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by

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Making Room for Social Studies, Through Read Aloud

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Dedication

Dedico este trabajo a todos mis alumnos y alumnas. ¡Qué cambien el mundo!

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Finally, I am humbled by the gratitude I feel towards my mom and my dad. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to my education for, at this point, at least 20 years of school.

Abstract

Making Room for Social Studies, Through Read Aloud

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

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Through this report, I offer a solution for a problematic gap that I observed in my school's curriculum: the absence of social studies. Grounding my understanding of the nature of this problem in the school's mission, I argue that based on research, this absence could actually interfere with our goal of inspiring children to create positive change in their communities in the future. I present data showing the effectiveness of read aloud as a pedagogical practice, and then I show the way in which structuring read aloud around meaningful social issues would actually make it more effective pedagogically over the course of the year. Finally, I outline the structure, materials, and lines of inquiry that teachers might use in a fourth grade context in order to incorporate a multicultural social studies curriculum through the read aloud time which we are allotted two to four times per week. Drawing on frameworks of multicultural education (Banks, 2004) and culturally-relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994), I demonstrate how the curriculum outlined fulfills the purposes desired. I hope that the adoption of this curriculum at my own school will enable the fourth grade's continued improvement in

our mission to prepare our students to be thoughtful, participatory citizens in their communities, and that this project might serve to spark similar ideas in other contexts.

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Introduction: My Story and the Purpose of this Paper

Last year was my first year teaching second grade at KIPP Austin Obras, a charter school located in South Austin. Every day when I walk into the school building, I cannot help but notice the school's mission, printed in giant letters on the walls. It reads, "KIPP Austin Public Schools (KAPS) believes that every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, has the right to an exemplary education. We will empower our students to thrive in and graduate from college, choose their paths, and positively impact their communities."

All the teachers in our school community, myself included, take this mission to heart. In no other job have I ever felt so impressed by the commitment and dedication of my colleagues. Our elementary school is new – this coming year we will found fourth grade – and thus still very much in the process of growing and making decisions about how best to support the mission in terms of curriculum and instruction. For example, the school district conducted extensive research and pilots before selecting the current elementary math and literacy curriculums. They purposefully selected programs with resources in both English and Spanish because our school features a 50/50 dual language model based on a "one language, one face" policy. In grades K-2, a Spanish-speaking and English-speaking teacher alternately lead and support instruction in the same classroom all day. In grades 3 and 4, students spend half of their school day in the Spanish classroom and half the day in the English classroom, with one teacher in each. Either way, students receive approximately two hours per day of literacy instruction in

each language as well as about two hours of math instruction, in a combination of the languages. In order to accommodate this curriculum, students attend for an extended school day.

I am hugely supportive of our school's dual language program and many of our curricular choices. At times, I also find myself noticing ways in which I believe we can improve. A consequence of the intense focus on literacy and math, for example, is that we only teach science three times per week, and we do not devote any time exclusively to social studies. Occasionally, our programs such as Number Corner might devote a month to the study of flags, which gives us a chance to point out countries on a map of the world. This past year, our second grade team took it upon ourselves to organize grade-level assemblies in celebration of Black History month and to explore family heritage. Such isolated activities, however, hardly represent the contextualized learning that makes the social studies so powerful.

My students repeatedly demonstrated both significant misunderstandings and immense curiosity about geography as well contemporary and historical social issues. For example, they evidenced much confusion about whether Texas is a city, state, or country, and when we read a story about Ruby Bridges, they were shocked to hear that the desegregation of schools had not happened hundreds of years ago but actually within my parents' lifetime! They asked me questions about it for days. As a teacher, I tried my best to answer their questions in the moments that presented themselves, but I felt saddened that our schedule did not provide room for students to explore their wonderings

in meaningful ways. I also felt irresponsible as I repeatedly failed to address critical issues in the preparation of our students for a “participatory democracy” (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 15). Last year, I wanted to dedicate appropriate time and conversation to these essential issues, but before I knew it, we were on to a new week and a new read aloud with a totally different topic. Although we had important learning goals for our kids during these different read aloud books (and incredibly well-written plans), the sequence of selections lacked cohesion, and our journey over the course of the year felt disjointed, even to me as a teacher.

I mentioned my concern about neglecting this important area of study to administrators. Some definitely shared my concern, and I received encouragement to incorporate social studies into other parts of the day, especially through reading selections. While this may have been possible in theory, our approach to lesson planning made it challenging in practice, at least in second grade. We use shared planning across the grade level, meaning that I received weekly texts for read aloud and the corresponding plans from another teacher. The expectation was that I implement those plans, so a purposeful selection would have required collaboration at the grade level. We were already struggling to find Spanish books of which we owned enough copies for each second grade teacher to use one. I felt that by insisting on an effort to be more selective with our choices of texts, I would just create more work for that planner. I did attempt to incorporate socially provocative texts into other times in the literacy curriculum when possible. However, these haphazard selections hardly consisted of the contextualized,

inquiry-driven, culturally relevant approach to teaching that makes for effective learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

I realized, however, that if approached through careful planning, the idea of incorporating social studies through read aloud holds a lot of potential. It would be ideal to designate time exclusively to social studies, but that change seems unlikely to occur in the immediate future. We receive our daily allotment of time to devote to subject areas from the district, and with the implementation of the curriculum priorities in math and literacy, not a lot of room for flexibility remains. (Perhaps in the future, however, that time will grow!) Even absent a separate block, however, we could find a timely solution by thoughtfully analyzing and responding to a deliberately selected body of texts. Choosing our books carefully and structuring larger units of inquiry around essential questions would allow us to incorporate meaningful goals and standards from social studies, while also achieving all the present aim of the current read aloud program. In fact, case studies of effective classrooms demonstrate that in the upper elementary grades, content integration across social studies and language arts may create the most effective use of time for the teacher as well as the most engaging experience for students (Field *et al.*, 2011).

Composing a potential annual outline and finding the appropriate texts became the center of this master's report. Before my suggestions of potential units and readings themselves, I provide an introduction that presents the theoretical and empirical basis for structuring the read aloud curriculum around social themes in the manner suggested. I

prepare this rationale constantly keeping in mind the two prongs of the school's mission: that is, to prepare students both to graduate from college and to positively impact their communities. I also write conscious of my position, as a teacher, as a person in power in a classroom and institution. Thus I need to consider carefully how my decisions send a message to students about what matters, what is possible, and what is true. Next year, I want to make space for my class to consider these questions, together.

Why Social Studies?

The disappearance of social studies from the American K-12 curriculum is a well-documented phenomenon in the years since the passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, which caused “ever-increasing pressure on educators and schools to focus on the content areas being tested” (Callahan & Muller, 2013, p. 2; Jennings & Rentner, 2006; Leming *et al.*, 2006). Even in schools where minutes of social studies were mandated by the state or district, time audits conducted by student teachers revealed that significantly less time was spent on social studies than required by law (Bailey *et al.*, 2006). In my own school, I surmise that the centrality of literacy and math to a college-preparatory curriculum as well as the complexities of integrating content across two languages led to the de-emphasizing of social studies. Far from being neutral, however, this absence begets consequences, especially cumulatively as students pass through the five years of elementary school that we offer at Obras.

