

ACTION RESEARCH

**FIRST GRADE LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS:
TEACHING VALUING DIVERSITY
DURING A PANDEMIC**

Elizabeth Leslie, M.P.S. Candidate in Art Education

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Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd, Professor of Art Education & Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
(committee chair)



Dr. Aaron Knochel, Associate Professor of Art Education (major field member)



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Introduction to the Study

In this study, I focused on the inclusion of literature into a first-grade art curriculum toward the goal of teaching acceptance of difference and diversity. I typically introduce an art making activity by reading a story and showing the art in children's picture books. As I reviewed my library for my first-grade teaching, I found that all the authors are White, and the stories relate to their White experiences.

The purpose of the study was to identify picture books for my first-grade art class that would align with a general education learning module. My current art curriculum's lack of diversity portrayed in the literature may lead to students' lack of motivation to learn due to not identifying with the characters, the art, and storyline in a lesson. In my study, I examined my first-grade art curriculum implemented in Fall 2020 during a pandemic and introduced diversity perspectives. These perspectives center Black and people of color's experiences, including a more detailed look at the story as told by the images.

The pandemic added a layer of complexity to my study as it changed my schedule for the first time in four years. However, the schedule change provided a new opportunity to teach smaller classes in hybrid learning concurrently for 30 days in a row, rather than seeing each student once a week for the entire school year. This new situation allows my curriculum to be altered into a more congruent plan with students' English Language Arts curriculum (hereby referred to as ELA). My art curriculum can serve the needs of students in my classes by aligning with ELA lessons taught in other classrooms, while adding art making and emphasizing the value of difference. This opportunity for change will carry into all future teaching years, it was with this new schedule that I was given the opportunity to dig deep into my curriculum.

Problem Statement: My Art Curriculum Does Not Teach Toward Embracing Diversity

I teach art to kindergarten through sixth grade at an elementary school, but my first graders were my most difficult class. First grade is my last class of the day in an environment where the older kids are in the hallway packing up to go home, being loud, and generally distracting. I find that I give less effort at the end of the day to first grade than I do to other grades earlier in the day. Therefore, I chose first grade for my action research project. I have become more keenly aware during my graduate studies that my art curriculum does not teach toward diversity awareness, and to value the diversity of people in terms of race, ethnicity, and abilities, among other ways that diversity contributes to the richness of experiences and knowledge (Lo, 2019; Welch, 2016). There are many different types of diversity, and I hope to introduce as many as possible to first graders through the picture books I select in revising my art curriculum. Education diversity scholar Patreese Ingram (2001) states:

Diversity includes everyone because people differ from one another in many ways. In other words, there are many *dimensions of diversity*. The following are just a few dimensions of diversity: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Age, Physical and Mental Ability, Sexual Orientation, Language, Veteran Status, Religious Beliefs, Marital Status, Parental Status, Education, Income, Occupation, Geographical Location. (p. 4)

My goal is to revise my curriculum to teach through a selection of books, and facilitation of discussion and the making of art.

Throughout my action research project, I have identified readings that foster diversity awareness and the valuing diversity, and designed drawing lessons that teach the value of difference through selected books. In this study, I have critiqued my curriculum through a lens

of diversity, and designed a curriculum intended to foster my teaching goals of introducing young children to respect, embrace, and value difference while aligning my curriculum with ELA learning goals.

Background of the Study: Divisive Worldviews

The impetus for my study began due to the divisive worldviews that I and my students encounter in families, communities, news, and the rhetoric of the current highest level of the U.S. government in contrast to the Black Lives Matter movement. I believe that we as teachers have a unique opportunity to teach acceptance, inclusion, and diversity. Educators can hope to make diversity and acceptance a part of life that is recognizable and meaningful to a young child.

As an art teacher, I can contribute to teaching youth to value each other for their differences, and value themselves for their own differences. (See Appendix A for my annotated bibliography that has guided my curricular changes.) My action research goals are to prepare a curriculum for first graders that teach value and difference by the choices of literature I introduce to students to lay the foundation for art making activities.

Context of the Study: World of Books, My School's Required Module

I have conducted my study over the course of the first 60 days of school, which includes two cycles of art classes. The first cycle of 30 days was data gathering and experimenting with new books and projects I teach in my class. During the second 30 days, I kept a journal about my teaching using the new books I have adopted into the curriculum. The curriculum for first

grade ELA that we use at our school is *Wit and Wisdom* (Great Minds, 2020). The school district in which I teach changed the curriculum in 2018 from *Storytime*. The school district's curriculum director oversees all decisions made on behalf of curriculum changes in ELA. He meets with administrators, teams of teachers, and special education directors to gain feedback on curriculum before making decisions. However, he has not invited art teachers to contribute feedback. If art educators were a part of the conversation, we would have much to say about the type of books included in the ELA and art education curriculum. For example, I would fight to include diverse books in the curriculum, and to teach toward embracing diversity in all subjects, not just art and ELA.

The *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum follows four major modules of study throughout the school year. I have focused on Module 1 for first grade, which is called "World of Books." While classroom teachers are required to follow a list of authorized books, I as the art teacher can select which books to include in my curriculum.

The pandemic offers a new opportunity for smaller class sizes and more individualized learning. I have classes of 10-12 students instead of the typical size of 25-30 students that were in class in previous years. I now see students for 30 days in a row, rather than once a week for the entire school year. I am operating on a hybrid schedule of Monday, Tuesday group A, Wednesday virtual, Thursday, Friday, group B (see Table 1 below). This small class size allows me to connect with my students in a way that was exceedingly difficult in a larger class where I was teaching twice the number of students than I am now. In Fall 2020, I have a unique opportunity, due to the pandemic, to have small group interactions where we can talk with one another and be heard, unlike waiting to be called on in a class of 30 students.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A	Group A	Virtual Learning	Group B	Group B
Group B Virtual	Group B Virtual	Virtual Learning	Group A Virtual	Group A Virtual

Table 1. Virtual Learning Schedule

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to develop an art education curriculum that teaches to value diversity as an important perspective to hold throughout a student's life. According to Ingram (2001),

human beings are ethnocentric, seeing the world through their own narrow view and judging the world by their familiar yardstick. This is not bad, but it can be a source of conflict if other ways of being are not accommodated and valued. (p. 10)

Teaching students to value difference at a young age can help to lessen ethnocentric views as children grow up.

In Module 1 of *Wit and Wisdom* (Great Minds, 2020) curriculum, students read literature from around the world with goals of learning how books change the lives of children. With this study, I have changed my art curriculum to reflect these goals as well. I have introduced books that teach diversity and difference and ask questions that lead to greater

understanding of what works and does not work in my own curriculum toward goals of teaching respect and valuing of diversity.

Methodology

Often, I start my art class with a book, and then students draw a picture inspired by the illustrations in the book. This year, I started this study by introducing new books into the first-grade art curriculum that show diversity and value difference. Using these new books, my main research question is: How does my selection of books augment my art curriculum with the goal of valuing diversity and difference? Some sub questions that arise from my central question are:

1. How might my book selections coincide with the prescribed selections of the *Wit and Wisdom* Module 1 ELA curriculum and essential questions raised in that curriculum?
2. How does my book selection relate to the art lesson plans created for the various class periods?
3. How might I reflect on my previous curricular choices in light of my developing diversity awareness? What was successful before that does not work now? What works now that was not addressed before?

My diversity book list has come from my research for websites for elementary school educators on diversity picture books such as:

- *Multicultural Books for Kids: Ages 6-10* (Scholastic, 2020)
- *30 Days of Diverse Books for Kindergarten and First Grade* (Amazon Services, 2017)

- *30 Children's Books About Diversity That Celebrate Our Differences* (Ellis, 2018)

Within these websites, I have chosen 10 books (see Appendix B for the list of books selected) to develop in-class instruction, given that I meet with students in person 12 times during their art cycle. These books focus on diversity topics such as race, socio-economic status, gender, sexual identity, language, and culture. After selecting 10 books, I have carefully dissected their content to see what works for my new curricular goals, and what does not. I have added and deleted books from the list as I worked to decipher the quality of the material relating to diversity, art making relevance, and appropriate age level reading. In what follows, I provide the specific design of my study, which follows the action research cycle of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting (Keifer-Boyd, 2014).

