few assets.

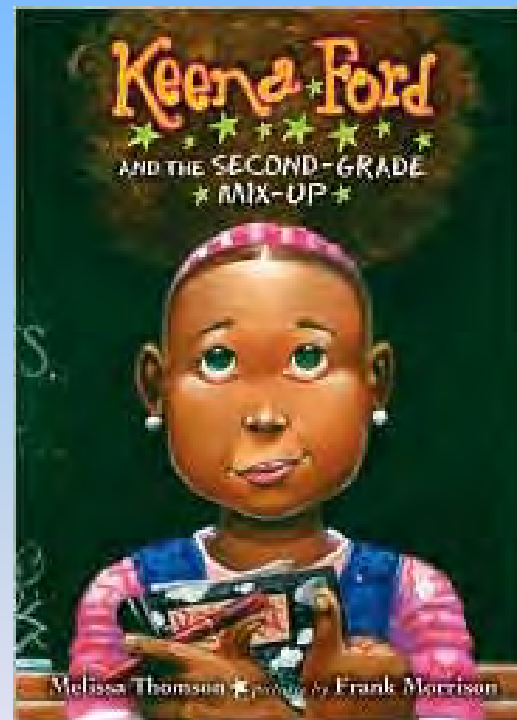
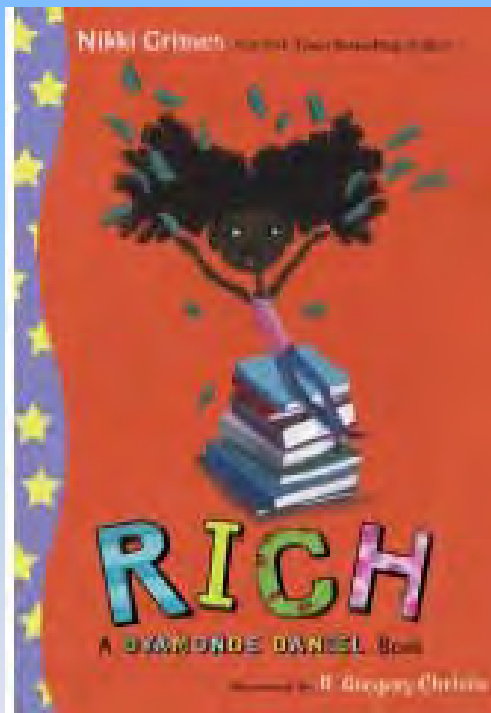
Professional Middle: Includes professions requiring college or professional school. These families have more control over work hours and are relatively financially secure.

Upper Class: Family has enough income and assets that family members do not need to work to pay for basic necessities.

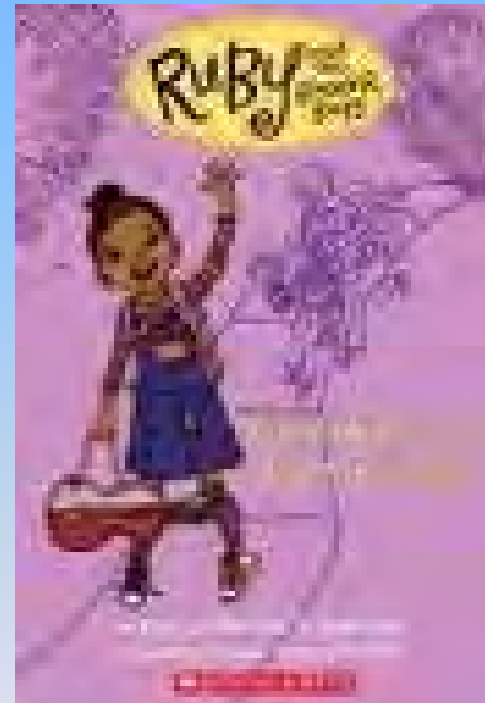
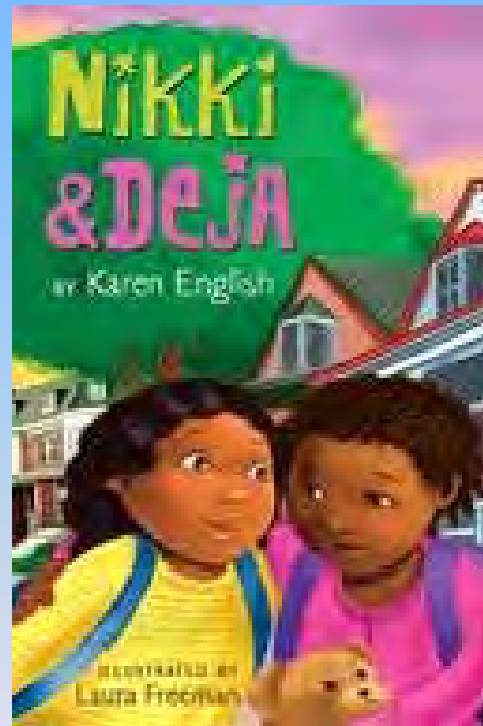
Socioeconomic Status