The preparation of students for active engagement in a participatory democracy represents an explicit priority of American public schools since at least the mid-19th century (Callahan & Muller, 2008; Leming *et al.*, 2006). In particular, “through social science instruction, schools educate youth for citizenship and prepare them for political participation” (Callahan & Muller, 2008, p. 1). Research demonstrates a relationship between high school students’ enrollment in rigorous social studies coursework and their future civic engagement, as measured by voting, volunteering, and participation in

community organizations (Callahan & Muller, 2008). Existing data do tend to focus on the outcomes of high school course-taking in the social sciences; research that explores quantitative outcomes of elementary social studies appears limited. However, scholars documenting the decline of time and attention to social studies have raised concerns about “meeting state and national content standards, students not having the background knowledge to be successful in middle and high school grades, and the ability to pass the state high school exit examination” (Bailey *et al.*, 2006, p. 18). Indeed, in interviews, high school social studies teachers do reveal that since the implementation of NCLB, students come to them from elementary and middle school with fewer skills and less background knowledge that prepares them for success at the high school level (Callahan & Muller, 2008).

Educators who base their conception of a social studies curriculum on their own experiences may react negatively to its inclusion, if they think that it “focuses on the recitation of facts rather than on the development of critical thinking skills” (Callahan & Muller, 2013, p. 3). Sadly, a survey of elementary and middle school teachers found that the most frequently observed activities were textbook- and teacher-centered (Leming *et al.*, 2006). In contrast, scholars argue that “given its focus on the development and growth of human communities and on patterns of social dominance and renewal, the social science classroom lends itself to the development of students’ ability to question a premise, construct an argument, predict its outcome, and debate its merits” (Callahan & Muller, 2013, p. 3). In elementary classrooms, the study of these themes can take many

forms that demand students' active engagement, including discussion, debate, and role-play (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2012). Conceiving of social studies as this forum for participation on the part of students, I see a direct congruence between the higher-order thinking skills that Obras aims to teach students through its literacy curriculum and those fostered by well-designed social studies classes. Seen through this lens, the inclusion of social studies would support our goal of preparing all students for completion of college.

I could not find any research correlating elementary social studies with political outcomes later in life that might represent individuals' positive impacts on their communities. There is research, however, that examines the relationship between elementary social studies and achievement test scores. While achievement tests do not encapsulate the entirety of the transformative work that we are trying ultimately to achieve with our students, they may give an indication of how knowledgeable students are about civic issues. Individuals who possess more knowledge about the history and politics of the society where they live are more prepared to know effective ways to make a difference in their communities. Chudowsky & Chudowsky (2012) show that overall since 1998, 4th grade students' achievement test scores in civics slowly risen. However, they also points out that "sizable gaps persist in the civics achievement of students from different racial/ethnic groups," at all the grade levels they examined (4th, 8th, and 12th) (2011, p. 17).

These data are troubling because knowledge provides the foundation for effective civic and political community action. We want to ensure that our students are prepared to

act in these effective ways. Previous research indicates that the individuals who are most active civically (as measured by voting and volunteer behavior) are also the older, most affluent and highest educated members of our society (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2012). Meanwhile, a study contrasted the behavior of Latino and non-Latino ninth grade students and found that “non-Latino students had significantly more civics knowledge, were more likely to expect to vote, and were less likely to hold positive attitudes toward immigrant rights than were Latino students” (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2007, as cited in Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2012, p. 42). The researchers investigated the reasons behind these discrepancies and attributed them to “individual-level and school-level characteristics” such as “classroom environment” and pedagogy, including an absence of civics instruction in schools that serve majority Latino students (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2012, p. 42). The same report cites research by Comber (2009) that found that social studies coursework made a stronger impact for African-American and Latino students’ civic knowledge than it did for their white peers, as measured by their political interpretation skills.

A majority of our students identify as Latino and come from low-income backgrounds. What if by neglecting social studies as an area of instruction, we are reinforcing political trends that already favor whiter, wealthier citizens? Explicitly teaching to encourage our students’ present and future civic action speaks directly to the KAPS mission. The promising side of the data lies in the fact that quality instruction in schools demonstrates the potential for effecting positive outcomes. Only through

deliberately considering a social curriculum can we fulfill a school's responsibility to prepare students for participation in democracy. I react with fear to predictions that "deemphasizing these [social studies] programs at the local level... could result over the long term in the diminished civic and political involvement of a generation of citizens" (Callahan & Muller, 2013, p. 123).

The Importance of Social Studies for Dual Language

The rationale above provides strong support for the value of social studies education for all students. However, in the context of a two-way immersion program, we could argue that the urgency of teaching about social issues become even more salient. In addition to high academic achievement and biliteracy for all students, a commonly named goal of enrichment dual language education is cultural competence (Lindholm-Leary, 2005), sometimes referred to as “cross-cultural understanding” (Bikle, Billings, & Hakuta, 2004, p. 599). Two-way programs deliberately combine students from different linguistic backgrounds not only to provide competent language models for their peers in the target language, but also to foster an environment of biculturalism. How can we foster the development of cross-cultural understanding without an explicit focus on culture, and where is this study of culture more present but in the social sciences? This attention to culture is necessary if we are to claim that we make equal efforts towards achieving the three-fold goal makes dual language an additive approach to education.

Language is also relevant as we consider the capacities needed in order for our students to create positive change in their communities, as named by the KAPS mission. Individuals with high overall academic achievement and well-developed, balanced literacy in two languages are certainly poised to help effect such change. An individual with those skills in combination with an understanding of diverse cultures, however, is even more optimally positioned. As scholars in dual language education point out,

language is not the only characteristic differentiating English- and Spanish-speaking students and their families. Language is intimately tied to culture, and building cultural competence must take these differences into account. Furthermore, the differences operate in a society that privileges English, the dominant language, and subordinates Spanish. Sociolinguistic theory points out that “greater attention needs to be paid the language less likely to be developed and retained” (Bikle *et al.*, 2004, p. 594), in this case Spanish. If we approach dual language programs as if our only differences are linguistic, we in fact miss the deeper opportunity to help our students name and productively counter these prevalent but detrimental narratives that they encounter in their lives (Bikle *et al.*, 2004).

In our school, we maintain space for Spanish in fourth grade by giving it its own classroom. By nature of the school day and year, students receive half of their instructional time in Spanish. While I know that the societal prevalence of English means that it sometimes “infringes” on Spanish time, overall our teachers maintain a strong commitment to their language of instruction. Many deliberately conduct themselves as strong bilingual models for students; for instance, by engaging with colleagues in Spanish. The question becomes, when we acknowledge the existence of different languages in the school, do we also acknowledge the positioning of those languages in society? Do we help students deconstruct the hierarchy of language and culture that permeates our world? These conversations are essential as we work to incorporate social studies into a dual language program in a way that achieves *all* our

goals.

The Role of Read Aloud

Research in the teaching of reading convincingly supports the importance of read aloud as an invaluable component in a literacy curriculum. Numerous sources continue to quote the 1985 report issued by the U.S. Department of Education whose “simple declarations rang loud and clear: ‘The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children,’ [and] ‘it is a practice that should continue throughout the grades’” (as cited in Trelease, 2013, p. 4). Authors attribute the conviction behind this striking proclamation to research that demonstrates the positive effects of read aloud on various individual skills associated with success in reading and in school in general. For example, the frequency with which both parent and teachers read aloud to students is correlated with achievement tests scores not only in reading but also in other subjects (Trelease, 2013, p. 10). According to a review of the benefits of read aloud provided by Fisher *et al.* (2004), the practice positively affects students’ oral language development in both first and second languages, their concepts of print, and their understanding of the structure of both story and language itself. Numerous studies demonstrate a relationship between the growth in students’ vocabulary, both receptive and productive, and classroom read aloud (see Boyd, 2013).

