Weaving KidLit into Professional Learning for Gifted Educators: Shifting Perspectives and Coaching for Equitable Practices

Katie Lewis ⓘ
York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA, USA

Angela M. Novak ⓘ
East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA

Abstract

Children's literature (KidLit) is an effective strategy for fostering a classroom culture which embraces cultural diversity and builds understanding amongst students; professional learning (PL) communities can use KidLit as the basis for their discussion. A common read provides an opportunity to enrich PL communities and allow teachers to build on a shared experience to foster discussion. The key to using KidLit is to gather carefully selected pieces which are well timed and strategically inserted. Viewing areas of everyday racism through the eyes of children is a highly effective way to address areas of multiculturalism. Literature provides an avenue to explore diversity through a safe means, opening participants' minds to various points of view and challenging preconceived ideas. This article discusses the benefit of using KidLit in PL with teachers of the gifted, and shares a step-by-step implementation plan for building- or district-level PL.

Keywords

children's literature, gifted, professional learning, equity

Corresponding author:
Katie Lewis, York College of Pennsylvania, 411 Country Club Rd, York, PA 17403-3651, USA.
Email: klewis15@ycp.edu

"L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux"
"hat is essential is invisible to the eye"

–Le Petit Prince
–Antoine de Saint-Exupery

In *The Little Prince,* Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote, *"And now here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."* These words are a signal for equity, for activism, for the need to focus on what is truly. The French quote hung in the late Fred Rogers' office, of *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*. Mr. Rogers may not be the first name that comes to mind when you think of culturally responsive pedagogy, or of the Civil Rights movement for that matter. However, he engaged in activism throughout his broadcast. For example, in an episode that aired in 1969, he invited Officer Clemmons, a local Black police officer, to take off his shoes and join him in soaking his feet in a small pool in the backyard, sharing his towel to dry off. The television host focused on the need for openness, the sharing of feelings, and the importance of childhood, play, and emotional well-being. And of course, essential to this article, Mr. Rogers highlighted the critical need to go to the library and check out a book. Another childhood favorite for many is *Reading Rainbow*. Beloved host LeVar Burton encouraged children to explore literature of all varieties, and to seek their own answers, urging children not to take his word for it, but to look it up in a book! Literature has long been the source of finding knowledge to the questions people seek, an opportunity to truly see the perspectives of others to boldly go where none have gone before. It is with reflection on Mr. Roger's favorite quotation that this article opens, "what is essential is invisible to the eye," as we delve into the use of children's literature (KidLit) to explore equity and culturally responsive professional learning (PL) with teachers of gifted students.

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood for Reading the Rainbow

In truth, it has always been the right day, the right time to discuss equity, to work on culturally responsive PL. However, recent events have primed the field for more attention, more focus, a more open mind to learning. While it is unfortunate that it has taken such devastation to create this opportunity; it is here, the day must be seized. The field of gifted education has been ripe for this conversation, and in need of PL around the construct of equity for decades, since its inception as a field.

Gifted education was born on the wrong side of history, and it has always remained entrenched in the folds of racism's robes: inequitable, biased, and disproportionate, a cog that reinforces systemic marginalization in every step of the educational system. Those that acknowledge and raise up Lewis Terman as the father of gifted education, while quietly looking beyond his racist beliefs, biased research methods, and ties to the Eugenics movement *actively* perpetuate systemic racism. Those that condemn or omit Terman but fail to elevate the names of W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Witty, Martin Jenkins, Mary

Frasier, Stuart Tonemah, Ernesto Bernal, and/or Norma Hernandez in his stead *passively* perpetuate systemic racism.

In 1896, Plessy versus Ferguson created a court-mandated structural and systemic marginalization throughout society, theoretically repaired 58 years later in schools by Brown versus the Topeka Board of Education on May 17, 1954. Ruby Bridges, only 67 years young today in 2021, was barred from attending an integrated Kindergarten her first year of school in 1959. The following year, she took a required entrance exam and passed, establishing her first day of integrated school as November 14, 1960 (Michals, 2015). Six-year old Ruby walked the few blocks with her mother to the all-White William Frantz elementary school, to be the sole student in Ms Henry's class, as none of the White parents allowed their children to remain. Every day that year, diminutive Ruby was provided protection from federal marshals against crowds of angry White adults, shouting racial slurs at her; one of whom frightened Ruby by holding up a Black baby doll in a coffin (Michals, 2015). Ruby Bridges, and countless other brave Black boys and girls like her, took monumental first steps; but Brown versus Board did not repair the rift.

Time and space in this article does not allow for a full dive into the history of gifted education; however, it is a known entity in the field that the legacy of inequity, bias, and disproportionality remains. More recently, there has been attention paid to a shift, from scholarly research and writing, policies and practices created, statements presented, change occurring on the ground.

Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education

In 2019, I-URGE, Inclusion of Underrepresented Groups in Gifted Education, was created by leading Black scholars in the field to advocate for underrepresented groups in gifted education and promote anti-racism in scholarly work. In June 2020, the reactivated Consortium for Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education (I-URGGE) released a statement titled, "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks: Black Scholars Speak Out to Confront Racism Against Black Students in Gifted and Talented Education." Signed by 13 Black scholars in the field of gifted education, the statement responded to the consistent police brutality, racism, and the inequities in gifted education for Black students, as well as established clear expectations for solutions (Consortium for Inclusion of Underrepresented Racial Groups in Gifted Education, 2020).

Council for Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted

Council for Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted (CEC-TAG) has had diversity in the foreground for decades. In 2001 the organization published "Diversity and Developing Gifts and Talents: A Call to Action." Initially updated and re-released in 2009, CEC-TAG recently updated and published "A Call to Action: Supporting Equity, Diversity, and Access for Gifted Students" in 2020. This document calls for a strategic movement in PL, equitable access, curriculum and instruction that is culturally re-sponsive, research focused on equity and diversity, parent engagement and community

partnerships, and policy (Council for Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted, 2020).

National Association for Gifted Children

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) issued a statement following the death of George Floyd in June of 2020, denouncing systemic racism and racial injustice, and indicating a need for action. In July 2020, NAGC followed this initial release with a vision statement that supported Black gifted learners and promoted equity and social justice. The initial action steps included town hall discussions, reviewing policies to prioritize equity, developing publications centering around Black gifted learners and expanding the Javits-Frasier Scholars Program which supports teachers through PL in Title I schools (National Association for Gifted Children, 2020).

A common thread in these statements is recognition of the systemic racism pervasive in our educational system, and how the structural oppression and biases are the root causes of the underrepresentation of minoritized gifted children. A second thread is the need for action. Professional learning is one clear method for a gifted resource teacher or administrator to become a change agent in their sphere of influence, their school.

Why KidLit in PL?

In 1991, an author asked Mr. Rogers to provide a list of his 10 favorite books. As an ordained minister, Fred included the Bible. He also listed psychology texts, Frost, Shakespeare, and a vegetarian cookbook: tomes that were mirrors of his life. Crucially, he included two children's books: *Le Petit Prince* by Antoine de St Exupéry and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (Jones, 2020). On *Reading Rainbow*, children heard that they could go twice as high as a butterfly, they could grow, they could be anything and go anywhere, just by looking in a book (Weir et al., 1983). The answer to "Why KidLit?" is why Mr. Rogers included two children's books in his top 10, and why the Reading Rainbow starts by reminding us we can be, do, and see anything. It is being able to find a library shelf full of children's books sharing Ruby Bridges' story. It is in the power of meaningful literature that draws connections, evokes emotions, and provides a stepping stone to understanding.

Using KidLit

The key to using KidLit is to gather carefully selected pieces which are well timed and strategically inserted (Morris, 2013). The use of KidLit can be particularly effective when used to reinforce concepts during PL, while also modeling and introducing new books to utilize in the elementary or middle grades classroom. When KidLit is used intentionally, it can ease the approach for a challenging topic, leading to a greater acceptance of the topic at hand. Morris (2013) suggests that KidLit can soften automatic trigger responses, when books are conscientiously and meaningfully selected.

Originally published in 1990, an article by Rudine Sims Bishop was reprinted in 2015 in Reading is Fundamental, highlighting the importance of multicultural literacy:

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, readers having only to walk through an imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experiences. Reading, then becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek mirrors in books. (Bishop, 2015, p. 1)

Typically, the windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors approach is used to highlight the importance of having a diverse and inclusive selection of literature in the classroom and in the school library. The importance of Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students' having their faces and voices reflected in the literature that they read on a daily basis cannot be understated (Gallagher & Wrenn, 2020). In the PL framework, it is often the windows or sliding glass doors approaches that are frequently used: providing educators the opportunity to see or step into the worlds of their students. In a 1967 interview, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. references the frequent admonition to pull yourself up by your bootstraps, saying "I believe we ought to do all we can and seek to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, but it's a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps" (Dance, 2019, para. 9). King goes on to explain that "many Negroes by the thousands and millions have been left bootless as a result of all of these years of Oppression and as a result of a society that deliberately made his color a stigma and something worthless and degrading" (Dance, 2019, para 10). KidLit helps educators to walk a mile in the shoes of their students- realizing that they are, in fact, barefoot.

Professional Learning

Equity is a topic that should be entered into with trained facilitators, engaged and willing participants, and open minds. Research in equity-driven PL for educators of gifted children shares key elements of effective PL to keep in mind when conducting this work: based on needs, reflective, connected to practice, collaborative, and a place for growth (Combs & Silverman, 2017; Novak et al., 2020). Professional learning for gifted educators is most effective when it is based on the real-time needs of the educators in the room, observing faculty, distributing needs assessments to faculty, conducting a survey of staff, students, and/or parents can all be beneficial in gathering these data. Just like in the classroom, assessment is essential to tailoring the PL to the needs of the learning community and then delivering meaningful PL in the zone of proximal development (Combs & Silverman, 2017; Novak et al., 2020). The most effective PL begins and ends with an assessment (Guskey, 2016). Key to effective PL is the opportunity for participants to reflect on the content being delivered, process new understandings, and ask clarifying questions, along with the opportunity to put new ideas into practice. This cyclical

approach is necessary to the internalization of new understandings. Collaboration among educators often results in meaningful connections, sparking renewed enthusiasm and creativity (Combs & Silverman, 2017; Novak et al., 2020).

