Influences on selecting books for the classroom library

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**Abstract**

This research paper overviews what banned and challenged books are, common themes found in those books, along with an analysis of perceived pressures that teachers feel when selecting books for their personal classroom library and where those perceived pressures stem from. Throughout this study, I looked into common themes amongst banned and challenged books, who challenges books, the effects of preemptive censorship, and what characteristics teachers look for when selecting books. The literature will also discuss how teachers would respond when there is resistance to a book or topic addressed in class. I sent out multiple surveys which collected demographic data to numerous teachers new to the field. In total, I conducted four interviews with four different K-6 teachers; two of them taught in the general education setting while the other two taught in the special education classroom. I analyzed the results from the surveys and interviews and discussed what the participants’ thoughts were about pushback from the community regarding certain topics and how this impacts the books the teachers choose for their personal library.

**Introduction**

My thinking behind this research project began nearly two years ago during a children’s literature course. Within the first week, I fell in love with this course; I devoured every children’s book I could find. Over the semester, I began to realize how important books can be for children. A specific book can open or close the world for a student, regardless of his or her age. One book in particular, *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold, became a favorite of mine. The book centers around the belief that regardless of a student’s appearance, at-home situation, or other factors, he or she is loved, accepted, and welcomed in the classroom. I learned, however, that in an elementary school not far from Birmingham-Southern College, a teacher used *All Are Welcome* as a beginning of the year book in her classroom. Towards the end of the book, two women are pictured holding hands in the background. One of the parents in this teachers’ classroom was so displeased and disturbed by this that he or she ended up pulling the student out of the teacher’s classroom altogether. While *All Are Welcome* is grounded in acceptance, the book is not specifically about same-sex couples; however, this parent at the school perceived it as such. This belief surprised me and eventually set me on course for this research project. I began wondering what teachers do when parents have such a large reaction to a book read in class, what constitutes a book being banned from schools altogether, and what themes in books are most commonly taken away from students.

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

Throughout my life and academic career, I have been interested in students’ access and restrictions to material in the academic setting. As I have been through the schooling system, I have learned of “banned books.” I frequently found myself wondering why certain books were banned or required a legal guardian’s signature and permission for me to read them. Throughout my process of conducting my literature review, I gathered information about banned books, how they are banned, and what this looks like in a teacher’s personal classroom library. However, as I gathered information, my questioning shifted. What started off as an inquiry into the reasoning of why books are banned morphed into a search for why and how teachers and school administration preemptively self-censor books before they can be placed in students’ hands.

As mentioned before, my initial literature review included topics such as the differences between banned and challenged books, the history behind banned books themselves, and what happens if a teacher has a strong desire to incorporate either a banned or a challenged book into the classroom curriculum. However, as I read into various texts, articles, and periodicals I began to question what factors influence a teacher’s reasoning to include a book in the classroom at all. To research my new question, I looked into four main areas. The topics that my literature review primarily discusses are: 1) banned versus challenged books, 2) censorship versus selection, 3) reasoning for self-censorship, and 4) who challenges and/or bans books. Other related topics that support these research areas include: 1) common themes amongst banned books, 2) why representation and knowledge are vital in the classroom.

**Banned versus Challenged Books**

According to Ediaz (2019) from the American Library Association, “a challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials” (p. 1). While books are more likely to be challenged or banned, other forms of media and information are challenged as well. The ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom traced 377 challenges in 2019. According to those findings, 56% of those challenged were books, 22% were programs, 9% were displays of art, 8% were films, and 5% were classified as “other” (American Library Association, 2019). The American Library Association also reports that when a book is challenged, this movement is not simply an individual acting alone in expressing his or her views; instead, the individual is attempting to restrict others from having access to the article at all (2019). If a book or other text is challenged, it is reviewed by the district; if the challenge goes through the book is banned. However, because of the efforts of students, teachers, librarians, and parents, most challenges are unsuccessful (Ediaz 2019).

**Censorship Versus Selection**

The American Library Association describes censorship as, “…[taking] many forms, including removing materials, destroying pages, hiding resources, requiring permission forms to access content, and burning books” (American Library Association, n.d.). Asheim (2017) defines the differences between censorship and selection as, “[selection] seeks to protect the right of the reader to read; censorship seeks to protect—not the right—but the reader himself from the fancied effects of his reading” (p. 1). When we are presented with selected books, we as a reader are trusting the selector’s knowledge of us and of the subject area to make the best choice for us. However, when individuals or groups censor media, there is a lack of others’ trust and judgement (Asheim 2017, p. 1).

**Reasoning for Censorship**

As I continued my research, I noticed several recurring reasons why teachers and librarians censored the books in their libraries before students were able to read them. April Dawkins’ research stood out to me in this particular area. Dawkins discusses the concept of perceived discomfort (2018). She reasons that one of the primary reasons that librarians and teachers self-censor their classroom literature is based in fear that their own administrators may push back against the selected texts (2018). Administration’s views towards ‘controversial’ literature impacts teachers’ feelings on another level as well. Dawkins described that as school librarians felt that their principal was increasingly uneasy with a subject, the librarians’ own uncertainty rose as well (2018). This fear went as far that some staff members were concerned that they could lose their job; Dawkins’ study found that, “… 35.7% of the 17 school librarians with less than a year of experience felt that their job might be in jeopardy if they added controversial content to their collections” (2018, p. 10). While this worry of losing one’s job did not immediately come to my mind as a reason for self-censorship, this information aligns well with my research inquiries.

Both actual and perceived push-back from a school’s community influence a teacher’s selection process. Dawkins writes that, “[they] may choose to exclude controversial content if they perceive their community is rural, conservative, or likely to challenge such choices” (2018, p. 12). Pre-service teachers held the belief that parents can possess a great amount of input, “… over the choices and actions of teachers” (Hartsfield and Kimmel, “It was the word ‘scrotum on the first page…”, 2019, p. 342).

**Who Challenges/ Bans Books**

As I started my research, I was under the assumption that parents and students’ close family members most frequently challenged books in the classroom and library. However, according to the American Library Association, patrons of libraries make up 45% of the challenges, 18% are parents, 13% are school boards and administrations, 12% are religious or political groups, 8% are librarians and teachers, 3% are elected officials, and 1% are students themselves (n.d.). While in 2019, patrons made up the majority of challenged books in libraries, teachers often seem to hear the most from vocal parents and, as previously discussed, higher administration.

Kimmel and Hartsfield (2019) discuss an example on why parents and legal guardians are often the first to protest a text in their article, “‘It Was… the Word ‘Scrotum’ on the First Page’: Educators’ Perspectives of Controversial Literature’”. In this example, students were reading a book that described a dog and a snake fighting on the first page of the book. The book was describing a snake biting the dog’s scrotum, and then moved on with the story. Despite this word being only used once in passing in the entire book, many parents were upset to find such language in their children’s book. Often, the parents had not read past the first page to gain context and understanding. This article also discusses that adults often have three assumptions about children: “1) children are innocent and require the protection of adults. 2) children are depraved and require redemption. 3) children are capable, wise, and seek connections with texts and other people” (2019, p. 337). These reasons pair well with the reasoning that parents and adults often challenge and aim to censor books because they misinformed (Greathouse et al., 2017, p. 17-24). Parents and community members often want what is ‘best’ for their children, and challenges to texts commonly come from a place of fear and loss of control (Greathouse et al., 2017, p. 17-24).

**Common Themes Amongst Banned Books**

According to the American Library Association, of the top 10 most challenged books for 2019, eight of the ten were banned for LGBTQIA+ content and/or for featuring a transgender character (Admin 2020). Other common themes amongst banned books include violence, conflicting with a religious view point, sexual references or addressing sexual education, drug use, addressing teen suicide, offensive language, racial issues, and in one instance a book was challenged because, “…schools and libraries should not ‘put books in a child’s hand that require discussion” (Admin 2020).

**Why Representation and Knowledge are Vital**

The American Library Association has heavily influenced my literary review. Over the years, the organization has consistently held a critical view towards banned books. Specifically, the ALA has been vocal about the dangers that follow close behind when literature is frequently banned. When we censor books, this leaves us blind and unknowledgeable to uncomfortable yet still very real topics and conversations. It can be said that censorship impacts young adults and children the most; the ALA reported that in 2018, the top 11 books that were challenged were texts whose content was targeted towards children and young adults (American Library Association, 2018). According to Greathouse et al., young adult literature can serve the purpose of creating a place for students to feel safe and seen as they discern who they are (2017, p. 17-24). Greathouse et al. also mentions that when students are barred from both texts that are relatable and those that are of other perspectives, they are missing out on the opportunity to have a life-changing experience (2017, p. 17-24). Hartsfield and Kimmel pose that, “preemptive censorship restricts students’ freedom to read and limits their encounters with diverse perspectives and challenging topics… adolescents appreciate reading books addressing complex and realistic social problems and books relevant to their lives” (2020, p. 443). Often, children either cannot or do not feel comfortable discussing personal or vulnerable topics with their family for any multitude of reasons. Teachers, for many students, can be one of the few people in their lives who are willing to talk about such topics (Kimmel and Hartsfield, 2019, p. 342). Representation and crafting a wealth of knowledge that reflects accurate representation can be a challenging task, but in order to prepare students for difficult discussions, an expansive library is necessary.

**Literature Review Conclusion**

The varying areas of literature that I have researched: 1) banned versus challenged books, 2) censorship versus selection, 3) reasoning for self-censorship, 4) who challenges and/or bans books, 4) common themes amongst banned books, and 5) why representation and knowledge are vital in the classroom are reflected throughout the resources I read through. Each of these topics, while stemming from my initial search about banned books, are all intertwined and aid in my search to question what influences teachers to self-censor their classroom libraries. As my knowledge and questioning grows, my literature review will shift and change with my research.

**Methodology**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate books chosen in the classroom library related to factors that influence teachers’ self-censorship. The procedures used in conducting the study are presented in this section. Included are a description of the research design, procedures, and data analysis. The design, procedures, and analysis methodology were specifically chosen to best answer the following research questions:

1. What factors influence a teacher when choosing books for a personal classroom library?

2. How do teachers preemptively self-censor books before they reach the classroom library?

**Design**

The research design utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Results of data analysis were expressed in both qualitative and quantitative formats. This study involved a combination of a multiple-choice and short response survey sent out to numerous elementary education educators along with a virtual Zoom interview with four teachers. The initial survey sent out to all participants aimed to gather demographic information about the teachers. These questions were also grounded in information gathered throughout the Literature Review portion of this study. The data gathered from the survey in turn informed my topics and questioning for the interviews. I intentionally chose to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies into this research project because when used together, both areas allow for a wider pool of information to pull from. Patton (1990) stated, “Because qualitative and quantitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research. Both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected in the same study” (p. 14).

The follow-up interview after the initial survey aimed to dive deeper into the teachers’ experiences when selecting books for the classroom. The initial demographic survey the teachers completed gathered closed-ended answers to straight-forward questions; however, Patton (1990) said that, “what people say is a major source of qualitative data, whether what they say is obtained verbally through an interview or in written form through document analysis or survey responses.” ( p. 25). The primary purpose of the interviews was to not only have my specific questions answered but also to learn even more personal information and anecdotes from the teachers themselves. I chose to conduct interviews because they provide space for deeper and open-ended conversation about my questions and the participants’ responses. Richards & Morse (2013) support this decision by stating:

Some researchers prepare broad, open-ended questions as a guide to topics they want to cover. However, as the purpose of the interview is to elicit the participant’s story, asking such questions initially any preemptively determines what is discussed. It is better if you simply let the participants tell their stories, and then, if you have not learned about all aspects of whatever it is you want to know, you can ask questions when the participants finish speaking. You might prepare only opening questions (sometimes called a ‘grand tour’ question; Spradley, 1979). The grand tour question is intended to focus the participant on the topic, and the researcher, in essence, assumes a listening stance (p. 126-127).

**Participants**

The participants chosen for the initial demographics survey were selected with a specific reason in mind. I initially received a list of contact information of Birmingham-Southern College graduates from the past four academic years. Most of the teachers included in this list were Collaborative Education majors; however, twelve of the sixty graduates were not listed as Collaborative Education majors. While this study primarily focuses on elementary and special education classrooms, I intentionally included the non-collaborative majors in this study because they still have to select books for their personal classroom libraries.

For the follow-up interviews, I chose to facilitate deeper conversations with four randomly selected teachers. I conducted four Zoom interviews in total. To select my participants, I randomly selected four individuals; to select them, I incorporated what Richards and Morse (2013) call convenience sampling (p. 221-222). One was a sixth-grade special education teacher, and another was a special education teacher who works with fourth through sixth graders in a self contained classroom. I also interviewed one fifth grade english language arts teacher, and one first grade teacher at a private school. Each of these participants had been teaching for four or fewer years. Originally, I aimed to have two teachers who were new to the field and two teachers who were more experienced. However, after receiving results from the teachers who were willing to participate in an interview, my pool of participants was limited to teachers who had four or less years of experience.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Participant interviews were transcribed and coded for emergent patterns. Data were collected and analyzed following the three-tiered cyclical model defined by Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. I utilized content analysis as a form of initial data reduction in that individual participant interviews were coded for emergent themes independent of one another. I conducted a second tier of data analysis which involved conducting cross-case analysis comparing emergent themes across interviews.

Content analysis, as described by Patton (1990), is, “the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data” (p. 381). After conducting multiple thorough readings of the transcripts from the interviews, primary patterns and themes began to materialize. Category titles were given to categories as they emerged from the transcriptions. As patterns began to emerge, a quote from Richards and Morse (2013) came to mind. They stated that,

Related to data coding is the *assessment of saturation*. Data gathering must continue until each category is rich and thick, and until it is replicated. It is saturation that provides the researcher with certainty and confidence that the analysis is strong and the conclusions will be right (p. 223).

**Methods to Ensure Rigor of Study**

Throughout this study, I have taken numerous measures to ensure rigor of study, including data verification, triangulation, peer debriefing, and the keeping of a personal methodological log. Peer debriefing was based on Eisner’s (1991) model of consensual validation and referential adequacy. Eisner stated, “[consensual] validation is, at base, agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (p. 112). Throughout my study, I collaborated and conferred with numerous of my education classmates who served as detached observers; in addition to this, I worked with my professor to revise and critique my research along the way. During these conversations, I gained insight into new areas of study and possible questions.

**Findings**

After completing cross-case analysis of each of the interview’s transcripts, several key themes emerged throughout the four interviews. Perceived pushback from the school’s surrounding community, personalized books, intentionality and justification when selecting books, one-on-one discussions, and one’s personal beliefs were all prevalent topics of discussion interwoven in the various discussions.

When asked if any of the participants had personally experienced any significant pushback from parents, administration, or other people of interest, none of them cited any personal experiences. I then asked each participant if they had had any other examples of pushback from others in the classroom, not limited to specifically about books. Participant #4 said that, “…you’ll always have pushback with at least one thing in your year. Whether that’s a tough parent teacher conference… or someone might not understand why you’re doing this the way you’re doing it…”.

While none of the participants had experienced any major pushback from any parents, two of them specifically mentioned the pushback they perceived from their surrounding community. The teachers mentioned being able to sense the community’s beliefs, pressures, and leanings on them. Two of the participants explicitly expressed that they held very different political beliefs than the community they taught in, and that this often left a residual tension hangin in the air. Even if the participants were not talking with the students about overtly political or controversial topics, they often felt tense over how the conversation could be repeated at home or in a different setting. Participant #3 voiced that, “I do feel, not necessarily literal pressure, but perceived pressure from the community because of the demographic. We do live in a predominantly white upper middle-class area that tends to vote and lean one direction. I tend to lean the other way. I do have this pit whenever I talk about something super controversial, [I think], is this going to go back to someone’s family and they’re going to come talk to me tomorrow?” Participant #2 cited that despite holding similar beliefs to those around her, she was still hesitant not to say anything outlandish which would ‘rock the boat’ or make her stand out. Participant #2 explicitly said that if her principal was not comfortable talking about a subject, then she was unlikely to talk about the issue either.

When asked about the support, or lack thereof, the participants felt from their principals and administration, each of the participants felt that their administration would support them. However, despite agreeing with the principal on most fronts there was still an air of tension amongst the participants. Participant #3 expressed that if there was an issue between him and a parent or the principal and a compromise could not be found, he would have to do what the principal said in the end.

I then proceeded to ask each participant for what qualities, topics, or characteristics they look for in a book when gathering new resources for the classroom. Three of the four teachers responded that they intentionally sought out books that either represented the students in their classes or books that provided the students with a different perspective than their own. This belief ties into the idea that books can be mirrors, windows, or sliding glass doors for students. This idea was originally created by Rudine Sims Bishop was echoed in Participant #1’s response. Participant #1 searched for books that mirrored the students in the books specifically because they did not see themselves mirrored in Participant #1. This teacher said that she wanted the students to be able to read texts with characters of different colors, genders, and upbringings. She wanted her texts to be relatable to the students, and Participant #1 understood that in order for texts to be relatable, they have to be varied to reflect the diverse population of readers.

When selecting new books for the upcoming school year, Participant #3 answered that he chose books that did not reflect his students in an upfront way. Participant #3 stated that, “I’ll pick books that represent not only the students in my class with characters that represent them...Being in a majority white upper middle-class area, I really want to engage them with characters who don’t look like them. So, I went out of my way this year. Over the summer [I went] to buy tons of books, and none of them have white protagonists.” Two of the participants also answered that they searched for books which addressed task behaviors, books which addressed certain skills the students are learning at the time. Participant #2 alluded that she chose books which focused on colors and numbers since her students were learning about those areas.

When asked how the participants would respond if they were approached by a parent who opposed a book or topic being discussed in the classroom, many of them answered that being able to justify why a book is being read is critical. In addition to this, the participants mentioned that relating the book in question directly to the curriculum or classroom discussions is important as well. Intentionally choosing books for a specific lesson or student ahead of time before using the book could alleviate some of the potential stress of ‘rocking the boat.’ Several of the participants answered that if they were met with a disagreeing parent or administrator, being able to have an open discussion with the other person was very important.

