

Application Activity 3:

Using Professional Selection Sources to Develop a Core Subject Collection

Middle School Poetry Collection

Scope: Authors of Color

Brianna Amoscato and Emily McGurgan

Library Scenario & Scope Statement: Our library scenario is hypothetical. We are school librarians at Ingomar Middle School as part of the North Allegheny School District. The North Allegheny School District covers 48 square miles and is located 12 miles north of the city of Pittsburgh. It is the largest suburban school district in Allegheny County. Ingomar Middle School services 530 students in grades 6-8. 72% of the student body is white, 20% Asian, 3.2% Multiracial, 2.1% Hispanic and 1.5% African American.

The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade teachers conduct poetry units within their curriculum scope and sequence and are looking to diversify their curriculum with authors and protagonists of color. They have asked the school librarians to help create a strong poetry collection such that they could use it as a supplemental resource for the students. They hope to work closely with the librarian, secure titles and board approval by the end of May so that the materials can be purchased for the 2026-2027 school year.

Our Collection focuses on middle grade poetry published between 2021-present written by authors of color and intended for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Authors represent a range of ages, genders and cultures and identity as Black American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Palestinian American, Chicana, Iranian American, Indigenous, Hmong American, Black Caribbean, Afro-Dominican, Chinese American, Indian, Persian, Korean-American and Haitian American. The collection highlights smaller subcategories such as Disability Awareness, Black Joy, Loss & Love, Indigenous Peoples, Hispanic Experiences, Mental Health, Immigration & Refugees, Nonfiction and Historical Fiction Events. The majority of the collection includes copies in print. However, after analyzing favorite audiobook reviews from School Library Journal, it was decided to include a few audiobooks to support English Language Learners as well as students receiving Special Education services.

Collection Choices:

Subtopic: ___Poetry by Authors of Color_____Disability/Mental Health Awareness					
Title	Bibliographic Info	Format	Selection Source	Price	Reason for Selection
1. It's All or Nothing, Vale	Andrea Beatriz Arango Published	Print	Kirkus; online	\$17.99	A strong selection following a protagonist female

	February 11, 2025 Random House		Oct 26, 2024		that not only shatters stereotypes as a Puerto Rican female fencer but shares her perspective as someone with a disability.
2. The Extraordinary Orbit of Alex Ramirez	Jasminne Paulino Published June 3, 2025 G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers	Print	SLJ online; May 1st, 2025	\$18.99	A male protagonist named Alex Ramirez is a middle-school student who finds himself in Special Education classes. However, he yearns to be placed in mains One of the few novels in prose that also highlights the beauty of being neurodivergent as well as encouraging self-advocacy.
3. Aniana Del Mar Jumps in	Jasminne Mendez Published March 14, 2023	Audiobook	SLJ online; April 1, 2023	\$13.50	Features Aniana, a Dominican American twelve year old who also suffers from juvenile arthritis. It also highlights familial trauma and tells the story using many forms of poetry (including concrete)
4. Just Another Epic Love Poem	Parisa Ahkbari Published March 12, 2024 Dial Books	Print	Kirkus; online Dec 16, 2023	\$19.99	Written by a therapist, this lyrical novel highlights an LGBTQ+romance between Mitra (Muslim-Zoroastria

					n) and Bea (Mexican American) while highlighting parental addiction. One of the only selections found with an LGBTQ romance with diverse cultures as a central part of the story. The focus on parental addiction and childhood trauma also adds to our mental health subcategory
5. The One Thing You'd Save	Linda Sue Park Published March 16, 2021	audiobook	SLJ online; July 1, 2021	\$22.00	Using a 14th century Korean-syllabic verse form , this collection of poems answers the teacher, Ms. Chang's question, "What would you do if your home was on fire? What would be that one thing you save? An excellent addition to a collection capturing diverse middle-school voices and perspectives.

