

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

“Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn” Podcast Episode 20 – February 2019

Title: *Using Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Texts that Move Students*

SPEAKERS

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INTRODUCTION:

JGF: It's so important for our students to see themselves in print. But even for students who are not necessarily linguistically and culturally diverse, they need to see the world. And books are a great way to sort of open up that identity and see the world and experience someone else's story, and maybe develop empathy or a connection to someone else that is different than they are.

I have this idea and I call it sort of the "Goldilocks idea of reading." It's really important for our students to have books are just right there where we are as readers so we can practice those strategies and sort of show what we know is a reader in terms of identity and sort of move forward.

JO: Welcome to the "Ayers Lunch and Learn" podcast presented by the *Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation at Lipscomb University*, where we're all about education. These podcast episodes are sponsored by *Edsouth* which promotes interest and awareness of higher education opportunities to students, families, and schools. Each Ayers Lunch and Learn podcast episode provides bite-sized portions of professional learning.

Today's topic is: “Using Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Texts that Move Students.” We'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic as well using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #VoicesMatter. My name is Julia Osteen and I'm the Technology Integration Specialist for the *Ayers Institute*. Participating in our conversation today is Dr. Jeanne Gilliam Fain of the *College of Education at Lipscomb University*.

JO: Welcome!

JGF: Thank you.

EPISODE BODY:

JO: I'm excited for us to talk today about linguistically and culturally diverse text. What are those things that teachers need to think about as they consider bringing in texts that move students?

JGF: Well it's really critical that all students vividly see themselves within literature. All students need to see authentic representation of culture, language, and diverse stories. They don't just see a tourist point of view. They do not just see stories that do not represent themselves. They need to see their personal stories within the literature and they need to see them in powerful ways.

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JO: I know you've brought a number of examples with you today. What are those types of texts that you would recommend?

JGF: There's all different types of text that I would recommend. But for today, I'm just going to share a few of them; and I'm going to start with picture books that you can use, I would say in the K-8 classroom.

The first one I love. Well okay, so I love most all of these books— so you know that's okay. But this one is called *I Am Human: A Book of Empathy* by Susan Verde. Right now in terms of our political context, we definitely could do some work on our ability to be empathetic towards each other. We have students sitting in our classroom that have come from some very challenging situations, and it's just incredibly important that we read books where we're demonstrating how to be a kind human. And this book really captures that. There's even a page that I'm going to read to you and says, "But being human means I am not perfect. I make mistakes. I can hurt others with my words, my actions, and even my silence. I can be hurt, too." So this book sort of offers a point of view on what it means to be human and sort of the range of that. Because students and adults, I would argue, are all learning how to be empathetic and kind to each other.

Another book that I love and anything that Jacqueline Woodson writes I am definitely on board for. Her writing is always inclusive, always compelling, and it's just always really thoughtful. So, she's written this book called *The Day You Begin*. Jacqueline Woodson illustrated by Rafael Lopez. And the illustrations are just stunning. And there's a page in the book I think that a lot of our students can sort of connect with and it says, "There will be times when no one understands the way words curl from your mouth, the beautiful language of the country you left behind. My name is Rigoberto. We just moved here from Venezuela and because they don't understand, the classroom will fill with laughter until the teacher quiets everyone." There are lots of students sitting in the classroom for a range of reasons and they are nervous to actually speak. Their tongue actually becomes hard and this is a real challenge for them. I think that these words can really help students feel like, 'oh there's somebody else out there that actually has that same challenge.'

Okay the next book is another one I love. It's called *Alma and How She Got Her Name* and the book is written by Juana Martinez Neal. And it is, she was recognized for her illustrations in another book. This is her first picture book and this book has been getting all kinds of awards all over the place. And the book begins with her dad telling the story of her name and she has multiple names as a lot of our students do. Her name is Alma Sophia Esperanza Jose Pura Candela and she has a really long name and her dad goes into each name and sort of explains it. And then he ends with Alma and she's like, "What does Alma mean?" And he says to her, "Well you know what, you're going to have the ability to write your own story. So you're going to get to set up what it means." I think the message of sort of writing your own story, then you could have students write their own stories as they are sort of making those connections with her story and thinking about their name and the story and sort of where they come from in terms of their identity.

