

Bridge School DEIJ Newsletter

Dear Bridge Community,

The Diversity Equity Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Committee is hard at work this school year, after our process of discovery and information gathering last year. We want to (re)introduce ourselves, and let you know what we are doing this fall.

Committee Members: Natasha Chang, Jen Grilly, Spring Ulmer, Phoebe Vaughan.

We are currently working on the following projects:

- Putting out a monthly newsletter to connect with families as well as provide education and resources.
- Securing DEIJ training and professional development for staff.
- Organizing a common reading to increase dialogue and awareness about DEIJ issues.
- Creating a DEIJ values and mission statement for our school.
- Creating and implementing a DEIJ strategic plan for our school.

We value your input, ideas, and participation! If you have feedback or want to be part of our work please get in touch.

Stories, Images, and Representations Hold Power

When children of color, LGBTQ+ children, gender non-conforming children, children with disabilities, and other marginalized children do not see themselves reflected in literature and other types of media, they can feel invisible. It's important that they have "mirrors" in books, films, and other representations that reflect them and communicate the message "I matter and I belong."



Did you know?

The Bridge School silo mural is intended to celebrate our community's diversity! It is entitled "We're Different, We're the Same, We're All Beautiful" and it was created in 2018 by artist Chris Murray (the father of a Bridge kid). The title comes from a Sesame Street book that celebrates difference and common humanity.

In the Community

Beginner West African Djembe Drum Class

A class for beginners to learn the basics of West African Djembe drum rhythms, taught by Guinean master drummer Seny Daffe. Sign up through the Vergennes Rec Department. Begins 10/6.

It's also important for children from dominant -- and indeed all -- groups to have "windows" that offer them understanding about the experiences of others and about our global, multicultural world. Books can introduce kids to the history and traditions of cultural groups as well as invite reflection and comparison to their own.

If you sort your child's bookshelf into "mirror" and "window" books, how big is each pile? What would you like more or less of?

Finally, since it's October, let's not forget that Halloween costumes are also powerful representations. Here are a few questions that might be useful to bring awareness to unintentional -- but hurtful-- cultural appropriation and the perpetuation of stereotypes:

1. Does the costume take from or refer to a religious, cultural, or identity group that is not your own?
2. Is there a history of discrimination against this group?
3. Does the costume portray a narrow stereotype of the group?
4. Does the costume use cultural or religious symbols out of context?
5. Would you feel comfortable wearing the costume in front of the group of people the costume depicts?

As parents and caregivers, we can lean into learning with our kids and help them celebrate and expand their knowledge about other cultures in ways that are empowering and justice-oriented.

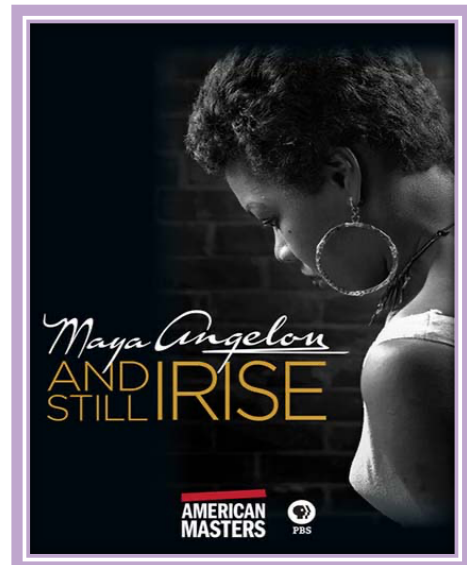
Diverse Books Resources:

[We Need Diverse Books](#) is a non-profit and a grassroots organization that promotes literature which reflects and honors the lives of all young people. You'll find many sources for diverse books.

Asian-American owned [Lee and Low Books](#) is a major multicultural children's book publisher with many titles to explore.

[Social Justice Books](#) has an extensive list of multicultural and social justice books for children, young adults, and educators.

Social Justice Books also has a great [guide for selecting anti-bias books](#).



In the Community

Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise

An MNFF Selects Series monthly movie screening. Thursday, Oct. 20, 7 p.m., Town Hall Theater. Advance tickets, \$14; Tickets night of show \$16.

The Rokeby Museum

The museum, located right off Route 7 in Ferrisburgh, is open until October 23rd. It is designated as a National Historic Landmark; the main house served as a safe house on the Underground Railroad. In addition to the museum's current exhibit "Free and Safe: The Underground Railroad in Vermont" there are hiking trails on over 50 acres of land. Visit this fall while you can!