Branching off to another key theme, one-on-one discussions were mentioned during each interview. When I asked how they would respond if a parent hypothetically pushed back against a book in the classroom, each of the participants answered with some variant of having a one-on-one conversation with that parent. Participant #4’s response to a parent would have been, “We can look at the book together and see what about it you’re concerned about or what about it offends you.” These participants felt that it was important to be able to discuss why the book is important to you as a teacher as well as discussing the instructional aspect of the book as well. Having the open line of communication between the teacher and the parent was, for these participants, the first step in building that bridge between themselves and the parent.

Another overarching theme that emerged throughout the four interviews was the participants’ personal beliefs. Overall, each of the participants wanted their students to feel valued and welcomed in the classroom. When the class discussed more ‘serious’ or ‘controversial’ topics, several of the participants felt that in order to properly educate the students, they had to do their best to ensure that their own personal beliefs were removed from the discussion. The participants held the belief that it was their role as teachers to inform the students about a topic, but it was not their responsibility to share their personal beliefs with the students. Participant #1’s students enjoy talking about politics and asking the participant for her opinions on various issues and beliefs. Participant #1 explained that she felt that, “...as a teacher, it’s my job to inform [the students], but it is not my job to give [the students] my opinion.” Participant #4 answered that, “…if I try and put [my opinions] on my kids through books that I pick or through topics that I decided to talk about, then I’m not doing my job in a good way.” Two of the participants directly mentioned the value of discussing hot-button topics with their students. They answered that it was one of their primary roles as teachers to facilitate discussion amongst the students themselves. When students were able to make personal connections with and amongst passages, that was when these teachers felt that their job was being done well. Participant #3 voiced that when his students were making those connections for themselves, he felt that that was a way to ensure that his own biases and beliefs were being kept out of the equation.

Throughout my interviews, one outlier was found in the interview with Participant #2. She briefly discussed how she had not spent a lot of time considering the representation and diversity in her classroom library because her students in the special education setting were learning the colors and numbers while using board books. Since her students were using board books, she had not considered seeking out books which challenged the norm in any particular way. After my discussion with her, I did a quick search on the internet for various board books discussing racism, diversity, and similar topics. One of the first board books in the results bar was *Mixed: A Colorful Story* by Arree Chung. This book touches on topics such as racism, segregation, inter-racial relationships, discrimination, internalized biases, along with the idea that people can change from their past harmful ways. However, this book also touches on the colors themselves and new colors that are created when they mix. This book touches on these difficult yet very real topics in a way that students of any age or development level can learn from. It seems that we as teachers need to go above and beyond to intentionally include a diverse representation in our classroom libraries; not doing so is an easy way out of the hard conversations that must be had with students.

**Conclusion**

Through my research, I discovered that there are many reasons teachers either do or do not censor the books they select for their personal classroom library. I learned that the support from parents, administrators, and the surrounding community matter. Every person benefits from being supported from others, and teachers are no exception. I also learned that being informed and intentional when selecting books for the classroom library is essential. When teachers are grounded and can provide the reasoning behind why they did something, this holds them accountable and eases the process when advocating for themselves and for others. Finally, open communication is often the most important and first step when an issue arises in the classroom. While teachers face varying pressures and challenges in the classroom setting, my research indicates that teachers and students alike are better off when teachers are supported, grounded in their reasonings, and willing to have flexible conversations with others.

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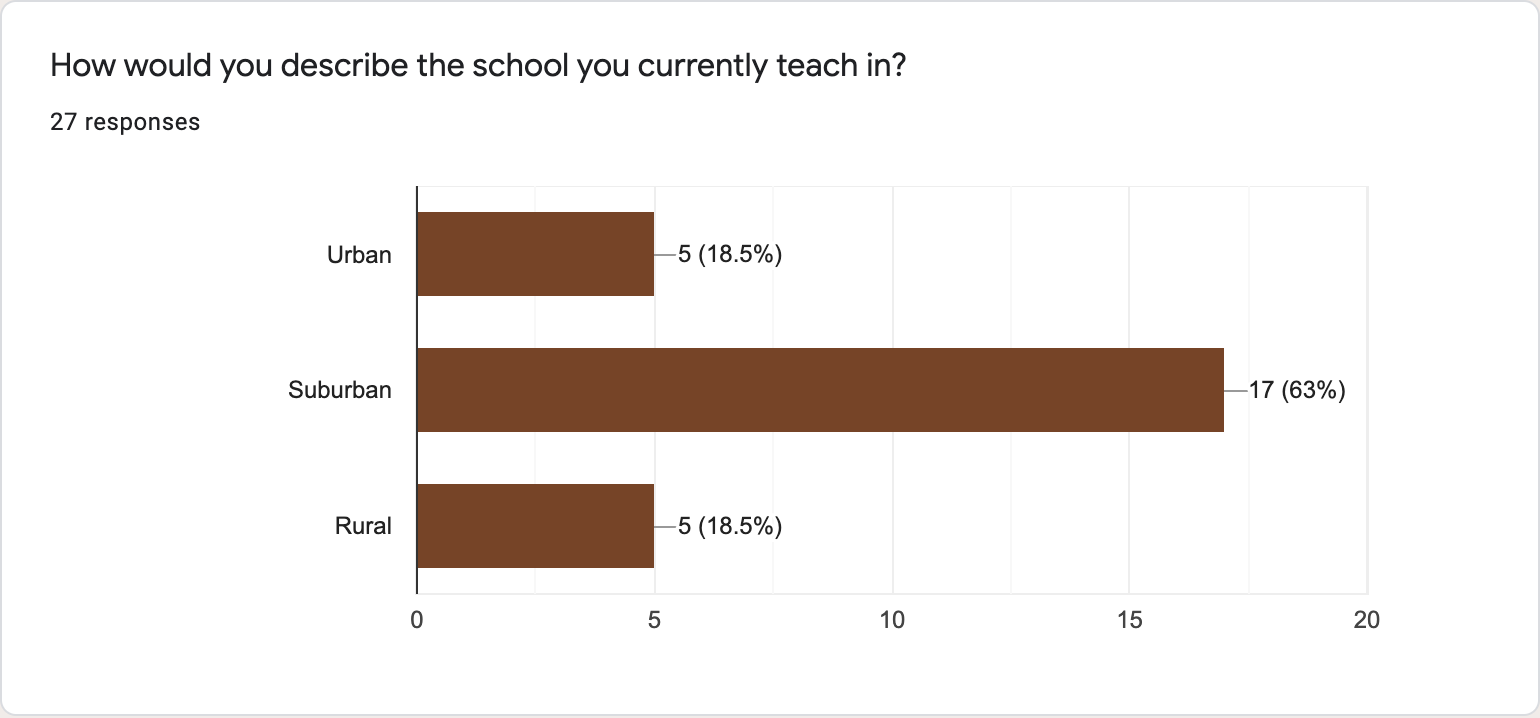
**APPENDIX A**

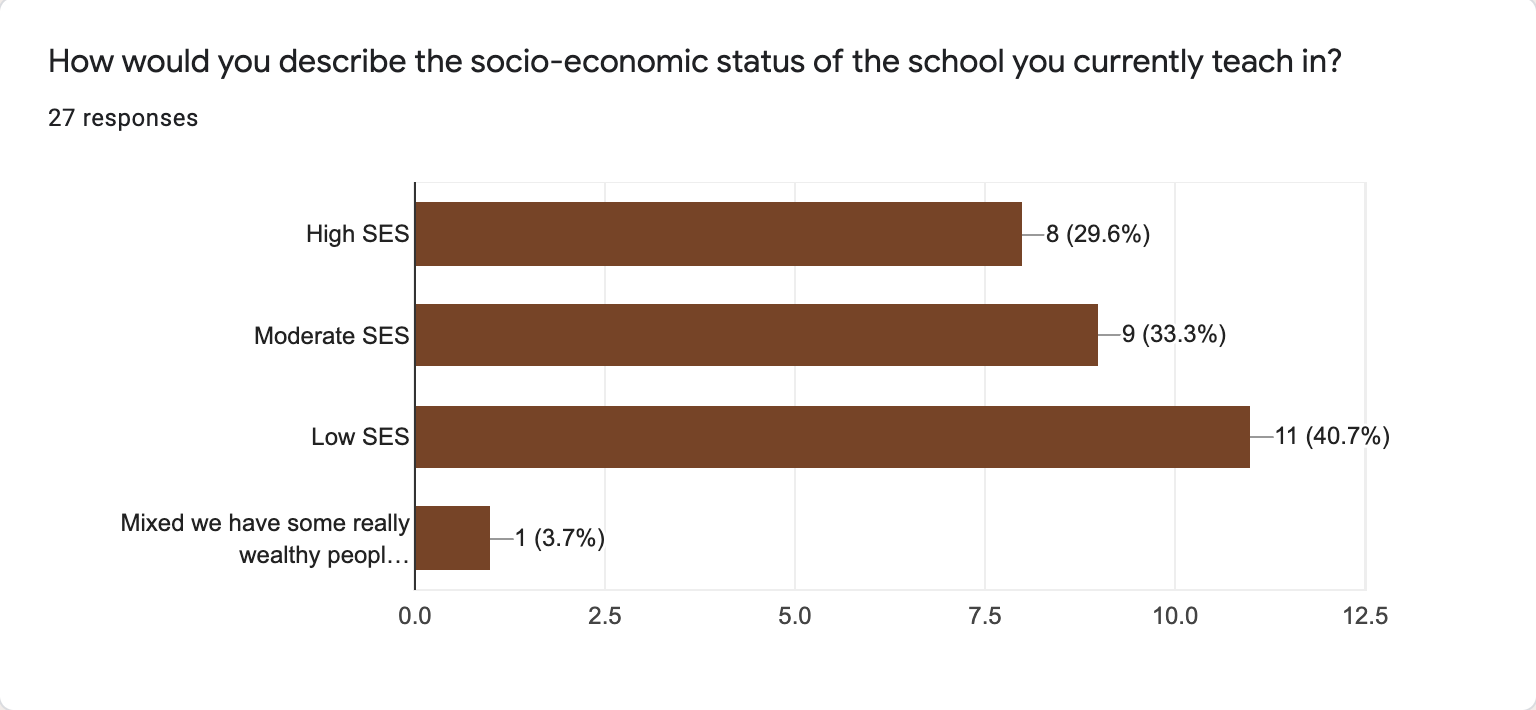
Initial Survey Questions

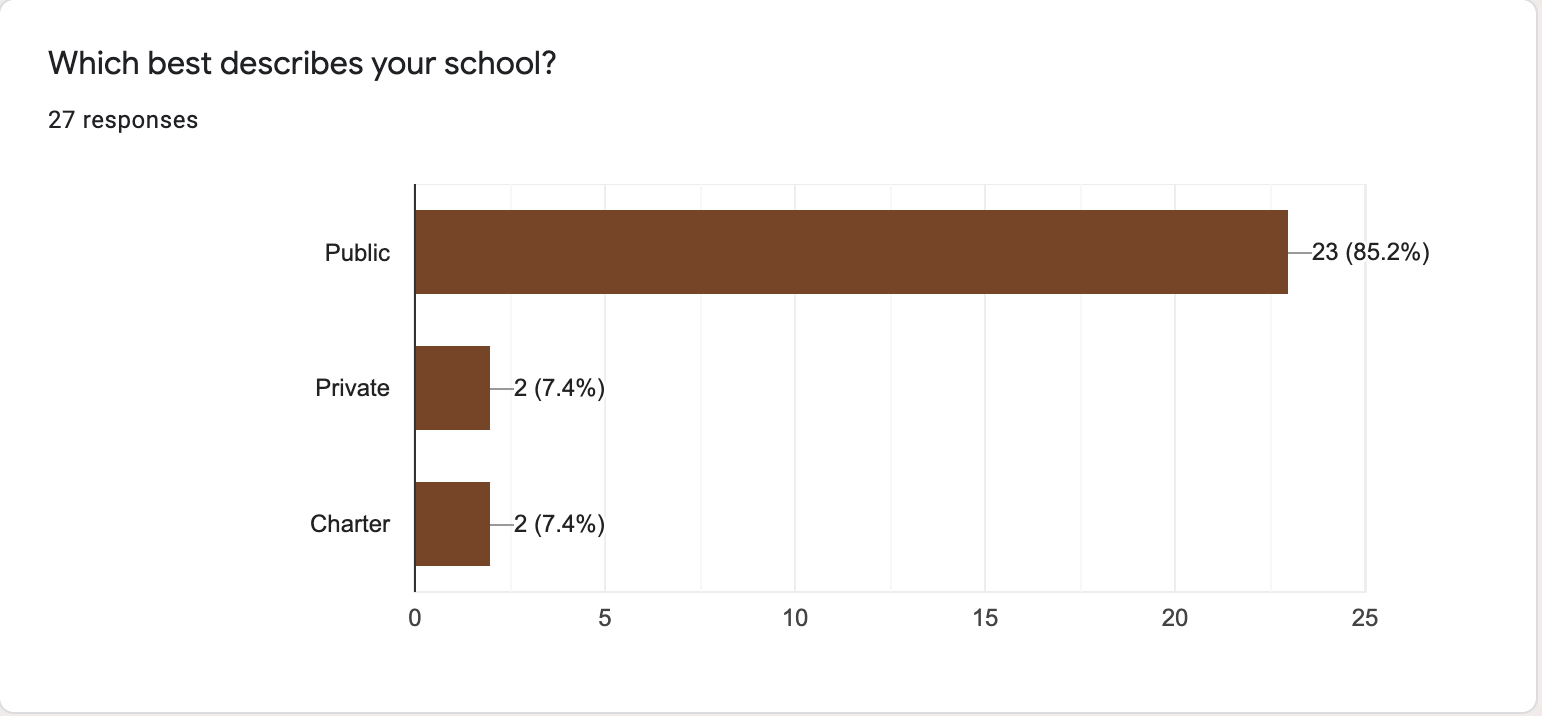
1. How would you describe the school you currently teach in?
   1. Urban
   2. Suburban
   3. Rural
   4. Other…
2. How would you describe the socio-economic status of the school you currently teach in?
   1. High SES
   2. Moderate SES
   3. Low SES
   4. Other…
3. Which best describes your school?
   1. Public
   2. Private
   3. Charter
   4. Other…
4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
   1. 0-3 years
   2. 4-7 years
   3. 8-10 years
   4. 11+ years
5. What is your gender?
   1. Female
   2. Male
   3. Other
   4. Prefer not to say
6. Select all of the grades you have taught
   1. Pre-K
   2. Kindergarten
   3. First
   4. Second
   5. Third
   6. Fourth
   7. Fifth
   8. Sixth
   9. Self contained
   10. Special education
   11. Other…
7. What grade(s) do you currently teach?
   1. Pre-K
   2. Kindergarten
   3. First
   4. Second
   5. Third
   6. Fourth
   7. Fifth
   8. Sixth
   9. Self contained
   10. Special education
   11. Other…
8. How do you purchase books for your classroom library?
   1. Personal funds
   2. Donations
   3. Scholastic points
   4. School funding
   5. Other…
9. Are you solely responsible for choosing books in your classroom library?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Other…
10. If you are not solely responsible for choosing the books in your library, which of the following applies?
    1. A parental advisory committee assists in selecting books
    2. A librarian or library committee assists in selecting books
    3. Other…
11. Are there any books you want to include in your classroom but have not?
    1. Yes
    2. No
12. If yes, please list below…
    1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Would you be willing to participate in a 20-minute phone or Zoom interview?
    1. Yes
    2. No
14. If yes, please leave your name and contact information below.
    1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