Design of the Study: Planning, Implementing, Observing, and Reflection Phases

For the planning phase, I searched for quality books for first graders that address diversity and valuing difference. I used the first 30-day art cycle to experiment with diversity books chosen from the websites listed above, and other sources that I discovered in my research. I deleted some books that I found to be irrelevant or inapplicable to art education. Appendix C provides an overall timeline for my study.

After I narrowed my book selection from piloting with students in the first 30 days of school, I then implemented the teaching phase with the selected books (see Appendix B) in the second 30-day cycle with a new group of students. At the end of classes, I have observed my own thoughts on how the lessons compared to or coexisted with Module 1's educational goals. I have recorded thoughts on how essential questions are addressed in the lesson plan and

curriculum changes. Finally, I have observed changes to my curriculum based on new lesson plans compared to lessons taught in the past.

The final part of the plan is to reflect on all my data. My reflections include what was successful and what was not in my own teaching. I used Module 1 *Wit and Wisdom* (Great Minds, 2020) books to align ELA learning goals with my art education curriculum. I have also reflected on what curricular changes led to diversity addressed in art making experiences, and what did not. Observational notes led to conclusions through the lens of valuing diversity and difference on which lessons taught to respect and embrace diversity.

Role of the Researcher as Study Participant

As the teacher and curriculum designer, my researcher role is as a participant by researching and studying my own teaching methods and my own curriculum. I observed my own teaching methods, lesson plans, and methods of teaching to study what can be done to add diversity to my lesson plans in the first-grade curriculum. I have studied my own lessons and reflected on my curricular changes. The only study participant is me, in the role of teacher. I design my own curriculum and have examined and changed my curriculum and lesson plans throughout this study.

Limitations of Findings and Delimitations of the Study

There are many things that limit generalizing findings from the study. My goal is not to generalize findings but rather to study the particulars of my curriculum and teaching to improve toward my goals of diversity education. One limitation, which is a delimitation of the scope and

scale of this action research, is the time frame of a 30-day pilot study and 30-day implementation of a curriculum (see Appendix D), and to reflect on my findings.

I have very small classes this semester, therefore I do not know what to expect in the way of diversity in my own classroom. I am a White female art teacher; therefore, I possess my own set of biases that could affect my teaching students different from me. I have lived in the United State my entire life, and do not pretend to know everything there is to know about other cultures, or diversity. The study was a learning experience for me, one that I looked forward to in conducting action research about my own teaching practice.

Data Analysis

The data that I have collected is analyzed into sections below starting with the books that students read in ELA. This data was used to illustrate how the essential question in the prescribed ELA curriculum “How do books change lives around the world?” (Great Minds 2020) led me to my own set of focusing questions for each book I have chosen.

In the next section I provide a synopsis of my selection of new books I have chosen for my first-grade art classroom. Following the synopsis of each book, I describe the corresponding art project I taught, and discussion questions for students to ponder following my reading the picture book aloud, and while making their art, as well as in viewing their completed art projects. This section is important because it shows the types of books that are being introduced into my curriculum and how they teach diversity. In the *Books and Lesson Plans* section, I delve further into how I use each book to make a new art lesson plan for students that teaches diversity.

In concluding my study, in the *New Versus Old Curriculum* section, I compare what worked in the past versus what works now. I also reflect on what I have learned in conducting the study.

First-Grade Module I Book Selection Synopsis

In this section I present a synopsis of a selection of six book for Module 1, the adopted Module taught in *Wit and Wisdom* ELA to first-grade students. This is the prescribed Module taught to all first graders in my school that students I teach would read in their ELA class. The goals are summarized by *A World of Books* as follows:

A World of Books harnesses Grade 1 students' inherent desire to read and learn. Through inspiring texts, students journey to new places, meeting diverse characters whose lives change positively and irrevocably because of books. With each new text, students construct more knowledge and collect more evidence about how and why children everywhere read in order to answer the Essential Question: *How do books change lives around the world?* (Great Minds, p. 2).

These selections are important to highlight because they show where I got the information for my own discussion questions formulated for the art curriculum.

The following are the books prescribed for Module 1:

- *Tomas and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora and Raul Colon
- *Waiting for Biblioburro* by Monica Brown and John Parra
- *That Book Woman* by Heather Henson and David Small
- *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss
- *Museum ABC* The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- *My Librarian is a Camel* by Margriet Ruurs

For analysis, I first provide a synopsis of three of these books and then provide visual images that are in those books that show insight into the nature of the text. At the end of this section there is a list of essential questions that are posed in Module 1's ELA curriculum. These synopses, images, and essential questions became the starting point for me to focus my own discussion questions toward diversity for first graders in an art classroom.

***Tomas and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora (1997).**

Synopsis: Tomas and his family travel by car from Texas to Iowa, then back to Texas, to work at different farms. His grandfather Papa tells him stories that he knows all too well, as they sit in nature (Figure 1). Tomas stumbles across the town library in Iowa and the librarian shows him different books. As he reads, he begins to imagine himself in the stories riding dinosaurs and exploring different landscapes (Figure 2). He becomes obsessed with books, taking new one's home nightly to read to his family. He teaches her new Spanish words, and eventually the word goodbye when it is time to travel back to Texas. She gives him the gift of a new book, and he treasures it as he drives away to Texas. Tomas goes on to become Chancellor of the University at Riverside. This book was based on the real life of Tomas Rivera.

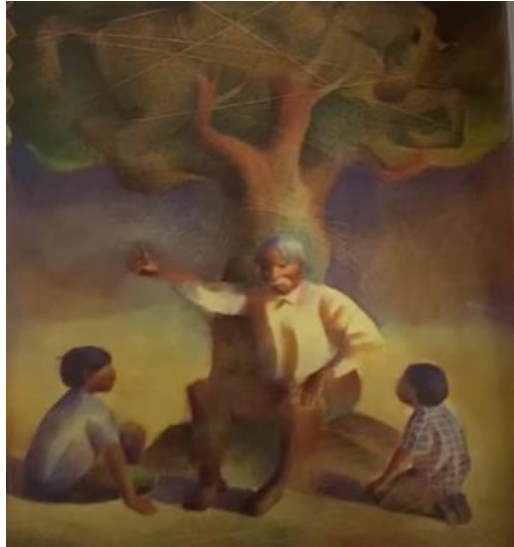


Figure 1. Papa tells stories under the tree.



Figure 2. Tomas imagines himself in the different books as he reads.

***Museum ABC* by The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2002).**

Synopsis: *Museum ABC* is an amazing art book that shows different images for each letter of the alphabet. For example, letter D shows four different examples of artworks of people dancing (Figure 3). Letter H shows four different types of hair from four different paintings (Figure 4). Letter N shows four different noses in painted style (Figure 5). This book shows great artistic examples of difference through images, and is a fantastic resource for viewing art.



Figure 3. Letter D shows different artwork of people dancing.



Figure 4. Letter H shows artwork of all different hairstyles.



Figure 5. Letter N shows all different artistic versions of noses.

***My Librarian is a Camel* by Margriet Ruurs (2005).**

Synopsis: This book shows how students receive library books all around the world. From Australia to Zimbabwe, this book shows different methods of libraries. For example, in Finland books are delivered along the coast by boat (Figure 6) and in Mongolia a horse and wagon bring books into the Gobi Desert to children as well as the use of a Minibus. Children are given sweets and books when the bus arrives (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Books are delivered along the coast by boat in Finland.



Figure 7. Children are given sweets when the Minibus arrives with books in Mongolia.

Essential Question

1. How do books change lives around the world?

Focusing Questions

1. How do library books change life for Tomas?
2. How do people around the world get books?
3. How do books change my life?

