THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:
Using literature as windows into equity in early mathematics

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“Difference does not diminish; it enlarges the sphere of human possibilities.”
(Sacks, 2002, p. 201)
Diversity in Children's Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds.
Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison:
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

0.9% American Indians/First Nations
2.4% Latinx
3.3% Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans
7.6% African/African Americans
12.5%* Animals, Trucks, etc.
73.3%** White

* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.
EMPOWERING STUDENTS—
CULTURALLY RICH STORIES

- Color-aware approach
  - Intentional teaching—purposeful value discussions
  - Address race in direct and positive ways

- Social justice approach
  - Empower children to advocate for equity
  - Recognize and act upon race-related injustices
    - Unfairness and discrimination
MAKING CONSCIOUS SHIFTS
FOR EXAMPLE, SHIFTING FROM...

Continuing the connections:

1. Have you ever had an experience like in this story?
2. Are the characters in this story like you or anyone in your family?
3. What was your favorite part about this story? Why?

to include...

- Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes
- My Name Is Yoon
- Thunder Boy Jr.
STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING CULTURALLY, AND MATHEMATICALLY, RICH LITERATURE

- Select books that provide opportunities for self-reflection
  - Tools that affirm sense of racial identity (Bishop, 1990; Wanless & Crawford, 2016)
  - Does the book allow children to imagine themselves in the story?
    - Mirror elements of identity (e.g., race, community, values)
  - Does the book encourage children to expand their understanding or empathy for others?
    - Introductions to unfamiliar people, places, or contexts

- Thought-provoking tasks—grounded in math content and processes
  - Color-aware: Mathematical explorations contextualized in related literature
  - Social justice: Math as tools to investigate or document inequities

- REMEMBER: No single book fully represents a group or issue
  - Seek “text sets”
    - Collections on a topic to emphasize different perceptions
“Starter” Children’s Book List

- **Counting on Frank** By: Rod Clement
  - Possible concept: Measurement

- **Dreaming Up** By Christy Hale
  - Possible concepts: Building, Shape & Space

- **Feast for 10** By: Cathryn Falwell
  - Possible concepts: Counting, Numeral to Quantity

- **Google-eyed Goats** By: Stephen Davis & Christopher Corr
  - Possible concepts: Addition & Counting

- **Handa’s Surprise** By: Eileen Browne
  - Possible concept: Subtraction

- “**More, More, More**” said the Baby By Vera B. Williams
  - Possible concepts: more/less, comparing concepts

- **Mr. George Baker** By: Amy Hess
  - Possible concepts: Counting, Addition/Subtraction, Sorting

- **My Rows and Piles of Coins** By: Tololwa Mollel
  - Possible concepts: Sorting & Money

- **Please, Baby, Please** By Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee
  - Possible concept: time

- **Subway** By: Anastasia Suen
  - Possible concepts: Spatial orientation

- **Two of Everything** By: Lily Toy Hong
  - Possible concept: Doubling

- **The Ugly Vegetables** By: Grace Lin
  - Possible concepts: Sets, Measurement/cooking

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**Professional References**