Professional learning addressing sensitive topics related to equity, diversity, and cultural awareness requires the establishment of both safe and brave spaces. Safe spaces are essential for cultural growth as it protects the participants and encourages an environment of trust and affirmation, asking them to share and ask respectful questions (Novak et al., 2020). The spaces must also be brave, as educators participate in courageous conversations with the purpose of seeking understanding about topics which may otherwise be sidestepped. Educators experience discomfort in order to experience growth (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Group norms, expectations, and/or guidelines for participating in safe/brave spaces must be established, maintained, and enforced throughout the PL (Novak et al., 2020).

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) developed the backwards design model to help teachers focus on the learning process rather than the teaching activities. Backwards Design provides focus to lessons as all instruction is guided by the established learning objectives. The three stages of Backwards Design are Identify Desired Results, Determine Acceptable Evidence, and Plan Learning Experiences (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The first stage of planning, Identify Desired Results, begins with selecting standards and breaking them into concepts and competencies. From here one develops the learning outcomes for the unit of study. In the second stage, Determine Acceptable Evidence, planning with the end in mind, one creates a summative assessment which will measure student learning based on the learning objectives from Stage 1. The final stage, Plan Learning Experiences, is the creation of scaffolded lessons that are aligned to the initial learning goals which will lead the students through the learning process and develop new understandings, setting the students up for success on the performance assessments but these learning experiences also have to be aligned to your learning goals just like the assessment evidence. They further are designed so learners are successful with the performance assessment. Applying the backwards design model to guide PL sessions is appropriate because it enables the facilitator to plan so that the participants acquire knowledge, understandings, and skills with a clearly defined end in mind, the focus of the PL. That is why it is backwards—the learning experiences help learners acquire the knowledge, understanding, and skill in order to do well on the summative assessment, which demonstrates the degree to which they have learned the knowledge, understanding and skill that was the focus of the unit of study. Ideally, participants in PL demonstrate the degree to which they have learned the knowledge, understandings, and skills, either through discussion, application of the principles of the focus topic to lesson plans or parent groups, planning with their PLCs or co-teaching, or through traditional evidence-based measures such as pre/post-tests. Viewing the Backwards Design model as a framework for developing PL, opposed to using it as a curriculum is important. "UbD is a way of thinking, not a program. Educators adapt its tools and materials with the goal of promoting better student understanding" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 10) In particular, PL cannot be a curriculum which is neatly packaged and distributed, rather it is a framework that is molded to meet the PL needs of the participants.

KidLit Infused PL for Gifted Educators: Step by Step

Educators know the value of literature and the importance of utilizing high quality literature in the classroom. Gifted educators and counselors frequently use bibliotherapy as a method for helping students understand their lived experiences as well as exploring social-emotional needs, including overexcitabilities (Halstead, 2009). The value of learning from literature extends to PL (Morris, 2013). Focusing on the end goal, the Backwards Design model enables facilitators to craft equity-driven PL experiences designed to enable participants with the concepts and competencies to achieve the learning outcomes. Infusing KidLit into equity-driven PL for gifted educators creates a space where the benefits of learning from targeted gifted-based literature meld with the growth opportunities that PL provides to educators. The following section walks through the three stages of the Backwards Design process through a gifted, equity-driven PL lens. Embedded within the stages are practical examples from a facilitator's planning process.

Stage One: Setting the Framework

The first step in the Understanding by Design curriculum process is to identify learning goals and the desired results. Similarly, here in PL, the facilitators should select learning outcomes and goals for the PL sessions, based on the needs assessment data. The components of PL discussed previously are key in ensuring that the learning outcomes will be effective: reflective and collaborative with opportunities to connect to practice and a safe and brave place for growth (Combs & Silverman, 2017; Novak et al., 2020). Facilitators should be forward thinking while at the same time plan small. For example, if the facilitator only has three sessions to address a need, the data-based learning outcome needs to be achievable within this time frame.

As the facilitator is establishing learning outcomes, they should reflect on the specific needs to be addressed during the PL using these to develop the learning outcomes. Table 1 provides a sampling of possible needs to be addressed and correlating learning outcomes, assuming these needs arose from pre-assessment data.

Once the learning outcome is established, the facilitator should identify the enabling knowledge and subskills, which are considered foundational to the learning outcome. For example, if the learning outcome is to create a learning environment that is inclusive of diverse learners, a required piece of prior knowledge is a basic understanding of diversity. This is the enabling knowledge/subskills, the outcomes will likely not be achieved without the foundational skills. Additionally, the learning outcome should be tied to knowledge, understanding, and skills that the learner will be able to demonstrate mastery of, by the end of the training.

Stage 2: Determining Evidence-Based Measures

Stage 2 of Understanding by Design, involves the creation of assessments which are used to determine the effectiveness of the learning outcomes, which were developed in Stage 1. In PL, the participants do not necessarily complete a formal assessment rather the test of

Table 1. Developing learning outcomes.