Synopsis, Art Lessons, and Discussion Questions for Selected Books

In what follows, I present the books I have chosen and the analysis of the stories, characters, and pictures. I examined the images in these texts to further emphasize the inclusion of multiple races, genders, classes, families, languages, cultures, and ability levels. The images are important because as an art teacher, I want students to learn diversity through visual language. Each image I have selected shows a diverse setting or character in the book that can become a topic for diversity discussion questions in class.

The books are presented in the order that they were introduced to students in class. The book order was not well planned out at first, and each book built upon the last which led to new topics of discussion. In future years, I will plan the organization of the books in a more organized order that will be discussed later in this paper.

***The World Needs More Purple People* by Kristen Bell and Benjamin Hart (2020).**

Synopsis: This book is narrated by a young White child, Penny. She teaches us how to be a purple person in five steps. Step 1: “Ask really great questions” (Bell & Hart, 2020, p. 5). This

step includes asking questions to get to know people. Step 2: “Laugh (a lot)” (p. 9). Penny says this makes us come together as people. We can overcome our differences when we laugh together. Figure 8 shows children of different races and religions laughing and playing together. Step 3: “Use your voice (and don’t lose your voice)” (p. 15). When we use our voice, we are brave upstanders (Stein, 2015). Step 4: “Work Hard (super-duper hard)” (p. 19). In this step we work together to get things done. Step 5: “Paint yourself purple (just kidding)” (p. 25). The joke to paint yourself purple is to show that it doesn’t matter what you look like. Figure 9 pictures people of all different colors, ages, and skin tones. Step 5: “Be the real you” (p. 28). Step 5 is about being yourself and being proud of who you are. It shows many different people, skin colors, abilities, ages, and races (see Figure 10). Although there is a White child narrator, the book shows important diverse characters and sends a positive message as to how to be an inclusive “purple” person.



Figure 8. This page shows children of different races and religions laughing and playing together.

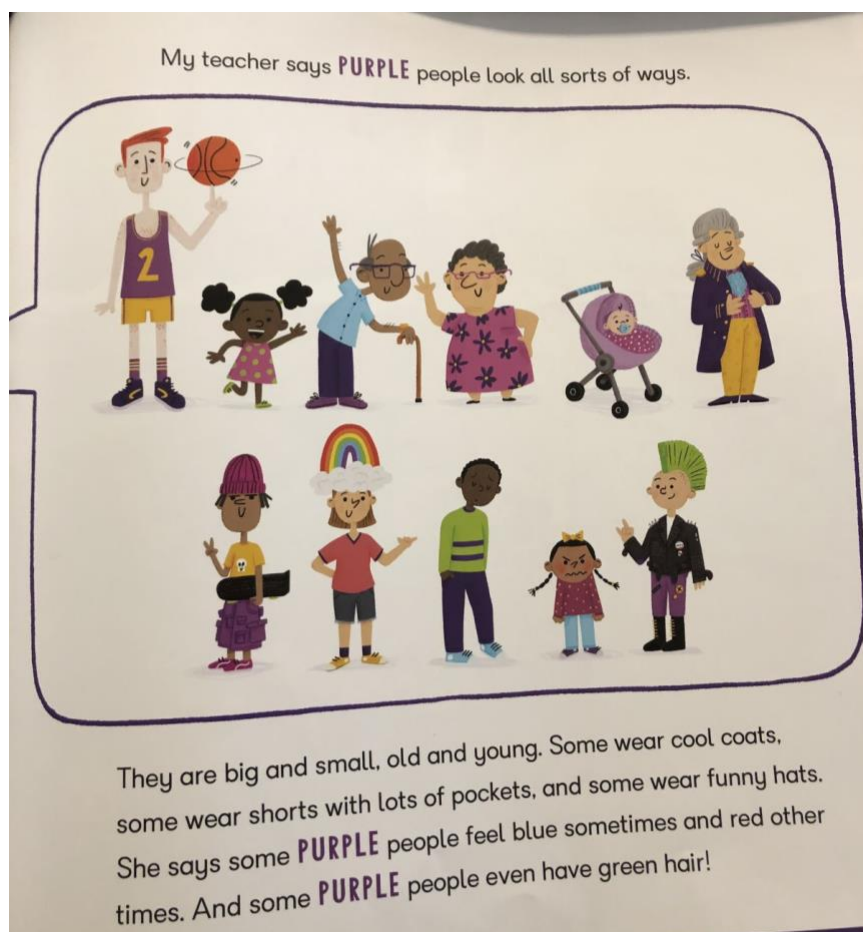


Figure 9. This image shows different ages, races, genders, and skin tones of people.

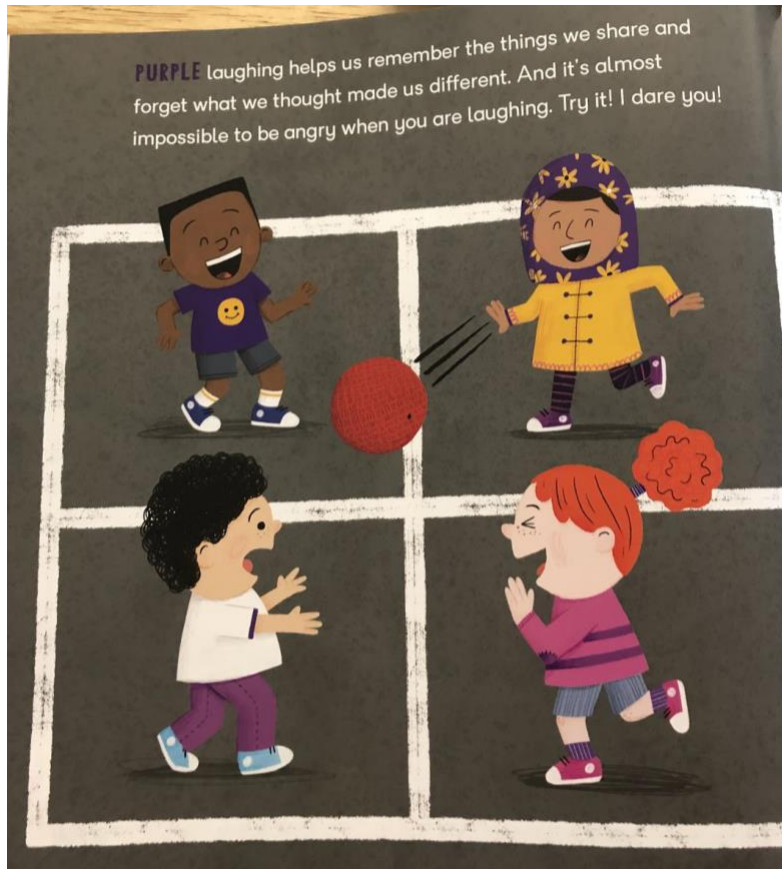


Figure 10. People from different cultures can play and laugh together.

Art Lesson Overview: Learn about the illustrator Daniel Wiseman and his style of art. Looking at the pictures in the book, draw an example of a purple person. Use one of the steps in the book. For example, draw two people together laughing, or a group of people working together to make dinner.

Discussion/Questions: What kind of a questions can you ask a new student at school or a new friend? What are some different kinds of laughter? Can there be unkind laughter as well as kind laughter? Tell me about the difference. What does it mean to be a brave upstander? How can

you use your words to help when someone is denied their voice? What does it mean to be the authentic you? How can you celebrate yourself and your differences?

The Water Princess by Susan Verde (2017).

Synopsis: Gie Gie is a young girl living in Africa. She believes she can do great things like “make the tall grass sway when I dance” (Verde, p. 5). But she cannot make the water come to her or be clean. She and her mother take the long journey to water starting in the dark morning. They carry their empty water pots on their heads and sing as they walk to the water. You can almost feel the heat of the sun on this page (Figure 11). They stop halfway under the shade of a tree and eat a snack of nuts. Finally, they hear a trickle of water, and see the many other women and children heading to the water to collect it (Figure 12). After they fill their pots, they walk much more slowly home, singing more softly this time, afraid to spill a drop of precious water. “Maman” prepares the water by boiling it, and it is used for drinking, washing, and cooking. Finally, Gie Gie gets to drink, and her expression shows gratitude at something many people take for granted. Later, her mother brings her one more cup and tells her to sleep and dream because they have to do it all again tomorrow to get more water. Gie Gie thinks about one day having water closer and cleaner to her.

