Books reflect life. They validate who we are and affirm our sense of self; the same self that we see when we look in a mirror. Books also teach us about life; showing us different perspectives and life experiences, teaching us to respect and value what we see through the window. Picture books, especially, reflect the world around us; and as our world becomes more global, and our communities become more diverse, it is important that the picture books we choose reflect the diversity that children experience on a daily basis.

As teachers and librarians, we have a responsibility to be advocates for the children we spend time with everyday. The books in your school play a major role in the creation of a welcoming environment in which those children see themselves as valuable, respected members of a community.

Advocate for those of your students who are new to America, your city or your school or whose background reflects something other than yours. Don’t limit yourself to race and ethnicity. Consider many types of diversity as you teach toward equity. Race, gender, culture, community, different abilities and alternative family structures are all things that should be reflected in the literature in your school.

Whatever type of diversity is represented, apply the same criteria you would in selecting any material for your library or media center. One of the most common pitfalls for choosing multicultural literature is to assume that if it is written about or has illustrations depicting a culture other than your own it will satisfy the needs of multicultural readers. Don’t just judge the book by its author’s name, its cover, or its characters. According to Denise E. Agosto, young adult literature specialist at Drexel University, there are five attributes that you should look for when identifying materials for your collection or classroom: “accuracy, expertise, respect, purpose, and quality.” (Teacher Librarian v. 34 no. 3 (February 2007) p. 27-31)

When you’re choosing books that represent the minority, pay close attention to how the topic is presented and think ahead of time of the questions that children might ask. Do the books in your collection help to provide answers to those questions?

Most importantly: share the books that reflect the make-up of your classroom or school. Don’t hide them away on the shelves of the library. Read them, talk about them, display them. Create a window through which your children can learn about others, and to respect differences, and a mirror in which all children will see themselves as valuable members of their community.

(Continued on Page 2)
Consider some of these excellent picture books to include in your school’s collection to reflect the diversity in our communities:

**Race**
Prior to the 1960s, people of other than European origin were virtually invisible in the world of children’s literature. Today, you can find children’s books written and illustrated by people representing so many more cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- *Skin Again* by Bell Hooks
- *Sitti’s Secrets* by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits
- *I am America* by Charles R. Smith, Jr.

**Gender**
It was not until the 1970s that the publishing industry began portraying girls in active roles in picture books. Keep your eye out for books that also allow boys to have a range of emotions and girls who don’t have to act like boys to succeed.
- *Chicken Chasing Queen of Lamar County* by Janice N. Harrington
- *Nothing but Trouble: the Story of Althea Gibson* by Sue Stauffacher
- *Freckleface Strawberry* by Julianne Moore
- *What to Do about Alice* by Barbara Kerley

**Culture**
Folktales from different cultures are wonderful ways to introduce the different values and lifestyles around the world. An increasing number of biographies, graphic novels, and informational books about people from all over the world are also now available. Some of them read as well as a story, and the illustrations or photographs are stunning.
- *My Painted House, My Friendly Chicken and Me* by Maya Angelou
- *One Child One Seed* by Kathryn Cave
- *Mabela the Clever* by Margaret Read MacDonald
- *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* by Jeanette Winter

**Geography: Rural vs. Urban**
An overwhelming number of picture books for kids involve farm animals, and, of course, we want to make sure that kids appreciate farm life. However, in North America, just over 80% of the population lives in urban areas, so it’s important to include books that reflect city life.
- *Lily and the Paperman* by Rebecca Upjohn
- *How to Heal a Broken Wing* by Bob Graham
- *What Happens on Wednesdays* by Emily Jenkins
- *Rainstomper* by Addie Boswell

**Different Abilities**
While there are still not a plethora of books that are inclusive of characters with different abilities, these are quietly elegant in their treatment of the subject.
- *Be Good to Eddie Lee* by Virginia Fleming
- *Susan Laughs* by Jeanne Willis
- *My Friend Isabelle* by Eliza Woloson
- *Best Friend on Wheels* by Debra Shirley

**Alternative Families**
This is perhaps one of the most difficult areas to find represented in picture books. There are a few books that do directly address the issue of a single parent or same sex parent families. Books that address the issue without being heavy-handed can work as both a window and a mirror.
- *Let’s Get a Pup said Kate* by Bob Graham
- *Love is a Family* by Roma Downey
- *Every Year on your Birthday* by Rose Lewis
- *King and King* by Linda de Haan
The Forecaster Examines Culturally Responsive Teaching
by Becky Bard, Tigard-Tualatin School District

This issue of the Forecaster is dedicated to looking at equity in our classrooms. As you read through our articles, you’ll find many ideas and thoughtful conversation on how we can all improve our teaching in a culturally responsive way.