The next one is called *Dreamers* and is written by Yuyi Morales. Yuyi Morales is a multilingual learner herself. She came to the United States with her baby, with her husband, and her family. And she did not know English. English is her second language. And so this story, *Dreamers*, talks about her story as she comes to the United States and has to learn English, and actually discovers the joy of the library. And the library is where she shares so many powerful moments with her young baby. And they sort of learn English together from the library. And then, in the back of the book is this amazing author's note in *Dreamer's* by Yuyi Morales that actually talks about her story or the specifics. So we have lots of students who are learning English as a second language and she's an amazing example of someone who came to the United States and then became successful as an author in English and Spanish.

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And then finally the last one I have is called *Mommy's Khimar* and it is about a young Muslim-American girl and her scarf. And so she's sort of it's written by Jamilah Tompkins-Bigelow illustrations by Ebony Glenn. There are not a lot of positive stories that are just about the hijab or the khimar. And since we have so many students sitting in our classroom that are Muslim-Americans or that are Muslim it is really important that we show the power and positivity of difference. And this book does this in really powerful and compelling ways.

One of the questions I always get with this kind of literature is: Where are you going to put it in the curriculum? Definitely you could sub it out in terms of some of the text your using within a unit. You could use it as an interactive read aloud. Definitely these are powerful reads. You could use it as a shared reading. You could use these as mentor text for writing. And you definitely could have all kinds of thoughtful discussions around this literature.

JO: So, as I think about these books that you shared that really have that linguistically and culturally diverse aspect to them. It occurs to me that these kinds of texts can help all students really develop that reading identity. Talk about the importance of a reading identity.

JGF: It's so important for our students to see themselves in print. But even for students who are not necessarily linguistically and culturally diverse, they need to see the world. And books are a great way to sort of open up that identity and see the world and experience someone else's story, and maybe develop empathy or a connection to someone else that is different than they are. So definitely, I think there's a place for all of them.

In terms of identity. We definitely want it to sort of expand that and get students to think about who they are in terms of what they want to read. A lot of times these books are books that students don't want to read. They don't want to necessarily read about themselves they don't want to read about their language they don't see it as a cool, wonderful thing. And so as teachers we need to position these books with power, so our students do want to hear these stories and sort of expand their identity.

We have lots of students who only want to read series books, or who only want to read books that have action, or only want to read books about relationships. But it's really important that we help our students build a range of books. Definitely I have a range of things that I read and I think it's really important for our students have that.

For me personally, I have this idea and I call it sort of the "Goldilocks idea of reading." I think it's really important for students to have books like this and other kinds of books that are too easy because then we can really work on fluency, and we can really practice our reading skills and strategies. Then I think it's really important for our students to have books are just right there where we are as readers so we can practice those strategies and sort of show what we know is a reader in terms of identity and sort of move forward. Then it's really important that we're challenged, so we need to have books that are just too hard. Books that we really want to read and motivate to read, but really challenge us in terms of using our strategies in powerful ways. If we're only ever reading things that are just so easy or that are just right. We will never get better at what we're doing. So, we always want to be challenging ourselves as readers. So definitely I think having that range is critical.

CONCLUSION:

JO: In our conversation today, Dr. Fain shared the importance of including linguistically and culturally diverse texts in the classroom. She also shared some examples of texts that move students and can be used to encourage all students to develop a reading identity. She has given us a lot to think about and discuss

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with colleagues. A probing question for you and your colleagues to explore is: “What benefits do you see within your educational context when using texts that moves students?”

As we close today's episode, we would like to encourage you to continue the conversation on “Using Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Texts that Move Students” with your colleagues. There's a graphic organizer file available for download as you continue thinking about this topic. The graphic organizer along with a list of recommended texts are found on eduTOOLBOX – at eduTOOLBOX.org.

Don't forget. We'd love to hear your thoughts on using linguistically and culturally diverse texts that move students using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #VoicesMatter. Also, follow and like the *Ayers Institute* on Twitter and Facebook @AyersInstitute.

We hope your appetite for bite-sized portions of professional learning was satisfied with this podcast presentation sponsored by *Edsouth*. Look for other episodes of the “Ayers Institute Lunch and Learn Podcast” at <http://podcast.ayersinstitute.org/>.