

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

“Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn” Podcast Episode 19 – October 2018

Title: *Moving Linguistically & Culturally Diverse Texts into the K-8 Classroom*

SPEAKERS

JO	Julia Osteen	Technology Integration Specialist, Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation
JF	Jeanne Gilliam Fain	Associate Professor of Education and the lead faculty for English Language Learning Program, Lipscomb University’s College of Education

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INTRODUCTION:

JF: We don't want to read the same old boring books. Nobody wants that. Students want to read things that are new and current especially with this whole push of social media and our kids being excited about things that are new. Books need to reflect that newness. And then you can sort of have that excitement about something that's new.

It's really important that we bring books in the classroom, where kids are excited about it and especially our middle schoolers that are starting to develop their own tastes. And they sort of can judge a book, and decide what they want to read it or not.

For me, reading new books is exciting, new and I'm learning something for the first time and sort of gives students the opportunity to delve deeper.

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

Today's topic is: “Moving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Text into the K-8 Classroom.” We'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic as well using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #VoicesMatter. My name is Julia Osteen and I'm the Technology Integration Specialist for the Ayers Institute. Participating in our conversation today is Dr. Jeanne Gilliam Fain of the College of Education at Lipscomb University.

JO: Welcome!

JF: Thanks for having me.

EPISODE BODY:

JO: So I'm really excited for us to talk about this topic today. And I'm just wondering what those things are that teachers need to consider, as they think about bringing in linguistically and culturally diverse texts?

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JF: Well it's really critical that all students vividly see themselves within the literature. All students need to see authentic representation of culture, language, and diverse stories. They need to see their stories; and they need to see, you know, they need to see themselves in the illustrations. They need to see themselves in the actual stories.

So, I just think it's really important that we take that inclusive point of view as we're thinking about all of our students.

JO: I know that you've brought some examples with you today. And I'd like for us to maybe focus on some examples of the poetry that you've brought.

JF: Well, so, poetry is really important in the curriculum. Poetry is a genre that is taught K-8. And so, there's all kinds of really great books out there that we want to highlight. I'm going to start with books that we would use in middle school. Typically we have- we don't always start with middle school and I just think like the important place to start.

In particular, Nikki Grimes book *One Last Word* is a book that actually has short vignettes and has short little poems. So there's not a lot of text for students who are learning English as a second language. They can have an opportunity to sort of experience a high quality text, but with not so much print on a page and in terms of the wording and in terms of the way she has framed. I mean, this is a collection of powerful poems she's actually written them as a response to poems that come from the Harlem Renaissance. So you'll see a poem that was selected from the Harlem Renaissance, and then Nikki writes a response and this is really powerful that lots of our middle schoolers could just maybe make those connections.

Another book that I think is really important is a book that Margarita Engle wrote. Margarita Engle had been around for a while. She writes poetry. She has novels and picture books and she actually has this amazing novel of the *Zoot Suit Riots (Jazz Owls: A Novel of the Zoot Suit Riots)*. And so there's all kinds of violence, sort of this whole issue of race. And actually there's a whole, there's actually a lot of discrimination and some troubling things within this book. It would make an amazing read aloud and I would definitely be a great book for middle school readers.

Okay, moving on to some of the picture books that are and all these books are recent to like 2017-2018 because it's really important. We're using current books in the classroom. This particular book *BookJoy, WordJoy* by Pat Mora and illustrated by Raúl Colón. Is just a wonderful little collection of poems about books in the library. In particular, she has a poem about library magic and it starts off, "'Vamos! Let's go to the library.' Tomas says to his family. He shows them his favorite books and his cozy reading nooks." So it's just a joyful positive powerful book that shows off, sort of, the Spanish language. And it definitely would be something really thoughtful for students to look at.

So a lot of our students don't see poetry as fun. They see it as boring. And they see it as something that's really troubling and hard for them and one Felipe Herrera who was the poet laureate of the US from 2015 to 2017 has written two amazing books one this sort of more towards for middle schoolers and then one that you could use in a primary classroom. But he's got this book called *Jabberwalking* and he says this comes from the book jacket. "Can you walk and talk at the same time? What about Jabberwalk? Can you write and draw and walk and journal? All the same time?" And in this particular book they- the font is used in very creative ways and each page is different. I mean there's even a page that says, "You did not have to know where you're going, but what you're saying." And then you can see some kinds of dialogue and then the font is moving. So if you're looking for a creative way to get kids excited about poetry, I definitely see *Jabberwalking* as a book that a lot of students might maybe make a connection with.

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And then finally the last one in terms of poetry is this book called Imagine. And I love it so much because Juan Phillipe Herrera writes again this particular one and he talks about imagining what you might be when you grow up, but he puts his own personal spin on it. Like he has to learn English as a second language, he has to learn all kinds of different things and sort of. His story is integrated in the pages where he actually helped his mom with the chickens, and he had never seen a concrete school before. And you know this whole idea of wondering whether he was going to learn how to read and speak in English. And just a really powerful book about imagination and seeing yourself in school.

JO: That Jabberwalking book that's a really interesting book cover that just really grabbed my attention with the different colors on it. And all of that could see that being really intriguing my kids.