Hearing language read aloud contributes to students’ independent decoding skills such as accuracy, rate, and fluency. For instance, Beverly, Giles and Buck (2009) studied the effects of various reading interventions across first grade classrooms: a control group,

a classroom that received only explicit phonics instruction, a classroom that received phonics instruction in combination with practice in “decodable text,” and a classroom that engaged in “authentic literature read aloud” (2009, p. 191). At the end of the semester-long study, “the Literature group made significant gains in all measures of fluency and was the only group to show a significant comprehension gain” (Beverly *et al.*, 2009, p. 200). The researchers did not anticipate this growth and emphasized that it occurred for students of all reading levels, whereas only struggling readers benefitted from the phonics interventions. In fact, they suggest that an emphasis on decoding may even be detrimental to the more fluent readers in a classroom. These results require careful consideration in light of data showing that teachers report pressure to abandon the practice of read aloud and the surrounding discussion in favor of activities that promote more “immediate, quantifiable results” (Worthy *et al.*, 2012, p. 309).

In reality, the data discussed above show that when implemented well, read aloud may well promote those quantifiable outcomes. However, researchers are pointing out that these gains do not occur equally across all classrooms and contexts. That is, the way in which individual teachers conceive of and execute read aloud varies considerably, and the different variations do not necessarily result in equal outcomes for students (Boyd, 2013). According to Beck and McKeown, a review of research shows that “the most effective read-aloud strategies are far from the most common ones” (2001, p. 11). While read aloud provides an optimal context for posing open-ended questions that foster students’ engagement with the “big ideas” of a text, many teachers rely on factual

questions that require students to “retrieve a quick answer” (p. 11). Such a questioning pattern is also problematic when we consider the goals of reading instruction more broadly and from a social perspective, rather than as discrete skills that can be “completed, mastered, and transferred” (Boyd, 2013, p. 19).

In *The Art of Teaching Reading*, Lucy Calkins describes the centrality of read aloud to holistic literacy instruction that focuses on making meaning. In her words, through reading aloud to children we “help them know what it is to lose themselves in the drama of a story,” and we “demonstrate to our children and...mentor them in the habits, values, and strategies of proficient readers” (2001, p. 56). That is, in reading aloud a teacher has the opportunity to model genuine engagement in a text and to “think aloud” about the mental work that she is doing beyond the words themselves in order that students eventually internalize these approaches and use them independently. This description aligns with Boyd’s (2013) description of effective read aloud as an “apprenticeship” into the world of reading. In this conception, teachers make explicit the motivation behind a read aloud to students. In the case of literature, that purpose might well be the enjoyment of reading for pleasure. Teachers also communicate that readers read for a wide array of purposes, and the habits, mindsets, and strategies that they bring to a particular reading depends largely on their purpose in that moment (Boyd, 2013).

If “it is the quality of the interaction that occurs during reading that results in positive effects, rather than just the storybook reading itself” (Boyd, 2013, p. 35), the logical next step is to make sure that the proposed read aloud contains the elements

identified as effective. According to these criteria, last year our school was already employing many effective read aloud practices. For instance, in their “model” of an effective elementary read aloud, Hoffman, Roser, and Battle suggest designating a particular, predictable time of the school day dedicated to reading aloud; “discussing literature in lively, invitational, thought-provoking ways;” rereading special texts; and providing opportunities for partner and group conversations to maximize students’ engagement (1993, p. 501), all of which we already prioritize. The same authors emphasize the importance of text selection and “offering a variety of response and extension opportunities” (p. 501). In particular, teachers should choose “quality” children’s literature that is “connected by genre or theme or topic,” because “literature organized into these units of study has been shown to greatly enrich the read-aloud experience and greatly add to the potential for student interest, independent reading, and personal connection” (p. 501).

Thus as my school aims to align our read aloud implementation with best practices according to research, we certainly have room for improvement in the latter areas. Approaching texts through thematic study that allowed students to construct knowledge around various subjects over time has the potential to increase both engagement and comprehension (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). For this reason, organizing our read aloud block over the course of the year around social themes would not only provide our students with exposure to important content which they are currently denied, but it would also enhance our literacy instruction. Consequently, this could be a high-

impact time of day to make conscious decisions about content and practice while requiring no change in the execution of the school schedule as outlined by the district. Every grade level at our school already possesses a designated read aloud time in its schedule, and read aloud already occurs in a whole-group context, so every student would benefit from the proposed curriculum. Finally, the research in support of the importance of read aloud means that the daily allotment of time is likely to remain in our schedule for the foreseeable future, making this a change that we have the potential to revise and build on for years to come.

Conceptions of Literacy

Professional development offered by my school and feedback provided to me as a teacher confirm that we see read aloud as an opportunity to model the thinking skills seen as important to be a successful reader (e.g., prediction, inference, envisioning), as described by Calkins (2001). The plans include example teacher think alouds to help students develop the targeted skills. The plans do not generally include questions that critically interrogate the text, however, such as wondering about “whose perspective is present in any given situation and whose is missing” (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 52). Thus, my proposal here requires not only a careful selection of content but also an adjustment in practice to accommodate a more critical perspective of what is meant by the act of reading.

For example, research into the effectiveness of read aloud appears useful if we take for granted the adequacy of measures such as standardized tests and decoding skills as our only barometers of our success as teachers. In the context of the mission I am trying to fulfill as an individual and as a teacher at KIPP, these measures do hold some meaning, since, for example, standardized tests for reading play an important role in a student’s eventual college application process. We must realize, however, that read aloud as executed in any given classroom (including my own) cannot be divorced from the context and values of the teacher, the school, the community, and the larger society. Moreover, claiming that reading as an isolated skill can indeed be measured by a

multiple-choice test unquestionably represents a certain theoretical position about the nature of literacy itself. It embodies what Street (2003) defines as the autonomous model of literacy. This “standard view” assumes that literacy consists of “technical and neutral skills,” and that improving literacy, in and of itself, will result in cognitive, social, and economic benefits for all people, “regardless of the social and economic conditions” that resulted in their “illiteracy” in the first place (2003, p. 77).

In contrast to the autonomous model stands the “ideological” conceptualization of literacy. Street (2003) explains that this view

posits that literacy is a social practice...; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge:...Literacy, in this sense, is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always ‘ideological,’ they are always rooted in a particular world-view and in a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others” (p. 78).

When I first contemplated the implications of this view of literacy for my own daily work as a teacher, I felt disconcerted. After all, if we work ten-hour school days at an institution designed explicitly to serve those whom society has historically marginalized, how could our vision for literacy simultaneously further that marginalization? However, if we maintain the conviction that pre-designed question-and-answer sessions lead unidirectionally to greater achievement, we inevitably side with those who “suggest that ‘literacy’ can be ‘given’ neutrally and then its ‘social’ effects only experienced afterwards” (Street, 2003, p. 78). Viewing literacy as a social practice, inseparable from the world, changes the way we think about reading and discussing books with children. That is, I realize that last year, when my approach to read aloud was supposedly

“haphazard” or “neutral,” I in fact inherently espoused a particular view of what it is to read – and conveyed that to my students. These considerations are especially important as we consider organizing much of the reading that occurs in a classroom around social themes. In particular, if teachers are “privileging a certain type of reading, either consciously or unconsciously, the students are learning something about reading” (Boyd, 2013, p. 35). If we want to communicate that many different types of people use reading for many different purposes, we should consciously model that variety in our planning.

