


Chapter 20

Supporting Teacher Candidates as Social Justice Change–Makers: A Faculty–Librarian Collaboration for Building and Using Diverse Youth Collections

Anne Homza

Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Boston College, USA

Tiffeni J. Fontno

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9667-7926>

Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Boston College, USA

ABSTRACT

Critical consciousness, teacher agency, intellectual freedom, and equity-informed practices are vital aspects of a collaboration between a faculty member and an educational librarian, whose shared goal is to support teacher candidates' capacity to use diverse children's literature to teach for social justice. In this chapter, teacher educator Homza and head librarian Fontno share ways to help teacher candidates use diverse children's literature to develop their own critical consciousness, explore issues of equity, and teach for social justice in their future classrooms. Grounding their work in conceptual frameworks, the authors discuss their positionalities, how the literature collection is built, and course activities that use diverse children's literature. Teacher candidates' reflections suggest that these efforts have an impact on their critical consciousness and capacity to engage in the challenging work of transformative pedagogy. The authors share implications for other teacher educators and librarians and questions to explore in future work.

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, Homza, a teacher educator, and Fontno, head librarian in a curriculum library, share ways to help teacher candidates (TCs) use diverse children's literature to develop their own critical consciousness, explore issues of equity, and teach for social justice in their future classrooms. The authors work in a school of education and human development in a predominantly White institution whose mission is to make the world more just. They have intentionally focused their work on how this aspirational goal might be advanced through the use of diverse children's literature in connection with the teacher education program's explicit themes: advancing equity and justice, promoting knowledge co-construction, inquiring into practice, and embracing care ethics. These themes support Homza and Fontno's collaboration across job title and race and have allowed them to create a collaborative space that embodies both critical consciousness and agency.

Homza and Fontno illustrate how the program themes are connected to conceptual frameworks that allow TCs to use diverse youth literature to develop the critical consciousness and agency necessary to become social justice change-makers. The authors view their collaboration as key in this effort: A well-developed curriculum library cannot promote equity and justice if TCs are not able to use these materials to disrupt inequitable practices. On the other hand, TCs will not develop the skills to effectively use children's literature for more socially just education without opportunities to explore a well-curated and wide-ranging collection.

Following a brief presentation of the program themes and the conceptual frameworks that undergird both their individual work and their collaboration, the authors show how they use diverse youth literature in their practice—Fontno in her librarianship, and Homza in her undergraduate foundations course—and discuss its impact on TCs. The authors conclude with implications of their work for teacher educators and librarians, and suggest areas for future research.

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Overarching Themes

An encompassing goal of the school of education's mission is to make the world more just, and much of the work explored here is situated within this aspirational goal. As Figure 1 illustrates, the teacher education program themes are embedded within a broad understanding of the school's mission; these themes establish the shared values of the program faculty and describe its conceptualization of key aspects of teaching, learning, and schooling. The emphasis on social justice is evident in the first program theme, "Advancing equity and justice," which acknowledges the political dimensions of teaching and the need for teachers to challenge society's inequities in order to promote the learning and life chances of *all* students, particularly those who have historically been marginalized. The four program themes in Figure 1 are integrated across all coursework and field-based experiences, in both theory and practice.

Librarian Conceptual Frameworks

Fontno, the head librarian, manages collection development and outreach for the Educational Resource Center (ERC), the school of education's curriculum library. In this position, she develops the collections,

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