Needs to Be Addressed	Possible Learning Outcome
Educators need an introduction to the concept of racism, both within their spheres of influence and greater systemic racism.	The educators will (TEW) recognize characteristics of racism within their personal spheres.
	The educators will recognize their own personal biases and discuss how those impact marginalized gifted and talented students in their classroom.
	The educators will create a learning environment that is inclusive of marginalized gifted learners.
The school is struggling with a shift in the economic fabric of the school and community, due to the economic impacts of COVID on the parents.	The educators will explore the impact of poverty on gifted students and how poverty adds a layer of intersectionality to minoritized gifted students.
	The educators will discuss the impact of trauma on gifted learners, affectively and academically.
	The educators will develop strategies to support social-emotional needs of gifted students, recognizing that not all students have the same needs, and that historically marginalized students may benefit from additional supports such as affinity groups.
Educators are not aware of the significant role culture plays in recognizing, meeting the needs, and retaining gifted students, particularly gifted students from minoritized and marginalized groups.	The educators will compare and contrast traditional lists of gifted characteristics to characteristics more often exhibited by marginalized gifted students.
	The educators will evaluate the cultural impact of what are often labeled as 'non-traditional gifted characteristics', including the otherness of this label.
	The educators will debunk common stereotypes and myths surrounding underrepresented gifted populations and determine steps for improvement in their sphere of influence.

proficiency is evident when a change in teaching beliefs or practices occurs. Measuring the extent of effectiveness of the PL can be assessed through short term and long-term changes. Short term effectiveness may be evaluated through exit tickets, end-of-session surveys as well as follow up surveys. The benefits of short term evaluations are feedback for the facilitator to gauge the effectiveness of the PL sessions and identify next steps (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2016).

There is also the potential for a more formalized assessment, in the form of a survey. If you conducted a needs assessment or questionnaire prior to the PL experience, for example, to determine understanding or frequency of practice around certain topics, then it can be good practice to administer the same or a similar post-assessment. If using the

same assessment, allow a minimum of 3 weeks to reduce participants responding the same due to remembering the questions.

While these are commonly used tools for evaluating knowledge and understanding of PL sessions, changing teachers' beliefs and practice takes time (Guskey, 2016). Thus, there is added benefit to the evaluation of long-term impact. These long-term evaluations are completed quite some time after the PL sessions, three-, six-, or nine-months at a start, possibly yearly for a few years, but are more informative of changes in beliefs and practices; therefore, long-term feedback is critical to the evaluation process (Guskey, 2016). In the same vein, reflection and follow up for participants in PL is crucial. Ongoing and sustained reflection and support are key elements in providing teachers with the agency and affirmation to implement the new knowledge and skills learned during the PL sessions (Combs & Silverman, 2017; Guskey, 2016; Novak, et al., 2020). Facilitators should be available to provide classroom observations and visits at the request of the teachers, in order to provide additional boots on the ground support. When boots on the ground are not feasible, the next best thing is an online learning community. These support groups are valuable tools in providing additional guidance to teachers following the PL experience. Teachers are able to post and respond to queries as well as find additional resources on the related topics.

Professional learning is a recursive process; therefore, it is reasonable to expect to speed up or slow down the PL based on the needs of the learners. Monitoring the individual growth and pulse of the faculty is key to changing mindsets. Feedback should not be intented as punitive. This undue pressure will negate any positive gains made during the PL, jeopardize the safe learning environment, and future effectiveness of any PL.

Stage 3: Designing Activities Targeting Learning Outcomes

Stage three of the Understanding by Design model is the development of lesson plans and activities which provide the scaffolding and instruction to achieve the learning outcomes identified in Stage 1. Overlaying Understanding by Design to the PL, stage 3 is where the PL plan design and activities are created. These PL activities and experiences are created with the purpose of being able to achieve the identified results from the first stage. The following steps are key elements in designing high quality professional development sessions which use literature.

Determine timing and method. The first major consideration in determining the best fit for the PL is to determine the length of time available for the training. Perhaps, your ideal is 30 minutes monthly, but if the reality is you will have one 30-minute face to face training session, you will need to adjust your expectations. Time considerations should also include the amount of formal and informal time. During shorter face to face sessions, it may be more beneficial to implement a read aloud, rather than a book study. Remember, being strategic with your book selection is key in a successful implementation.

Book Study. Often called a common read (Ferguson, 2006), book studies provide an opportunity to enrich PL communities and allow teachers to build on a shared experience

to foster discussion. This is highly effective in addressing areas of multiculturalism (Gibson, 2012; Laufgraben, 2006), allowing teachers to see areas of everyday racism through the eyes of children. "Providing access to quality literature, a judgment-free setting and opportunity for discourse allows students to find comfort in being able to admit their discomfort so they can then negotiate a path toward greater awareness, acceptance and advocacy" (Gibson, 2012, p. 11). Book studies provide a longer experience with the characters, plot and storyline. They are effective when the chapters are divided into shorter reads with firm due dates, scaffolded questions, and discussion prompts. A book study is most effective if your teachers fully engage with the text and are self-motivated. It would not be a good idea to assign a book study during a high stress time, such as a standardized testing window.