I understand that discussing these theoretical considerations with elementary-age students feels out of reach. Luckily, as Bomer and Bomer (2001) point out, introducing a socially critical perspective into an existing literacy structure does not necessarily require substantial adjustments. As they describe it,

teaching critical concepts, especially in classrooms where talk about texts has already been rich, collaborative, and intentional, does not necessarily involve creating new classroom structures. Rather, becoming more critical involves bringing newly intensified lenses to the practices already in place. It involves bringing new terms to the discourse of reading in the classroom. We are interested in students being able to ask themselves new sets of questions within the classroom, developing new frameworks for reading literature, nonfiction, and the world” (p. 38).

From a practice perspective, the components of an effective read aloud as described by Calkins (2001) nicely overlap with aforementioned habits for teaching social critique described by Bomer and Bomer (2001). For example, reading aloud while learning to critique still involves demonstration, “making thinking visible,” and “conversation partners.” Instead of taking for granted the conditions and the events of a story, however, teachers within this framework emphasize the “habit of applying critical questions to

texts” and helping readers to “loosen their assumptions” (p. 51). For example, teachers ask questions about who has power in a story, the relationship between individuals and groups, and the concepts of fairness, justice, voice, silence, and representation.

It is important to note that applying this critical lens to text in no way precludes and even complements the types of “higher-order” thinking questions that traditionally make the think aloud and discussion components of read aloud so effective. For example, contemplating “how things got to be the way they are and possibly how they can be changed” (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 52) requires a complex understanding of cause and effect and perspective-taking that support academic achievement. It also, however, requires empathy and entails an invaluable human dimension. Similarly, critiquing a text does not preclude taking moments to appreciate literature for purely aesthetic reasons. I imagine that a more varied, complex repertoire of ways to approach texts would only serve to bolster my students’ mastery of academic skills and their understanding of the world.

Theoretical Framework

Once I became convinced that I needed to revise my teaching of read aloud in the upcoming school year, I confronted the particulars of how. For this purpose I drew on a number of pre-existing frameworks, most notably, the theories of multicultural education as outlined by Banks (1996, 2004) and culturally relevant pedagogy as described by Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009).

Multicultural education consists of “five dimensions” that educators can use “to guide the implementation and assessment of programs designed to respond to student diversity, and to incorporate transformative scholarship into the curriculum and pedagogy” (Banks, 1996, p. 336). These five dimensions are content integration, knowledge construction and transformation, an equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and an “empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 337). The elements build on each other and are all necessary for the implementation of multicultural education at a school level. Dimensions of whole-school culture such as “grouping and labeling practices” are further from my control and for the most part outside of this project. Fortunately, however, and in support of this framework, the whole-group read aloud structure requires no grouping or labeling of students based on reading skills. To the contrary, its reliance on dialogue means that many educators consider read aloud to be an optimal opportunity to ensure the inclusion of all voices in the classroom space (Worthy *et al.*, 2012).

Thus the inclusive nature of this classroom practice aligns well overall with Banks' framework. Other areas will be more salient in the explicit design of the units. However, since all the dimensions are interrelated, I need to consider all elements in order to evaluate the degree to which I am fulfilling the true potential of a multicultural approach. A balanced consideration of the multicultural education framework is important because historically "many school...practitioners have a limited conception of multicultural education, viewing it primarily as curriculum reform that involves only changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups" (Banks, 2004, p. 4). Without a commitment to the totality of a multicultural approach, a "restructuring" is sometimes achieved in a way that furthers the marginalization of particular groups of people. For instance, Ladson-Billings provides the example of textbooks whose main narrative threads go "uninterrupted and undisturbed" and meanwhile add text boxes or blurbs of information highlighting the achievements of minorities or women literally in the margins (2004, p. 53).

Some people argue that these text boxes achieve goals of content integration. To counter arguments of inclusion based on tokens of information, Banks developed a description of the levels of "approaches to curriculum reform" (2004, p. 15). These levels characterize the degree to which schools are implementing a multicultural education framework. They range from "the Contributions Approach," (Level One), where the focus is on "heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements" to "the Social Action Approach" (Level Four), where "students make decisions on important social

issues and take action to help solve them” (Banks, 2004, p. 15). Additionally, schools might adopt Level Two, the “Additive Approach,” in which curriculum is supplemented and diversified without any change in its structure, or Level Three, the “Transformation Approach,” in which the actual structure of the curriculum is adjusted and purposely viewed from the perspective of diverse peoples. These four levels are incredibly useful as a classroom teacher because they allow us to look at our content and practices and place ourselves on a continuum. Within the first two levels, we can take positive steps towards reform without radically adjusting the structure and conception at the heart of the curriculum. Beyond that level, however, we realize the inevitable link between the “what” and the “how” of our teaching.

An examination of the levels helps us understand the various dimensions of incorporating a multicultural education framework. Merely providing a list of books that includes diverse characters would only serve to further a narrative that incorporates “a veneer of diversity without any commitment to social justice or structural change” (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 53). The “knowledge construction” aspect of the multicultural education framework helps students “see through the veneer of inclusion to the ways in which diversity or multiculturalism is being manipulated to maintain and justify the status quo” (p. 55). The aspects of equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction stand out as especially important in the light of the aforementioned goal of cultural competence espoused by dual language education.

Likewise, the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy provide insight about practical questions to consider as I turn theory into action. For example, Ladson-Billings demonstrates that “teachers with culturally relevant practices help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities” (2009, p. 52) and that in culturally relevant classrooms, “the school curriculum becomes something that both students and teachers struggle with to create knowledge” (p. 83). Ladson-Billings developed her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy through an extensive ethnography of eight highly effective teachers of African-American students, as recognized by both the schools where they worked and the communities they served. The overlap between Banks’ theoretical framework and Ladson-Billings’ observations of these teachers is evident, and thus Ladson-Billings’ work provides a valuable portrait of what multicultural education might look like in the everyday life of an elementary or middle school classroom. Taking into account what these approaches share, I will try to create a plan for whole-class reading that incorporates a careful consideration of what will be presented as official “knowledge” in the school curriculum (content), a constant interrogation of the dominant narrative and what it leaves out (knowledge construction), and equitable pedagogical practices that focus on cooperation, inquiry, and agency on the part of students.

According to these frameworks, selecting content, including reading material, that feels relevant to and builds off of my students lived experiences is essential.

Simultaneously, I cannot make assumptions about those experiences and can only truly

know my students through the personal interaction that I do not yet have. Consequently, in some ways even formulating a plan feels contradictory. I must balance my awareness of the historical oppression of groups such as Latinos to which many of my students belong with my understanding of each child as an individual human being. I feel, though, like I can begin from a certain common ground: for example, and at this moment we all reside at least part of our lives here in Austin, Texas. Additionally, Bomer and Bomer (2001) point out children are naturally attuned to most issues of fairness, and for the most part exist in a world where adults make decisions and hold considerable power. Our shared identity as members of our classroom community can serve as a starting point for exploring the world together, through reading.

Proposed Curriculum

KAPS espouses five values, which we incorporate frequently into our everyday language and life. They are community, integrity, tenacity, curiosity, and courage. I used these values as a starting point as I brainstormed what themes I wanted my students to consider in the year to come. I added other units that would enhance instruction in other areas of the curriculum, such as writing. I know that another teacher could take the same five themes and go very different directions with them. I envision the units presented only as points of departure. They are possibilities that will be adjusted with input from my students and my team of fourth grade teachers. Perhaps after time and practice questioning authority and the legitimacy of the status quo, my students will begin to interrogate any assumptions that underlie these values – who knows!