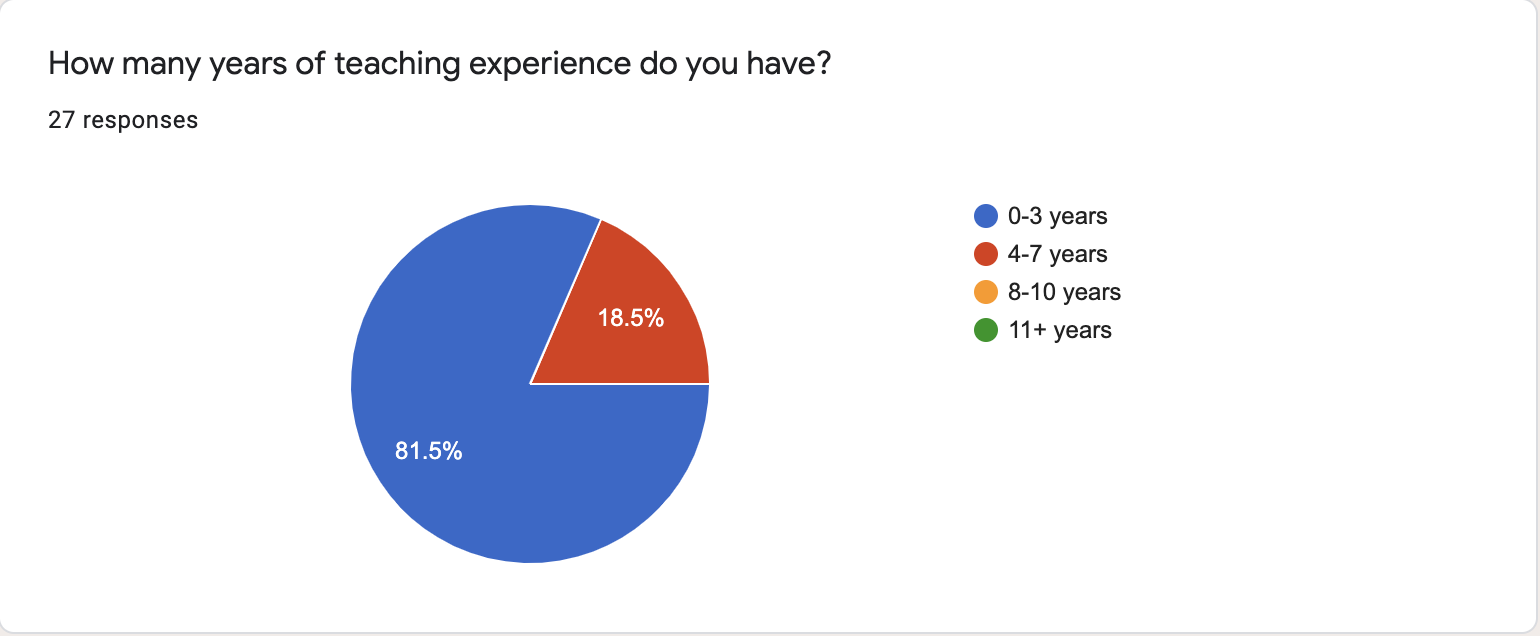
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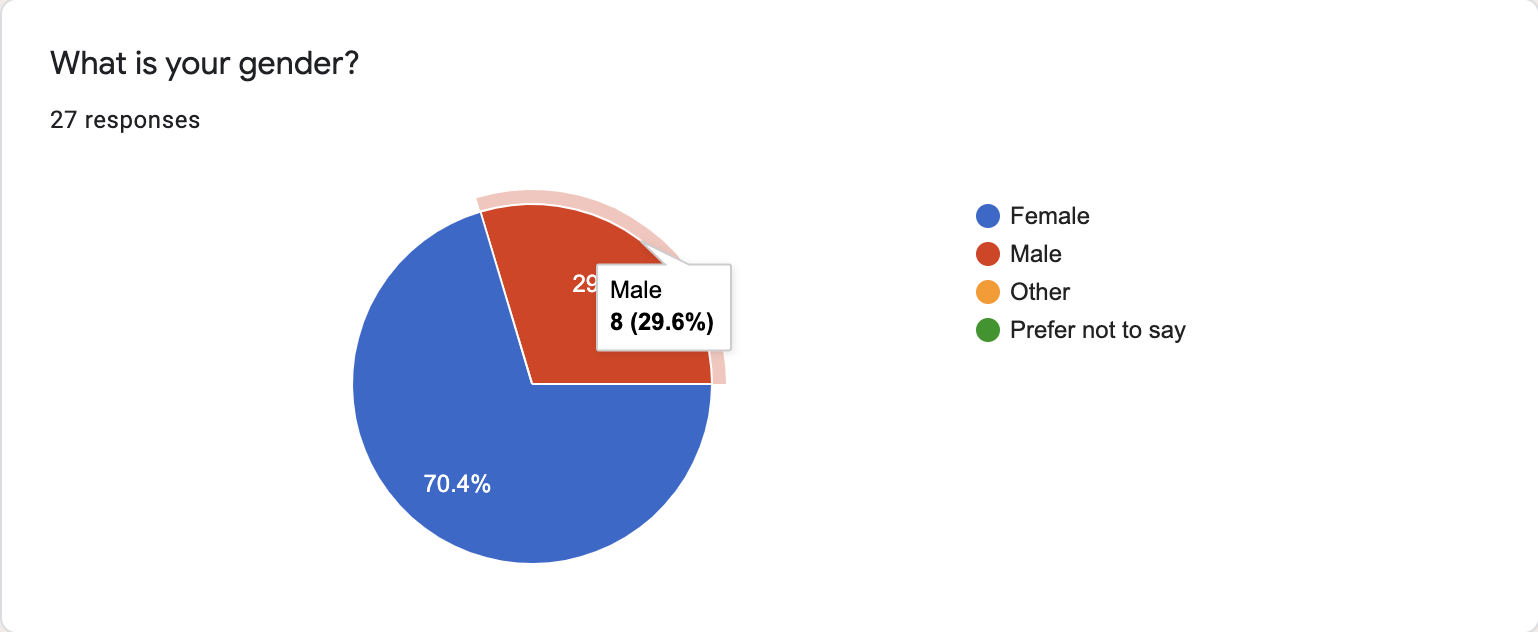
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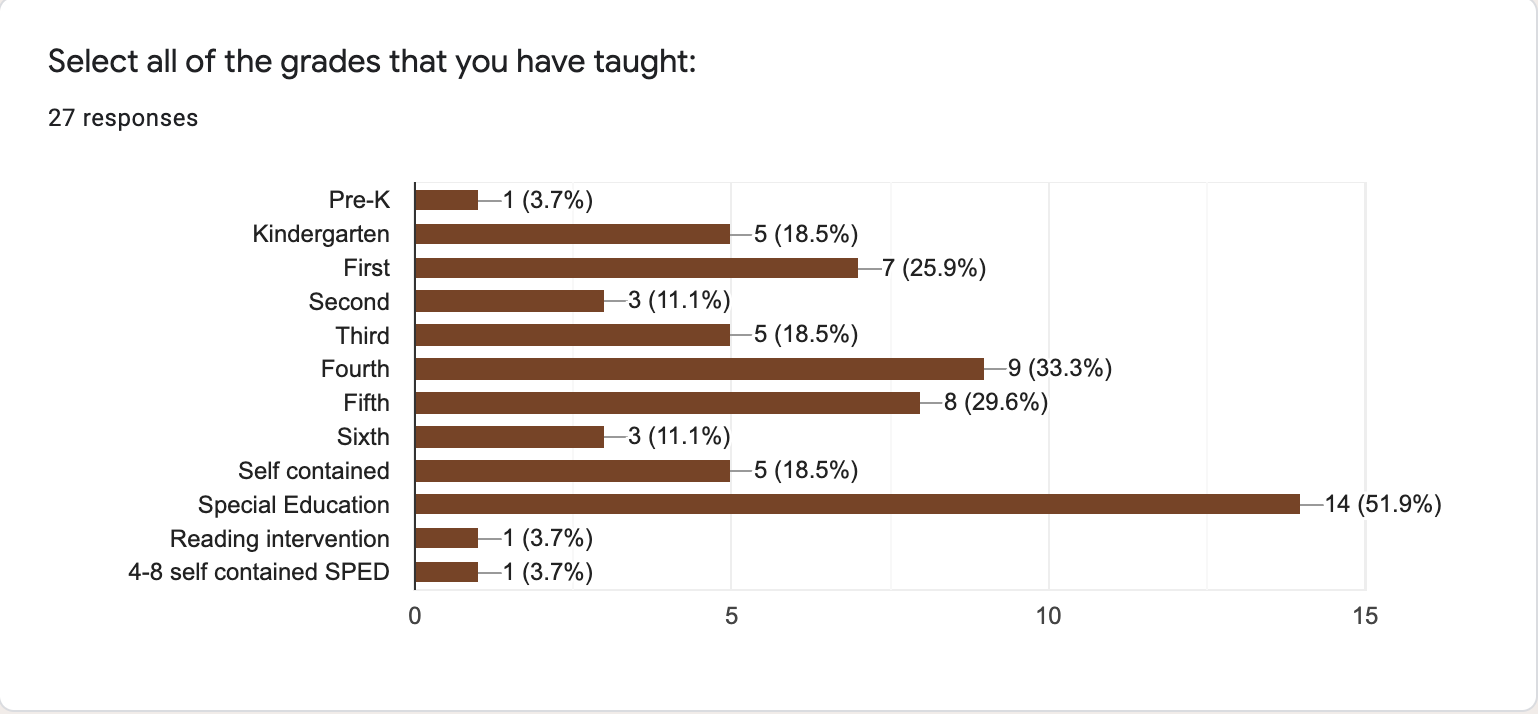