If you’d like to find more information on this timely topic, take a look at these fine websites:

**Race: The Power of an Illusion**
[www.pbs.org/race](http://www.pbs.org/race)
This is a companion to a documentary series of the same name. There are many resources and topics to explore.

**Links for Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Teaching**
[www.ithaca.edu/wise/topics/multicultural.htm](http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/topics/multicultural.htm)
More links than you can imagine that will lead you to a full day of surfing!

**The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning**
[www.culturallyresponsive.org](http://www.culturallyresponsive.org)
The Center is a leader in meeting the challenge of designing schools, classrooms, and learning experiences that result in academic success for diverse learners.

Let us know if you have made changes in your teaching practices to make learning more accessible to your diverse population of students. Log onto the Portland Reading Council blog at [pcira.wordpress.com](http://pcira.wordpress.com) or email me at bbard@ttsd.k12.or.us.

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**13th Annual African American Read-In**
February 8, 2009

PCIRA invites you to attend the 13th Annual African American Read-in on Sunday, February 8 from 2:30 – 4 pm at the North Portland Branch Library, 512 North Killingsworth. The read-in is sponsored by the library and the Portland Reading Council.

Each year, Portland community leaders along with community members share selections from their favorite African American authors or poets. This year, one guest reader will be President Charles Schlimpert from Concordia University.

Please come and join the celebration to promote the sharing of African American literature within our community. If you would like more information, please contact Keylah Frazier at key2teach@gmail.com.
Equity Through Inquiry: What Can Educators do to Promote Equity in Schools
by Sho Shigeoka, Beaverton School District

In my position as the Equity Coordinator for the Beaverton School District, I am often asked the question: “What can a teacher do to promote equity?” When I think of the important work of ensuring that all students, regardless of cultural or ethnic background, receive the support necessary to be successful in school - I think in terms of the layers that constitute the educational system. We must tackle this work layer by layer, asking one inquiry question at a time.

**Individual Level:**
The first step is to reflect upon our own personal assumptions and biases. One may hold these assumptions and belief systems unintentionally; however, they have significant impact on student learning. We must ask ourselves:

- What assumptions and biases do I possess about historically underserved populations?
- Do I view differences that students bring as deficits or assets?
- How much does my race and class impact my teaching and interaction with students?
- Do I believe cultural and social factors (such as poverty, race, mobility, language, etc.) limit a student’s opportunity to learn or capacity to learn?
- What do I do to interrupt inequitable practices and eliminate biases in my school?

**Classroom Level:**
Once we have examined our own assumptions and biases, the next step is to closely examine what is happening in our classrooms in terms of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The classroom is where teachers do have control. Teachers should consider:

- Is my curriculum reflective of the cultures represented in my classroom? If so, is it reductive and stereotypical or strengths-based and positive?
- Do I view culturally relevant instruction as an “add on” to my content or an opportunity to rethink and reconceptualize what is being taught?

In *Everyday Anti-Racism*, Mica Pollock talks about the struggle to “change a system that is unequal, while working within it.” The thought of promoting equity in schools in a system that has been set up to produce inequitable outcomes can seem overwhelming. However, it is a moral imperative that we as educators - in collaboration with the various stakeholder groups - must make a difference by inquiring about everyday equity actions we take in our classroom, hallways, building, and the community. It is through this persistent collaborative work that we can begin to make a change in our system.
**Canby TAR’s Walk and Talk a Success!**
*by Joan Flora, Canby School District*

Canby teachers and administrators finished their fall Walk and Talk sessions focusing on Ellin Oliver Keene’s *To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension*. During the group’s four sessions, the twelve educators walked along Molalla Forest Road as they discussed what’s essential in literacy instruction and their successes and struggles as they guided students into deep understandings.