For this reason, I left the timing of the units loosely planned. My teaching experience suggests that no matter how thought I put into planning, timing is almost impossible to anticipate. I can always easily fill a few “flex” days to reread texts or dive deeply into certain pages. Furthermore, research supports the value of incorporating relevant nonfiction texts such as newspaper articles or primary sources, even into studies that contain mostly fiction, in order to provide context and diverse perspectives (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). Thus building in time to make those connections seems wise. Finally, while the curriculum presented stems from my own interests and beliefs, I want to provide room for the students to exercise agency in the curriculum and recommend texts

of their own. This will allow us to explore issues that matter to them. I grounded my project in the KAPS values because they can act as a common conceptual foundation for students as we explore unfamiliar material. Upon suggestions that I ground my units in the standards as defined by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), I realized that revising the units to align with those specific aims certainly represents a goal for future consideration. As the year goes on, I will certainly revise units to make time for the inclusion of standards as frequently as time allows.

As teachers advocating for culturally relevant pedagogy, we often gravitate towards authors who “share our vision of social justice, and the values we see in the text match our own” (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 40). Texts that make visible the themes and ideas that we are teaching into can be useful as we introduce a critical lens. However, if the “discourse and the text always match harmoniously, might that not teach a sort of noncritical reading?” (p. 40). For that reason, a curriculum needs texts of all kinds, at times even ones that we consider “outrageously wrongheaded” (p. 40). If a healthy skepticism towards text is a regular part of the classroom conversation, students can critique these texts in a manner that could prove very useful to them in their own reading in the world. Had I cultivated this type of cautious apprehension last year, I might not have felt so conflicted about having to use texts from resources such as Reading A-Z. Thus, this year when I confront what I consider to be inflammatory or politically incorrect messages in the media or in the bookstore, rather than shelter my classroom, I can incorporate those messages and employ strategies of critical questioning: “only when

we stop censoring the texts we disapprove of can we help students take critical power over the texts they read, resisting authorial assumptions and recognizing and disrupting naturalization” (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 40).

For each unit, I provide a title, brief description, and estimate of the timing in the yearly calendar. I follow with a list of questions for inquiry. I do not anticipate the discussion of all of the questions within a single class, or even a single week. Rather, as we deepen our understanding of context over the course of a thematic study, we will probe deeper into the questions most relevant for that text. Of course, I also anticipate and welcome the inquiry of the students themselves (and may well encourage such reflection for homework!) I propose texts in English and Spanish. There are not always the same number of books suggested because the varying length and complexity of books means that an equal number of volumes will not mean that classes require equal amounts of time to complete that reading. Finally, underneath the outline of the unit, I wrote a few paragraphs relating its content and approach back to the framework for multicultural education outlined by Banks (2004).

When it comes to implementation, the nature of our dual language model means that I am not responsible for planning or executing read aloud during the English part of the day. Students receive half of their instructional day in Spanish in my classroom, either in the morning or afternoon, and spend the other half in their English class. However, I plan Spanish read aloud for the other fourth grade Spanish teacher as well as myself and have been encouraged to draw on the proposed curriculum as I wish. I have

been encouraged to share the framework and resources with the two fourth grade English teachers, with the understanding that they might not feel as comfortable with or as strongly about this content as I do. I understand this concern; I also hold the opinion that through conversation, we can bolster our skills of articulating our own views and guiding students towards understanding. My preliminary conversations with English teachers have been positive, and I am hopeful that we will all choose to adopt at least the outline of the year, with the understanding that teachers have the liberty to make adjustments as they see fit.

Of her own education, Ladson-Billings comments, “math and science were about ‘right answers.’ But social studies was a different animal altogether...The social studies classroom was a place to display my intellect. It was the place where I came alive” (2009, p. 86). I read this quotation and immediately recognize my own feelings about schooling at the elementary and secondary levels – and to this day. Perhaps for this reason I feel so personally invested in this project. My students deserve an education that exposes them to the world as it is and can be. Those who gravitate towards social issues deserve the joy of a place to display their intellect and come alive.

Unit 1: Literacy in the World (August – September)	
<p>This unit will serve as an introduction to a “new lens” of read aloud in comparison to what students are accustomed to. In it we will explore the role of reading and writing themselves, which lend themselves to many conversations about ideologies, access, and what kind of language society values. This unit will act as a fitting introduction to the year because it will overlap with our grade-wide initiative to encourage independent reading and writing both at home and at school.</p>	
Questions for inquiry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do people use reading and writing to pursue their individual goals? • How do people use reading and writing to create change in the world? • How do we become powerful readers and writers? Does school help us learn these skills? Do all people have equal opportunity to learn these skills? • Who decides what “good” writing looks like and what books we should read? Do all people have an equal say in that decision? • What reading and writing figures do we already admire? What kinds of readers and writers do we want to hold up as models in our room this year? • What is the relationship between the language itself (English/Spanish) and the types of reading and writing that I do? 	
Proposed Spanish Texts	Proposed English Texts
<p>Mora, P. (2002). <i>Una biblioteca para Juana: El mundo de Sor Juana Inés</i>. (C. M. Lee, Trans.). New York: Alfred K. Knopf. – Recounts the life story of Sor Juana Inés, including the barriers that she faced to education as a woman and the personal significance of the library that she eventually established. Additional resource: http://www.los-poetas.com/l/sor.htm</p> <p>Jiménez, F. (1996). <i>Cajas de carton: Relatos de la vida peregrina de un niño campesino</i>. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. – In this collection of short stories, Jiménez tells of his childhood as a migrant farm worker in California and Arizona. He had to exert tremendous effort</p>	<p>Brown, M. (2007). <i>My name is Gabito: The life of Gabriel García Márquez</i>. China: Luna Rising Books. – An imagined first-person narrative recalling the life of García Márquez that focuses on the potential of writing to create and transform the world through art and imagination.</p> <p>Winter, J. (2009). <i>Sonia Sotomayor: A judge grows up in the Bronx</i>. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. – This biography traces Sotomayor from childhood, through her education at Princeton, to her nomination as the first Latina Supreme Court justice. It provides opportunities to consider the significance of education in her life and why her college experience was different from her</p>

Unit 1 (continued)

<p>ol (because he missed so much instruction, and because he was punished for speaking Spanish) yet he eventually attended college and became a professor.</p> <p>Lázaro, G. (2014). <i>Gabriel García Márquez: Gabito</i>. Malaysia: Lectorum Publications, Inc. – The life of Gabriel García Márquez, written in verse. Students will compare and contrast the way Brown and Lázaro capture the essential life events of García Márquez in their works and contemplate how it is that the same “true” story has multiple versions.</p> <p>Brown, M. (2015). <i>La manta de Maya</i>. New York: Children’s Book Press. – Tells the story of a child’s blanket that eventually becomes a book that she reads to her own children, transmitting her story over generations.</p>	<p>peers.</p> <p>Ryan, P. M. & Sis, P. (2012). <i>The dreamer</i>. New York: Scholastic, Inc. – In this book, we learn of the abuse Neruda suffered in his childhood as well as the bullying he received from other children for his shyness. He couldn’t escape the pull of the written word, which helped him confront the injustices of his society and his own life to become one of the most renowned poets in the world.</p> <p>Winter, J. (2005). <i>The librarian of Basra: A true story from Iraq</i>. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Inc. – A true and recent story about an Iraqi woman’s organization and maintenance of a secret library in a time of war. This book reflects the importance of literacy for peoples across the world.</p> <p>Gilman, J. (1993). <i>Something from nothing</i>. New York: Scholastic, Inc. – Like <i>La manta de Maya</i>, this picture book tells the story of a child’s blanket that deteriorates over the years until it eventually “becomes” a story. Students examine address the power of the word in family and personal experience. They can also examine similarities and the differences between similar plots as told by Gilman (1993) and Brown (2015).</p>
<p>Additional Resources</p>	
<p>Mora, P. (1996). <i>Confetti: Poemas para niños</i>. (Q. Fernández & P. Mora, Trans.). New York: Lee & Low Books. – The poems of this book will be used to ignite our passion for words as begin this study and throughout the year. In particular, “Palabras libres como confetti” speaks to the power of words, in both languages, to “make us free.”</p>	

This unit addresses both the content integration and knowledge construction aspects of the Banks’ (2004) theoretical framework. In particular, reading about the lives

of renowned writers will help us understand that reading and writing do not occur in isolation but rather are directly related to their social and cultural context. This contextualization applies to our own lives as well as those of famous authors.