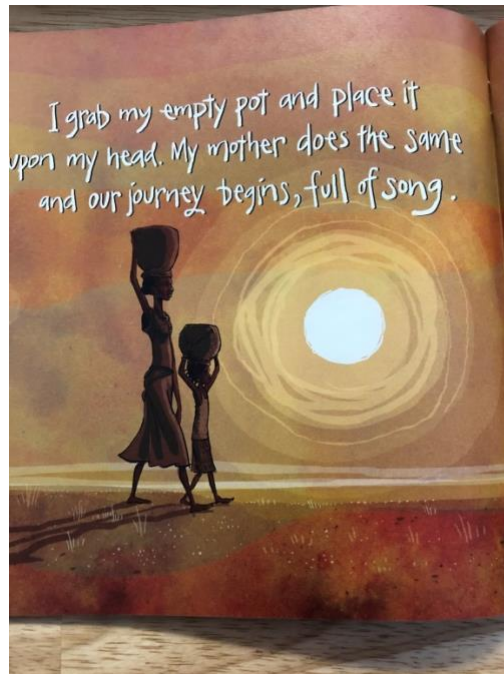


Figure 11. You can almost feel the heat of the day on this page.



Figure 12. Everyone heads toward the trickle of water they hear.

Art Lesson Overview: Design a container that you could balance on your head and walk a far distance to gather water for drinking daily. Think of size, function, color, shape, etc.

Discussion/Questions: How would you feel if you were Gie? How do you feel about the running water we have now that you read this book? What do you think about Gie Gie's life? Do you think you take your running water for granted? How did the blazing sun in each picture make you feel? What did you think when you heard they had to do it all again the next day?

Stella Brings the Family by Miriam B. Schiffer (2015).

Synopsis: Stella is upset because she has no one to bring to Mother's Day at school. She is sad, because she has two dads. She spends the week at school distracted thinking about the party, while her friends question her about who packs her lunch, who hugs her when she cries, and who reads her stories at night. All of which she replies, her Daddies. When it came time to make invitations at school, Stella decided to invite her whole family, Daddies, Aunts, Uncles, and Grandparents (Figure 13)! She has a wonderful time at the party and was very happy with her family.



Figure 13. Examples of student's invitations to the Mother's Day celebration at school.

Art Lesson Overview: Make a special invitation for your family to a party. Include everyone you would want at your party. Be sure to add decorations, food, and lots of color to make it look inviting!

Discussion/Questions: What are some ways that families can be different? Why did Stella feel bad at first? Why do you think she invited her entire family?

***More-igami* by Dori Kleber (2019).**

Synopsis: Joey loves to fold things, one day his classmate's mother comes to school and shows the class how to make origami. She folds a beautiful paper crane. Joey is obsessed and begins folding everything in sight. He folds his math homework, his sister's violin music, and even his mother's money! (Figure 14). He becomes dejected when everyone is upset with him for folding their things. How will he learn if he cannot practice? He goes to the Mexican restaurant next door for fajitas to make himself feel better. When he gets there he notices the napkins on the table. Joey folds a napkin from the table into a pyramid, and the owner Mr. Lopez likes it. He encourages Joey to make more. Joey returns day after day to fold the napkins on the tables. Eventually he masters the fold of the crane! A girl walks in holding a paper fan and is astonished that Joey could make such a beautiful crane. She asks him to teach her, and he agrees, warning her that it takes a lot of time and practice!

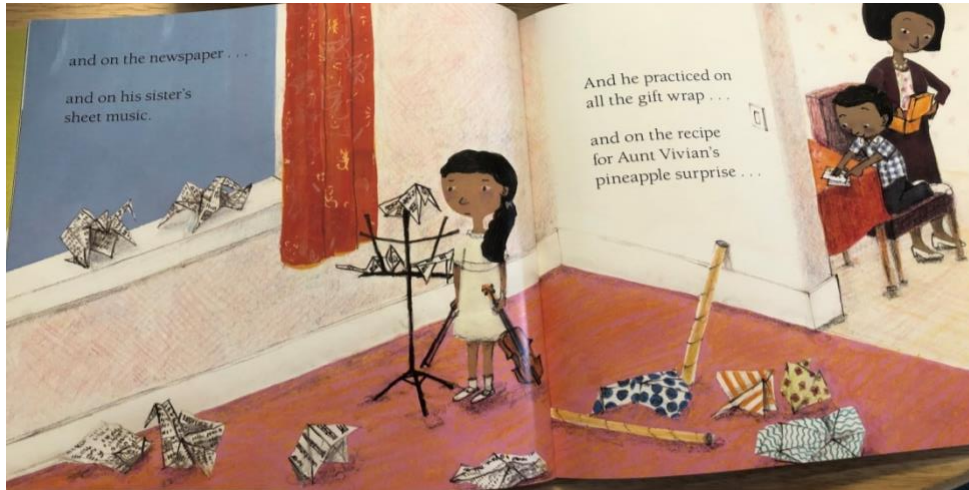


Figure 14. Joey has folded everything in the house including his sister's music, and his mother's money.

Art Lesson Overview: We will learn about the Japanese art of origami and make an origami ladybug.

Questions: Why were Joey's friends and family getting upset with him? Why did he keep going? Have you ever had to practice something that was difficult? How did it feel when you mastered that skill?

***I love my hair!* by Natasha and Earl B. Lewis (2019).**

Synopsis: As the young girl in this tale prepares for bed, her mother combs her hair. It is sometimes painful, but she rubs coconut oil into her scalp to soothe the pain. Her mother tells her she is lucky because her hair is beautiful, and she can wear it in so many different styles. The imagery of mother and daughter bonding on these first few pages is very calming and comforting (Figure 15). Mom makes the little girl's hair into a bun, cornrows, beaded

braids, and an Afro. Kids teased her on the day she wore it in an Afro, even though that's the day her hair was the most natural. Her parents told her to be proud of who she was and where she came from just like they were (Figure 16). The little girls shows how she loves her hair in all different styles.

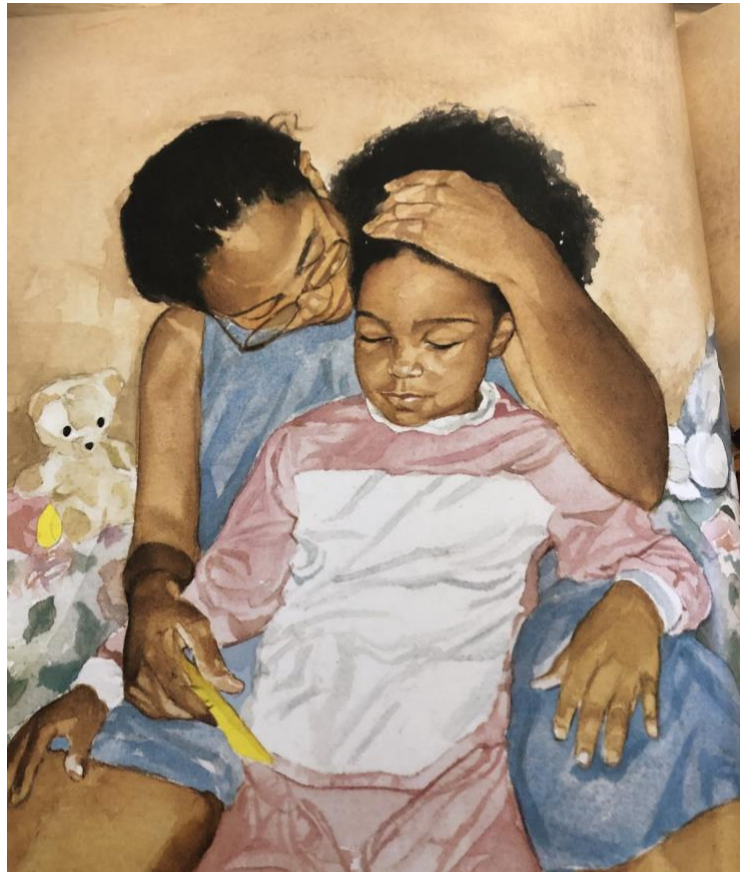


Figure 15. Mother and daughter are bonding in comforting images.