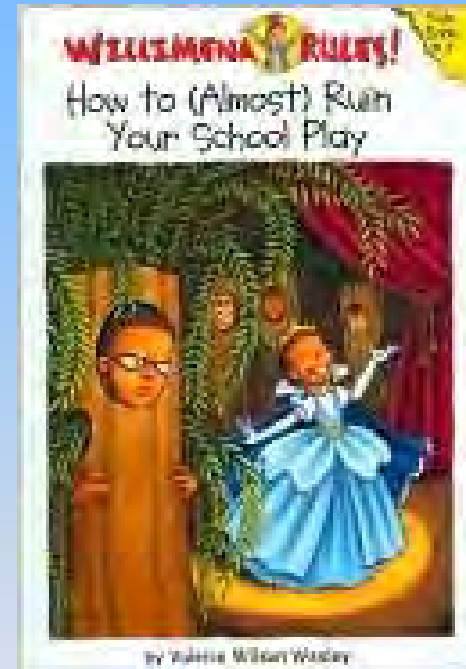
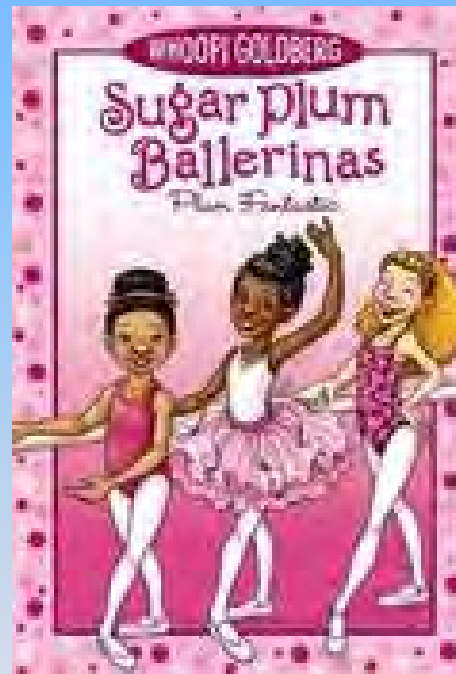
Short Chapter Book Series – African American Girls



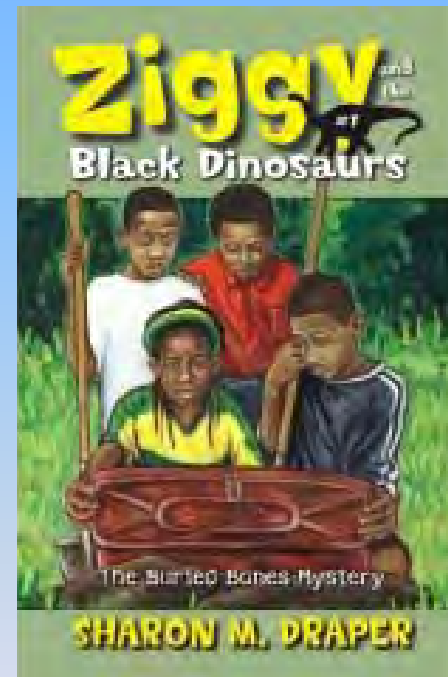
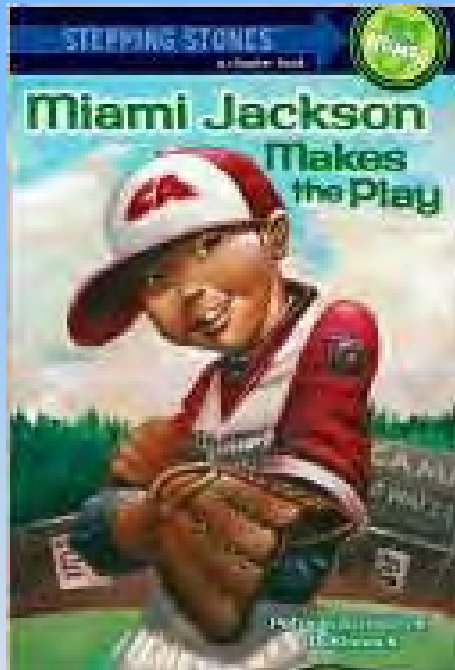
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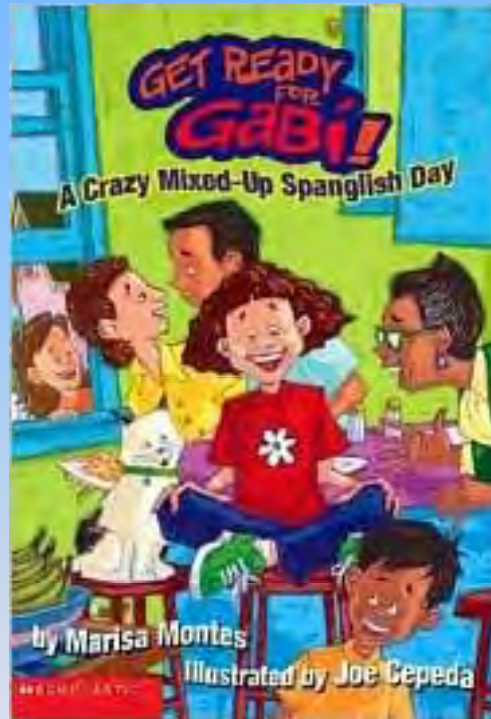
Short Chapter Book Series – African American Girls