As I contemplate Banks' spectrum of curriculum reform, I realize that emphasizing so strongly the power of words at the beginning of the year may send the message that words are "enough" – that we do not need to take the final step towards the highest level of reform, social action. Hopefully understanding this concern will allow me to illuminate the way in which reading and writing can themselves be responses to issues of injustice that we notice in the world. Reading is a crucial way through which we inform ourselves about both historical and contemporary issues from multiple perspectives. Teachers sometimes conceptualize books as ways that children map out and make sense of their world by comparing them to "mirrors" and "windows." Some texts reflect the world as we know it (mirrors), and some texts give us a glimpse into the lives of others (windows). Through this study of literacy, my students and I will approach books with the understanding that they hold that power, and we will also consider in what ways writing itself can be a form of action, whether it takes the form of art or more direct political response. Conceiving of reading and writing this way will provide a basis for why the discussions around our shared reading in the coming year are so important, as well as for why we are trying to improve as writers. As we go forward throughout the year, we will read and write in response to the world we observe.

Unit 2: Our Relationships – Community and Integrity (September – October)	
<p>By focusing on families and friend groups, the most intimate and immediate communities to which we belong, this unit will allow us to focus on how our actions affect the people around us. We largely read fiction and wonder about how characters and their stories can influence our ideas and actions in our own lives. Also, we use this time to become more attuned to external messages that we constantly receive about what families look like and how they operate.</p>	
<p>Questions for inquiry</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do we need family and friends, as human beings? What matters to us in our life with our loved ones? • How do children and adults have different experiences in the context of families and friend groups? • What are our options when we feel like we are being treated cruelly or unfairly within a group? What about when we feel threatened from outside? • Do all families (and groups of friends) look the same? How does the media (what we see on TV or in movies) influence our idea of what a family or friendship “should” look like? What do we do with the messages we receive? 	
Proposed Spanish Texts	Proposed English Texts
<p>Ryan, P. M. (2004). <i>Yo, Naomi León</i>. New York: Scholastic, Inc. – Naomi has always grown up with her grandmother, and when her mother returns after a long absence, it upends her life and causes questions about the relationship between parents and children.</p> <p>Anzaldúa, G. (1993). <i>Amigos del otro lado</i>. Hong Kong: Children’s Book Press. – A girl in a Texas border town makes friends with an undocumented boy and must defend him from bullies and eventually la migra. Raises the issue of the lengths we will go to for friends and about issues of inclusion and exclusion.</p> <p>Lipp, F. (2007). <i>Fátima</i>. New York: Mondo Publishing. – In this story, classmates begin to make fun of a Muslim</p>	<p>Herrera, J. F. (2000). <i>The upside-down boy</i>. San Francisco, CA: Children’s Book Press. – A boy faces challenges when his family finally settles down and he begins to attend school. His teacher and family help him adjust. Through the lens of the author’s note provided at the end, we will discuss students’ and teachers’ roles in constructing a school community.</p> <p>Blume, J. (1972). <i>Tales of a fourth-grade nothing</i>. New York: Penguin Books. – An older brother feels constantly annoyed by his little brother’s actions and undervalued by his parents. This book can open a discussion about the aspects of being a child that are hard for adults to understand.</p>

Unit 2 (continued)

American girl wears hijab for show and tell. A fellow student who at first laughs is forced to reconsider his opinion – a lesson that even if we are wrong at first, we can reexamine the situation and change our minds.	
Additional Resources	
Other books that could lend themselves to some of these questions: Dahl, R. (1988). <i>Matilda</i> . London: Jonathan Cape. Patterson, K. (1977). <i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> . New York: HarperCollins. MacLachlan, P. (1985). <i>Sarah, plain and tall</i> . New York: HarperTrophy.	

This unit allows me to incorporate not only elements of content integration but also aspects of knowledge construction and prejudice reduction. My experience suggests that children come to school with well-formed ideas in their heads about what constitutes both families and friendships (for example, that families consist of a mother, father, and two siblings that love each other, or that girls “should” play with girls and boys with boys). As Bomer and Bomer point out, observing the “stereotype” of the American family too ubiquitously “can make people feel that their lives aren’t good enough. It can also make people think that *other* people’s lives aren’t right” (2001, p. 35). In order to decide what we truly consider to be right and good, we must have exposure to ways of doing things different than our own and evaluate them according to our own values. Books, including fictional literature, can be a meaningful way to gain this exposure.

Reading stories of characters from different backgrounds than our own and empathizing with those characters can engender greater acceptance of people with different lifestyles. Although we are reading about fictional characters, Banks’ conception of the work of prejudice reduction is still quite applicable. Furthermore,

when we are more conscious of the way our knowledge is constructed through the various media representations we view and receive, we are able to recognize when these images might not be accurate. We may be in a better position to counter stereotypes using our own reason and to speak out about ways in which our story challenges the dominant narrative.

The content integration of various cultural groups is not as apparent in this unit. Fourth grade teachers desire an opportunity to read grade level “classics” or “favorites.” This desire is itself an opportunity to discuss knowledge construction with students. It is not a coincidence that most of the characters in “perennial favorites” come from a particular ethnic and cultural background. What does it say that only certain types of characters are supposed to embody the best of “children’s literature?” What is the role of minorities in their stories, and what does their centrality to the story (or lack thereof) say about whose story gets told the most in our schools and libraries?