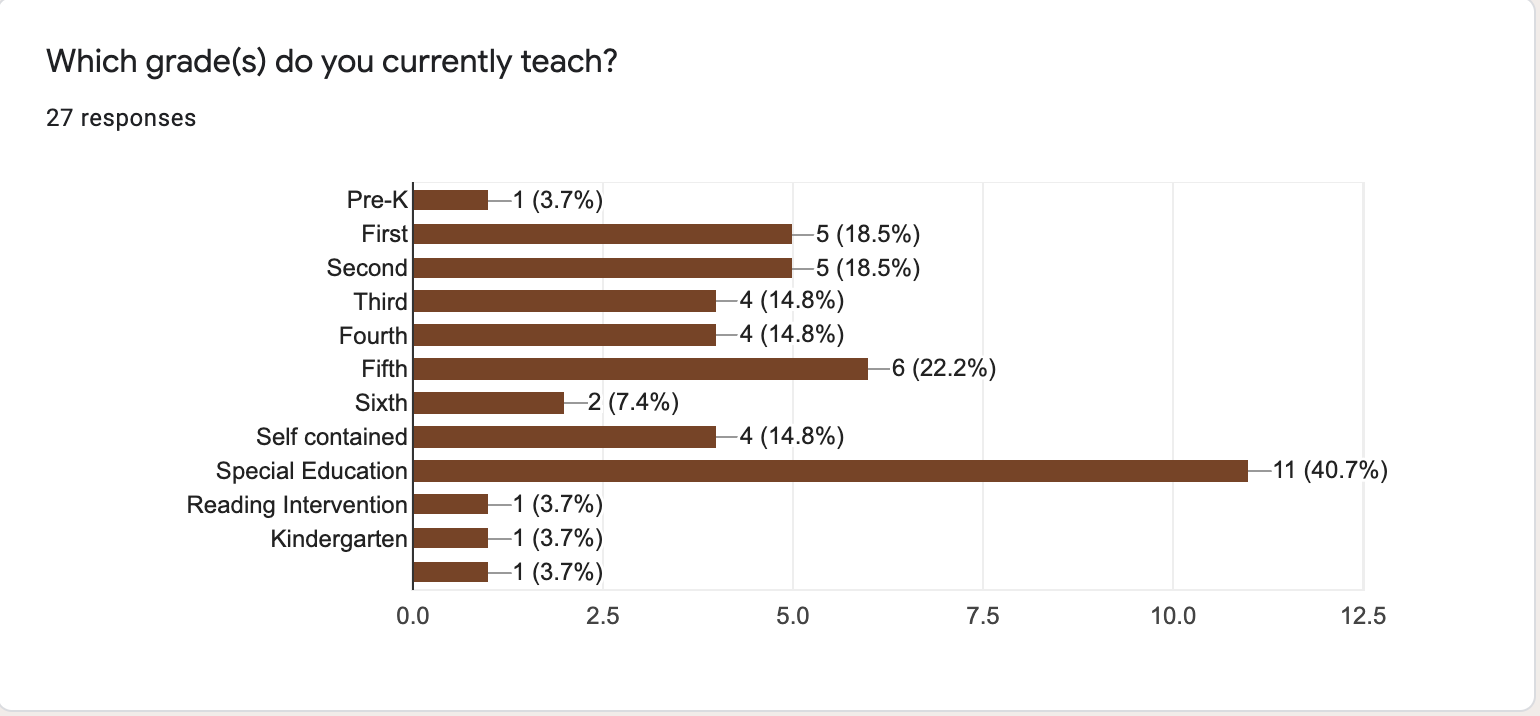


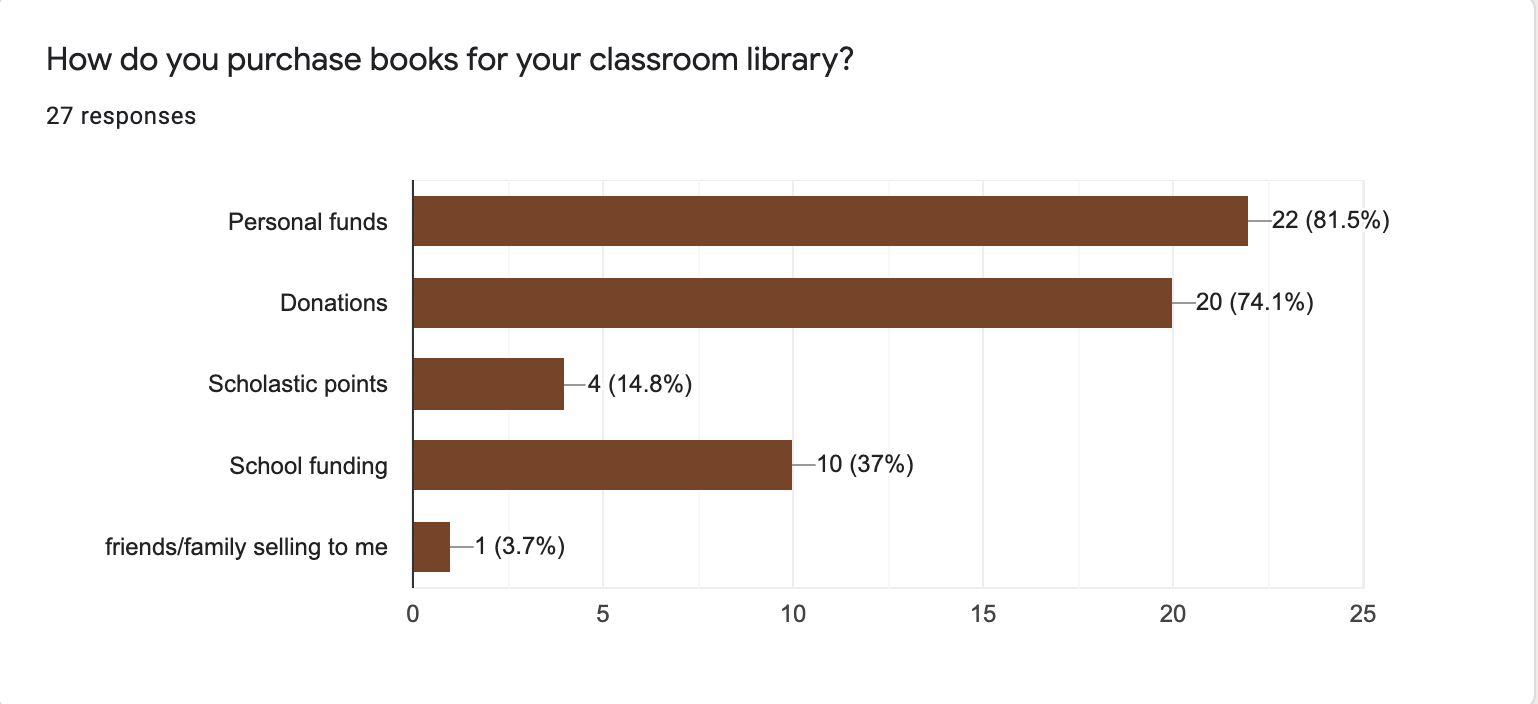


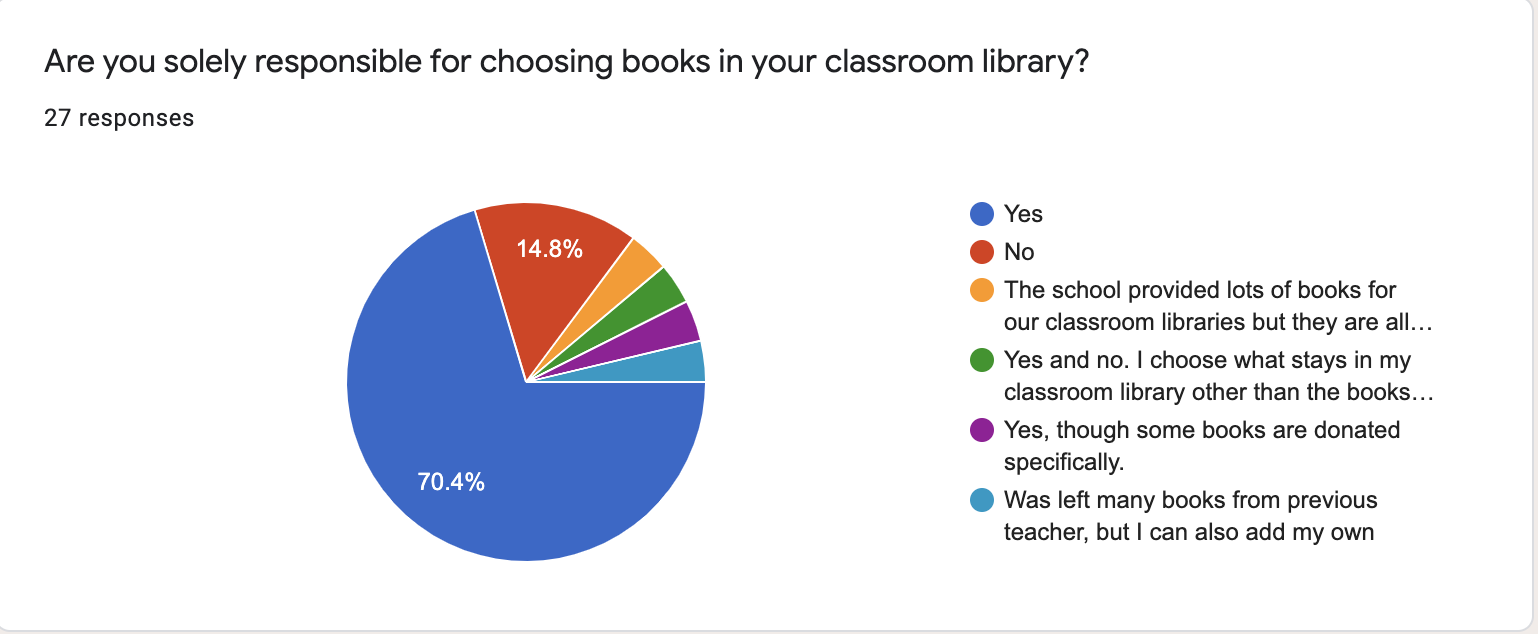


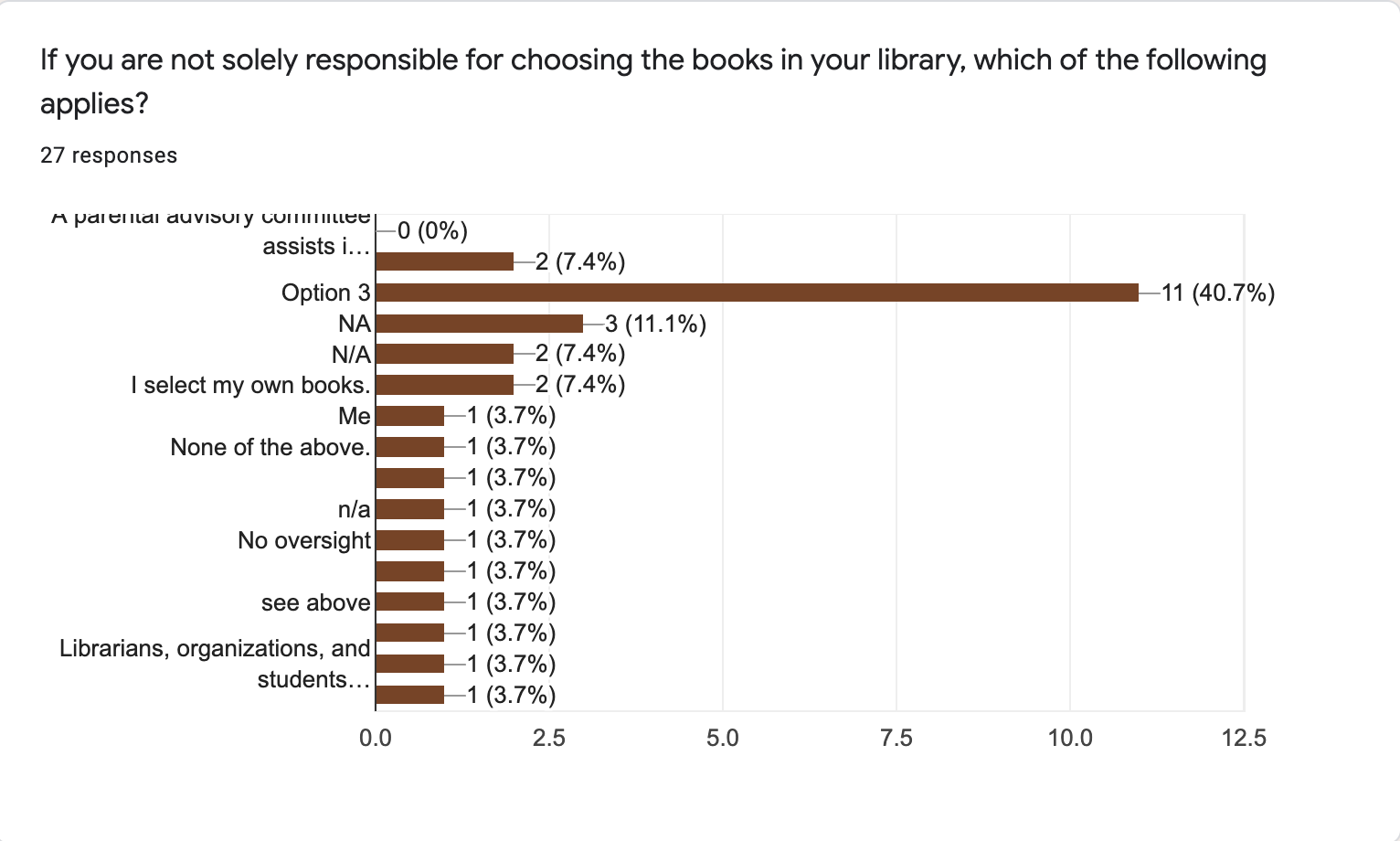


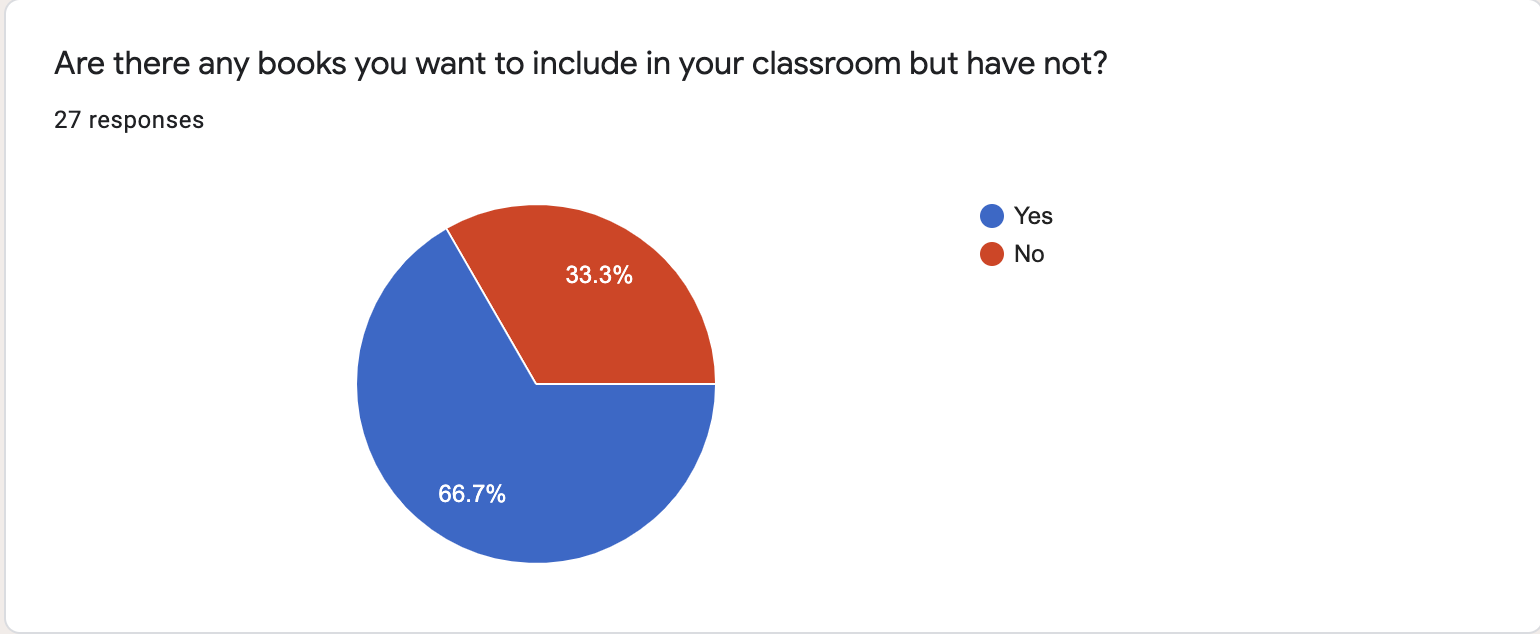


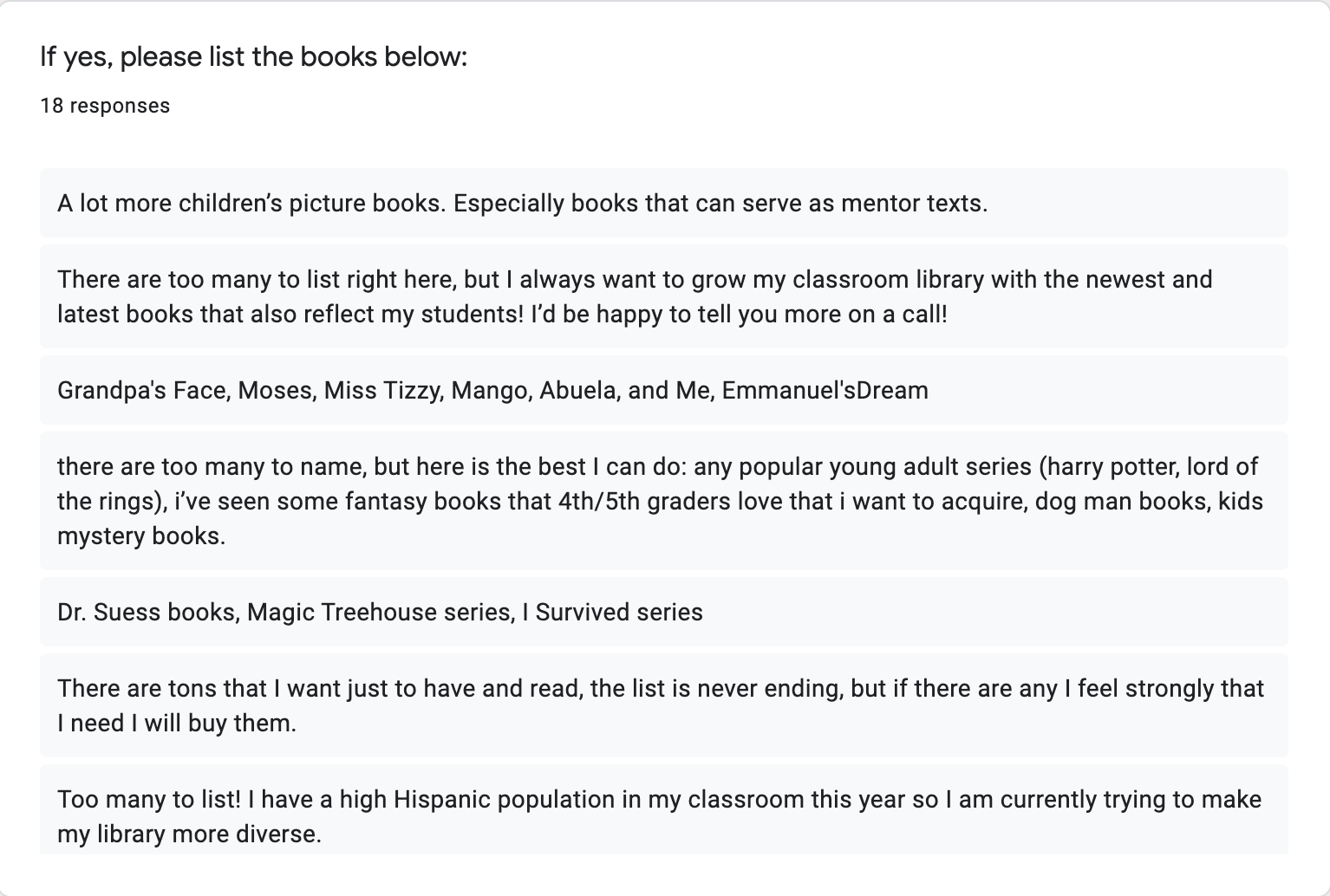


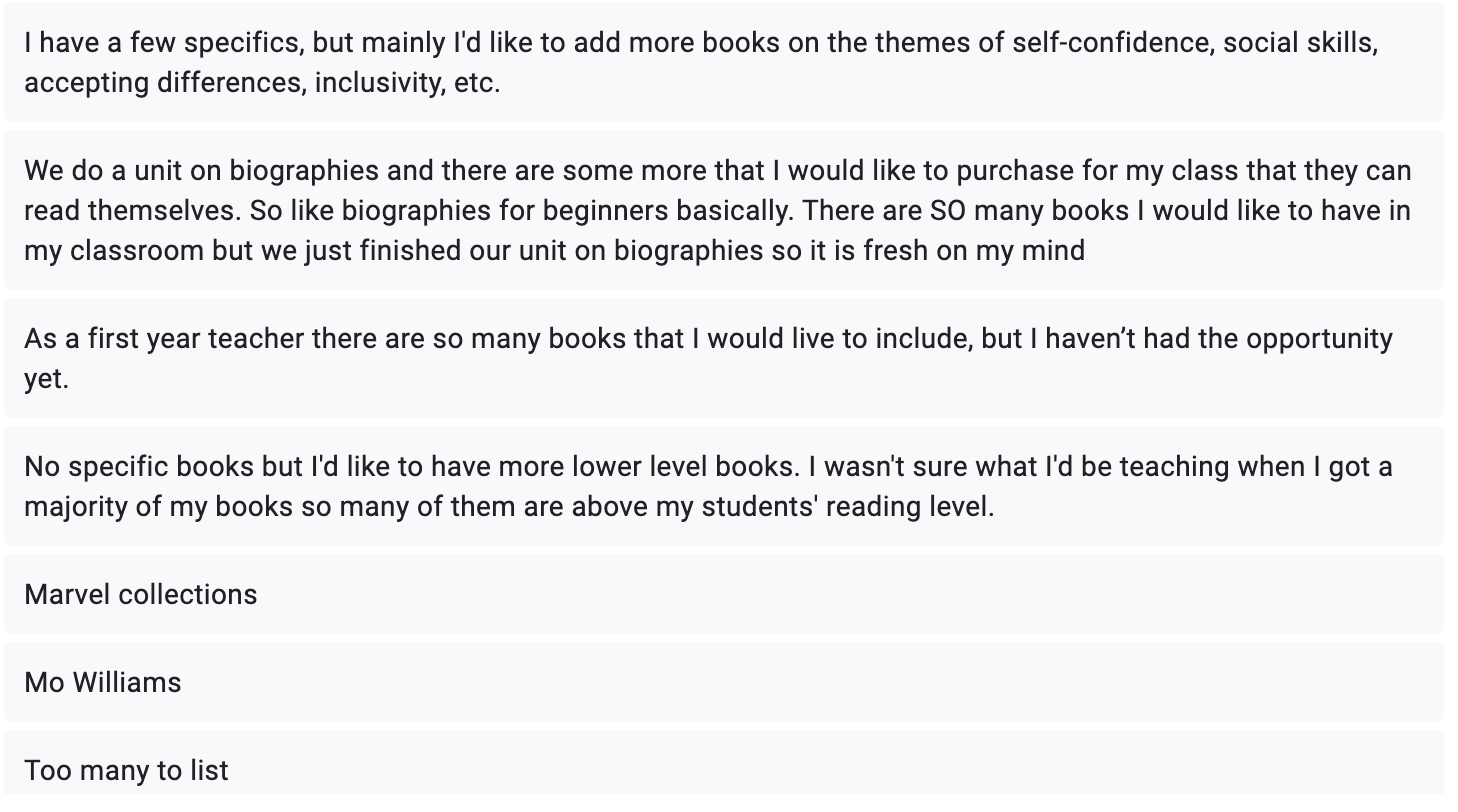


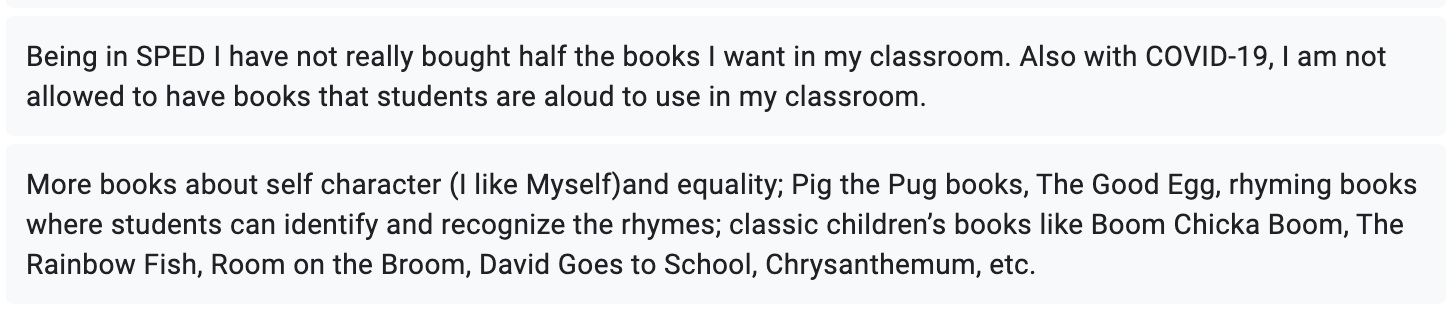


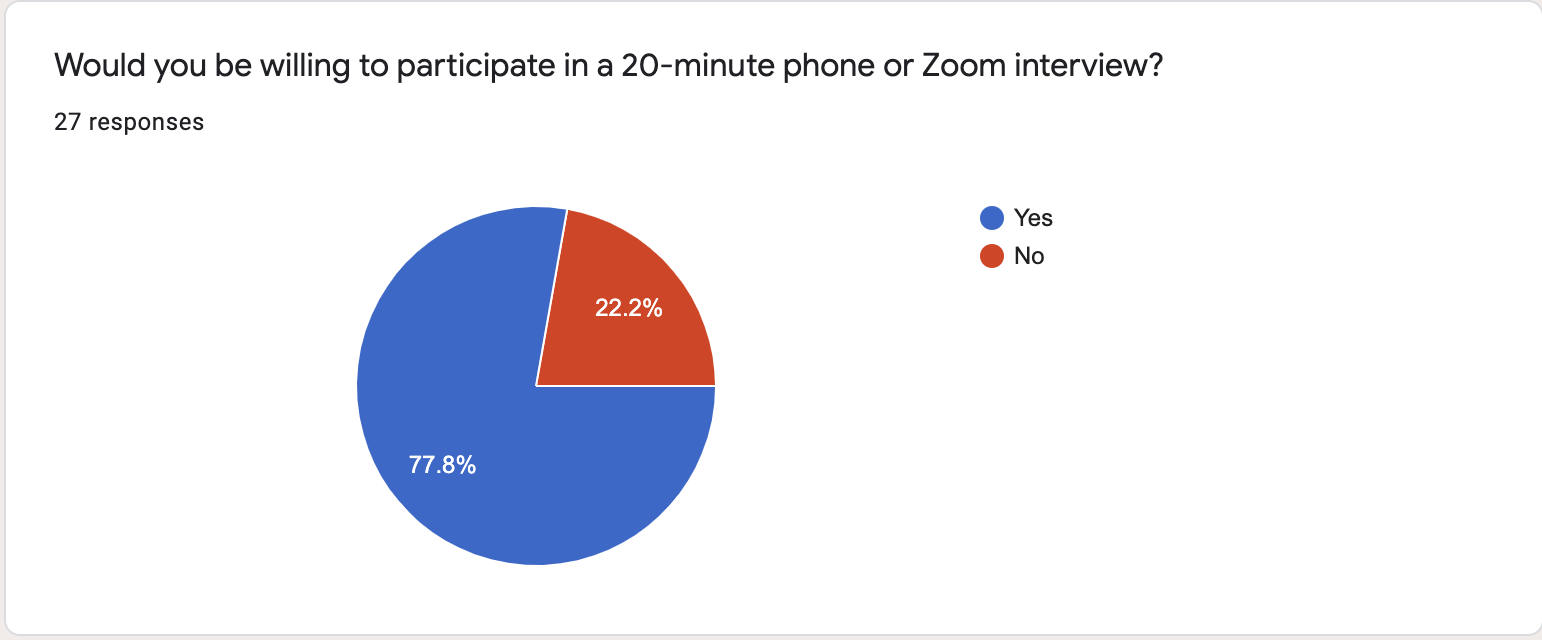












**APPENDIX C**

Transcript from Interview with Participant #1

Katie Taylor 0:00

This is totally fine. Perfect. Let's see. Okay, I think it's recording now.