Because the group was walking while discussing a particular chapter, they found that the best format to hold their thinking was to follow a simple “Three Levels” format for a Reading Round:

A Reading Round consists of:
- One person using up to five minutes to:
  - LEVEL 1: Read aloud the passage she/he has selected (bring a photocopy)
  - LEVEL 2: Say what she/he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
  - LEVEL 3: Say what she/he sees as the implications for her/his work.
- The group responding (for a TOTAL of up to three minutes) to what has been said.

Each person should be prepared for two rounds. That is, they should select and photocopy two passages to discuss with the group. The group also found it was best to walk in pairs and to switch partners after each round, working with different partners during each session.

The Canby TAR group was able to purchase copies of Keene’s book, thanks to the Portland Reading Council. Three teachers also earned one PSU credit for the course.

Joan Flora developed a study guide for *To Understand*. If you are interested in the guide, please contact Joan at floraj@canby.k12.or.us.
Do You Know An Outstanding Literacy Educator?

The Portland Reading Council will honor individuals

- who are dedicated to promoting literacy,
- who instill a lifelong love of reading, and
- who have made a significant contribution to literacy at the local level.

Educators selected for this award will be invited to a celebration in their honor in Spring 2009.

Please fill out the nomination form on the next page and return it by February 25, 2009.

Sponsored by the Portland Reading Council

Portland Reading Council is Online!

Check out PCIRA's new blog at http://pcira.wordpress.com. This is our new forum for the latest council news and lively (we hope!) discussion and sharing of literacy ideas. The blog is open for all to post comments. Simply click the small button labeled "Comments," and a comment field will open. While the blog is currently just a framework, your discussion will enrich it!

If you have resources you would like to share in the form of PDF or Word documents, simply send them to nathan_traller@beavton.k12.or.us and we’ll put them up.
**Nomination Form**

**Your Information**

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Please describe why you believe your nominee should be considered for the Celebrate Literacy Award. (Send additional page if needed.)

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Thank you!

Questions? Email Rene’ Dernbach: mdernbach@comcast.net

Please fax this form by FEBRUARY 25, 2009
to Penny Plavala 503-257-1650
Wild About Words:  
Vocabulary Instruction  
That Makes a Difference (K-8)  
with Linda Hoyt

The relationship between vocabulary and comprehension is unparalleled in importance. This workshop will provide a wide array of vocabulary enhancing experiences and strategies that you can apply across the curriculum for learners of all ages. Buckle up for an exciting day that is loaded with hands-on, ready-to-use strategies.

Wednesday, April 22, 2009
9:00 am – 3:30 pm at the Tigard Public Library

Registration fee includes continental breakfast, lunch, materials and inspiration!

$70  Oregon Reading Association Members
$95  Non-members

Linda Hoyt has had a rich array of experiences in education ranging from classroom teaching (K-6) to working as a reading specialist (K-8), curriculum developer, Title I teacher, staff developer and Title I District Coordinator. She is the author of five powerful professional books (Heinemann), four video programs (Heinemann and BER) as well as several Scholastic resources. Her energetic presentation style and practical strategies have made her one of the most requested literacy speakers in the United States. Linda and her husband, Steve, live in Oregon.

For more information, please contact Penny Plavala.
pplavala@mesd.k12.or.us or call 503-257-1777

Sponsored by the Portland Reading Council & the Oregon Reading Association
Please send this registration form WITH your check prior to April 15, 2009.

(Sorry, no purchase orders accepted.)

Registration Fees (includes breakfast, lunch, and all materials)

☐ $70 Oregon Reading Association members
☐ $95 Non-members

Payable to: PCIRA                      Mail to: Penny Plavala
                                                  11611 NE Ainsworth Circle
                                                  Portland, OR 97220

Questions: Penny Plavala – 503-257-1777
           pplavala@mesd.k12.or.us

* Please fill out all the information below. We will send registration confirmation by email. Phone numbers are essential in case of event cancellation. Requests for full refund must be received by April 15, 2009.

Please print.