Subtopic: ___ Poetry by Authors of Color _____ Black Joy, Loss & Love

6. All the Blues in the Sky	Renée Watson Published February 4, 2025 Bloomsbury	Print	Kirkus; online Nov 23, 2024	\$17.99	A poetic novel about experiencing grief due to violence. Three other students open up about their loss and the guilt/shame
-----------------------------	--	-------	-----------------------------------	----------------	--

					surrounding this loss. <i>The focus on vulnerability amidst trauma and the importance of counseling was an important part of adding this novel to our collection.</i>
7. Black Girl You Are Atlas	Renee Watson Published February 13, 2024 Kokila Books	Print	SLJ online; March 22, 2024	\$18.99	A strong ode to Black girlhood that results in a variety of different style poems (not just verse) <i>The collection defies stereotypes and includes mixed media illustrations that inherently tell a story.</i>
8. Mid-Air	Alicia D. Williams Published April 23, 2024 Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books	Print	Booklist online; April 2024	\$17.99	A story that centers black boy joy, loss, romance and perseverance. <i>The strong Black male protagonist (highlighting anxiety) was important to add to our collection.</i>
9. Poemhood	Edited by Amber McBride, Taylor Byas and Erica Martin Published January 30, 2024 HarperTeen	Print	Kirkus; online Nov 15, 2023	\$19.99	A rich anthology of intergenerational Black poetry that spans centuries. <i>Included in the collection as one of the only anthologies that focuses on intergenerational work.</i>
10. And We Rise	Erica Martin published	Print	SLJ online;	\$17.99	A collection of poems about the Civil Rights

	February 2022 Viking		January 1, 2022		Movement. Includes multiple types of poetry and backmatter with a timeline that provides historical context for the reader
11. Inheritance	Elizabeth Acevedo, Illustrated by Andrea Pippins Quill Tree Books/HarperCollins	Print	Kirkus; Online Mar 1, 2022	\$16.99	A poetry book that highlights Black hair and <i>Black beauty while grappling with white supremacy. A powerful collection with digital illustrations.</i>
12. Garvey in the Dark	Nikki Grimes, published October 25, 2022	audiobo ok	Kirkus Online August 30, 2022	\$17.99	Set during COVID, these selections of poems illustrate the hardships not only of life during a pandemic, but also touches on the anti-Black violence that came over the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. It tackles familial hardships dealing with social injustice.
13. Coach	Jason Reynolds Published October 14, 2025 Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books	Print	SLJ online; October 3, 2025	\$17.99	Set in 1988, the main character navigates regular life and his goal to be an Olympic athlete, initially unaware of the broader social issues at play. Otie's neighborhood has dangers, and it's not just the usual suspects who are the sources as

					<i>Reynolds tackles the effects of addiction, the cycle of improvement and relapse, and the overall community impact. This is the last part of Reynold’s Ghost series and by including it in the collection, we would hope the students would read Ghost and become inspired to read the others.</i>
Subtopic: ___ Poetry by Authors of Color _____ Indigenous stories and characters					
14. Legendary Fry Bread	Edited by Cynthia Leitich Smith Published August 26, 2025 Heardrum	Print	Kirkus; Online May 16, 2025	\$15.81	Written by multiple Native authors, <i>it centers indigenous communities and realism. It also provides the work of many talented authors.</i>
15. Red Bird Danced	Dawn Quigley June 4, 2024 HarperCollins/Heart Drum	Print	SLJ; Online June 1, 2024	\$18.99	<i>Written from the perspective of two indigenous children,</i> this novel highlights life living in an Intertribal housing complex. Written by an indigenous author, this novel is filled with heart and sorrow while keeping the story realistic
Subtopic: ___ Poetry by Authors of Color _____ Immigrant & Refugee Experiences					
16. A Year Without a Home	V.T. Bidania January 13, 2026	Print	Kirkus; online Novemb	\$18.99	<i>A historical fiction set of poems based on</i>

	Nancy Paulsen Books		er 15, 2025		<i>the author's familial experiences as refugees.</i> The main character must flee, but her own hardships continue as she overcomes familial/social norms of preference for male children.
17. In the Beautiful Country	Jane Kuo Published June 2022 Quill Tree/Harper Collins Publishing	Print	Audiobook; April 1, 2022	\$16.99	A historical fiction addition that details the hardships of immigrating to a new country. The difficulties of fitting in, both in school and more broadly on a social scale. <i>While set in 1980, it translates to Asian hate Asians/Asian-Americans may face today on a relatable journey.</i>
18. Samira Surfs	Rukhsanna Guidroz Published June 29 2021 Quill Tree/Harper Collins Publishing	Print	SLJ review; June 1, 2021	\$16.99	Samira and her family are refugees from Burma. While settling in Bangladesh, Samira begins to take on surfing. An authentic novel <i>documenting a refugee girl's experience while also navigating unequal gender norms and fighting for girl rights.</i>
Subtopic: ___ Poetry by Authors of Color ___ Hispanic Culture/Experiences					
19. Estela, Undrowning	René Peña-Govea Published March 3,	Print	Kirkus; online	\$19.99	Tackles cultural nuances when the

