Multicultural Connections and the Use of Bibliotherapy

The National Association for Gifted Children K-12 standards for gifted students contain a cultural competence section that stating, “Educators model appropriate language and strategies to effectively address issues such as stereotyping, bias, and discriminatory language and behaviors.” Educators can make use of bibliotherapy and mirror books to address these issues and empower underrepresented multicultural students.

Bibliotherapy is a technique that aims to help children experiencing emotional challenges by allowing them to read books with stories reflecting their situation. These books are called mirror books. Being able to see themselves in stories allows children to see their problems from an objective viewpoint and provides with a safe space to explore their feelings. It also allows children to see that they are not alone.

Many gifted students are avid readers and learn to read early. However, multicultural students have very few mirror books that allow them to identify with the characters and the content. According to the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, in 2017, only 13% of total children’s books published in the past 24 years contained multicultural content. Noticing the lack of books with black females as main characters, 11-year-old Marley Dias created the campaign, #1000BlackGirlBooks.

The two figure above provide several considerations to take into account when selecting multicultural literature for children. Due to the fact that many authors of multicultural literature are not people of color, it is important to select books that are authentic–accurate and do not promote stereotypes. Careful selection of multicultural literature allows children to read mirror books where they relate to the main characters.

Resources:

Presented by: The Center for Gifted Education