So, I didn't mean to like interrupt our getting to know you session. Now you're good. So, remind me like what grade do you teach? Where are you?

Participant #1

yes so I'm a second year teacher. I'm at Brighton school which is like borderline hueytown Bessemer it's actually about 10 minutes from like PSC towards Tuscaloosa, it's my first year here and I'm for special education resource teacher.

Participant #1 0:37

All right. Yeah, and I have about, I served about 18 kids right now. And are they all in person. Um, well, 16, of them are 18 of them are remote for the nine weeks.

So I'm very lucky because I was able to really like, I just work with those two kids together remotely, because a lot of teachers that are Genet here are having to run a virtual, and in person class at the same time, which is really tough for them, where I'm able to separate it, which is really nice.

Katie Taylor 1:10

Yeah, I've heard that some schools like they can switch if their child is doing in person or virtual every nine weeks, is that happening for you?

Participant #1 1:22

Yes, so they can make the change at the end of the nine weeks, you're actually supposed to be virtual this entire nine weeks, and we started the school year late with kids we started September, 2 with kids. Wow, like online.

And then about four weeks ago they made a decision to bring kids in and we did two weeks on like an A/B schedule with Wednesday's off. And then last week was our first week with the kids coming in five days a week, so we... they decided about halfway through like I think at the start of October, to bring kids back, which at first I was like, "I just want a consistent schedule" but I'm really glad they're back because my kids did not do a good job of being virtual.

Katie Taylor 2:05

Yeah, how was that?

Participant #1 2:08

It was very ...like the virtual aspect of things, it was very difficult, especially in my school range. So, with working in kindergarten and even the earlier grades like first and second, I noticed that they do not have a lot of exposure to technology and like don't even know how to work a mouse.

And then I'm at a title one school so there is not the social- like socio economic area here. Parents are wonderful and do it they can but they are... like all my parents told me that are working while their kid is at home learning. And Wi Fi was terrible so it just, it did not work for for us here. So I was glad we made the switchover.

Katie Taylor 2:56

Mm hmm. Yeah, I can't imagine... like it's been difficult as a college student doing online stuff but I at least know how to like you said work a mouse. I know how to use email... like get on zoom, but I can't imagine being a little one, and trying to figure all that out and. Oh, yeah. So, as a reminder my senior research, I've been interested in how teachers choose classroom books for their library, specifically like picture books but also chapter books. In addition to that, and what sparked my interest was sophomore year so two years ago, spring semester I took a class here called children's literature.

And that focused on reading children's books, and it really emphasized the importance of the diversity that you can have in those books and the representation that kids can have, as well as like the morals those books can tell. And they can like tell more heavy topics like adult hard topics to talk about but like for a child to understand and one book that really sparked my interest was the book "All are welcome."

Participant #1 4:15

Okay.

Katie Taylor 4:16

And you know that book?

Participant #1 4:17

I haven't read that one yet.

Katie Taylor 4:19

It is by Alexandra Penfold.

Participant #1 4:23

Okay.

Katie Taylor 4:24

And it is a wonderful beginning of the year book, talking about all students are welcome and it's... I wouldn't call it a poetry book but there is some rhyme and rhythm to it. And it's talking about like, no matter what you're at-home life looks like or what you bring to school for lunch everyone can come together and eat. We can all play together on the playground is just a wonderful "All are welcome here". And it ends with, "You are welcome here", just a great book, and I was surprised to hear that I don't know which school in particular, but a school around Birmingham Southern I teacher used that book for beginning of the year intro and got some upset parents come back.

Participant #1 5:13

Yes, I think I heard that story it was a girl I think a couple years older than me.

Katie Taylor 5:17

Mm hmm. Because there was like, and I talked with Dr. Jacobs like "why? it's such a lovely book it's just everyone's welcome!" and there was just two, I think, adult women holding hands in the back and like bringing--

Participant #1 5:32

I think it was gender related that the parents did not appreciate.

Katie Taylor 5:36

Yeah, and it was like, it wasn't even the book wasn't about a same sex couple or an interracial couple but the parents were upset that that was featured in the book and that just for me personally blew my mind that,

Participant #1 5:50

yeah.

Katie Taylor 5:51

A that's not an issue and B that's not what the book is about.

So that got my wheels turning about how does that happen in classrooms like how do teachers respond when that happens, and just how do you kind of wade those waters of, "I want to teach my kids this topic, but there's pushback."

Participant #1 6:16

Yeah. You know I fortunately have not had that pushback yet, but I imagine when you do read those kind of books like I would be definitely the person that what as well. Um, I think I know... you got to make sure you're like intentional with what you're dealing with that book you want to make sure that like the message is clear that you know what the book you're talking about it sounds like, "All are welcome" so it's like a parent, came back to me was like, "hey I'm not cool with this" I'd be like, "I understand like thank you for your input like my classroom I want all my students to feel like they're in a community where they're home where they can be comfortable, and this book is not about you know it's not addressing these topics" but in the end it's a good thing to be interesting I probably wouldn't have that part but I'd be like fun in the end the goal of this book is to allow my students to know that you know they are welcome here and that they're free to feel comfortable here and hopefully they can show the personality and show you know and open up about things that they might not want to talk about. So making sure that like if there was pushback in there let the parent know why you chose that book.

And make sure you advocate for yourself in that situation of like I chose this book, because. I've not had to face that yet that'd be tough.

Katie Taylor 7:45

Yeah I'm, I'm hoping I won't, I know I probably will at some point, it'll, you know, bumps happen but yeah that's a tricky situation.

And as I was doing my literature review like researching this topic. I didn't hear much addressed on like what if your student brings that up? Like, do teachers, or how do teachers handle that differently between parental concerns and like student pushback.

Participant #1 8:15

Okay, okay. So if they were upset with it or if they're asking more questions about it?

Katie Taylor 8:20

Kind of, I guess, either/ or I hadn't thought about that. I was thinking it in like, if the student is like, I don't like that in the book, or. And then, like you said, that's another good point of like what is this? What's the problem with that?

How would you kind of,

Participant #1 8:35

Oh, yeah, that's a tough one, um

I guess I've had like... student so you're asking me how I would react if a student pushed back? Um, I think I would sit like talk to that, either way if they're asking more questions about it.

Or, if they had major issues with it I would say you know today we're talking about how we can become a community in this classroom and if we want to talk further about this like, um like you we can have a discussion together one on one. So I'd kind of finish probably like address that student, let him know I heard him, and then have a further conversation about it later, in a more one on one private setting, so there's not this whole cluster of questions coming in from my kids and everyone gets kind of just stuck on this topic, especially me like it's definitely a conversation I would be interested in having if I taught older, which is something I'm interested in but like K through four, there's some crazy questions that you get so whoever wanted to stop and ask those questions I would definitely give them a more personalized one on one, or small group time to talk to me about it.

Katie Taylor 9:47

Mm hmm. So when you are choosing books for the classroom, what do you personally look for, or are drawn to?

Participant #1 9:56

Yes, so I don't know I know it's a popular senior research topic, it was when I was like a sophomore or junior I saw this presentation about how you're a window or you're a mirror.

Katie Taylor 10:07

Mm hmm.

Participant #1 10:08

Um, and to my kids I'm a window, so they do not see theirself-- so I'm in a predominantly black and Hispanic school. So my kids to them, they do not see themselves in me, but I can still let them see things that I present them but it's really cool because most of the teachers here are mirrors for them. Um, but when I choose books, I really want to have that time for them to be able to read about characters that look like them or read about characters who might be in a similar situation.

So, what books I have over there? I'm like, I want-- I do want characters of different genders, different color all in my library. I want it to be relatable so I love having books where like one of my favorites is "Grace runs for president". And it's about a little girl who decides she wants to run for president and all the boys are against her so it kind of plays into that gender role as well. And that always creates fun discussion. And then I also really like to include books for like Task Behavior. So, I have a lot of students-- I probably have four or five students that is behavior related and following instruction so I love like Dr. Jacobs when I was in children's lit it was like "don't push the button" or push that button I can't find a book right now.

Um, but I love using that book with my kids who are like first grade behavior instruction following because they have so much fun with it they don't even realize that they're following instructions. And it's just really cool so I also like to include books with like those social stories and behavior, and things like that.

Katie Taylor 12:03

I hadn't thought about. Did you call it, task performance?

Participant #1 12:09

Yeah. Just like behavior... Following tasks. Yeah.

Katie Taylor 12:16

Um, so being in the south do you feel that there are topics that you want to talk about or feel like you need to but because of community influences or opinions you feel pressure not to?

Participant #1 12:33

Um, you know, we, so I'll speak about like so I was in Chelsea for my first year was sixth grade, um, just because here you know it's very easy to have the control of your classroom, but I still, I mean I definitely have opinions, um, and these little guys are so young that they don't really ask me anything that would like catch me off guard yet, but I know in like Middle School. My kids love to ask me about politics, love to ask me about what's going on in the world. Um, and I mean my stance and even though I'm definitely.... I mean, I'll tell you because you're not a student, I'm definitely like democratic in the south and where I'm from in Rome, Georgia I would stand alone and Chelsea I always stood alone and there are a lot of teachers that made it very obvious how they viewed society's politics. Politics was a big topic of discussion, and my kids would make comments like, oh, because we started our mornings off with CNN 10 which is like a fun little clippet of what's going on in the world. So my view is I want my kids to be informed and that would talk about politics and my kids would make comments and be like this because they're who you voted for like me hate Trump, and I'd be like, Well, like I said as your teacher it's my job to inform you, but it is not my job to give you my opinion.

But if you want to go make a change when you're old enough go vote and stay informed. So that's kind of how I battle, these biases in the south, as I tell my kids you know especially when I'm with sixth graders, stay informed, know what's going on. And then if you want to make a shift, like difference and change that, like have a plan and be informed.

But I mean that mainly address the Hot Topic issue of politics, which is great. So, I wasn't but I do believe like as my job as a teacher, it is not my job to tell those kids who I vote for what influences going on, Any comments like that.

Yeah, so was that an okay answer?

Katie Taylor 14:44

Yeah, yeah, I'm just here to listen to you. I'm here to just learn and gather information. Yeah.

So I guess that kind of plays into the books you choose of like it's not, because there are definitely children's books that lean one way or the other. I can't think of any on the spot, but like, would do you say that it's also kind of your role to just present different stories and different points of view to them and then let them make their own opinions and have those discussions?

Participant #1 15:20

Ah, yeah I definitely think it's my role to... I think it's just, it's hard for me to get in that mind space right now just because you know my kids can't even read!

Katie Taylor 15:30

Yeah. Yeah.

Participant #1 15:32

So we do read aloud, you know they're very focused and they're not really creating that discussion yet but I do think it is my role to create discussion, like that. And my overall goal is like I love-- my heart lies and Dr. Jacobs will tell you this too-- my heart lies in social studies and I love like the fourth fifth age I love doing resource because of my scheduling and things like that. But ultimately, if I were to go back to school, I'd love to get in like secondary research, or like social studies. And I think as a teacher like it is totally my job to bring those kind of books to discussion. if it's a hot topic you know present both sides, read the books create discussion about it. Like you, said present the info, show how there's biases in the world, even you know? How one book could talk about how this was a great thing and one could not. And then create discussion about that.

Katie Taylor 16:28

Another thing I found when I was doing my literature review was like tension between teachers and school administration. So if a principal was more hesitant to talk about or address a topic... then teachers were more hesitant to talk about that. Have you experienced anything like that?

Participant #1 16:52

I have not, um, I had wonderful support administration last year and then this year. You know, my principal is so busy that she had not really been able to keep tabs on what I'm doing. Um, I do know that my, but yeah personally I'm not I do know my sister did about a lesson in the book that she is and she had to go advocate for itself with the vice principal who observed her, and you know talked about you know why she did it, what her reasoning was behind it and then principles like okay, or the budget which was like okay okay, but I have not received that pushback. But I do understand why teachers look to what they did.

Katie Taylor 17:36

Yeah so without getting like into the personal details, can I hear your sister's story, or what you remember from it?

Participant #1 17:43

Oh, you know, I-- there's not much-- she read, I mean I don't even know if it was about the book's topic. I know that she was doing an English lesson with reading that she had stations and discussion topics but the vice principal told her she didn't like her lesson. I did not go into that much further.

Katie Taylor 18:01

Yeah, I get that.

Participant #1 18:02

I'm sorry.

Katie Taylor 18:03

No, that's fine.

Participant #1 18:04

Yeah, just a fun phone call conversation with her.

Katie Taylor 18:07

I'm sure you two have plenty of stories to pass back and forth.

Um,

yeah, the other questions I really had were. What makes you like a book, or what things do you keep in mind when you're selecting books for the library but we kind of address that second one.

Participant #1 18:27

Mm hmm. Yeah. Um, yeah, I'd say what makes me like a book, you know, is when my students can see themselves in the block as was a big number of probably like the number one. Number two is you know I wanted to have a message for him. So one of my favorite books too and I'm sure you might have read this one Jabari jumps. Mm hmm. Um, it's about courage you know the student is able to see kind of a world that they're familiar with and you really see their like schema on themselves and that character and then they also get the message of courage, or I really want them.

Um, so I love, like i said i love history so I do love to read books about history if they have that because I know that my kids aren't getting that right now so there's a book about what's going on the world or there's a little history playing or how the Eiffel Tower was me things like that like I think it's really fun to gauge that side of their learning cuz really. I mean, with middle school is different because there was a history teacher. But here like I love to read books about historic events people of importance. I think that's really important because I what I've observed in my inclusion. There's no history going on right now which is fair because I know that things are crazy with posting to classrooms and online in person, but that's kind of one of the major things I've done this last month is make sure if I do do a read aloud it tries

Katie Taylor 20:02

to include history as well. Hmm, I hadn't thought about history being the ball that's dropped right now, and that makes sense. Yeah.

Participant #1 20:12

So my center research was. And it's funny, especially last year about like the decline of social studies in the classroom. I do have a passion for it and love it, and it drove me crazy last year because on a middle school schedule. It's not small group like it is here. I had like, if my kids saw me twice for reading and math like on a required class schedule in middle school they're pulled from social statics.

Katie Taylor 20:39

Oh no, my gosh

Participant #1 20:41

no no no That's kind of my worst nightmare right now but there's nothing I can do about it because the SPED world is you got to do what you got to do.

Katie Taylor 20:50

Wow.

Um, those are kind of all the questions I had written out, is there anything else about this topic that you think I'm missing or you think is important?

Participant #1 21:03

You're doing a wonderful job all sounds really good to me.

Katie Taylor 21:07

Oh, great. Well thank you so much for meeting with me. I really appreciated you taking time out of your busy schedule.

Participant #1 21:14

Not a problem. Now with for your presentations are y'all doing like PowerPoints and posters or what are you doing for it?

Katie Taylor 21:21

We are, hopefully, you know, hopefully everything we can say on campus and everything. We had planned to do presentations with like PowerPoints. On November, 21 and 22nd that Monday and Tuesday. Yeah.

Participant #1 21:38

So that's coming up here,

Katie Taylor 21:39

coming up pretty soon, yeah.

Participant #1 21:42

that is exciting. Um, ours we did like a brief like five minute intro, everyone did and then we had posters and we created, along with our papers that were later. Um, that was really cool something different but I think they did go back away from that. But it was it was very fun to do that.

But yeah, I guess my one question is just more of you know are you, what do you, what are you feeling right now with all that you've done? Are you thinking you'll go SPED, general, any age preference?

Katie Taylor 22:11

i. Okay, that's a.. big questions, you know, I really like third grade in second grade. Okay, I like the little ones. And we're in the thick of colo--, our collaborative class, and I'm in also Ed psych right now so I am deep in special ed.

Participant #1 22:29

And it's yes are you-- is Dr. Spencer teaching both?

Katie Taylor 22:33

Mmhmm. Dr Spencer is teaching collaborative, and there's a new professor Dr. Dominic, she's teaching ed psych. Yes. I really enjoying what we're doing more so when I'm actually working with a student in special ed didn't like all of the paperwork side of it, which is, I know the case, and I know why the paperwork is important, but I really love working with the kids.

Participant #1 22:59

Yes. It's tough. It's a tough balance, that's for sure.

Katie Taylor 23:04

Yeah. All right, well thank you very much.

Participant #1 23:10

Of course, thank you so much I hope everything goes well until all of the... Is anyone on sabbatical, or they all there? Doctor Barnes...?

Katie Taylor 23:17

they're all there this semester.

Participant #1 23:19

Okay well tell them Hello for me.

Katie Taylor 23:20

I certainly will.

Participant #1 23:22

All right, well it's wonderful to meet you Thank you so much.

Katie Taylor 23:24

Bye

Participant #1 23:25

Bye Katie.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

**APPENDIX D**

Transcript from interview with Participant #2

Katie Taylor 0:00

Hello, can you hear me? I don't think I can hear you. Oh, it would help if my sound was turned on. I don't think I can hear you still.