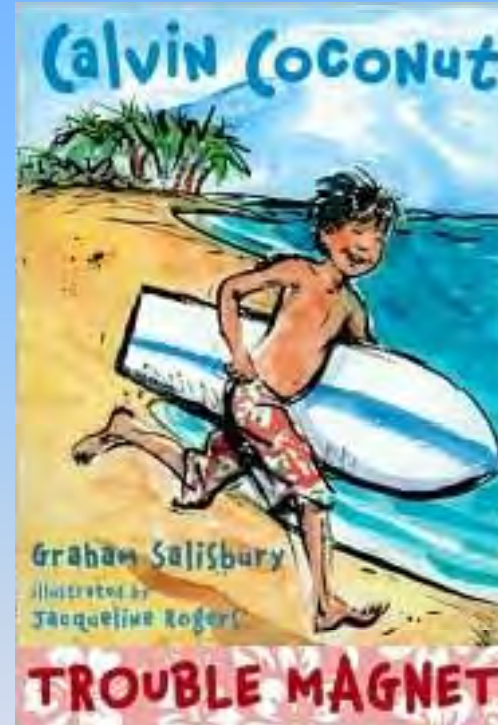
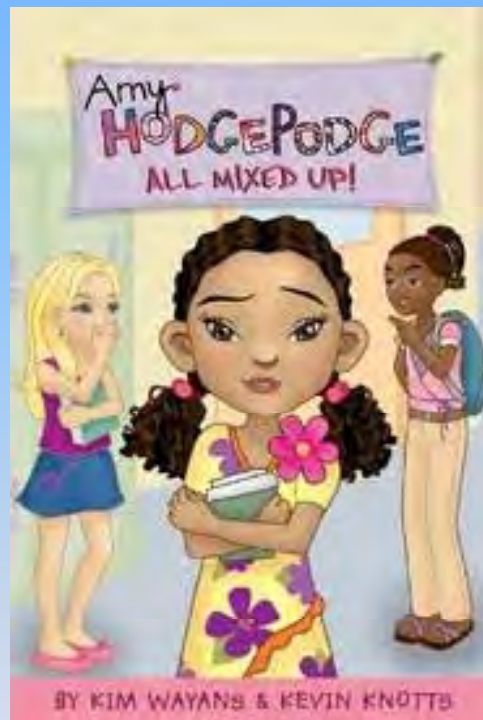
Short Chapter Book Series – African American Boys



Short Chapter Book Series – Latino characters



Short Chapter Book Series – Multiracial characters



Equity of Access

- How many books are in these series...
 - Boxcar Children?
 - Amelia Bedelia?
 - Magic School Bus?
 - My Weird School?
 - Junie B. Jones?
 - Willemena Rules?
 - Miami Jackson?
 - Claudia Cristina Cortez?
 - Alvin Ho?
 - Keena Ford?
- What impact might this have?

Overall Trends



- Limited diversity
- Striking absence of Latino, Asian American, Native American characters
- Few books in series with characters of color
- Many titles go out of print quickly

Ideas for Action (generated by the group)

- Share these titles with every elementary teacher you know.
- Provide the recommendation list to parents.
- Insist that your district's preferred distributor carry these titles.
- Raise heck at your local book stores.
- Produce research summary for publishing industry