Figure 16. She is proud of herself and her family heritage.

Art Lesson Overview: Learn about self-portraits and write about your favorite part of yourself. Draw a self- portrait and add color. Learn about color mixing, and how to make your perfect skin tone just for you. Hang in the hallway for all to see.

Discussion/Questions: How can our differences be celebrated? Why did people make fun of her Afro? How would you feel if someone made fun of your hair? What helped her to choose to love herself anyway?

***Big Red Lollipop* by Rukhsana Khan and Sophie Blackall (2010).**

Synopsis: Rubina is invited to her first birthday party. She doesn't know what a birthday party is and neither does her family. Mom tells her she has to call her friend and ask if her little sister Sana can go too. Rubina is afraid her friends will make fun of her. She is forced to bring her little sister who ruins everything. Sana falls during musical chairs and cries, embarrassing Rubina in front of her friends. At the end of the party, they get gift bags with big red lollipops in them. Sana eats her immediately, Rubina saves her for later. When Rubina goes to eat her lollipop the next day, it is gone, and Sana has eaten it. Rubina is so mad. A few weeks later, Sana comes home with a birthday invitation. She is so excited to go to the party, but mom says she has to bring the next littlest sister Maryam. Sana is so upset. Rubina talks to mom privately and explains that little sisters do not go to birthday parties with big sisters (Figure 17). Mom understands. Sana is so grateful she gives Rubina her gift bag after the birthday party. It is a big green lollipop.

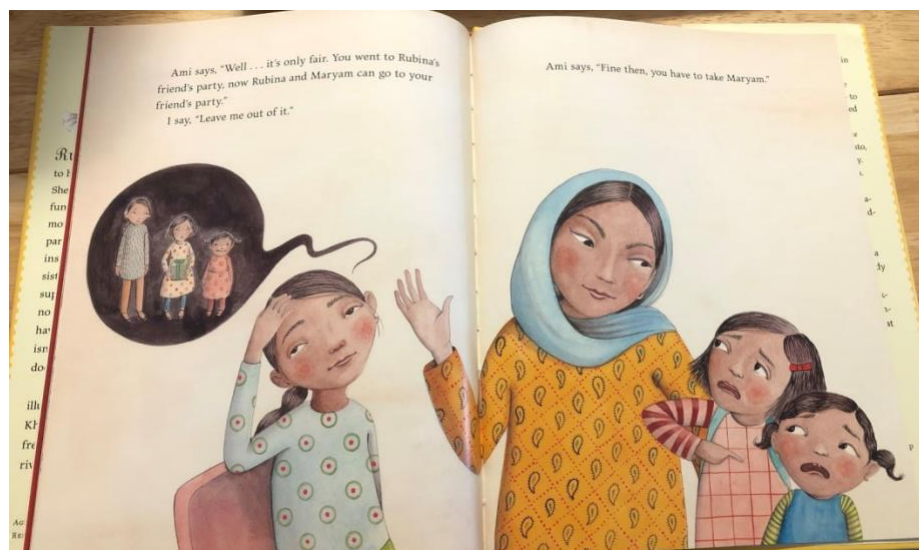


Figure 17. Rubina explains to mom that little sister's do not tag along to big sister's birthday parties.

Art Lesson Overview: We will design our own lollipop using model magic and popsicle sticks. After they dry we will paint them. They will be a gift for someone we love.

Discussion/Questions: What would you have done if you were Rubina? Why did Rubina's mom keep making the little sisters go? Why was this Rubina's first birthday party? How did Rubina's life change after this birthday party?

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt De La Pena (2016).

Synopsis: Nana and CJ wait outside in the rain for the bus. CJ is upset that it is raining, and Nana tries to cheer him up. When the bus arrives, CJ wonders why he doesn't have some things that others have like a car. The bus driver does a magic trick for CJ when he gets on the bus. Nana makes sure they say hi to everyone on the bus. They meet all different people on the bus, and CJ has many questions about who they are and why he must meet them (Figure 18). Nana has an answer for everything, and a reason why each person is important on their journey. As they ride, CJ looks out the window at all the graffiti around the city walls. CJ found himself lost in the magic of the music of the guitar player on the bus (Figure 19). They end up serving food at a soup kitchen, both happy for the journey they made and the people they met along the way.



Figure 18. CJ is curious about all the different people on the bus.



Figure 19. CJ gets lost in the music and enjoys the moment on the bus.

Art Lesson Overview: Talk about graffiti and murals in cities. Students will design their own mural for a city wall.

Discussion/Questions: Why did CJ and Nana take the bus? Why was CJ upset? Why was he happy at the end? What are some advantages of taking the bus?

***The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson (2018).**

Synopsis: A little girl Angelina walks into a room at school and she feels like she does not belong (Figure 20). A boy in her class Rigoberto understands because he just moved from Venezuela, and no one knows how to say his name yet. The children giggle when he is introduced. The teacher quiets them and tells Rigoberto “your name and homeland sound like flowers blooming the first bright note of a song” (Woodson, p. 8). (See Figure 21.) The other children in class talk about what they did over the summer. They talk of travel, beaches, planes, and faraway lands. Angelina remembers being in her hot apartment with her sister all summer. Another girl is ashamed of her lunch because no one recognized her kimchi and rice. Another young boy feels left out at recess when he can’t run and jump as fast as the others. Angelina finally gets the courage to tell her class she read books all summer with her sister and it was like she got to travel anywhere (Figure 22). Rigoberto says his sister’s name is Angelina too! All of a sudden everyone begins to open up to each other and find the differences in each other are great, and that they can make some space in the world for each other. It is about friendship, food, names, race, and feeling different but being brave enough to share that with others.



Maybe it will be your skin, your clothes, or
the curl of your hair.

Figure 20. Angelina feels like she does not belong at school.



Rigoberto. From Venezuela, your teacher says so soft and beautifully that
your name and homeland sound like
flowers blooming the first bright notes
of a song.

Figure 21. The teacher says that Rigoberto's name is lovely, like a song.



Figure 22. Although Angelina did not travel like the other students in her class, she went on adventures by reading books.

Art Lesson Overview: Think of something that makes you different from others in the class. We are each going to draw what makes us different from one another and share our drawings with the class and the richness we form together from our differences.

Discussion/Questions: Why is it important to embrace people different from yourself? Why might the main character in the story feel different and that she did not belong as she entered school? Why did she stay home all summer? Why did the other girl feel self-conscious about her lunch? Have you ever felt like you did not belong? Did you ever do something to help make

classmates feel like they belong? What could you do to help others feel like they are welcomed to a group?

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi (2003).

Synopsis: Unhei has just moved to the United States from South Korea. She goes to school and on the school bus, students tease her about her name. When she enters her classroom, she sees that no one is Korean like her, everyone has different color skin, but none the same as hers (Figure 23). She feels embarrassed and tells her class she doesn't have a name yet. The next day there is a name jar on her desk with lovely choices in it for names. Her class is trying to help her choose a name. She thinks for a while and decides to keep her own name. She teaches the class to pronounce it correctly, and her friend Joey helps her. She gives him a special Korean name and stamp as a thank you, just like her grandma gave her.



Figure 23. Unhei walks into class and sees that no one is Korean like her.

Art Lesson Overview: We will use Chinese, Japanese, and Korean characters to make our names in three different languages. We will look at the differences (Chinese dense and square, Japanese spacious and rounded, Korean dense and rounded) and you will select one version of your name translated to design a stamp out of model magic that goes with our new name and print it on paper.