Unit 3: Our Larger Communities (November – December)	
Based loosely on the KAPS value of community, this unit will explore, literally and figuratively, our place in the world. As a part of this unit, we will study maps and emphasize the geographic and numeric scale of the particular community we are discussing. I anticipate this aspect of the unit will provide crucial background knowledge for the year since previous conversations with my students indicate that they have not received this foundational knowledge.	
Questions for inquiry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What communities do I belong to? How are they related to each other? (city, state, national, and global communities) • When do I feel welcome in communities? How do I know when I belong? • How can many different voices and opinions coexist in a community? What happens when members of the same community disagree? • Why do certain people (or certain types of people) get excluded from communities? What can and should we do if we see that happening? • What is the relationship between place and people? Are communities tied to a place? Can I be a part of a community far away? • What is the relationship between a community and the language we speak? 	
Proposed Spanish Texts	Proposed English Texts
<p>Brown, M. (2004). <i>Me llamo Celia Cruz</i>. Huizhou, Guangdong, PRC, China: Luna Rising Publishing. – An imagined first-person account of the life of Celia Cruz. Her story of how she overcomes discrimination to become the “queen of salsa” also describes how she feels that she simultaneously and fiercely belongs to both Cuban and American communities.</p> <p>Ada, A. F., & Zubizarreta, G. M. (2011). <i>Nacer bailando</i>. New York: Atheneum Readers. – The fictional story of Margie, a ten-year-old girl from Texas, resents having to help her cousin Lupe, who recently arrived from Mexico, adjust to life in a new school. Since Lupe only speaks Spanish and faces other cultural barriers to acceptance by her classmate, this book provides an opportunity</p>	<p>Smith, D. J. (2002). <i>If the world were a village</i>. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. – Proposes a hypothetical situation in which the world were one village, and then gives the number of inhabitants of various ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, nationalities, linguistic backgrounds, etc. This work will allow us to compare our lives in Texas to the majority of lives on a global scale.</p> <p>Hollander, J., Ed. (2004). <i>Poetry for young people: American poetry</i>. New York: Scholastic Inc. – This compilation of poetry that aims to capture the American identity presents examples with themes such as freedom and independence. It will help us address questions about what perspectives get</p>

Unit 3 (continued)

<p>to discuss the role of language and culture in creating community among people.</p> <p>Robleda, M. (2004). <i>Paco: Un niño latino en los Estados Unidos</i>. Miami, FL: Santillana USA Publishing Company. – This migration story boasts a happy ending and could be seen as oversimplifying many experiences. It represents an opportunity for practicing our critical reading skills.</p>	<p>represented most strongly in the “America” held up as the idea: which parts resonate with us and which we want to push against.</p> <p>Adams, S., & Murdoch, D. (2003). <i>Texas</i>. London: Dorling Kindersley. – Reading this traditional nonfiction book on Texas will allow us to gain valuable cultural knowledge while also questioning whose perspective gets the most weight in this type of text.</p>
<p>Additional Resources</p>	
<p>Johnston, T. (1996). <i>My Mexico~México mío</i>. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons. – Beautiful bilingual poetry describing features of the Mexican landscape</p> <p>The following list provides recommendations of numerous quality books explicitly addressing community for children of different ages. I will use it to provide numerous options for related independent reading.</p> <p>https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=151</p>	

Through content integration (Banks, 2004) that includes characters similar to many of our students in geographic location and cultural background, our class will work to define what communities we are a part of on many scales. This will also address knowledge construction through an examination of the dominant narrative; when we examine “authoritative” nonfiction books on Texas, are they truly objective? Does the author emphasize one voice over others? We can examine texts with the understanding that every author makes decisions about what to include and what to leave out. Similarly to the last unit, we can incorporate an aspect of prejudice reduction through naming how the dominant narrative stereotypes certain groups of people, and making efforts to move beyond it.

Unit 4: The Civil Rights Movement – Valuing Courage and Tenacity (January – February)

Previous conversations with my students indicate that America’s Civil Rights movement of the 1950s-60s represents a topic of much curiosity among our students. However, many profess the misconception that the movement for Civil Rights consisted of two brave stands by Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and our study of the issues often conveys the idea that the fight for civil rights is no longer needed and has thus come to a close the U.S. society. Reading stories about diverse people struggling towards diverse ends will help students realize that rather than an isolated incident, the story of the Civil Rights movement contains that of many different groups adopting many different strategies over a long period of time. Studying both the well-known heroes and the now lesser-known leaders (including allies of the movement) will help us contemplate our own role in today’s world.

Questions for inquiry

- What do we mean by “Civil Rights?” What were people fighting for during this time in history?
- What types of actions did people take in support of their rights?
- What were the major accomplishments of the Civil Rights movement?
- Which different kinds of people were involved in different types of activity?
- Which individuals have received recognition (in the history books, in society) for the successes of the Civil Rights movement? Why do the successes of others not receive as much attention? What is the relationship between group and individual action?
- Is the Civil Rights movement over? Where do we observe a need for continued action in our world today?

Proposed Spanish Texts

Tafolla, C. (2008). *¡No es justo! La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia*. New York: Scholastic, Inc. – This is the amazing story of Emma Tenayuca, who led a historic strike of pecan workers in pursuit of fair wages. This lesser-known (to the wider society), female protagonist took meaningful action in pursuit of Mexican American rights in the 1920s.

Brown, M. (2010). *¡Sí se puede!* (C. Valencia, Trans.). China: Harper Collins. This account of the 1960s founding of the National Farm Workers Association and then the United Farm Workers union

Proposed English Texts

Tonatiuh, D. (2014). *Separate is never equal: Sylvia Mendez and her family’s fight for desegregation*. New York: Abrams Book for Young Readers. – This book tells the story of Sylvia Mendez, whose parents brought a lawsuit against the state of California challenging the segregation of white and Mexican American children. The case was a landmark case and set a precedent on which the Supreme Court relied when it ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Conkling, W. (2011). *Sylvia & Aki*. New York: Tricycle Press. – This book tells the

Unit 4 (continued)

<p>includes the important role played not only by Cesar Chavez but also by Dolores Huerta.</p> <p>Cohn, D. (2002). <i>¡Sí, se puede!</i> (S. Franco, Trans.). El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press. – This story tells the story of a woman who “was a leader in the victorious Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Campaign in April 2000” (p. 30). Through a study of the actions of Dolores Sánchez, on whom the book is based, we can consider actions available to us for continuing the struggle for civil rights today.</p> <p>Krull, K. (2003). <i>Cosechando esperanza</i> (F. I. Campoy & A. f. Ada, Trans.) Orlando: Libros Viajeros Harcourt, Inc. – In contrast to the other story, this biography of César Chavez does not even mention Dolores Huerta, thus allowing for an excellent conversation about how “the story” becomes so.</p>	<p>story of Sylvia Mendez, from the</p> <p>Pinkney, A. D. (2008). <i>Boycott blues: How Rosa Parks inspired a nation.</i> – In beautiful verse, this book tells the story of Rosa Parks and the subsequent bus boycott. Because of the emphasis on the participation of so many inhabitants over many hard months, rather than only the often-told incident when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus, this book provides a powerful context within which to discuss the power of groups and individuals.</p> <p>Lord, B. B. (1984). <i>In the year of the boar and Jackie Robinson.</i> New York: HarperCollins. – A Chinese girl immigrates to New York City and at first struggles to adapt to her new home because of linguistic and cultural barriers. She begins to feel more at home as she follows the struggles of Jackie Robinson, whose story reminds us that people in our country fought for civil rights in all areas of life, not only on buses and in formal protests.</p> <p>Rubin, S. G. (2014). <i>Freedom summer: The 1964 struggle for rights in Mississippi.</i> New York: Holiday House. – This amazing nonfiction text incorporates primary sources and photographs as it tells of the diverse group of people who participated in the effort to register Black Mississippians to vote in the summer of 1964.</p>
<p>Possible Extensions</p>	
<p>Obama, B. (2010). <i>Of thee I sing: A letter to my daughters.</i> New York: Alfred A. Knopf. – A short, illustrated letter from President Obama to his daughters. Why might even the president of the United States need to assure his daughters that they “belong?”</p> <p>Soto, G. (2003). <i>Cesar Chavez: A hero for everyone.</i> New York: Aladdin Paperbacks. – A biography written in traditional “biography style,” narrating Chavez’s life in chapters.</p>	

Content integration is essential to the goal of aligning this unit with the framework for multicultural education. When this content feels “close to home” and relevant to students’ lives, it holds the potential to be incredibly inspiring. The rich resources include significant nuance and detail allow us to complicate the idea of the Civil Rights Movement, and luckily there are many excellent children’s books available to help pursue these goals.