Participant #2 0:23

Yes. Sorry. We don't normaly use Zoom at my school.

Katie Taylor 0:30

Oh, sorry about that.

Participant #2 0:32

No, it's okay. It's all good. I had zoom on here, but we actually weren't allowed to use zoom because of the privacy issue at the beginning so...

Katie Taylor 0:41

Right

Participant #2 0:43

How are you?

Katie Taylor 0:44

good. How are you doing today?

Participant #2 0:49

Pretty good, a little tired, it's been a busy day but can't complain.

Katie Taylor 0:52

Yeah. Um, before we get going too far do you mind if I record this? Yeah, sure. Okay. There we go. I should be recording. So, you said you've had a busy day, is it been a good one at least.

Participant #2 1:08

Oh yeah, it's been awesome. I definitely love it. I just, it's a lot. I, I'm case manager for, four through sixth grade self contained. But I'm collaborating teaching with another teacher in kindergarten through sixth grade so it's busy.

Katie Taylor 1:28

Wow. You do a lot. Yeah. So, um, yeah. Sorry about well, no, let me backtrack thank you for working with me so far with my interview process. And I apologize for responding to you so late. I'm sure you know how crazy things are yeah like he said it's just, everything's all over the place.

Participant #2 1:54

Yeah, I can't even imagine how it is now either.

Katie Taylor 1:57

Mm hmm. Luckily for me all of my classes are in person. So I haven't had a huge barrier with online stuff yet. For all the kids we're working with it's on Zoom though, but yeah some of my roommates have online courses. One of them's a chemistry major. And so she has a lot of lab time, and she thankfully hasn't had to go into quarantine yet, but she's had other chemistry major friends who have... like you can't you can't do chemistry stuff online with all, I don't even know what they're doing with all that lab stuff. But thankfully with education classes it's pretty easily adaptable on zoom.

Participant #2 2:41

Yeah, How are they--- are the kids with zoom? Was that kind of was that hard or..?

Katie Taylor 2:47

It's been okay for the most part the kids have been good on zoom. The main issue on our end at least has just been scheduling times to meet with them. Because you know, some of them are online all the time, some of them change their schedule. And then sometimes the school's schedule gets changed. And I know that we are just fortunate enough to be working with the kids at all. So we're kind of put on the back burner as we should be we're not the main priority, you know, but the kids have been lovely on zoom. Most of the time they're, you know, working from the couch, or from the bed. So it can be challenging to get them engaged fully but that just comes with being on zoom.

What about you? What's the mix up for your kids?

Participant #2 3:38

We started out fully virtual for the first... I think it was like two weeks. And then they made allowances for our population to get to come in for their service time so we had, we would have like two kids a day come in for just the morning hours. And we had a few that stayed virtual, completely virtual, and then slowly but surely, we've been opening back up up here. I teach up near Huntsville, and we've completely opened back up now and we have precautions everybody wears masks, at least in Gen Ed. I actually have several students who don't wear masks. But I think we have almost all of our students. We have two more students that are coming back from virtual next week. and then I think we have, maybe two or three that are still virtual whatever they're in the classroom, it was. I think it was the hardest when we had like half and half, half that were virtual and half that were in person.

Katie Taylor 4:45

Right.

Participant #2 4:46

Our kids are such like... They're fully hands on. They're fully, you know, you, they have to have attention at all times. So it's really hard to balance and fit a second schedule in there, but they're making it work. Tt's been interesting because a lot of our kids, they don't sit in front of a computer and talk to us. It's like their parents chasing them around with the camera.

Katie Taylor 5:07

Oh really?

Participant #2 5:09

Yeah, that's been interesting. But, it's been a steep learning curve. As I'm sure it has been for everybody.

Katie Taylor 5:16

I could, I can't imagine actually that's. Wow. Yeah.

So just to kind of reminder, my senior research, I'm really interested in what started off as-- I was just interested in banned books, like, how to books get banned in schools, who decides how that happens. And then I learned about challenged books versus banned books, like, "what's going on here?" What-- and sophomore year, two years ago I took a children's literature class here. And Dr. Jacobs recommended the book "All are welcome" to me. I can't remember the author, right now. But it's a great-- Have you read that book before? So, "all are welcome" is a great beginning of the year book to read with your kiddos just, "All are welcome here no matter what you're at home life is like what you bring to school to eat, how you play on the playground. All are welcome here and you're welcome in my classroom". I thought "I loved this book!, I want this book everywhere. I think everyone should read this book!" But then I was talking with Dr. Jacobs, and she mentioned that-- I don't know which school but a school pretty close to Birmingham Southern, a teacher had used that book for an opening lesson and got some upset parents come back and ask questions about that book. Because apparently in the background of one of the pages, there were two women holding hands as they brought their child to school, and that inferred that they were in a same sex relationship. And the parents were just very upset about that. And I thought, for me that I didn't even notice for one, they were just in the background. I thought, Wow, that's really crazy and I wondered how teachers wade through those waters, when they're choosing books.

Participant #2 7:25

Well, I'm. I work in a very small town and pretty conservative town. And I, it's one of those like really tight-knit communities where a lot of people have grown up there, and their grandparents grew up there. Tand the kids all grew up there and so everybody knows everybody a lot of them are related. And they all share very similar views. So I can definitely see that happening at my school. And it's hard to say with my population, because they're not necessarily ones that are going to go home and talk about the two women they saw in the book. I really like that about my population of kids, they don't care about that much as that stuff as much. Maybe some of my older ones my, my higher functioning ones who have been around parents and stuff like that. But I think it's interesting to think about the perspective that parents and grandparents and family members or whoever, the kids go home to can impose on kids. Because I don't think that kids inherently would notice that stuff. Unless, because I think that when I think back on my kids last year, last year I had older kids I had six through eighth grade. And they were self-contained, mostly intellectually disabled children. The only derogatory or like... unaccepting remarks that I ever heard, I almost 100% can say, it came from something they heard somebody else say. Their mom, or whoever they were living with their brother or their older brother or something like that. Because it was totally out of character for those kids. So I think it's... I don't know how helpful that is to your research, but I think it's interesting to think about how you have to think about as, as a teacher you really do you have to think about not just what are your kids going to think about, and what are your kids like... personally what are they going to think about the topic of a book, but what are the people at home going to think about it, and what are they going to say about it and that's an interesting topic, I haven't... like I said haven't really had to think about it because a lot of mine are still on like board books so that they don't eat them.Yeah, stuff like that.

So, we talked about colors and numbers and all that kind of stuff. But I appreciate that thought that... you really have to be thoughtful about which books you have. And really, I... Even outside of the scope of, you know, what is the content of the books that you're getting even as a teacher. Especially when you're going into a job and a new school that you don't know, and kids you don't know. And even just a new class coming up. How do you how do you stock a classroom library full of books for kids you don't know? And, and families you don't know? And whose opinions-- you don't know those families. So that's a that's a cool topic. Yeah,

Katie Taylor 10:49

That's I'm kind of looking into.

So can you tell me how you personally select books for your classroom?

Participant #2 10:58

So, originally, I just, I asked for books when I graduated. So, I just let people who I knew give me books that they cared about-- that they connected to when they were kids, and stuff like that. And that's kind of how I built my library. At the beginning, but I didn't know what I was going to teach. I didn't know the age, we didn't have a setting. I didn't know if I was gonna be Gen Ed or Special Ed.

And so, I have a big box of books that I don't really use because I got a lot of chapter books and stuff like that. But since then I think I base my book choices on how they will personally assist a child. So, they might be you know-- books about emotion, certain emotions, or books about a certain skill that they're working on. Tt's a lot of behavioral type stuff. If they're working specifically on money or something like that, it'll-- It's a lot based on what my students connect to, but I think that that is what a lot of teachers do. I think that that's what I do in Gen Ed, would be to... it might not be about emotions or about, you know, colors or numbers. But it would be about what are my kids interested in. What do they need to learn about, and what are they passionate about. What are they interested in? All that kind of stuff.

Katie Taylor 12:35

Yeah, and that kind of pairs into like we were talking about before. How do you buy books for kids you don't know yet as a first or second year teacher? It's just that cycle.

So, when you find those books that you think will work for kids, for your students, what are some characteristics of those books that you like really look for? Or do you think, "no, I don't want that one"? If that kind of makes sense.

Participant #2 13:02

So, like, there's like the broad stuff, like I said: board books and my paper books for certain students, chapter books versus picture books. I have kids from pre literate like pre-preschool level all the way up to like, probably, third or fourth grade level. And so, I have a really wide variety. When I am picking for specific kids it'll... Some kids it's, "are there bright colors on the book? Is it going to be visually appealing to them to pick it up and look at it?" And then for my higher levels, "is it on a level that they can understand?" You know, the zone of proximal development. "Is it something that's going to be frustrating to them, or is it something that's going to be boring to them?" Hopefully I can find something that's right in there that's challenging enough, but that is also going to not push them into the frustration zone. And then, anything that they're working on a lot. we talk about IEP goals all the time so some of my kids have sequencing goals. "Are these-- is this a story that they can sequence? That they can talk about the sequence of events?" If they have a goal for answering, "who, what, when, where" questions, "is this a good story for that?" And then you have to think about is it something they're actually going to enjoy. "Does my child--you know-- like to read about horses? Can I find a horse book that goes with their IEP goal and has what they need? Can I find, you know, whatever they're interested in? So that they can really connect to it and really engage with it."

Katie Taylor 14:45

So, you said you personally haven't had a lot of pushback from parents in your class of like something you talked about, like a topic.

Participant #2 14:55

Can you say that again?

Katie Taylor 14:57

Yeah, you said, if I'm hearing you right, you haven't personally experienced a lot of pushback from parents about a certain topic you cover.

Participant #2 15:07

No, I haven't had um...I actually haven't had any parents, pushing back about like controversial topics or anything like that. I have had a few comments from kids saying, you know, "My mom. My mom doesn't like that." or, or I've and I've had a few kids saying, "Oh, my uncle's gay" or something like that if we had a book that had that in it. um, but I haven't had any parents like come after me, anything like that.

Katie Taylor 15:41

So another question I had was if... How would you handle the situation differently if it was a student who had questions or concerns about a topic versus if a parent had those issues?

Participant #2 15:57

Um, I'd like to say that I'd be a little bit... a little bit more interested in going a little deeper with kids. Although there's obviously that line, because like I said most kids get their beliefs from the people that they're living with. So I don't want... I don't want a kid going home and saying, "hey my teacher said this is fine". You know something like that, but I like to use a lot of questions.

And this isn't really anything controversial but I mean I have some kids who just have misconceptions. Like I had a student last year who thought for the longest time that he was pregnant. And he's a boy. he's a teenage boy. Like he can't be pregnant. And so he was very confused about that, and so I had to do a lot of questions well, you know, are you in, you know. He has autism. I don't know that he has any concept of, you know, other genders and gender fluidity and stuff like that. So it has to be very straight cut. "Are you a boy or a girl? A boy. Well, do you have a baby in your tummy? No. Okay, so we're not pregnant, right. No." So it's a lot of, you know, questioning, because a lot of times it's just misunderstanding. Or they haven't got the chance to think about it for themselves. And I like to try and open those doors without being like, "this is what you should think" or "you shouldn't think the way that you do", something like that. I don't want to say, "your parents are wrong".

And, but I think that I would be a little bit more open to answer your question, a little bit more open to trying to open those doors and really see what the child is thinking versus what they've heard. To where with parents, you know, it's a lot of, "okay, yes ma'am. I understand." Well, you know, sometimes I might have to be like, "okay well put that book to the side." So it's not something that they're going to see even if it's, you know, despite my beliefs sometimes I have to do what I have to do to be professional and all that kind of stuff. So, yeah, I think I just be a little bit more open to questioning and seeing what they're really thinking for kids, whereas, parents, it's just a little, "Okay."

Katie Taylor 18:17

I, yeah, I understand that.

So you would say you feel as a teacher, it's more of your role to present students with information about a hot topic issue or something and then let them come to their own conclusions?

Participant #2 18:35

Yeah. Um, I don't know if present, the word present, is the right word. Maybe it is. You know... letting them see that there's more than one way to think about it, and like I said, as much as I can... because a lot of my students think very concretely, but usually those aren't the ones that would question. It's the ones that with more abstract thinking that would question it. So they would be the ones that could understand that there's, you know, more than one opinion, and there's more than one idea. They could think about how do they feel personally about it, and they could kind of separate themselves from what their parents think. So I think it is, you know, I think it-- I'm within my means to kind of be like, "Oh, well this is what I believe" or "oh, this is what other people believe." So that they can see that, you know... A lot of times kids have a hard time separating themselves from or, you know, separating from themselves and putting themselves in other people's shoes. And so I think it's a good opportunity to help them kind of get in other people's shoes and see that other people might believe different things. And you can change what you believe, or you don't have to. But you know everybody has their own opinion. That is one thing in my class that I'm kind of firm on-- is that we're not going to make fun of other people for their opinions, and everybody gets to have their own opinion. And if you don't like it, that's oka. You don't have to hear about it, but we're not going to make fun of each other. We're not going to get on to each other and stuff like that.

Katie Taylor 20:07

Certainly, yeah. So, as I was doing my literature review I found from a couple of different places that if a principal or other school administration, its, administrative, what's that word?

Participant #2 20:24

Administrator.

Katie Taylor 20:25

That's the word, sorry, it's been a day. --That the school administrator had been hesitant to talk about a topic or was like really set in their beliefs for this one thing, that even if a teacher was more flexible for that concept that, because their higher-up was more firm or really hesitant to talk about something, then the teacher adapted their beliefs to reflect that kind of in the classroom. So, maybe they didn't get in trouble or rub someone the wrong way. Have you ever experienced anything like that? Or know someone who has?

Participant #2 21:06

I don't know that I have. I feel like I am lucky because my administrator and I seem to have very similar beliefs in what's appropriate to talk about in the classroom and, you know, what we're allowed to talk about-- what we're not allowed to talk about. There doesn't seem--even despite working in a very close knit community... My principal is actually from outside the community as well. So he has a pretty open mind. So I haven't experienced that in, in terms of, you know, hot topics and taboo things, and stuff like that. But I can totally see that happening like knowing how schools are, and knowing how different that they can be based on who the administration is--I can 100% see-- especially as a first year teacher. In terms of like hot topics I haven't had that problem, but I have absolutely been in a place where I'm like, "okay, let me not say anything about this because I don't want to rock the boat." You know tenure. Everybody's always talking about tenure and, "are you getting--are you getting on renewed?" So, I can totally see how somebody would be like, "well, he doesn't want to talk about it. He won't talk about it. He said don't talk about it. I'm not talking about it." So, I see that being a thing. I haven't experienced it personally but I can. Absolutely. I'm sure it happens. Yeah.

Katie Taylor 22:35

Um, do you have any formal professional development provided to you from your school about inclusive texts in your classroom or inclusivity in the classroom?

Participant #2 22:48

Nope. Mostly--- anything like that that I got when I was in school. And when I was still at Birmingham Southern.

Katie Taylor 22:55

Gotcha.

Participant #2 22:56

Yeah, we haven't talked about that at all since I've been teaching.

Katie Taylor 23:03

So those are all the big questions I had lined up. Do you think there's anything about this topic that I'm missing or anything related or just anything else you could think of that I could research?

Participant #2 23:21

So, what's the name of your-- like what-- can you tell me, like in like one statement, what your research is about?

Katie Taylor 23:28

That's a good question. Yeah, I'm looking at how external factors influence the books teachers choose for their personal classroom library.

Participant #2 23:45

And you're... and it's more focused on is it-- is your focus mostly on like controversial subjects and......?

Katie Taylor 23:53

And kind of where that line is in classrooms.

Participant #2 24:02

It sounds like you're being pretty thorough. I mean, all the questions that you've asked are all the things that come into my mind. I mean, I think it's, it's probably kind of, I don't know how helpful I was with this from the SPED community. It's kind of hard to self contain this.

Katie Taylor 24:17

I think you've been very helpful. I'm just here to learn from you, and you've been great.

Participant #2 24:22

Awesome. Well, I think you're doing a great job. Sounds like it's very thorough. When do you present?

Katie Taylor 24:29

The end of November. Last Monday and Tuesday.

Participant #2 24:34

Okay, is, is Dr. Jacobs overseeing senior research this year?

Katie Taylor 24:40

she is.

Participant #2 24:42

Awesome. Well, um, so do you have plans for after school?

Katie Taylor 24:48

Not at the moment. Not at the moment. No, I'm hoping to stay in the Birmingham... general Alabama area because that's, you know, where I have most of my connections right now. But, we'll just see what happens. And honestly, I've gotten that question from a lot of people and like, "Oh, do you know where you'll be doing internships in the spring? and what that will look like it's like?", I don't know what schools will look like in January. What that status will be. So I think after I graduate, it'll really depend on what school ooks like next fall. Yeah.

Participant #2 25:25

So you're gonna you plan to teach when you graduate?

Katie Taylor 25:28

I do. Mm hmm.

Participant #2 25:30

Do you know if you're... If you'd prefer special ed? And then are you doing a dual certification?

Katie Taylor 25:35

I am doing the dual certification. I'm really not sure yet, we really just started all the special ed stuff. And I know it's been a different experience than normal with, you know, teaching online. But I've really loved when we get to work with the students. I love that time with them. The only drawback, and I know this is the case for everyone, has been all the paperwork and writing IEPs, and it's not even my complete job yet for all of the paperwork. So that's a lot to consider, but I just love working with those kids.

Participant #2 26:14

Yeah. That's awesome. I'm happy for you, and I can't wait to see what you do. I love, I love hearing about new teachers stories. I feel like I've been out of college forever. Less than to, a year and a half. But yeah, they'll have to let me know how it goes.

Katie Taylor 26:34

Yeah I'll keep you in the loop.

Participant #2 26:37

Awesome. Tell Dr. Jacobs I said hello, she was my supervisor.

Katie Taylor 26:42

I will. Yeah, I'll tell her you said hello.