Read Alouds. During a read aloud, the facilitator reads an excerpt or short KidLit story to the group followed by scaffolded questions and discussions. Being mindful of best practices for engaging participants during a read aloud. Reading the text fluently and pausing to ask questions throughout the reading engages the audience and helps to draw their attention to key moments in the read aloud. Following the reading, a deep dive discussion around the big idea of the text or PL topic, is where personal connections and new understandings are formed.

Read alouds and book studies are equally valuable vehicles for delivering effective PL using KidLit; however, it is important to carefully consider the constraints and audience of the PL when designing your PL. After determining the length of time and method for your PL, the next step is to select the KidLit book. The KidLit book is at the heart of the PL and should be mindfully and critically selected.

Selecting high quality KidLit. The selection of the KidLit determines the impact of the PL session. A first consideration in book selection is value-addedness. What are the benefits of the potential literature choices? Consider: will the time for use outweigh the benefit of the story? Time during PL is precious; therefore, every element must be carefully selected. If the message of the KidLit book is excellent but the time it takes to read the story aloud will take the bulk of your allotted time, and you will not have time to dive deep into a discussion, then it may not be the best fit for this PL.

Second, the KidLit selection needs to be purposeful. Does it relate directly to the goal/ topic/skill? A story may be a great story, but if it is not related to the learning outcomes, it is not appropriate. For example, Gallagher and Wrenn (2020) identified non-fiction KidLit stories that featured the intersectionality of gifted, rurality, and Black; if the topic is also on Black rural gifted students, these selections fit, but not if the school population/topic features a predominantly Hmong population in an urban setting. Just as one would evaluate the benefit of an adorable, crafty Pinterest activity for teaching versus the content to be covered, one should be selective when choosing a book.

Third, consider the degree to which the KidLit is influential. Will the story influence attitudes or beliefs (Morris, 2013)? As a reader, when you close the book and leave the story, do the characters stay with you? Will your audience connect with the characters and events in the story? It is important to tailor the book to the audience, to find what will

resonate with your faculty, but that also reflects the outcomes you wish to impart; this is where the initial needs assessments and surveys can be beneficial. As the facilitator, be sure that you will be able to facilitate intentional conversations and guide meaningful activities based on your choice.

Consider the following key elements in your equity-focused KidLit selection:

- Examine the author's or illustrator's background. What are the author's qualifications? What motivated the author to write the story (Derman-Sparks, 2016)?
- Check the copyright date. Generally speaking, books published before the 1970s may not reflect the equity-driven mindset or vocabulary that is currently used. Eloise Greenfield is a great find! Books featuring overt racist images and messages are best left closed; *Little Black Sambo* comes to mind.
- Review the illustrations. Critically examine the pictures for stereotypes, tokenism or invisibility. Remember, a picture speaks a thousand words (Derman-Sparks, 2016). Is a gifted child drawn as a white male child with taped glasses, gapped teeth, a button up shirt and a pen in his front pocket, perhaps carrying a stack of books? Is this a similar image for a scientist or a doctor? In particular, white and male?
- Look at the relationships between the characters. How do the characters value diversity? How are they responding to diversity (Derman-Sparks, 2016)? In what ways does the story authentically portray the culture? Consider language as a cultural element; does the author deepen the readers' knowledge of words and phrases naturally within the story, or "tease" the language with accents and ending sounds (Pérez Huber, 2021)? Are gifted English Learners accurately portrayed? How is giftedness portrayed, in particular by marginalized characters? In what ways does the book depict a family, cultural, or community response to gifted behaviors, characteristics, or programming/services?
- Look for hidden messages about different lifestyles. Are all groups equally valued? Are some oversimplified? Is there a variety of groups represented (Derman-Sparks, 2016)? Look carefully for any racial or ethnic stereotypes or deficit views (Pérez Huber, 2021).
- Who are the BIPOC characters? What roles do they play? Are they central to the story, with power and agency (Pérez Huber, 2021)? Are they change agents, working together to solve problems? Is there a diverse group of heroes in the story (Derman-Sparks, 2016)? What role does giftedness play within the context of the story, and how does this impact your use?
- Watch for bias wording. Consider the context of the words and who is using the words (Derman-Sparks, 2016). We often find stories we read as kids that we remember fondly, but vernacular has shifted. Be critical as you examine books, and know your audience. Be ready to have an open discussion, emphasizing how we as individuals and as a society can grow and change. Foster egalitarian impulses, anti-racism, and equity within the group (Smith, 2012). Consider the terminology used for gifted and talented in your school, district, community, and local cultural context.
- Consider the overall book appeal. Is it a book that you would want to read? Just because a book meets all of the above criteria does not mean it is a great fit for your

purposes (Derman-Sparks, 2016). Pérez Huber (2021) highlights the importance of the bigger picture, "Effective storytelling about people of color should provide a broader historical, social, political and other context. This gives children the ability to understand how everyday experiences exist within the larger society" (para 18). Situating interest within context is crucial for KidLit.