Discussion/Questions: Why did Unhei feel embarrassed by her name? Have you ever been somewhere where there was no one like you? What would that feel like? Would you change your name if you could? Does your name mean something special to your family? Can you tell which names from our stamped prints are in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean characters?

Strictly No Elephants by Lisa Mantchev (2015)

Synopsis: A little boy has a tiny elephant for a pet. He takes it for walks and never quite fits in. One day there is a pet club meeting, and when he arrives there is a sign on the door that says no elephants. The children who answer the door have angry faces when they see the tiny elephant (Figure 24). They turn him away. He feels terrible and walks away where he finds another friend who has a skunk. They start their own pet club where all are welcome (Figure 25). They find joy in each other's company and have big smiles when they realize they can make others feel welcome too (Figure 26).

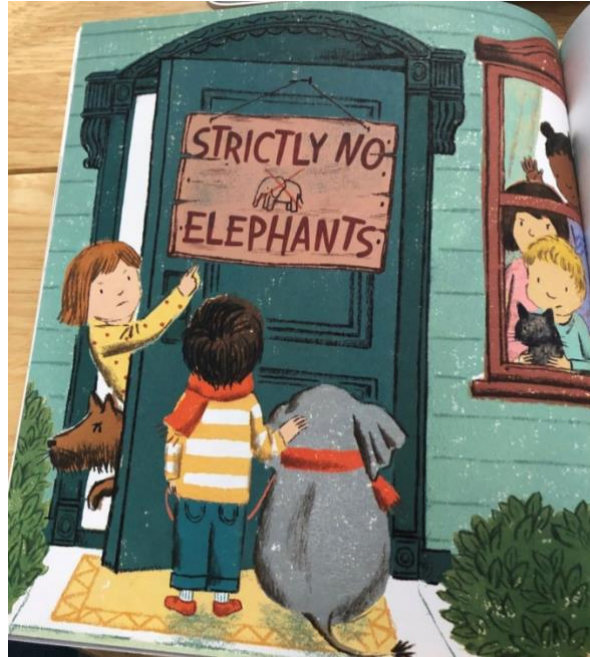


Figure 24. The child answering the door has an angry face when they open it.

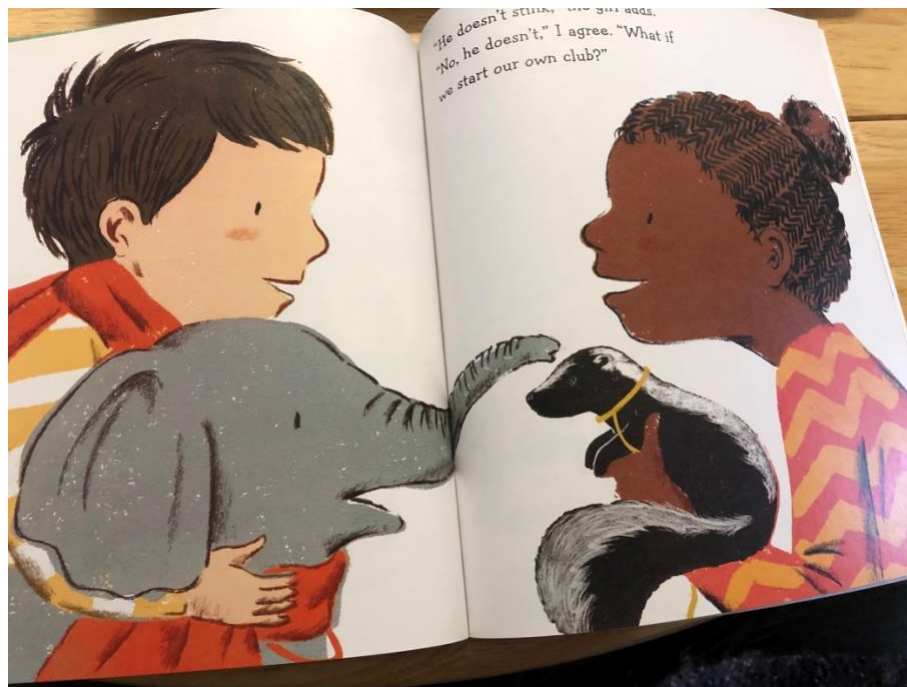


Figure 25. The two kids decide to make their own club where all are welcome.



Figure 26. The new club is successful, and everyone can join with their pet.

Art Lesson Overview: Design your own poster for a cool club where anyone can join. Make it about something specific like pets, or art, or sports. Make everyone feel included.

Discussion/Questions: What does it feel like to be different? What does it feel like to be left out? Why do you think those club members had such mad faces? How can anger turn to other bad things? Looking at our posters who would feel welcome and who might feel excluded?

Focusing Questions for Selected Books

The essential question for *Wit and Wisdom* (Great Minds 2020) Module I is: How do books change lives around the world? The books that I have chosen, show the value of diversity, and ask the question of how these books change lives. For example, in the book *The Big Red Lollipop*, how did Rubina's life change after her first birthday party. By asking these

questions that coincide with the ELA curriculum, my art lessons will be in better alignment with the first-grade ELA curriculum.

The ELA curriculum's essential question of how books change lives around the world guided me towards my own questions from each of the books that I chose for my new book list. My essential question became; How do books change lives toward valuing diversity around the world? In Table 2 below, discussion questions from each book are shown. These questions are derived from my essential question and geared toward discussion in a first-grade classroom.

My Book	Questions
The World Needs More Purple People	What are some different kinds of laughter? Can there be unkind laughter as well as kind laughter? Tell me about the difference. What does it mean to be a brave upstander? How can you use your voice to help when someone had lost their voice? What does it mean to be the real you? How can you celebrate yourself and your differences?
The Water Princess	What do you think about Gie Gie's life? Do you think you take your running water for granted? How did the blazing sun in each picture make you feel? What did you think when you heard they had to do it all again the next day?
Stella Brings the Family	What are some ways that families can be different? Why did Stella feel bad at first? Why do you think she invited her entire family?
More-Igami	Why were Joey's friends and family getting upset with him? Why did he keep going? Have you ever had to practice something that was difficult? How did it feel when you mastered that skill?
I Love My Hair!	How can our differences be celebrated? Why did people make fun of her afro? How would

	you feel if someone made fun of your hair? What helped her to choose to love herself anyway?
Big Red Lollipop	What would you have done if you were Rubina? Why did Rubina's mom keep making the little sisters go? Why was this Rubina's first birthday party? How did Rubina's life change after this birthday party?
Last Stop on Market Street	Why did CJ and Nana take the bus? Why was CJ upset? Why was he happy at the end? What are some advantages of taking the bus?
The Day You First Begin	Why is it important to embrace people different from yourself? Why might our main character feel different as she entered school? Why did she stay home all summer? Why did the other girl feel self-conscious about her lunch? Have you ever felt like you did not belong? Did you ever do something to help make classmates feel like they belong? What could you do to help others feel like they are welcomed to a group?
The Name Jar	Why did Unhei feel embarrassed by her name? Have you ever been somewhere where there was no one like you? What would that feel like? Does your name mean something special to your family?
Strictly No Elephants	What does it feel like to be different? What does it feel like to be left out? Why do you think those club members had such mad faces? How can anger turn to other bad things? Looking at our posters who would feel welcome and who might feel excluded?

Table 2. This Table compiles the focusing questions for each book to provide a curricular overview.

In future years, I plan to take a different approach on the order of the books I present to students. In the following Table, (Table 3) I will show you how the books will be presented

differently to coincide with the values that they teach. In presenting books in this new order, students will be shown information in a more organized manner that can bring together themes such as awareness, valuing, and embracing diversity. For example, *Stella Brings the Family* (Schiffer 2015) makes us aware that there are many different types of families that people belong to, while *The Name Jar* (Choi 2003) teaches us that we should embrace our culture just like Unhei does by keeping her Korean name in the book.