Participant #2 26:45

Awesome. Well thank you for including me.

Katie Taylor 26:48

Thank you so much for meeting with me, and taking time out of your busy schedule.

Participant #2 26:53

No problem.

Katie Taylor 26:55

All right. Thank you. Bye.

**APPENDIX E**

Transcript from interview with Participant #3

Katie Taylor 0:00

Hello.

Participant #3 0:01

Hi. How are you?

Katie Taylor 0:02

I'm doing well, how are you today?

Participant #3 0:04

I am fantastic.

Katie Taylor 0:06

That's good to hear!

Participant #3 0:10

Can you hear me okay?

Katie Taylor 0:12

I can, yes.

Participant #3 0:13

Great. Awesome.

Katie Taylor 0:16

So thanks for meeting with me. I apologize for like responding back late, you know, things have been crazy.

Participant #3 0:23

Oh, I know. Trust me, I get it. Yeah.

Katie Taylor 0:28

So, let's see. I'm Katie, I guess we haven't actually like spoken face to face yet.

Participant #3 0:34

My name's [REDACTED]. I graduated...2017, I think. Yeah.

Katie Taylor 0:41

Nice. I am from Jackson, Mississippi,

Participant #3 0:45

Alright, cool.

Katie Taylor 0:46

I'm here for school and hopefully when I graduate I'll teach in the Birmingham area. I'll probably be around here because... that's where most of my connections will be, you know.

Participant #3 1:01

I'm originally from North Alabama, the Lawrence area. And when I graduated, the amount of connections that we made to the schools really kind of cemented that this is where I wanted to stay.

Katie Taylor 1:16

Mm hmm. And remind me which school are you at?

Participant #3 1:21

I'm at Vestavia Hills Elementary East. So, one of the five elementary schools in the Vestavia Hills City School District.

Katie Taylor 1:30

Nice. Yeah. And I guess before we get going... do you mind if I record this?

Participant #3 1:35

Oh yeah. Sure, go ahead. Perfect.

Katie Taylor 1:38

So how has school at vestavia been going so far this year?

Participant #3 1:44

Um, all things considered... really well. We have lots of precautions in place, you may not be able to see, but we've got like the plexiglass screen and everything... Masks on pretty much all the time. Consistent seating groups, stuff like that. and I was pretty apprehensive at first to like the degree of success we would have, but district-wide I think we've only ever had a maximum of, like, .02% out.

Katie Taylor 2:20

Wow

Participant #3 2:20

--which is really good. Yeah. And I've only had one situation where I had multiple students out for a prolonged period of time, and we have a pretty solid blended model of like using Google Classroom to communicate work and things like that. It's been going pretty well. I teach fifth grade, so my students are pretty technologically capable. They've been pretty good with it. I know kindergarten and first grade, they have a tough time over there because getting technology in the hands of little ones like that and having them kind of be engaged with it is pretty difficult. But overall it's been pretty good.

Katie Taylor 3:00

Good. So you guys-- have your classes had a mixture of in-person and zoom, or virtual classes?

Participant #3 3:07

Yeah, so we... the district offered, it was like an opt-in program. So we have a remote model, like completely remote. There is another teacher in the building that is responsible for all the fifth grade students who are remote. And then we, like, I'm technically a traditional-only teacher, but any students that are out for a long period of time, I'm still responsible for making sure that they're like caught up and have stuff to do and and are engaged in what we're doing at home.

Katie Taylor 3:37

Wow, you guys have a lot on your plate right now.

Participant #3 3:40

Yeah, it's like I said, I was apprehensive at first, but it's been overall pretty good. Mm hmm.

Katie Taylor 3:48

Classes have been okay here at BSC for me. Right now I'm just taking three education classes, and they've all been in person. We've been able to like zoom in to classes to work with students here there. I think just a small percentage of the classes here are online. And so I haven't had any issues, but one of my roommates is a chemistry major, and she's run into some problems of like one of her senior research partners was quarantined. She's not positive, but she can't do that lab work at home on zoom. So I've been very thankful that at least with education, it can be done over zoom.

Participant #3 4:32

How is BSC handling everything in general? Like are there... Is there like precautions and stuff are they working on?

Katie Taylor 4:40

Yes. So I think the BSC has handled it pretty well. There are different levels of precaution...so code green. There's code green, yellow, orange and red, green being you just six feet apart, wearing masks all the time, when you're not like in your dorm room. And you can have any visitors on campus, as long as you log them in 24 hours ahead of time just to let BSE know they're coming. And then every week BSE is randomly selecting, I think, 20 to 25% of all students, faculty and staff to be randomly tested.

Participant #3 5:21

Okay.

So, depending on those results every week, based off of like the percentage of the population of the school, you move up into the different code so like code yellow is, you can only have like 20 people outside for an organized gathering and like 10 people inside and then if there are more positive cases that is limited to 10 people outside and five inside. And then if there's a larger outbreak on campus we go into Code Red, which we thankfully haven't yet, but that is where all classes move virtual and campus pretty much shuts down for two weeks. And I guess, you know, we would still have to go to the cafeteria, but there's no like Religious Life events, Greek life stops all together. It's just online classes. So, there are several layers to wade through, but I have been very impressed with how the school has handled it. And we're just trying to make it through, you know?

Katie Taylor 6:29

Trust me, I get it. I'm just trying to make it. Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 6:32

So as kind of a refresher for my senior research, I'm looking at how external factors influence the books that teachers choose for their personal library. So I was inspired by, two years ago I took the children's literature class here. And I'm sure you remember that class, and I was really interested in the book "All are welcome". I don't know if you've read that one... but it's a good beginning of the year... welcoming students to class, no matter what you look like what you're at home life looks like you're welcome in my classroom. And I really loved that book, and I was talking with Dr. Jacobs about it. And she said, you know, that book has actually been challenged, or banned in some schools, And I thought, "no way, why?" and she said, I don't know which school around here but a school near Birmingham Southern, a teacher used that as a general "Welcome to the class", start of the year kind of book. And there was apparently two women in the background holding hands as they were bringing their child to school.

Participant #3 7:45

Yeah.

Katie Taylor 7:45

And so some parents were upset about that. And for me, that just really surprised me because I personally had read the book like four times and never noticed them in the background, because that's not what the book is about. But yeah, I was just really interested in. "Okay, Well, what if you believe like, I want to tell my students... to show my students that no matter what you look like, all that stuff... You are welcome in my classroom". But then, that is challenged by parents or that ruffles feathers. So to kind of backtrack I guess, can you tell me how you personally choose books for your classroom?

Participant #3 8:27

So, two main factors. When I'm thinking about books, so I am primarily buy like older elementary age like chapter books and stuff like that. Because I teach we are departmentalized here. So I teach reading and language, and my partners teach math and science. And so, I have a classroom library which, if I rotate... My computer is over there. Pretty big bookshelf.

I've probably got...2-3 hundred books that I either inherited from a retired teacher, bought at a yard sale, got at a hand-me-down place, whatever. And so, when I'm looking at books. I look, I have a ton of classics just because people love to read...like "Because of Winn Dixie" and "Old Yeller" and things like that. But the books that I've been buying recently, we have a curriculum that's called E.L. Curriculum is the the reading curriculum we use that. Instead of having like a reading textbook, we have different trade books that we rotate through throughout the year. And they always have a reading focus like a reading topic, but they also have like a larger... world... community-related topic.

So, the book we're reading right now is called "Esperanza Rising".

Katie Taylor 9:54

Okay.

Participant #3 9:55

It's about a Mexican immigrant working family that moves to the United States during the Great Depression. So, this book has a lot of character development. So we use it to talk about character traits and character development, that's like the reading curriculum thing. But then we also use this and we cross-analyze it with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We look at, "how did... how does this book and how do story is like it showcase to us how human rights are important? And how they haven't always necessarily been in the forefront of everyone's mind?" So, that curriculum drives a lot of book choice. This was, this was one of the, like, mandatory curriculum books. But along with this, they provide this huge list of supporting books that have things that go along with it. Stories that are similar stories and have similar characters, stuff like that.

But then also I personally always kind of keep my ear to the ground on like new authors and stuff like that. And I'll pick books that represent not only the students in my class with characters that represent them, but being in a majority white upper middle class area, I really want to engage them with characters who don't look like them. And so I've I went out of my way. This year, over the summer to buy tons of books, and none of them have white protagonists. And so like this is my favorite one it's called "Ghost". It's about track team. There's a whole series, but it has it's written by a guy named Jason Reynolds, very talented author. But he goes into these tough topics of homelessness, and family familial abuse, and bullying, and peer pressure, and all that kind of stuff. But he does it in such a way that is very kid-friendly, and it makes it very engaging. So I bought a ton of books like that. I don't have anybody telling me, "Hey, you can't buy this book. Hey, you can't do that." And I'm just gonna read what I want, until somebody says "hey stop"

Katie Taylor 12:05

Right.

Participant #3 12:06

Up to this point I haven't, because even some of the stuff that's like shocking and like the kids are like, "oh my gosh like that happens?" When we, when we talk about it and we discuss it, they realize like, "oh my gosh, where the world is a lot bigger than my house and my atmosphere in my sphere of influence." So, I really just want to challenge them with new ideas and new topics. And so that's typically what I look for.

Katie Taylor 12:36

So, you said you haven't had anyone really pushed back. But, if a parent came to you and said that they weren't comfortable with their student learning about this or reading certain things, how do you think he would respond to that?

Participant #3 12:52

You know, I would hope that they would be willing to have a conversation about it. Because I think... thinking back to your example that book that you mentioned. A simple explanation of like, "hey, it doesn't have to apply to your family. But there are families out there that that applies to, and there are families out there who that's their experience, and we want to make sure that children have families like that, that they feel welcome. No matter what." And I think with a lot of these stories, at least I would hope, a conversation where we really talk about what it means and why it's important to the parents. Like I want I want them to know why it's important too. Um, hopefully that would help. If it doesn't...and... they still are adamant against it. I would probably talk to my principal, and see what his advice would be. Because ultimately, I mean if he tells me that I need to do something that I have to do it. Luckily, my principal here is very like-minded to me. He wants these kids to come out of school with a better understanding of the world around them, not just how to read and write. And so, hopefully that kind of those conversations either between me and the families or my principal and the families or even if all three of us sat down and had a conversation about it... I would hope that we could come to a consensus and make it work. But if not, I mean, we have to do we have to do you know.

Katie Taylor 14:28

So something I found as I was working through my literature review was that if a principal was hesitant to talk about a topic, or if they had a really hard stance on something, then the teachers often or like hesitant to address that topic or to try and challenge that have you felt, I guess you said that you and your principal were pretty like minded, but have you ever experienced anything like that or that kind of thing?

Participant #3 14:57

Um... so not...not in that relationship because I do, I do think that he and I are very like minded, not necessarily that we agree on everything, but that there is value to lots of different topics and I think he's pretty open minded in that way. However, I do feel pressure, not, not necessarily literal pressure, but think like... perceived pressure from the community because of the demographic. We do live in a predominantly white upper middle class area that tends to vote and lean one direction. And I tend to lean the other way. So, it can feel...like I say, I'm not sure this is literal because no one's ever told me like, "hey you need to stop doing that." I think this is perceived... as like I do have this kind of pit... whenever I talk about something like super controversial like, "is this going to go back to someone's family? and they're going to come talk to me tomorrow? like is that gonna happen?"

Katie Taylor 16:04

Yeah,

Participant #3 16:04

But I haven't let it stop me it. And I hope that I don't. But I do always kind of have this thing in the back of my mind like, "is this the one? is this the time that it's going to get back to them and they're going to be like, Hmm, I wonder what they're really talking about in there."? But the fact that it hasn't happened yet in an election year, like the one we're dealing with, I think I'm in the clear. Yes.

Katie Taylor 16:29

So, um, well I had a question it escaped me. How would you say your role as a teacher versus you as an individual changes when having those hard conversations that might ruffle some feathers or might not sound the best at home? How do you kind of weigh that?

Participant #3 16:49

So when it comes to like, how do you like, how do I separate my personal beliefs from like what I deem okay to talk about in the classroom?

Katie Taylor 16:57

I guess so. Yeah.

Participant #3 16:59

Okay. Um, I guess... I've tried to separate like... well the way I talk about is very different too. Because I want... ultimately, when we talk about any of these challenging topics I want the kids to come to the conclusions... of equality and acceptance. If, like with Esperanza the book we're reading, if there's ever a time when... Like we just read a chapter where the immigration officials were deporting people back to Mexico who had never even lived there. They were American citizens, and they're being deported. And we were talking about it, and I was like, "how does that... like how do you think... like your family would react if that happened to you? and they're like, "oh my gosh... like that would like ruin our entire life", like, exactly! "So how do you think these families felt?" And then they kind of make that connection. And so, when they're making those connections, it doesn't feel as much as like I'm pushing... like I'm preaching it to them. So it feels like they're pulling it out of the text themself, and I don't feel as certain that they're going to go home and be like, "Well, Mr. [REDACTED] told us that immigrant families..." Yeah, it's less that and more like, "look at this thing that we talked about today." Whereas, in my personal life, and in my individual my individuality. I'm a little bit more pushy. Simply because I think that there are things that people should understand by now. If they don't, then that's a problem. I think with kids especially... like if they don't get it, it's only because they haven't been exposed to it.

Katie Taylor 18:29

Mm hmm.

Participant #3 18:29

Like, none of these kids have any mal intent in their heart. These kids love everybody. They just don't know that these other people exist. And so, like, introducing them to those topics and letting them come to the conclusions, is the best strategy that I've found to kind of keep myself out of it, keep my bias out of it. And they seem to respond pretty well to that.

Katie Taylor 18:52

Certainly Yeah. Um, another thing I found was that it helped teachers to diversify their classroom library when they had professional development offered by their school district. Does your school district...Does your school district do anything like that, or have you sought out your own professional development source?

Participant #3 19:16

So, yeah, I mean we have a pretty decent amount of professional development offerings through like our instructional team in the district. We...most of it is pretty curriculum-focused most of its pretty like instruction-focused. So, like we just did one from a place called "Solution Tree." I think when they focused on like PLC groups which is about like, identifying standards and breaking standards apart and stuff like that which is great. But I have done a couple of independent PD stuff. Especially last summer I did one called "Get Your Teach On." Are you familiar with that?

Katie Taylor 19:57

I've heard of it, but I don't know much about it.

Participant #3 19:59

So it's a group of educators from all over the country. They put on this big conference, and previously it had been like, you go and do this thing. Last year was virtual and so I took it I was like, "if this is the time that's gonna be virtual and I don't want to travel I'm gonna do it" . And so we did it, and we actually got it paid for by the school we-- we like, "hey we want to do this thing" and they're like "okay it sounds great." And so they paid for it. And, but it was a ton of different educators from all backgrounds, walks of life, urban, suburban, rural schools like all these stuff. They were all just kind of sharing their passion projects that they've been working on. And so a couple of them talked about diversity or multicultural education, which I've actually taken some of their stuff. I'm working on my master's thesis right now. And that's a lot of what I'm working on. And then, a lot of people talking about like social-emotional health for us and for the students and how do we make sure that our... we take care of ourselves mentally enough to be able to be present for our students like it was all these, these things that aren't necessarily instruction-focused. And it was really refreshing to kind of just not talk about standards and not talk about curriculum and like content for a little bit. And let's just talk about like, "how do we make sure that this world is good for these kids?"

Katie Taylor 21:16

Right.

Participant #3 21:17

Which is great and so like we---My team and I, my fifth grade team, were pretty good about trying to find things that fir that. So yeah, to answer your question, yeah, we--we do seek out stuff.

Katie Taylor 21:31

Awesome. So those were kind of all the questions that I had written down, is there anything big to this conversation you think I'm missing out on?

Participant #3 21:41

Um, I don't think so. I mean, let's see. Oh, I will say this, okay, but one thing that I've noticed about my school in particular is--we as teachers have control over our library, but like we have a school library as well. And that school library is not quite as diversified, if that makes sense? And I would imagine that's probably the case for most places, simply because it's a larger volume of things to deal with. And it's harder to differentiate for that big of a volume. Yeah, because we're a K-five school, and so they have to make sure that they have books for K through four as well, not just us. And so a large majority of the library is for littler kids because we're only one grade out of that. And so I know I've heard multiple times from my kids, "Hey Mr. [REDACTED], they didn't really have anything that I liked in the library. Can I look at your stuff?" or, "Hey Mr. [REDACTED], they didn't really have anything that I feel is challenging enough for me. Can I look at your stuff?" And we've kind of...not pushed back on that, but are trying to find concrete ways to say, "hey let's let's beef up our school library a little bit, so that they have just another avenue, or another option." That's another thing that I've noticed in the past couple weeks, even for my students are like, "gah, I don't know. they don't really have anything..." like that kind of stuff. But...

Katie Taylor 23:07

Yeah, I hadn't thought about that. The school's library in particular.

Participant #3 23:14

Yeah, I don't know like I haven't talked to the librarian in detail about like what process they use to purchase books, or how they look for things. But it'd be an interesting avenue to explore, for sure.

Katie Taylor 23:26

Yeah. Okay. Well, that's all I had for you. So, thank you for meeting with me

Participant #3 23:32

For sure. It was a pleasure.

Katie Taylor 23:34

All right, I will talk to you later.

Participant #3 23:38

Alright. Bye.

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**APPENDIX F**

Transcript from interview with Participant #4

Katie Taylor 0:00

Hello.

Can you hear me okay?

Participant #4 0:04

Yes. Can you hear me?

Katie Taylor 0:05

Yes. So, I guess before we get going, do you mind if I record this?

Participant #4 0:12

Oh, go ahead.

Katie Taylor 0:13

Awesome.

Participant #4 0:15

Sorry. I look like this. It was PJ today.

Katie Taylor 0:18

That sounds awesome! So how's the week been for you?

Participant #4 0:25

It's been good. So, we had fall break last week. And so this was our first week back. The kids definitely were tired, but we'll get there.