	2026 Quill-Tree Books Harper Collins		Dec 26, 2025		protagonist, a Chicana and heritage Spanish speaker, meets a roadblock with her white Spanish teacher who emphasizes formal European Spanish. Tackles this on top of teenage hardships from a BIPOC lens.
20. Abuela, Don't Forget Me	Rex Ogle Published September 6, 2022 Norton Young Readers	Print	Kirkus; Online June 7, 2022	\$18.95	<i>A work of love from Rex's own life from age 4 to college</i> as he recounts the hardships he's faced from racial to homophobic taunts and coming into his own identity. Paired with a loving look for his grandmother and how her enduring love got him through the hard times. <i>This memoir provides an emotional variety to this collection.</i>
21. Ultraviolet	Aida Salazar Published April 2, 2024 Scholastic Press	Print	SLJ online; April 1, 2024	\$18.99	Includes a <i>strong male protagonist</i> with interweavings of <i>Mexican culture, toxic masculinity and heartbreak.</i> This story follows Elio Solis, an eighth grader who is learning what it means to become a good man.

Subtopic: ___ Poetry by Authors of Color _____ Nonfiction Poetry

22. Grace Notes: Poems about Families	Naomi Shihab Nye Published May 7, 2024 Greenwillow Books	Print	Kirkus; Online Apr 20, 2024	\$19.99	A true account of Miriam, Shihab's mother, her mental health and marital conflicts.
23. Star Child	Ibi Zuboi Published January 3, 2023 Dutton Books for Young Readers	Print	SLJ online; May 6, 2022	\$16.99	A nonfiction biographical poetry selection about the life of Octavia Estelle Butler. Highlights Octavia's early childhood and love of writing while providing a rich history.
Subtopic: ___Poetry by Authors of Color_____Historical Fiction					
24. The Door of No Return	Kwame Alexander Published September 27, 2022 Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books	Audiobook	SLJ online; September 1, 2022	\$18.99	Set in 1860, it follows what life would have been like for boys and young men. But a tragic incident leads to intense danger as the main character is set to be enslaved on the transatlantic slave trade. An important piece of literature because the focus is on African joy, culture and humanity.
25. A Sea of Lemon Trees	Maria Dolores Aguila September 16, 2025 Roaring Book Press	Print	SLJ Online; October 31, 2025	\$10.99	A lauded historical fiction novel about a real landmark court case that came two decades before Brown versus the Board of Education. This history is often either forgotten or glossed over. Roberto Alvarez is

					the lead plaintiff challenging the forced segregation of Mexican students in a barn school during the Great Depression.
26. Lion of the Sky	Ritu Hemnani Published May 27, 2024	Print	Kirkus Reviews online; May 7, 2024	\$19.99	A novel, set in 1947 India when they gain their independence, paints the story of finding your place in the world and the harsh realities of growing up. It often means breaking social norms. It's culturally rich that teaches history while representing a difficult period in India's history.
27. Kin: Rooted in Hope	Carole Boston Weatherford Published September 19, 2023	Print	SLJ Review; September 15, 2023	\$18.99	A Coretta Scott King Author Award, this collection of poems and poetry focuses on the roots of slavery in African American families. Touching upon the difficult parts of history is essential for a poetry collection.
Subtopic: <u> </u> Poetry by Authors of Color <u> </u> Online Resources					
Color In Colorado	https://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/poetry-teens-diverse-voices	Website	ELL based and already bilingual. Poetry recommendations for all ages with seemingly to be primarily authors of color.		
Center for Children's Books	https://ccb.ischool.illinois.edu/	Website	Center for Children's Books is affiliated with The University of Illinois School of Information Sciences and includes professional development, advocacy		

			and children's collection resources and featured collections.
Goodreads App	https://www.goodreads.com/	App	The goodreads app is a powerful tool that contains countless book reviews and recommendations and also uses a star system and recommendation algorithm based on the user's previously read stories. The user can create their own virtual bookshelves,

Log of Selection Sources Used & Assessment of Each

Kirkus Review: Kirkus Review's online format offers an easy to use user experience. The website is clearly marked to find book reviews, and it has comprehensive filter options to find what you are looking for. For instance, it was easy to filter for middle school level books under poetry with their filters. The reviews themselves gave enough information about the book to make informed inferences on whether it would fit our collection needs while also giving a glimpse at the acclaim. It could have used a clearer opinion on whether the reviewer thought the book was worthwhile or not, but perhaps the vagueness leaves it up for interpretation. It is also useful that Kirkus Reviews are not locked behind a paywall.