Value Taught	Book Sequence
Awareness of Diversity/Difference	1. The Water Princess 2. Stella Brings the Family 3. The Big Red Lollipop
Valuing Diversity/Difference	4. I Love My Hair 5. Last Stop on Market Street 6. More-Igami
Embracing Diversity/Difference	7. The World Needs More Purple People 8. The Name Jar 9. The Day You First Begin 10. Strictly No Elephants

Table 3. This table shows the future sequencing of books that will be taught in art class and the values that they have in common.

By discussing the images in each book, and asking students about the differences that they see, I am showing the value of these books in my curriculum. By adding discussion of each book, students reflect on the text just like they do in their ELA class. Although my essential question is different: How do books change lives toward valuing diversity around the world? I am still building on the skills they are taught in ELA. In each prescribed ELA book selection for Module I, there is a great deal of diversity and difference, so basing my new curriculum on diversity also helps to build on the new knowledge they are learning about *The World of Books*, which is the title of Module I.

Books and Lesson Plans

The art lesson plans that coincide with book selections have been crafted to meet each book's unique needs. Each lesson showcases the book's images and diversity components. For example, in the story *The Water Princess* we examine the way the main character Gie Gie walks a great distance to get fresh water each day. We then use ideas from this text to design our own vessels to hold water that can be carried a long distance in the hot sun. Images in the text help to give ideas about shape and size of the water vessel that Gie Gie uses, and what might be an appropriate size and shape for student's drawings. Each book's lesson is detailed below in Table 4.

Book	Art Lesson
<i>The World Needs More Purple People</i>	Learn about the illustrator Daniel Wiseman and his style of art. Looking at the pictures in the book, draw an example of a purple person. Use one of the steps in the book. For example, draw

	two people together laughing, or a group of people working together to make dinner.
<i>The Water Princess</i>	Design a vessel that you could carry a far distance to gather water for drinking daily. Think of size, function, color, shape, etc.
<i>Stella Brings the Family</i>	Make a special invitation for your family to a party. Include everyone you would want at your party. Be sure to add decorations, food, and lots of color to make it look inviting!
<i>More-Igami</i>	We will learn about the Japanese art of origami and make an origami ladybug.
<i>I Love My Hair!</i>	Learn about self-portraits and write about your favorite part of yourself. Draw a self- portrait and add color. Learn about color mixing, and how to make your perfect skin tone just for you. Hang in the hallway for all to see.
<i>Big Red Lollipop</i>	We will design our own lollipop using model magic and popsicle sticks. After they dry we will paint them. They will be a gift for someone we love.
<i>Last Stop on Market Street</i>	Talk about Graffiti and Murals in cities. Students will design their own mural for a city wall.
<i>The Day You First Begin</i>	Think of something that makes you different. We are going to draw that and share it with the class. We will examine work at the end to see how each student interpreted the lesson.
<i>The Name Jar</i>	We will use Japanese, Chinese, and Korean letters to make our names in a different language. We will design a stamp out of model magic that goes with our new name and print it on paper.
<i>Strictly No Elephants</i>	Design your own poster for a cool club where anyone can join. Make it about something specific like pets, or art, or sports. Make everyone feel included.

Table 4. Table four shows the art projects that coincide with each book.

Comparing Data: Old Versus New Curriculum

In looking at my old curricular choices that were presented over the last few years with first grade, I see some areas where I can improve such as the inclusion of more diverse books, but I also see value in old lessons that can be integrated into new lesson techniques. In the past we have made Chinese vases, with a small background on Chinese culture and style, but now with *The Water Princess* we get a first-hand story about how and why this water vessel is used. This gives greater understanding to the class as they begin to design their own water container. Another example is *Grumpy Monkey* (Lang 2018) which is a story about a monkey who is in a bad mood and his friends try to make him happy. In the end, it turns out that it is ok to be grumpy when you need to. I still value this story and its message, so with the new book *The World Needs More Purple People*, I can still talk about emotional and cognitive difference as a type of diversity that divides people. This can still be a discussion topic, and an important conversation about diversity in my classroom even though we are no longer reading that particular book. The positive thing about purple people is it addresses many more types of diversity such as race, skin color, ability, gender, and age; and how the many types are not isolated but intersect. This book gives us much more to talk about rather than *Grumpy Monkey's* limiting topic. I feel this is an important aspect of the new curriculum, that it is broadening, and reaching new depths of conversation about diversity that the old curriculum did not reach.

Old Curriculum Book	Diversity in Book	New Curriculum Books	Diversity in Book
Grumpy Monkey	Emotional and cognitive difference	The World Needs More Purple People	Skin color, Religion, ability, Age, gender
Giraffe's Can't Dance	Physical ability	The Water Princess	Race, culture, age, gender

Love Monster	Appearance	Stella Brings the Family	Family structure, sexual preference, skin color, race
The Princess and The Frog	Appearance	More-Igami	Race, language
The Rainbow Fish	Appearance	I Love My Hair	Skin color, race, culture
The Biggest Snowman Ever		The Day You First Begin	Race, skin color, Socioeconomic status, mental difference, gender
Never Tickle a Tiger	Emotional and cognitive difference	Last Stop on Market Street	Race, gender, Culture, socioeconomic status
Andy's Web-Artist		The Big Red Lollipop	Race, culture, gender

Table 5. Comparing difference in books.

Reflections

As I reflect on this process there are many things that I have learned about my own curriculum that have been improved by this study. The first is the teaching of diversity in my own art classroom, which always seemed difficult and out of reach for an art teacher like myself. Through the examination of images and text in children's books, I have found the ability to alter my curriculum to include this incredibly important aspect of human life. By showing students that pictures and words matter, I have allowed everyone their own space in my classroom, making everyone feel welcome and a part of the narrative. Diversity and inclusion now have a solid place in my first-grade curriculum, whereas they were a bit shaky in the past.

There is still much value to be found in my old lesson plans. I found that the more I focused on diversity and difference the farther I felt from the actual making of art. I had to find a way to bridge that gap when I first started this study. I had to re-embrace the art, and the way

I did that was to think of my old lessons, and what was successful that could be carried over to this new model of teaching. For example, I used to teach very little about the message of the book, maybe a minute or two of conversation, then immediately into the drawing or painting. Now I feel I can take more time to really allow students to open up to the ideas that we have just seen, and ask them questions that will allow them to think in new ways, while still giving ample time to the art making process.

These new books lead to even more art making processes. The book *More-Igami* led me to experiment with Origami in first grade, something that I never would have tried before this research. Every book in my research endeavor has led me to regard the illustrator of a book as an artist. This seems very obvious, but I never taught this to my students before. The idea that every book has its own unique artist is a distinctive quality that I enjoyed bringing out in each book that we read together. The images make each book special, and the artists that made that book allowed that to happen.

The fact that I can now teach this to my students in a succinct manner is amazing, and a quality that I plan to branch out into all other grade levels that I teach. This study has been invaluable in the incorporation of my core values and my teaching style. Those two things coming together will help me to be a better teacher, and a more passionate curriculum designer for the rest of my career.

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APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Roberta Linder (2020):

This article is about the significance of talking about lower income families and how they live day to day. “Students need opportunities to explore economic diversity and to challenge harmful discourses about people experiencing economic hardship. . . Picture books can be used in elementary classrooms to reflect economic diversity and to facilitate critical classroom conversations on economic hardship” (p. 1). When students view other’s situations (i.e., *Last Stop on Market Street*) they can gain a greater understanding of how someone else feels about financial hardship and be more empathetic to such situations.

2. Molly K. Ness. (2019)

This article discusses the typical White American teacher who may not be educated on diversity, and therefore may not know how to educate their students on diversity. “Many preservice and early career teachers in the United States are White, middle class, and female and as such have little firsthand knowledge working with or growing up in the increasingly diverse population of the U.S. schools” (p. 33). I related to this article as a White, middle class female teacher who needs to broaden her world views, and the way she teaches.

3. Thomas Crisp et al. (2016):

Crisp discusses the extreme lack of diversity in children's books, and how to solve this problem for your own classroom. He discusses several categories of difference including SES, sexual identity, religion, gender, language, and genre. He recommends using social media, GoFundme, Twitter, Facebook, Bloggers and other resources to find a more accessible library for your classroom. This article was helpful to my study in that it showed me what to look for when searching for my diverse book list using some of the suggestions above.