JF: Yeah, it's really important that we bring books in the classroom, where kids are excited about it and especially our middle schoolers that are starting to develop their own tastes. And they sort of can judge a book, and decide what they want to read it or not. And the front page sort of reminds me of tie dye, sort of that tied, 70's vibe in terms of the colors that are used and it just and there's actually a picture with it with a dog and an older man. And I'm pretty sure that's him, although I don't know that for certain. He's in a lot of things that are online too. So definitely he's someone, Juan Phillipe Herrera, to check out.

JO: You mentioned that it was really important that we're bringing in more contemporary texts- texts that are more current in nature. Why is that important?

JF: Because we don't want to read the same old boring books like nobody wants. So lots of times across the curriculum books are repeated. I know we're making an effort to make sure that we're careful with the books we read, but students want to read things that are new and current especially with this whole push of social media and our kids being excited about things that are new. Books need to reflect that newness. And then you can sort of have that excitement about something that's new. Plus the other thing is as a teacher we don't always want to be reading the same books over and over again, because it becomes stale and very disconcerting. For me, like reading a new books exciting, new and I'm learning something for the first time and sort of give students the opportunity to delve deeper.

JO: The newness of those books can help you really ignite that passion for those books as well. That will be caught by your students.

JF: Yes. And one of the things that we think is really important is that it's really important that we highlight authors that are diverse and so that newness really speaks to that in terms of diversity. Like Juan Felipe Herrera has been around for a long time, and so has Pat Mora in terms of a book that I introduced, and so has Margarita Engle but there's a newer authors like Angela Cervantes that I am going to talk about in a little bit that we want to make sure we're highlighting those voices. So, it's not only that we're putting books into the place for all of our students, but we want to highlight some of those newer authors that have some really powerful things to say.

JO: Well I know that a lot of middle school students like to read novels, as well. So what are some of the novels that you would recommend?

JF: Well one in particular that I loved and I cannot wait to the next one is out. Actually part of a series which I know is popular among a lot of our students is this book called The Traitors Game by Jennifer A. Nielsen. So it is not like the Hungers Game, Hunger Games but it definitely follows there's a lot of action. And you are on your seats. If you have students in your classroom who are looking for a book to sort of bring them in has fast paced action, this is the book. Where the main character has been blackmailed into

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finding sort of this sword and the story will actually create this balance of power. And I'm very happy that we have a strong female character, but also the other characters around her are strong too and she sort of has to negotiate that. And then there's people that she trusts that she learns along the way that maybe she needs to rethink that in terms of her decision making. So it would make an amazing read aloud and would also make a great book in the hands of someone who's a reluctant reader, because there's so much action and such a fast paced book.

Another book that I absolutely love, because it's a tale it's sort of really shows the hardships of coming to a new country is *Escape from Aleppo*. It is a very powerful read by N. H. Senzai. And it just talks about this young girl and all the different things that are happening. And it actually was based on an event that actually on current events this novel sheds light on the complicated situation in Syria. There's not a lot of books on Syria just in the last couple of years are we seeing more novels about Syria. Syria is an area where a lot of our students really don't have a lot of information. So definitely I think this would be a great book to pull into social studies or read aloud or to put in the hands of a student who has had sort of that journey in terms of trying to leave somewhere they loved and start somewhere new.

Another book on that sort of same theme that I love is Alan Gratz. I have a lot of students that are boys tell me that they want to see themselves in books, too. They want to see action and fast paced and, you know, *Refugee* is fast paced it's actually three different stories that are sort of tied together and tell in compelling ways what it's like to be forced to leave your country, and leave everything, and leave your family. So definitely, it is a compelling fast paced novel that I think is important.

The other one that I just love is *Me, Frida and the Secret of the Peacock Ring* by Angela Cervantes. She's a newer writer. She definitely has so much to say in terms of this young character who actually has to, I believe, go to Puerto Rico and she's in the middle of this mystery. Well there's not a lot of mysteries like Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys have a Latina or Latino characters so this book really serves sort of an area that's been missing. It is fun. It would be a great read aloud or definitely a great novel for students to read.

And then finally, anything by Kate DiCamillo. I love it like she's one of my favorite authors. *Louisiana's Way Home* is this powerful novel about this young character and her grandmother actually leaves her in the middle of the story and so she is faced to figure out what she should do as a middle schooler. Should she go home to her friends? Does she have to figure out where to go across state? So she's sort of really has to figure out her path and her identity. And she's not sure she has the confidence to do that. So it sort of set in a rural setting and this whole idea of where you fit in is definitely a theme that our middle schoolers can resonate with.

CONCLUSION:

JO: In our conversation today, Dr. Fain shared the importance of including linguistically and culturally diverse texts in the classroom. She also shared some examples of poetry and novels that can be used to encourage all students to develop a reading identity. She is giving us a lot to think about and discuss with colleagues. A probing question for you and your colleagues to explore is: "What steps are you taking toward incorporating linguistically and culturally diverse texts in the classroom?"

As we close today's episode, we would like to encourage you to continue the conversation on moving linguistically and culturally diverse texts into the classroom with your colleagues. There is a graphic organizer file available for download as you continue thinking about this topic. The graphic organizer, along with links to resources, are found on eduTOOLBOX – at eduTOOLBOX.org.

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Don't forget. We'd love to hear your thoughts on powerful interview questions using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #VoicesMatter. Also, follow and like the Ayers Institute on Twitter and Facebook @AyersInstitute.

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