Continuing with the sample learning outcomes expanded upon in Table 2, we share several possibilities for both read alouds and common reads in Table 3. This table also shares an abbreviated selection of KidLit resources, compiled by equity-minded experts in the field.

Design activities. "A hammer is just a hammer until it is placed in the hands of [a] master craftsperson. The power does not reside in the thing itself; the power is realized as the tool is used by an individual with expertise," Everett (2017, para. 5), of ImagineLit, writes. He continues, "educators are still responsible for applying their expertise and critical lens to texts" (Everett, 2017, para. 5). Stepping into the world of a book allows the reader enjoyment and critical self-reflection, but when used in PL, the engagement with the text must be intentionally planned and purposeful. The activity needs to relate the book to the topic/outcome desired, which is best achieved through integrated activities. This can be done through expanding on the text or images in the story and making connections to the topic. The facilitator can use a single event in the story or the full book as a lead-in to talking; using KidLit to initiate conversations before diving into the PL topic. Along with lead-in to talking, a character analysis is helpful in broaching sensitive topics. By discussing and relating to the characters in the story, the participants are one step removed from the situation, which can defuse personal emotions to tense situations. Tying the character analysis to the PL topic can provide a smooth segway to diving deeper into a complex subject.

Group sharing of perspectives is one method of engaging the participants in the PL, part of the safe/brave spaces of equity-driven PL (Novak et al., 2020). By asking the participants to share their perspectives, in a safe learning space, the facilitator creates an opportunity for buy-in. Participants can then relate their stories to the characters from the KidLit, this is strengthened if a character analysis has already been completed as an activity. Participants have the opportunity for reflection and will view the same character in different ways based on their lived experiences, and collaboration, and will learn from the perspectives of their peers. Transitioning from perspective sharing to personal stories allows for a deeper connection with the text, the characteristics, and the topic itself; this is often an emotional experience for the participants who may not realize the commonalities or differences amongst their peers. Safe and brave spaces, while essential, can cause discomfort and dissonance; safety does not imply easy. It is important that group norms and guidelines are established at the onset, and that the facilitator ensures that it continues throughout the session.

Reflection can be personal or shared, and collaboration can be facilitated in small group or whole group sessions; this is a decision best made by the facilitator with knowledge of the needs and culture of the group. Activities during the PL should be a

Table 2. Sample Learning Outcome Map.

Learning Outcome	Enabling Knowledge (K), Understandings (U) & Skills (S)	Targeted Knowledge (K), Understandings (U) & Skills (S)
The educator will create a learning environment that is inclusive of diverse gifted learners.	-(K) Basic understanding of diversity -(K)Characteristics of positive learning environments -(K)Knowledge of "traditional" characteristics of gifted learners -(U) Gifted learners need opportunities to develop their gifts -(U) Gifted children are found across all cultural groups and social-economic status -(S) Creating a positive, nurturing learning environment for gifted learners	-(K) Key terms and how they relate: Diversify, equity, social justice, inclusion, and belongingess -(K) Characteristics of equitable and inclusive learning environments for gifted students -(K) Key characteristics of giftedness from diverse cultural viewpoints -(U) Cultural relevance is necessary to engage gifted learners -(U) Scaffolding is essential to fostering inquiry, depth, and complexity -(S) demonstrate strategies for creating an inclusive learning environment -(S) Describe and apply additional characteristics and cultural manifestations of gifted learners
The educator will debunk common stereotypes and myths surrounding underrepresented gifted populations and determine steps for improvement in their sphere of influence.	-(K) Knowledge of "traditional" characteristics of gifted learners -(U) Gifted students are present in all cultural, linguistic and economic groups. -(S) Articulate how stereotypes and myths create bias	-(K) Types of biases including confirmation bias, halo effect, horns effect, affinity bias, and their applicability in (in)equitable gifted education. - (K) Key characteristics of giftedness from different viewpoints. - (U) Giftedness varies, and no two gifted individuals will exhibit all of the same characteristics -(U) Acknowledging our own and others' biases helps us to recognize how we might view, or fail to view, students' gifted behaviors and traits - (S) Provide specific examples of stereotypes and myths in gifted education, specifically around culture and ethnicity. -(S) Reflect on current teaching practices and identify areas for growth related to equity -(S) Identify an action plan to foster cultural awareness between students

balance between independent self-reflection and collaborative conversations. Reflection is essential to growth as a learner. It is through reflection that one becomes cognizant of one's own thinking leading to question seeking and answering—a process which results in new understandings and growth as a learner. Engaging in reflection is both an

Table 3. Example books for sample learning outcomes and selected KidLit book lists.