Katie Taylor 0:35

Remind me where you're teaching?

Participant #4 0:37

So I teach in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and it's a school called Raider Baptist. So that is where I teach, and this is my third year teaching. Just crazy to think about. Because I went to school a Birmingham Southern, and now I'm teaching.

Katie Taylor 0:54

Does the time just fly by faster than they say?

Participant #4 0:58

Yes, it really does. Cuz we have like a website with like a little bio on the teacher. And so every year they're like, "Alright, everybody update your bios!" And I always put like, "this is my first year. That's my second year." So this year, I was like, "ahh!"

Katie Taylor 1:12

"my third year!"

Participant #4 1:13

Yeah, it's weird.

Katie Taylor 1:15

Yeah. So yeah, things have been okay, down here at BSC. Lots of precautions for COVID.

Participant #4 1:23

Is it crazy?

Katie Taylor 1:24

Yes, crazy. They've been pretty good with precautions for COVID stuff. Six feet apart, wear your masks, and we are required to unless you're in your dorm room. They randomly test about 20 to 25% of students and faculty every week. So it's a pretty good rotation of testing.

Participant #4 1:47

Yeah.

Katie Taylor 1:50

So it's beel alright. Most of the classes here are still in person, just a handful are online. Is that what it's like for you guys?

Participant #4 1:59

Well, I teach both in person and online. So, I've got some virtual kids. It's up to the parents for them to decide. While I'm teaching, and while I've got like 15 first graders... I've got like three that are online.

Katie Taylor 2:19

Wow.

Participant #4 2:20

Yeah.

Katie Taylor 2:21

And for some schools around here, the parents can choose every nine weeks if they want to change to in person or on zoom or hybrid. Is that what it's like for you?

Participant #4 2:32

Kinda Yeah. So they, they have the option every week.

Katie Taylor 2:36

Every week? Wow!

Participant #4 2:38

It's not like they're not taking advantage of it, if you will.

Katie Taylor 2:43

Hmm.

Participant #4 2:44

Which I appreciate, but like, mine that I want to come back so bad. I'm like, "All right. At the end of this week, where are we? Where are we thinking? We coming back? No? Okay." So, it's definitely been a challenge. And you like really got to be flexible with teaching online and in person. Because it could crash at any moment, or technology, you know, is never your friend until it decides that it wants to work. So...

Katie Taylor 3:15

So you're with first graders? How is that technology piece been for them?

Participant #4 3:22

Um, it's been alright. But having to teach like, say, you're my first grader, I'm like, "Alright, so click the big spacebar. It's the biggest button on your screen." Because they're muted. So if they click the space, then they're not muted anymore. And so, I'm also teaching to the parents. Like today, we were doing some tests, like spelling test, or whatever. And one of mine was having just a meltdown online, and there are many tears. And so of course, it's distracting the kids in my classroom because they can see them. And they're like, they're throwing a temper tantrum. So, it takes them almost like, "hey, do I need to talk to you?" And so like, she was just fighting with mom, and I, like walked in front of my camera. And I was like, "Listen, like, you cannot do that. Do you see any of these other kids doing that? Like, no, no, it's like, you have got to show me how smart you are on your paper right now." So it's been a little bit of a challenge, but yeah.

Katie Taylor 4:28

That's just rough for everyone.

Participant #4 4:31

Yeah. Even the kids like...You can't expect them to do it. And like, know exactly what to do. And it's hard. So yeah, what grade do you want to teach?

Katie Taylor 4:45

I really like second and third grade.

Participant #4 4:48

Mm hmm.

Katie Taylor 4:50

But I'm really up for wherever I get put those first couple of years, honestly.

Participant #4 4:55

Yeah. And have you gone to BSC all four years?

Katie Taylor 4:58

I have! I'm from Jackson, Mississippi. So, I've come out here every year.

Participant #4 5:05

Nice. Fabulous.

Katie Taylor 5:08

So just kind of as a reminder for my senior research, I was, I really enjoyed the children's literature class here with Dr. Jacobs. And have you read the book "All are welcome"?

Participant #4 5:23

Mmhmm

Katie Taylor 5:23

Great. So you know about that book. And I love that book so much. And I was talking with Dr. Jacobs about it, when I had read it a couple times. And she said, you know, "some teachers don't want to use that book in their class." "Why?" And she said, there was some school around BSC where a teacher had used it for a start of the year, "You're welcome here", classroom community type book. And there were two women in the background of one of the pictures holding hands as they walked their child to school. And I guess mom or dad heard about that afterwards, and came back to the teacher and was upset. And that just baffled me. Because that's not the intention of the book, it was just, "everyone is welcome here." So, I didn't expect that at all. And I was very surprised by that. And that got me thinking about banned books and challenged books in schools and how that process happens, but more specifically, the external factors that influenced teachers, when they are choosing books for their personal library. So could you talk-- Could you talk to me about what you look for in a book when you're choosing books for your library?

Participant #4 6:43

Yeah, so I'm... with that, but that's in my like, "beginning of the year" section. And I always love to read those books about saying that, like, "you all are welcome." And we have some that might learn differently than us, some that look different than us, some that need this in order to succeed, and some that don't need that in order to succeed. And so no classroom is ever going to be the same. And so when picking books, and I know that Dr. Jacobs, I think talks about this in that class, but they want to pick books that the kids can see themselves in, and then also books that teach them something. And so looking in, you know, mirrors and windows, um, I think they talked about that, but um, when I look at books to pick for my classroom, it like, also makes me think of like, what kind of classroom community I want. Like with us, our little family, because we're going to be living together for like a year. Um, so when I do pick those books, I want to pick books that are culturally appropriate for the kids in my class. And so I've got some that. Like, last year, I had a child that had a wheelchair and a walker. So, finding books that also included kids that she could see herself in those books and finding books about kids that learn differently... or some that have children that need to learn how to talk about their feelings. Like that's a big thing, especially right now. You got to have... They need that model within a story of another child doing that, because they're like, "I don't talk about my feelings. I don't know how to talk about my feelings."

So, finding books about that are, of course, taking books for like your units, and biographies, finding biographies about people that would naturally come up in their community, or some that they might not know about, but that served like an important role in our society today. And like, I know, we just did a unit on biographies, and so pulling some that were civil rights leaders, and some that were leaders in Chattanooga. And... presidents or baseball players. Like, I've got a lot of kids that play baseball, and so picking some books like that, that they can see themselves in, but they can also learn something like Babe Ruth and Jackie Robinson. Like them being able to see me like, "Oh, that's so cool!" and still being able to engage them in things that they're interested in as well. And so, like I said, no class is the same. So, what works this year might not work next year, and I'm doing things this year that I didn't do last year. It's just solely based on like, the dynamic of my class and the kind of of complexities of each kid in our class puzzle, if you will.

Katie Taylor 10:10

Mm hmm. Yeah. Um, what are some things that make you like a book?

Participant #4 10:19

I like books that are funny. I really do. Because first grade, it takes a lot to keep them......

Katie Taylor 10:27

Engaged?

Participant #4 10:28

Yeah, since they're the youngest. So like for us, we love when I read aloud. We love books that are like Junie B. Jones and like Magic Treehouse. So, I've found a bunch of The Magic Treehouse books that go with our units on like continents. Like, we just finished "Lions at Lunchtime". We're doing Africa right now in our social studies and science. And so being able to read this adventure book of these two kids that are going over to Africa, and they're doing safaris, and they're like, "there are lions over there! We got a runaway!!" Like, just silly little things. Um, those are my favorite books.

Katie Taylor 11:13

Yeah!

Participant #4 11:13

I can read to the kids.

Um, but I love it when they can relate to it and make those text-to-text or text-to-self, text-to-world connections. And I'm not like saying, "okay, what's a book that we've read? It's kind of like this." Or, "tell me about a time..." But they're like, "I know someone that's done that!!" Or, "My dad's name is---" like, even though those are silly, they're making those connections and being able to see that and so... The beginning of our year, we don't start with comprehension stuff. But as we're reading, and as I'm reading out loud, and bottling and like, "Hey! This kind of sounds like that! Didn't it?" Like me modeling that, we now have started doing sequence of events, or referential representation, which is like them making a picture in their brain. But they've already been doing that all year. And so I'm like, "What happened in this story? What happened at the end?" And so like, they've already started doing that, and being able to find books that have those clear moments of showing them different aspects of how a book is written, or how the pictures match the words, and why the words are floating down the page like this. So those are always fun. Yeah, I like books that have different dynamics to them.

Katie Taylor 12:36

Oh, yeah, you have to switch it up sometimes.

Participant #4 12:39

Oh, yeah. Keep them guessing.

Katie Taylor 12:42

So, have you ever had a parent or someone, pushback with a book you've read in the classroom? Now- and pushback might be too strong of a word?

Participant #4 12:56

Well, you'll always have pushback with at least some like, one, at least one thing in your year. Whether that's a tough parent teacher conference that you've had to have, or someone might not understand why you're doing this the way that you're doing it. Um, I wouldn't necessarily say that we've had pushback. Or, like, for me with books. Because I, you know, as a teacher, you want to read the books before reading them out loud to your kids. I've been able to like, not censor them, but like, 'stupid' is an ugly word in our class. And so if that word comes up, like I change it to silly.

Katie Taylor 13:58

Mm hmm.

Participant #4 13:58

And just keep moving on through the book, because I'm reading as fast as the page can go. And so I don't stop and be like, (whispers) "they said stupid!"

Katie Taylor 14:06

Like, you don't point it out.

Participant #4 14:08

Yeah, right. There have been times that I've read a book in class, and the kids love the book. They'll go home and be like, "I love this book!" And it might have 'hate' or 'stupid' or like, just some of those little words in it that a parent's like, "Hey, did y'all this in class?" and I'm like, "Yes, but let me explain, like, I never read a book out loud until I've read it myself." Um, and because I teach at a Christian school, I'm a Christian school also. And so I do have the freedom of being able to read a religious book, and I don't have any pushback there.

So, not really... Nothing to the extent I think that you're looking for. But, I also have the freedom to be able to pick the books that I do read in class, right? Like that.

Katie Taylor 15:06

So, hypothetically, if a parent did come up to you, and say that that book shouldn't be in your classroom, and that might be different since you're at a Christian school. I hadn't considered that yet. But, if a parent came to you and said, "I don't think this book should be in the classroom" for any reason, how would you handle that, do you think?

Participant #4 15:27

Um, I would definitely... Cuz I feel like if a parent would tell me that, then it would either be in like an email or like a quick pass by. I would say, "Well, I would love to sit down and like, have a talk with you. Have a chat with you. We can look at the book together and see what about it you're concerned about, or what about it offends you." And kind of talk about it through an instructional way. And so, another way I choose my books is, they all have like, an instructional piece to it. Like, I'm not going to just pick a book to pick a book.

Katie Taylor 16:01

Mm hmm.

Participant #4 16:02

I want it to relate to something we're doing, or I don't know, just like, I want there to be an educational aspect to it, versus just reading a book out loud. Which there's nothing wrong with that, because they're just super fun. You can do it every once in a while. Um, and so I feel like like, if there was a parent that was being critical with that, or pushing back some, I would definitely pull them and be like, "Hey, here are some times that worked for me, tell me something that works for you. Let's sit down, let's talk about it." And have a conversation about why they feel that way. And then after I get their side of it, then I'll say my side of it, and then we'll kind of come to an agreement on something. If not, then I mean, I'll pick a different... I'll find a different one. That'll be okay. But it'll teach the same aspects. And...I don't know.

I would definitely have a conversation with the parent though. And that would also be something that I would tell like my principal and be like, "hey, just throwing this on your radar. This parent has said this, so that you're not blindsided if they come and talk to you about it." It's better to know more information than not enough.

Katie Taylor 17:23

Certainly, yeah. So, as I was doing my literature review, I found that some teachers were hesitant to talk about a topic if their principal or higher administration people were hesitant to talk about a topic or had a really firm stance on something and were like, I don't know, really, really firm about a topic. So, if the principle was all for something or all against something, that even if the teacher had different views, they were less hesitant to try and teach. They were more hesitant to teach differently in the classroom. So they didn't rub up against the principal. Have you experienced anything like that?

Participant #4 18:09

I haven't, I worked for a great school, have a great boss, and he like has our back anything, and so I haven't had any thing that I'd be nervous about. Um, we did have to, like he talked in like one of our faculty meetings about how we need to be like, extra aware of... when we do our Black History Month, um, just to make sure that we're not being offensive or being very passive about those kind of topics. Because it's, it's a huge deal right now. And it has been for a while, um, but there hasn't been necessarily like a topic that either I've had a different view on, or he's had a different view on. As a teacher, if he... if my opinions on something, like political or anything like that, if my opinions, if I try and put those on my kids through books that I pick or through topics that I decided to talk about, then I'm not doing my job in a good way. Then that means I'm not there to make sure that my kids are being successful in whatever they're doing and nourishing their brain and their whole well being to be their own thinkers and their own person.

Because, I mean, in class, they're like, "I like the pink playdough. I like the green playdough." Okay, well, like that's your opinion, and you're allowed to have a different opinion. And so like, that's the only real way that I mean, we talk about our opinions in that sense. But, um, if there's like a topic, that is a touchy kind of topic, we kind of put like our opinions on the backside, because that's not our opinion to kind of make, you know? And just like with, like, the religious piece of it in, in a public school, if you're talking about religious aspects, it always has to be in a educational sense. And so like, there are historical aspects of the Bible. There are literature aspects of the Bible, but they're also literature aspects of different kinds of religious books and different religions and different historical events. And so keeping your opinion on the back side, but teaching "Hey, this is how this book is read. This is how it has shaped history. This is the Western culture here." And so basically just having the educational aspect of it, and teaching to that instead of just teaching and finding books about just like your opinion. And like as a teacher, you want to be able to give the resources to your kids, whatever grade but giving them the resources and the knowledge to then make their own decisions and form their own opinions. That kind ofa deal.

Katie Taylor 21:47

Right, yeah. So, you think it's important as a teacher to present students with the different sides of an opinion or different sides of a belief, and let them come to their own decisions, their own opinions.

Participant #4 22:02

I think so, because I think that would be really unfair of me to be like, "hey, you need to be a Christian. You need to do this." And I mean, obviously I have my opinions of, "Yes, I do believe in God, and I am a Christian", but I'm not going to sit here and force it at you. I'm going to sit here and love you like Jesus loved people. But I can't legally, by law... Yeah, I can't sit here and teach just this.

Katie Taylor 22:37

Mm hmm.

Participant #4 22:37

And so, I mean, there are aspects of like the Pledge of Allegiance that a bunch of schools still say. Like public schools that have those aspects of "one nation under God." Well, what does that mean? Well, it's a part of our daily thing we say every day. So, let's kind of talk about what we're saying, and why we're saying it and kind of the impact that that has. And so there's different ways that you can actually do that. And kind of like, bend the system, but...

Katie Taylor 23:10

Yeah, not just teaching to your own beliefs.

So I just had one more question really. Another thing I found in my literature review was the importance of professional development opportunities as a teacher. So, does your school provide any kind of professional development...things to go to for inclusion in the classroom and diversifying a library?

Participant #4 23:43

Yeah, so we have a person on our faculty, I think she's, I think there's a member from fourth and third, like a representative or more fourth and third grade team, and they get sent all of the conferences and all of the professional development books and all of that stuff through our accreditations at our school. And so I would say weekly, we get emails of conferences we can attend. And we've got a budget set aside for going to those and I actually am working on my master's right now. And so I'm being able to do that kind of professional development through the school, and they're helping me do that, which is, that's really great. Yeah. Um, so yes, we do have the opportunity to do professional development, go to conferences, and if we do go to conferences, it's not like using our personal days, it's using our like, professional development days.

Katie Taylor 24:53

Mm hmm.

Participant #4 24:56

So, I think my school does a really good job of making sure that we are lifelong learners. You can never stop learning.

Katie Taylor 25:06

I hope not, when you ever should... So, was there anything else really about this topic or this discussion that you think I'm missing out on?

Participant #4 25:23

Have you gotten a look at a bunch of those banned books? Those that were banned, that are back, or that now are banned?

Katie Taylor 25:30

I have, and some of them were really surprising. Like, on one school banned the Winnie the Pooh books. One school banned, like James and the Giant Peach, or I think one school banned at The Very Hungry Caterpillar. And you just get into those very nitpicky reasons of who..? I want to sit down with this person and figure out why they interpreted the book this way.

Participant #4 25:58

Yeah, yeah. It's crazy. Because like, you see them and you're like... never in my life would a five year old say, "this is what's in the book, and I don't appreciate that", like, yeah.

Katie Taylor 26:16

It's a caterpillar eating food.

Participant #4 26:20

Yeah, it's crazy. It's crazy to think about, and I feel like I feel like more books are about to be banned.

Katie Taylor 26:29

I think so too.

Participant #4 26:30

There are so many things that like, something like older books that you read, and you're like, "Are you allowed to say that? I don't know." So well, that's... I'm very interested in your, your topic, and I got to do an interview with Katherine Walker. Yeah. Um, for hers and hers is like mental health, but it was really cool. So um, I love that you guys get to do these kind of topics for your research. I know it's not what you expected. Not getting--

Katie Taylor 27:00

It's a bit different. Yeah.

Participant #4 27:02

But I think that these would be really cool research and to read and do. Even more power to you.

Katie Taylor 27:11

Thank you. Thank you so much for meeting with me today.

Participant #4 27:14

And if you and until Catherine this... That if if there's anything that comes up in more research that you read or more literature, or even more questions that you're like, "I didn't get a lot of answers in this area." Let me know.

Katie Taylor 27:27

Amazing.

Participant #4 27:28

All right. Find a time and I will try my best to answer even if it's an email, I can just type it back to you. But let me know. I'm here. Right.

Katie Taylor 27:37

Thank you very much. Yeah. All right. I hope you have a good weekend. Bye.

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