Name

Home Address

City/State/Zip

Home Phone                 Work Phone

School                     District

Email

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Using Children’s Literature to Open Doors to Understanding by Jane Koivisto, Director of Northwest Center for Children’s Literature, Concordia University

Through children’s literature, students can be made aware of cultures different from their own, thus fostering an appreciation for that culture. Students are able to identify with characters and see similarities between those characters and themselves through the pages of a book. Students “get to see people their age meeting challenges and solving problems. Unfamiliar aspects of other cultures—language, dress, beliefs—are less foreign when viewed through the lens of familiar issues”. (Landt, 2006, p. 691)

As Al-Hazza and Bucher (2008, p. 210) state in their recent Reading Teacher article, “Introducing multicultural children’s literature into the elementary classroom is a first step toward eliminating stereotyping and prejudice and helping students develop cultural identity”.

Dear readers, I feel as if I am teaching to the choir. As teachers we love children’s literature and we are already well aware of both the need and power of introducing awareness of other cultures through literature.

The real task is finding appropriate books, especially what’s new and fresh, books that inspire and teach, and are worth reading to our students. As Director of the Northwest Center for Children’s Literature, I am privileged to see the newest books first hand, and would love to share a few of my new favorites with you.

- **Stitchin’ and Pullin’: A Gee’s Bend Quilt**, written by Patricia McKissack and illustrated by Cozbi Cabrera (2008), published by Random House
  
  **Synopsis**: When Baby Girl finally gets her turn to join the family quilting table, she weaves a story of her own, of her family, and of a people’s struggle for freedom.
  
  **What the Experts are Saying**: "An outstanding way to introduce aspects of African-American history and to explore the power of community." Kirkus Reviews

- **As Good As Anybody** by Richard Michelson, illustrated by Raul Colon (2008), published by Knopf
  
  **Synopsis**: Two men, one a Baptist preacher from Atlanta and one a rabbi born in Poland, form a remarkable friendship to turn their personal experiences of discrimination into a message of equality for all.
  
  **What the Experts are Saying**: “In this powerful, well-crafted story about a partnership between two great civil rights leaders, Michelson shows how the fight for human rights affects everyone.” Booklist

(Continued on Page 11.)
**Roberto Walks Home**, written by Janice Harrington, based on the characters of Ezra Jack Keats, and illustrated in a Keatsian style by Jody Wheeler (2008), published by Viking

**Synopsis**: When Roberto’s brother Miguel forgets to pick him up after school, he must find a way to make it up to a very angry Roberto.

**What the Experts are Saying**: Too new for reviews!

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**Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale** retold by Carmen Agra Deedy, illustrated by Michael Austin (2008), published by Peachtree

**Synopsis**: Martina must find a husband and does so in a most ingenious way.

**What the Experts are Saying**: "Deedy’s masterful retelling of this Latino folktale has a rollicking voice imbued with sly tongue-in-cheek humor... A scattering of Spanish words adds zest to this fine read-aloud." Booklist. A Pura Belpre’ Honor Book

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**Weedflower** by Cynthia Kadohata (2006), published by Simon & Shuster

**Synopsis**: Weedflower is a story of the challenges of friendship and the overwhelming need to belong, despite a racial divide caused by a World War.

**What the Experts are Saying**: “Kadohata clearly and eloquently conveys her heroine's mixture of shame, anger and courage. Readers will be inspired by Sumiko's determination to survive and flourish in a harsh, unjust environment.” Ages 11- up. Publishers Weekly

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**References:**

Would you like to write an article for the next Forecaster?

Email Becky Bard
bbard@ttsd.k12.or.us

Thank you!

The Oregon Reading Association is on the Web
www.reading.org

PORTLAND COUNCIL
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 2014
PORTLAND, OREGON  97208

Literacy Calendar of Events

- **ORA Annual Conference**
  *February 6-7, 2009*
  Doubletree Hotel Lloyd Center, Portland

- **African-American Read-In Sponsored by the Portland Reading Council**
  *Sunday, February 8, 2009*
  North Portland Library
  Contact Keylah Boyer-Frazier for information:
  KFrazier@cu-portland.edu

- **Linda Hoyt – Vocabulary Instruction that Makes a Difference**
  *April 22, 2009*
  Tigard Public Library
  Contact Penny Plavala for more information:
  pplavala@mesd.k12.or.us