Example Books for Sample Learning Outcomes

Sample learning outcomes	The educator will create a learning environment that is inclusive of diverse gifted learners.	The educator will debunk common stereotypes and myths surrounding underrepresented gifted populations and determine steps for improvement in their sphere of influence.
Possible KidLit pairings	*The Buddy Bench* by Gwendolyn Hooks Illustrated by Shirley Ng-Benitez https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXD66wzG4Xg *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family* by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S.K. Ali Art by Hatem Aly https://youtu.be/XJiTBmfy-LI *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis (Common Read) *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone (Common Read)	*I Am Every Good Thing* Written by Derrick Barnes Illustrated by Gordon C. James https://youtu.be/9XXqvhwnrHc *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman https://youtu.be/LmIfdJRsSGQ *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang (Common Read) *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson (Common Read)
Selected KidLit book lists		
	Resource for Selecting high quality KidLit	Source
Internet Sources	*KidLit Collective*'s mission is to use social justice, equity, and inclusion to showcase indigenous and People of Color in KidLit. *American Indians in* KidLit, curated by Dr. Debbie Reese of Nambé Pueblo *Latinxs in KidLit:* Exploring the world of Latinx YA, MG, and KidLit *AdLit.org* has book lists organized by theme, curated by Jamie Watson. Links provided for Hispanic heritage (c819), Asian Pacific American heritage (c834), and multicultural stories (810/811). *Multicultural Children's Book Day* has several lists under reading resources divided by topic, such as anti-racism, immigration, microaggressions, Juneteenth, refugee experiences, skin color, and so on. *Rich in Color,* Reading and reviewing diverse YA books since 2013 *Books for Children, Featuring Gifted Children*: This resource is collated by Dr. Linda K. Silverman and housed on Hoagies Gifted. *Anti-Racism Resources for All Ages,* created by Dr. Nicole A. Cooke, the Augusta Baker Chair from the University of South Carolina *Social Justice Books: A Teaching for Change Project* has 70 different book lists. Note that both the education and race and education lists are teacher focused books, but most of the other lists are KidLit. *Hot Topics! Reading List for Gifted Children* *On Being Gifted:* This Hoagies Gifted lift contains gifted focused KidLit as well as teacher/parent resources. Books are divided into categories, including by age, social development, gifted girls, gifted boys, perfectionism, gifted and dyslexic, anxiety, gifted and LD, gifted and aspergers, and underachievement.	https://wtpsite.com/ https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/best-books.html https://latinosinkidlit.com/ http://www.adlit.org/books/c819/ http://www.adlit.org/books/c834/ http://www.adlit.org/books/c810/ http://www.adlit.org/books/c811/ https://multiculturalchildrensbookday.com/ http://richincolor.com/ https://www.hoagiesgifted.org/featuring_gifted.htm https://padlet.com/nicolethelibrarian/nbasekqoazt336co https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/ https://www.hoagiesgifted.org/being_gifted.htm

Table 3. (continued)

Example Books for Sample Learning Outcomes		
Text Sources	*Some of My Best Friends are Books* by Judith Halstead	ISBN: 978-0910707961 Great Potential Press
	Reading the Rainbow: LGBTQ- *Inclusive Literacy Instruction in the Elementary Classroom* by Caitlin L. Ryan and Jill M. Hermann-Wilmarth	ISBN: 978-0780807759332 Teachers College press ISBN: 978-0190932879
	Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of KidLit, *and the Need for Diverse Books* by Philip Nel	Oxford University press

Note. Most sources were previously published on June 3, 2020 on https://www.angelamnovak.com/post/black-lives-matter and can be accessed from that page.

independent and collaborative process. Providing opportunities and space for independent reflection is necessary when discussing sensitive topics, as one may not be comfortable with sharing out in the group for a variety of reasons from embarrassment to fear of repercussions. Journaling or blinded written responses can be cathartic for the learner. Opportunities to learn from peers are equally important in growing as a learner and changing mindsets. If one simply reflects by themselves, one runs the risk of stagnating as a learner. Engaging in group reflections is as important to the learner's growth as is engaging in critical discussions, keeping in mind that: "[w]e need to develop a way to have this conversation that doesn't make some people feel condemned" (Lopez, 2017). Toggling between both independent and group activities results in the greatest learner growth.

Following the personal connections, and likely a restorative break, the participants should transition to making connections between the topic and story/characters to their own classrooms and school/community. Drawing connections are critical to the participants leaving the PL sessions with new knowledge from the KidLit and/or their colleagues, and the ability and drive to put that knowledge into practice. When designing the PL activities, consider the activities that will take place during the sessions as well as prior to and after the sessions. Remember, the greatest gains will not be seen during a workshop; rather, they are seen days, weeks, or months later. Sustained, ongoing PL where learners have multiple opportunities to engage and reflect on the topic is the most beneficial.

Applying knowledge to teaching practices. Transferring the newly acquired understandings to the classroom is paramount to cultivating change in teacher practices. Keeping best practices in PL in mind, trainers should strategically plan activities that build on step 3, Planning Learning Activities, so participants can implement the new knowledge into teaching practices, preferably for which the facilitator is able to observe and provide feedback. Job-embeddedness is another essential PL practice; explicit connections are needed to show teachers how to apply the knowledge in their classrooms. For example, a PL session may focus on a culture represented in the school and community; it in turn may initiate changes in teacher beliefs, but because it lacked the connections to how gifted characteristics are portrayed in different cultures (those represented by your school/community), there may not be a change in teacher practices. Long term changes are not instantaneous, but incremental.