Unit 5: Legends, Fables, and Folktales (March – April)	
<p>This unit will coincide with our second narrative writing unit of the year, which will focus on folktales and legends. My experience last year suggests that we need to invest time immersing ourselves in the reading of this genre in order to understand its richness if we hope to inspire meaningful writing. Thus, part of the rationale for this unit lies in the connection between reading and writing that is at the heart of a strong literacy program. This is not to say, however, that they are irrelevant to a social studies curriculum. Oral stories that survive generations often encapsulate a group’s belief about their origin or the origin of phenomena important to their everyday life. Sometimes they reflect “traditional” and therefore revered ways of living and being. Finally, in a pluralistic society, the folktales of diverse cultures must coexist (and, sometimes, compete). An examination of which stories prevail across contexts versus in smaller pockets of society can reveal the larger power dynamics at play.</p>	
<p>Questions for inquiry</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do fables and folktales, though often fantastical, help us understand the world as it actually is? • What legends do you hear at home? Do they resonate with your experience? • Whose legends become legendary in mainstream culture? Do popular legends and folktales resonate with your experience? • How do folktales reflect the geography of the people who tell them? • Do you notice any commonalities between folktales that are tied to the Spanish language, or the English language. 	
Proposed Spanish Texts	Proposed English Texts
<p>Ada, A. F. (1997). <i>La lagartija y el sol</i>. (R. Zubizarreta, Trans.). New York: Dragonfly Books. – A Mexican folktale about a lizard who has to go on a quest to bring back the sun after darkness envelops the world.</p> <p>Álvarez, J. (2000). <i>Las huellas secretas</i>.</p>	<p>Keats, E. J. (1965). <i>John Henry: An American Legend</i>. New York: Randomhouse LLC. – Tells the story of an African American railroad legend. Shows the origination of folktales in more recent as well as ancient times.</p>

Unit 5 (continued)

<p>New York: Dell Dragonfly Books. – A tale about secret women who live in the water off of the Dominican coast and sneak in to land at night.</p> <p>Anzaldúa, G. (1997). <i>Prietita y la llorona</i>. New York: Children’s Book Press. – A South Texas version of the traditional Mexican tale that will hopefully inspire my students to share versions of the myth that they have heard in their own families and communities in order to contemplate how legends can indeed shape our outlook on the world.</p>	<p>Martínez, R. (2010). <i>Once upon a time: Traditional Latin American tales</i> (D. Unger, Trans.). New York: Harper Collins. – This bilingual collection of folktales contains English and Spanish.</p> <p>McDermott, G. (1972). <i>Anansi the spider: A tale from the Ashanti</i>. New York: Henry Holt & Co. – A lively African folktale about a mischievous spider.</p> <p>**Still needed: I would love to include legends and folktales from an even greater diversity of origins, including Asian or Native American folktales. I am still developing this particular area of the curriculum in response to searching I continue to do and recommendations I receive from other educators.</p>
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In addition to addressing diverse voices and perspectives, through this yearly plan I am hoping to appeal to students who favor a wide variety of reading preferences. Legends and folktales that include in the experience elements of the impossible fill an important role in that regard. Directly addressing folktales and what they represent to cultures around the world provides legitimacy to an alternate way of knowing in a way consistent with both knowledge construction and an equity pedagogy (Banks, 2004). They also provide a valuable lens through which to study a particular group’s norms and values: who we typify as villains, for instance.

By providing equal weight to folktales from a diverse range of sources, we achieve the goal of content integration. By discussing how legends and folktales trickle down into what is considered normal in mainstream society, we address the goal of

knowledge construction. Identifying how we might achieve the highest level of curricular reform, acting in response to what we observe, is perhaps not as easy with this type of unit. However, once students could brainstorm the ways that these legends are perpetuated in our culture, they might express discontent that certain types of stories appear to be valued over others.

Unit 6: What do we want to know? Curiosity (May – June)	
<p>We often come to books with pre-existing notions of “appropriate topics” for formal writing. Also, we always bring our background knowledge to books, concepts and “facts” that we think we are sure of. Through reading texts that challenge our idea of “important writing,” we can learn to actively seek answers to any question that matters to us. Through reconsidering our knowledge once we receive additional information, we can come to a deeper understanding the way history is told and handed down. For example, we can examine the relationship between power in society and the ability to lay claim to certain achievements. Through this unit, we hope to realize all that we still do not know.</p>	
Questions for inquiry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions can literature answer for us? What questions can nonfiction answer for us? • Do nonfiction books always tell the whole story? Do they consist only of facts? • Why is curiosity one of our school values? • Where do we go for “the truth?” 	
Proposed Spanish Texts	Proposed English Texts
<p>Deedy, C. A. (2009). (C. de la Torre, Trans.). <i>14 vacas para América</i>. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers. – This book tells the story of the Maasai tribe’s gift of 14 cows for America following the September 11th tragedy. In the afterword by the leader of the tribe, he explains his vision for a world where people care for each other across borders.</p> <p>**Again, I am leaving room in this particular area to incorporate resources that I find throughout the year and that I anticipate will resonate with my particular group of students.</p>	<p>Abdul-Jabbar, K., & Obstfeld, R. (2012). <i>What color is my world? The lost history of African-American inventors</i>. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. – In this book, we learn of the important role played by African-American scientists in the invention of countless items that we use every day. Through a fictional story interspersed with biographical excerpts regarding important African-American scientific figures, the relationship between power and the way in which history gets recorded in print and in popular memory.</p>

Unit 6 (continued)

	Murphy, G. (2007). <i>How loud can you burp?</i> New York: Scholastic, Inc. – This nonfiction text addresses science and anatomy of the human body in a question-and-answer format. While it is undoubtedly rooted in humor, it lays the foundation for an understanding that no question is too small or too silly: we can pursue answers to what interests and perplexes us through research and reading.
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After a year of reading and discussing, this unit challenges students to exercise independence in generating and answering their own questions. They will have the opportunity to recommend and defend their suggestions of texts for whole-group use. Authentic self-directed inquiry is a logical culmination of a year of read aloud based on Banks' framework. In order to achieve what Banks calls the highest level of curricular reform, that is, in order for students to recognize and act on issues that they genuinely care about, they need to identify and educate themselves on those issues. This inquiry represents a powerful opportunity for the teacher to surrender power and allow for student collaboration and initiative, consistent with practices of both an equity pedagogy (Banks, 2004) and culturally relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Conclusion

From the perspective of a classroom teacher, instituting this type of curriculum holds promise for many reasons. It does not require any more resources or daily preparation than any read aloud curriculum. It is clear, purposeful, and goal-driven. What will need adjustment from a teacher perspective are the overall approach and expectations. In a socially conscious read aloud, we retain all the goals that we ever have as a teacher of literacy in terms of our students' engagement and their growth in skills such as comprehension and vocabulary. The development of these skills is essential towards our pursuit of the KAPS mission to prepare students to thrive in and graduate from college. However, those factors become only one piece of the puzzle. We integrate social content in order to create a truly meaningful experience for our students, one which lets them use literacy to explore and act on issues of relevance to their lives. I can never be sure which issues will be of authentic relevance to which students. I can, however, model my own active, constant, and critical interpretation of "the word and the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 1) in a way that seems inspiring and inviting. This piece of the puzzle is essential in order to prepare our students to meaningfully impact their communities.

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