Classrooms across the country are filled with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds—and our school and classroom libraries can accommodate and represent that diversity. Incorporating multicultural literature into the learning environment can assist English language learners (ELL) in the process of language acquisition and in adapting to a new country or area. When ELL students read or listen to culturally and linguistically relevant texts, then vocabulary, social studies concepts, and even mathematics and science concepts are more easily learned, and grade level work can be attained and retained. But all students in your classroom or school who have access to multicultural literature and stories with multilingual facets will encounter challenging and familiar vocabulary, as well as stories that dispel notions that differences are something to fear, shun, or even hate. Experts agree that quality multicultural literature benefits all students, “regardless of ethnicity, race, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences” (Nieto, 2000, p. 4).

In addition to assisting students on the journey to becoming understanding and tolerant citizens, authentic and accurate books that offer positive role models, strong plots, and well-developed characters encourage students to read and think more critically, in general. Making multicultural literature available to all students can also foster mutual understanding, as well as individual self-esteem and confidence. It is through the themes, characters, and conflicts of such books that we can guide our students to connect with each other and the world around them, develop understanding and respect for their own cultural groups, empathize with the tragedies and triumphs of others, write and add their own personal voices to the mosaic, and value multiple perspectives and experiences as part of their lifelong learning processes.

Culturally diverse literature can help prepare students for active citizenship in our pluralistic society and our ever-expanding global society, but choosing quality multicultural literature isn’t necessarily an easy task. Finding the right balance of historical and contemporary literature that authentically represents the diverse groups that comprise your school demographic can be daunting with so many choices and variables to consider.

Because of the important role literature can play in the learning lives of students, it is imperative that we, as educators, approach the selection process with a critical eye, checking to ensure the books included in curriculum and classroom libraries do the following: present factual and historical accuracy, debunk myths and dispel stereotypes, avoid hasty generalizations, and provide authentic settings and language. Help is readily available to meet the challenges of integrating more quality multicultural literature into the classroom and curriculum. If in doubt about what books and stories are appropriate for the classroom, teachers can talk to other teachers and administrators about their best-loved books; especially check with your school or district ELL specialists. Libraries and bookstores are also great resources to explore.

1 English language learner (ELL), English as a second language (ESL), and English language development (ELD) are all terms in current usage across the country. We use ELL to represent the students in our classrooms who are learning English, as well as content areas subjects.

especially if the personnel are knowledgeable of small and independent presses. There are also many Internet resources available. Online booksellers often permit you to see an excerpt from a story and learn a bit about the author and illustrator. In addition, they frequently feature reviews and publishing information, making the online booksellers a good place for initial evaluations of specific titles. Below are multiple references for locating literary and other resources for supporting multicultural awareness and learning. While this is not an exhaustive list, the resources below were chosen for credibility and reliability. In addition to web sites with recommendations for multicultural literature, please note the information on particular publishers and a list of awards granted to those books that achieve the highest standards of excellence. The best multicultural literature reflects both the unique experiences of specific groups and expresses the universal themes and concerns common to all Americans—indeed, all citizens of the world.

**Look to Schoolwide for Multicultural Literature**

Visit Teacherwide for our multicultural offerings—click on “multicultural” to find great books for your classroom! Visit: www.teacherwide.com. Check out the following resources to help you find multicultural and bilingual literature that is relevant to your students.

**Multicultural Literature Awards**

By learning about award-winning books, you’ll find lots of options for adding multicultural books to your classroom and school libraries.

### The Americas Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html

Visit this URL for the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies to learn about past and present winners of the Americas Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature, sponsored by the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP). The Americas Award is given in recognition of U.S. works of fiction, poetry, or nonfiction that portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinas in the United States authentically and engagingly. The award-winning titles are selected for their 1) distinctive literary quality; 2) cultural contextualization; 3) exceptional integration of text, illustration, and design; and 4) potential for classroom use.

### Children’s Africana Book Awards

http://www.africaaccessreview.org/caba.cfm

These awards were established in 1991 by the African Studies Association, a non-profit corporation founded in 1957 and open to all who are interested in African affairs. The annual awards are given to authors and illustrators of children’s books published in the United States that present an accurate and balanced portrayal of Africa and Africans.

### Coretta Scott King Awards

http://www.ala.org/ala/emiert/corettascottkingbookaward/corettascott.htm

Sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA), each year a seven-member jury of librarians and children’s literature experts selects for this honor an African American author and an African American illustrator whose books “promote understanding and appreciation of the culture of all peoples and their contribution to the realization of the American dream.” The deadline for nominations is December 1 of each year. The site lists the award winners, provides links to other helpful educational resources, and offers information about the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT). Visit the general ALA site; it is the oldest and largest association of libraries and librarians, and it provides a number of award lists, as well as links to professional journals, conferences, and a number of multicultural resources and roundtables. In addition, this site links to the lists of winners for myriad important and influential awards, such as the Carnegie and Newbery Medal winners: http://www.ala.org.

### Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards


These awards are given annually to children’s books that promote the causes of peace, social justice, world community, and racial and gender equality while also meeting conventional standards for excellence in literature.
**The Mildred L. Batchelder Award**
www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/batchelder-award/batchelderaward.htm
This annual award honors books originally published in a foreign language in a foreign country that are subsequently translated into English and published in the United States.

**The Pura Belpre Award**
http://www.spokanelibrary.org/kids/award/pura_belpre.asp
Visit the Spokane library site to view a list of the most recent winners of the Pura Belpre Award, given every other year to outstanding Latino/Latina writers and illustrators whose literary works and artistry best portray, affirm, and celebrate the Latino cultural experience. The Award is co-sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), and REFORMA, an ALA Affiliate committed to improving library and information services for the growing number of Hispanics in the United States.

**Selected Publishers of Multicultural and Bilingual Books**
Most of the major publishers offer some multicultural and bilingual books—all you need to do is visit their web sites and search for either “multicultural” or “bilingual” to find a plethora of books, but some publishers offer only multicultural and bilingual books. A few are listed here.

- **Barefoot Books**
  http://www.barefoot-books.com

- **BOPO—Bilingual Books**
  http://www.bopobooks.com

- **Cinco Puntos Press**
  http://www.cincopuntos.com

- **Hyperion Books for Children: Jump at the Sun**
  http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/jump/

- **Lee & Low Books**
  http://www.leeandlow.com

- **Luna Rising (Northland Publishing)**
  http://www.northlandbooks.com

- **Piñata Books**
  http://www.arte.uh.edu/pinata/

- **Zino Press**
  http://www.zinopress.com/

**Additional Resources—Print**
These four books are annotated bibliographies, each listing hundreds of multicultural books by multiple publishers.

- **Across Cultures: A Guide to Multicultural Literature for Children**

- **Culturally Diverse Library Collections for Children**

- **Global Voices Global Visions: A Core Collection of Multicultural Books**

- **Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8**
  by NCTE (four editions in the series, authors vary). For more information, see: http://www.ncte.org/pubs/books/series/107778.htm.