Table 4. Sample plan for weaving KidLit into PL.

Stage 1: Setting the Framework

Identified learning outcome: The educator will debunk common stereotypes and myths surrounding underrepresented gifted populations and determine steps for improvement in their sphere of influence.

Enabling Prior Knowledge & Skills-Knowledge of "traditional" characteristics of gifted learners-Recognition of the concept of otherness-understanding of stereotypes and myths, basic understanding of bias

KUDs
Knowledge
-Types of biases including confirmation bias, halo effect, horns effect, affinity bias and their applicability in (in) equitable gifted education.
-Key characteristics of giftedness from different viewpoints.
- Specific examples of stereotypes and myths in gifted education, specifically around culture and ethnicity.

Understandings
-Giftedness varies, and no two gifted individuals will exhibit all of the same characteristics. Culture, ethnicity, place, economics, (dis) ability, neurodiversity, family structure, relationships, personality, gender, sexuality, and identity can all factor into manifestations of gifted behaviors and characteristics.
-Understanding our own and others' biases helps us to recognize how we might view, or fail to view, students' gifted behaviors and traits.

Do (Skills)
-Reflect on current teaching practices and identify areas for growth related to equity
-Identify an action plan to foster cultural awareness between students

Stage 2: Determining evidence-Based measures

Before: Facilitator uses a needs assessment to determine participants' baseline knowledge of "traditional" characteristics of giftedness, stereotypes, myths, and/or bias, in order to plan.

During: Facilitator will monitor the participants' levels of understanding through the use of exit tickets as well as through the discussion during the sesion

After: The facilitator will arrange follow up discussion prompts for the participants to complete in an online PL group. Participants will collect samples of student work, lesson plans as well as questions related to their observations of GT students in their classroom

Stage 3: Designing Activities that target learning outcomes

Determine the Time/Method of PL   45 minute initial face to face session Followed by online PLC groups

Table 4. (continued)

Stage 1: Setting the Framework	
Select KidLit pairing: *I Am Every Good Thing*; written by Derrick Barnes Illustrated by gordon C. James https://youtu.be/9XXqvhwnrHc	**Author:** Previously received a Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Author Honor, and Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award **Illustrator:** Previously received a Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Author Honor, and Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award **Book:** NCTE Charlotte Huck Award, Kirkus Prize **Copyright date:** 2020 **Purposefully Selected:** *New York Times* bestseller; Beautiful illustrations, positive, energetic text, character is self-affirming and a change agent
Design Activities:	**Journal Prompt:** *Do you know yourself? What would make today great? Who in your GT classroom do you think of when you hear the phrase, I Am Everything Good, why?* **Self-Reflection:** Participants fill out a checklist of stereotypical biases: Sample questions include: "Black children are loud and troublemakers" "Gifted children are the most engaged students in the classroom" "Black children are all from poverty" "Gifted children are naturally ahead of the other students in the classroom" **Method:** The facilitator will share the story as a Read Aloud with the participants. Sample discussion questions related to the story: *Which page in the story did you connect with the most? Why? Can you think of a student in your gifted classroom who is like the boy in the story? How does this book change your perspective of the statement I Am Everything Good?* -The facilitator will guide discussion of the manifestation of giftedness in Black children. Highlighting cultural influences, dispelling stereotypes/misconceptions, cultural bias. *Note: This 4 min PL is only the starting point of this conversation, the facilitator will need to narrow the focus, and plan follow up PLC activities **Possible Resource:** https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Parent%20CK/NAGC-TIP%20Sheet-Nurturing%20Gifted%20African%20American%20Children.pdf
Applying Knowledge to teaching Practices:	**-**Take the read aloud back to your GT classroom and walk through the discussion with your students -Share and post the NAGC bill of rights for gifted students of color (https://www.nagc.org/blog/culturally-responsive-equity-based-bill-rights-gifted-students-color) in their gifted classrooms. Educators of the gifted should facilitate a conversation about what this Bill of Rights means for and to the students - Teachers will return to the PLC group to debrief and share how the read aloud went with their students, and continue the discussion on recognizing bias and bringing more equitable practices to their gifted classrooms

As the facilitator, designing ongoing/sustained conversations and activities, providing PL focused on the topics, while matching both of these to the needs of the educators, along with balancing the ability to assist educators in putting theory into practice must all work together. Table 4 provides an example of a PL outline utilizing the UbD framework to purposefully incorporate KidLit to help educators of the gifted to shift their perspectives.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has clearly illustrated the overriding work ethic of teachers. Teachers are overwhelmingly compassionate, innovative and adaptable masters of their craft. Pivoting on a dime, changing their teacher practices and beliefs to meet the unknown demands of virtual learning, educators' model for the world how change begins with an individual. Intentionally and carefully selected KidLit, along with thoughtfully crafted activities, is a valuable avenue for engaging educators' hearts and minds in meaningful topics in equity and gifted education. Changing minds and practices is achievable through equity-driven PL.

> "We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."
>
> -Fred Rogers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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ORCID iDs

Katie Lewis ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1398-5673
Angela M. Novak ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8257-4731

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