School Library Journal: Despite the paywall, School Library Journal provides a comprehensive and very organized user experience. An individual can search via genre collection, "best of" within a specific date range or via one of the other subcategories such as just books (by genre), authors and illustrators or media. Booklists are available by grade level which are very useful tools in the library setting for teachers, administrators and librarians. The School Library Journal reviews are generally robust and provide wonderful touchpoints regarding character and plot development as well as theme. Verdicts at the end of every review provide a truthful overarching evaluation. In addition, truly excellent recommendations are given stars as an added visual for the reader. SLJ also posts many articles with various book collections and recommendations. For example, I recently read an article discussing 18 poetry books for teens and tweens that are best accessed through audiobooks. This was helpful for me as I contemplated what other media formats to provide in our poetry collection.

Booklist: To gain further experience with collection resources, we occasionally utilized Booklist to select poetry. Though the experience was not quite as friendly as the SLJ or Kirkus review, it did allow for a title, author or keyword search. In addition, it provided a star system for particularly excellent poetry reads and highlighted character and plot quite nicely. While I found Kirkus and SLJ to be better for searching new pieces of literature and the reviews to be more detailed and robust, I found Kirkus to be quite helpful in comparing reviews when making a final selection.

Conclusions Statement: Analysis and Reflection

We were lucky in several ways when it came to this collection development project. While \$500 is not realistically a large budget, we were able to add 28 books to the collection as described in our scope of poetry books by authors of color. In large part it was because none of these books were too expensive, averaging between \$16.99 - \$19.99 a book. The lower prices for books allowed us more freedom in what we were able to select. In most cases, if there was a book that fit our scope, it was able to be added to the collection.

During the collection process, our subcategories became more clear. We realized we had collected many novels in the Black Joy, Loss & Love category as well as Hispanic Culture & Experiences. However, more time needed to be spent developing subcategories related to disability and mental health, immigrant & refugee experiences, nonfiction and historical fiction poetry. In addition, many decisions were made during the search process as to what authors were present as well as absent within our collection. A separate, color-coded list was created that highlighted author culture and ethnicity which made it easier to determine cultures/ethnicities that were largely absent from the collection or perhaps overrepresented. After reaching the midway point of our collection, we stopped to analyze the cultures/ethnicities of our authors and saw that those identifying as African American or Hispanic American were well represented while Indigenous authors, Asian-Americans, South-Asians and a male authors were smaller in number.

Moving forward, we worked to add to the underrepresented subcategories as best we could. However, the lack of poetry specifically for males and by males was disappointing as was poetry focusing specifically on refugees, Asian and South Asian experiences, mental health/disabilities and LGBTQ relationships, adoption, foster experiences and divorce. There is certainly a need for poetry or novels in verse representing underrepresented populations and room for much growth in the future.

As we neared the end of our collection process, we realized we would have to cut a few books from the collection in order to remain under the \$500 budget. When we realized we were over, we used our scope as the guide for what should be the target items to consider removing. The overarching goal was to provide a mirror/reflection for our BIPOC population of students in the books that would be added. With that in mind, we looked at the racial percentages of students. Asians (20%) are the most populous minority racial group at Ingomar, whereas Blacks make up the smallest percentage (1.5%). However, from our collections, the section on Black Joy, Loss & Love had the most books at the time. Therefore, we selected a few books for removal based on publication date (2020) and a book that had a duplicate author. We also worked to add poetry books by Asian and South-Asian authors or featuring Asian/South-Asian character experiences. This decision was made due to ensuring the collection was current while also providing a wider representation of author voices representative of the students in the Ingomar community.

A final decision made regarding the collection was determining book format for the students. While the majority of our collection includes print copies, four selections include an audiobook format as recommended by an audiobook article through the School Library Journal. Given the

ESL population at the school as well as students who prefer audiobooks, we found this to be an important choice.

For the experience overall, we both quickly realized that the print versions of the Kirkus Review and School Library Journal were not well suited when we were looking for such a specific topic. At first, we were worried that we were not going to have enough materials to find. This is largely because while the print versions do have broad category breakdowns, there is no easy way to find which ones were poetry. That is why we primarily used the online versions of the reviews as we were able to use their filters to get poetry books. That said, for librarians who are looking to widen their collection more broadly, the print versions would certainly be useful as it would force looking at each individual title. However, if there is something specific the librarian was looking for, such as poetry, the online versions would ease the search process.