4. Ebony E. Thomas (2016):

This article discusses the history of shifting the landscape of children's literature into a more diverse representation. Ebony states: "Further diversifying out lenses for text selection matters because children's literature can enable children to see representations of social cooperation and the interconnectedness of humanity while also fostering critical discernment and empathetic sensibilities about the ways in which difference is often produced by inequality" (p. 116). As someone trying to diversify their literature, this seemed very relevant and important for me to read and connect with my curriculum revisions.

5. Rachel S. Lo (2019):

This article dives into the issue of family. There are so many different types of families, and this article discusses diversity of families portrayed in children's books. For example, "By including in our collective knowledge resources some representation of same-sex

parents as possible family models, all children may learn about a greater range of family models, thus ensuring that children with same-sex parents find a space in their communities and helping children gain a broader understanding of what makes a family” (p. 29). I found this compelling because when we think of difference, we often emphasize race and leave out categories that intersect with race.

6. Nancy Tolson (2008):

Nancy Tolson speaks about her teachings as a Black female, and her struggles with incorporating culture and people of color into curriculum. She says, “Children of color have the right to read stories that offer an image of themselves soaring into magical adventures and fantastic worlds, but instead they have to live vicariously through Disney characters and experience media-enforced peer pressure to accept the adventures of white children” (para. 11). She also says, “I tell my students that dreams come in color just as child and adolescent readers do, and it is only fair that the literature should be just as colorful” (p. 44). Seeing yourself in a book is one of the greatest experiences a child (or adult) can have, and I want to give this to as many of my students as possible within my lessons.

7. Bryann Welch (2016):

Bryann Welch writes about how the whiteness of curriculum and literature leads to a world of racism and hate. He says “the pervasive whiteness of children’s literature contributes to the cultivation of racial biases and stereotypes, impedes the cultivation of

compassion for others, and renders valuable goods less accessible to children of color than to white children” (p. 369). I want to be part of the generation who stops this from being the norm and fights back against this injustice.

8. Jared Brown (2016):

This article is about a company called Callaloo, which makes educational material for school-aged children and specializes in diversity. They state: “While the number of children’s books about people of color has increased in the past 20 years, many Black children often feel misrepresented or excluded from classroom curriculum” (p. 4C). This was another great resource for finding children’s books, and it was exciting to see entire publishing houses committed to such goals.

APPENDIX B: DIVERSITY BOOK LIST

Bell, Kristen & Hart, Benjamin. (2020). *The World Needs More Purple People*. Penguin Random House.

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APPENDIX C: TIMELINE FOR STUDY

Sept. 1: idea formulated. Karen sends example proposal (Panitch). Go into LionPath and make sure you clicked “Intent to Graduate”

Sept. 8: draft proposal sent to Karen

Sept. 12: Karen responds (with notes, maybe an hour zoom)

Sept. 12-15: revise proposal

Sept. 15: check with IRB (Karen helps compose email)

Sept. 16: Karen reviews and approves to send Aaron (two weeks) and schedule proposal zoom meeting.

Sept. 30: Proposal meeting (or there abouts)

Oct. 5: Begin study official—implementing what is planned, journal/speak after class

Nov. 5: Module ends. Reflection. Analysis begins, & writing up from data (analysis).
Meet with Karen for guidance

Nov. 15: draft of writing to Karen (goes into LionPath expected Dec. graduation)

Nov. 16: Karen provides edits/comments/feedback to action research report.

Nov. 17-18: Liz revises

Nov. 18/19: send to Aaron for his review & Karen

Thanksgiving—promote at your school, write up final piece of doing this and add to google doc.

Dec. 9: meet with Aaron & Karen for approval of final paper (defense)

Few more revisions

Dec. 16: Final signed and uploaded to MPS action research. Karen enters Milestone of complete and 594 grade.

APPENDIX D: SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A	Group A	Virtual Learning	Group B	Group B
Group B Virtual	Group B Virtual	Virtual Learning	Group A Virtual	Group A Virtual

APPENDIX E: IRB APPLICATION/APPROVAL

RE: IRB Question/Follow up

Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>

Thu 10/15/2020 8:43 AM

To: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>

Hi Elizabeth,

Thank you for sharing this information. Because the website is meant to be a course aid for future students who will complete the class project and not to widely share generalizable knowledge about your topic, I believe the NHR determination still applies.

Thanks again,

Michelle Covert, Ph.D. | IRB Analyst
The Pennsylvania State University | Office for Research Protections
The 330 Building, Suite 205, University Park, PA 16802
Direct Line: (814) 865-1776 | Main Line: (814) 865-1775
Fax: (814) 863-8699 | www.research.psu.edu/orp

From: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2020 3:52 PM
To: Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>
Cc: Keifer-Boyd, Karen Treat <ktk2@psu.edu>
Subject: Fw: IRB Question/Follow up

Michelle,

My professor wanted to make sure you are aware that our final projects are posted on the MPS website for future Art Education graduate students to view as examples.

https://sites.psu.edu/mpsaed/2016/05/21/action_research/

Elizabeth Leslie

From: Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 11:39 AM
To: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>
Subject: RE: IRB Question

Hi Elizabeth,

Based on the information you have provided; it sounds like this project is a class requirement that's purpose is also to improve your own teaching. Because the project is not intended to

produce generalizable knowledge, it is not considered to be research by the IRB. Accordingly, you do not need to submit to the IRB for review and approval.

Thank you again for checking in with the IRB! Have a good week!

Michelle Covert, Ph.D. | IRB Analyst
The Pennsylvania State University | Office for Research Protections
The 330 Building, Suite 205, University Park, PA 16802
Direct Line: (814) 865-1776 | Main Line: (814) 865-1775
Fax: (814) 863-8699 | www.research.psu.edu/orp

From: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 8:27 AM
To: Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>
Subject: Re: IRB Question

Michelle,
Thanks for getting back to me. To answer your questions, I am writing this paper to fulfill my final project for my master's degree. I am writing to improve my own teaching only, and this work will not be published.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Leslie

From: Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 8:31 AM
To: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>
Subject: RE: IRB Question

Hi Elizabeth,

Thank you for your email. I have a few questions that will help me to determine if you need to submit to the IRB. Is this work for a class project? Is this work meant only to help you improve your teaching/curriculum? Do you plan to use the data to contribute to generalizable knowledge in your field via publications or presentations?

Thank you!

Michelle Covert, Ph.D. | IRB Analyst
The Pennsylvania State University | Office for Research Protections
The 330 Building, Suite 205, University Park, PA 16802
Direct Line: (814) 865-1776 | Main Line: (814) 865-1775
Fax: (814) 863-8699 | www.research.psu.edu/orp

From: Leslie, Elizabeth S <esf111@psu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 2:19 PM
To: Covert, Michelle <mlf164@psu.edu>
Cc: Keifer-Boyd, Karen Treat <ktk2@psu.edu>
Subject: IRB Question

Dear Office of Research Protection:

I am in the MPS in Art Education Program and am preparing to conduct a study of my own teaching. In this study, I will find new books that work with the module of learning in the regular education classroom. I typically introduce an artmaking activity by reading a story and showing the art in children's picture books. As I review my library for my first-grade teaching, I find that all the authors are White, and the stories relate to their White experiences. I teach art to first-graders and have become more keenly aware during my graduate studies that my art curriculum does not teach toward diversity awareness, and to value diversity of people in terms of race, ethnicity, and abilities, among other ways that diversity contributes to the richness of experiences and knowledge. Throughout my action research project, I plan to identify readings that foster diversity awareness and the valuing diversity, and design drawing projects lessons that teach the value of difference through these books. In this study, I will critique my curriculum through a lens of diversity, and design a curriculum intended to foster my teaching goals of introducing young children to respect, embrace, and value difference.

My question is do I need to apply for OFP approval and submit an IRB proposal?

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Leslie

Esf111@psu.edu

Student ID number: 916443854

570 871-1026

Advisor: Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd