

# DIVERSITY ROCKS THE BOOK COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT

Prepared by Diversity Rocks the Book Project, Human Relations Commission, City of Holland, MI

## UNDERSTAND WHY DIVERSE BOOKS ARE IMPORTANT

When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are negative or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in society. Learn more at:

- Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_AAu58SNSyc&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AAu58SNSyc&feature=emb_title)
- We Need Diverse Books: <https://diversebooks.org/>
- Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin Madison: <http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp>
- Reading While White: <http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com/>

## IDENTIFY THE NEED FOR DIVERSE BOOKS IN YOUR CLASSROOM, SCHOOL, HOME, COMMUNITY

What kinds of diverse books are already there? How old are they? Are they still relevant? Do they continue misunderstanding or unintended bias? What books do you have from authors and illustrators from marginalized communities? Do you need to review and vet your collection? Who should do that?

What kind of diverse books are you lacking? Consider all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities\*, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.

*\*Diversity Rocks the Book subscribes to a broad definition of disability, which includes but is not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, chronic conditions, and mental illnesses (this may also include addiction). Furthermore, we subscribe to a social model of disability, which presents disability as created by barriers in the social environment, due to lack of equal access, stereotyping, and other forms of marginalization.*



## IDENTIFY DIVERSE BOOKS TO CONSIDER INCLUDING:

There are many lists of diverse books available on respected websites and social media. Check out:

- Diversity Rocks the Books annual list web link: [www.diversityrocksthebookholland.com](http://www.diversityrocksthebookholland.com)
- We Need Diverse Books web link: <https://diversebooks.org>
- Ask your local children's librarian!

Assemble the books for review. Purchase single copies or allow time to check them out from your library (or inter-library loan).

Assemble your local DRB team to review titles and decide. Team members should include: children's librarian, teachers, representatives from social services agencies (serving communities whose voices are not regularly included).

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERING A TITLE:

- Prioritize #OwnVoices titles which are written by an author and/or created by an illustrator who is a member of the marginalized group being depicted in the book.
- Look for new or recent publications.
- Check illustrations for stereotypes, tokenism, and invisibility.
- Check the storylines for who is centered and/or if the marginalized character must be "exceptional" or is always in need of "help".
- Assess the story for kid and teen appeal.

Start small. Identify a limited number of books to acquire for the first year. Make the selections so that the titles focus on intended grades, pre-K through 12.

Determine how many copies you want to purchase. Library sets? Classroom sets? Determine the cost of each set so that you can develop a fundraising strategy. (Note: Hardback copies of picture books last longer.)

## FUNDRAISING

What's your budget for supplementing your classroom/school/home library? Remember, every new title helps, do what you can and aim for more the next time.

How will you fund it? Institutional budget? PTO/PTA? Private donations? City/community regional foundations? Grants? from local businesses?

**Sample:** Fundraising Request





## GUEST READERS

The involvement via guest readers is a unique and powerful aspect of building a Diversity Rocks the Book program in your community. It is also one of the most popular with teachers, students, and guest readers themselves.

Recruit guest readers through your networks. Invite through your local chamber of commerce, business and community leaders (recruit from potential future funders).

Promote on social media, press releases, etc.

### Sample: Guest Reader Recruitment

Set clear expectations so that readers know what is expected of them (Example: Guest reader program running for how long? 1 month or up to school year? 15-30 minute visit to classroom, reading DRB selected books, preparation includes reading book in advance and reviewing tips on reading to children. When exactly are they available—what days of the week, mornings or afternoons?)

Notify schools that guest readers are available and provide info on how to request.

Scheduling: Depending on the size of your team of guest readers and how long you anticipate sending them into the schools, you'll need to track teacher requests and guest reader availability, so you can match them up. Be sure to collect all contact information. If your program grows beyond a manageable size, consider using a scheduling platform like Acuity Scheduling. [www.acuityscheduling.com](http://www.acuityscheduling.com).

- Send email notice to teacher and guest reader confirming the appointment.
- Send reminder email day before the appointment.
- Send follow-up email asking for their feedback.

Preparing the Guest Reader: Ask each guest reader to review the Read Aloud Tips and Dialectic Reading Prompts provided at <http://diversityrocksthebookholland.com/be-a-guest-reader>

Provide guest reader with a copy of the book to read in advance, or a link to a read aloud online.



## PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Be sure to promote the program with local media, with the school population, and with organizations that are providing guest readers.

Send out press releases and include write-ups in the weekly school newspaper. Make sure the PTO/PTA is aware of the project.

Use social media to promote as well: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Graphics give social media posts more traction, so use Canva.com to create easy and free graphics for the project.

**Sample:** Press Release

## DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

You will need documentation for future funding requests, so collect and save the following:

- Get lots of photos. Be careful of privacy restrictions on photographing children.
- Teacher feedback
- Guest Reader feedback
- Tally numbers of books purchased, guest readers involved, classrooms visited, number of students reached.