



The School Library Equity Project

by MICKI UPPENA

Harness the power of inquiry to begin to make your school a more equitable, inclusive, and welcoming place. Think big!



LITERACY CHAMPION: MICKI UPPENA

Micki Uppena is proud to serve as an elementary library media specialist in the Mineral Point Unified School District. She practiced as an elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist for sixteen years teaching grades 4K, K, 2, and 3 before making the library her home. She was recognized by the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce as Lancaster's Educator of the Year in

2014 during her first year in the library. Micki received the Kohls Fellowship Award for teaching excellence and innovation in the State of Wisconsin in 2020. Micki prides herself in taking risks and leading by doing. She views advocacy at all levels as her greatest responsibility. She works diligently to support educators and students. Her greatest joys are building relationships with students through books and connecting students with authors! Micki has presented her views on literacy and leading in the library at SWAL, WILS, WEMTA, WSRA, Summer SPARK, WLA, and NerdCamp Michigan. Micki is also the Past President of the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association.

One to Know: Plan a Book Equity Project

As an elementary library media specialist, I have noticed the strong effect of peer influence. Kids enter the library and observe the books their peers are choosing and may not put as much thought into their own book choice. When conducting book talks, student talk increases both engagement and participation in the discussion. Downside: if children choose to book talk only the most popular series such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, it may inhibit deeper thought about their own likes, dislikes, and their reader identities.

Here's a plan to develop an inquiry project that will expand school community horizons and help your school community work together to design a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming school library (you can also use this action research plan to assess classroom libraries).

What to Do: Framing the Inquiry

What type of research will you be conducting?

- With students (classroom-based inquiry)
- With colleagues (e.g., cross grade level team)

What belief, passion, or big question might drive this project?

Examples:

- Is our classroom library both current and culturally responsive?
- How might we organize the book selection process that promotes both student choice and reader identities?

Guiding Questions:

1. Are students who visit the library on their own more likely to be more adventurous in text selection vs. than when they are with peers? When they are on their own, do they take more risks? Are they pushed outside their comfort zone?
2. How can we frontload the selection process to support both goals?
3. Who will come in and choose the books: as a class or individually?
4. What is needed for this inquiry? List items or resources that will likely impact your/your students' learning. Include a rationale and an approximate cost for each item.

Item/Resource	Rationale	Approximate Cost
Books	Need several interests, genre, subject matter, text complexity	\$1000

Equity Project Plan

1. What is your wish for with this process? Why are you engaging in this project?

Making sure that students discover their own reading identities and develop the agency to choose the books that match their personal interests and will be most enjoyable to read.

2. What are your expected outcomes? How will you know the study is successful?

Kids are reading more widely, are taking more risks as readers, and have started to develop a reading identity.

3. What obstacles do you anticipate you may encounter during this process?

- Class sizes and vocal students may influence other readers, swaying them to choose what the "cool" kids are picking rather than books of their own choosing.
- Limited time to help each student find a text that is the best fit for him or her.
- Scheduling and physical space may also create constraints.

4. Develop a plan to launch your inquiry project.

- Think about the **data you will collect as feedback** around your sub-questions/topics. Consider how the steps in your plan will naturally lead to data creation and collection.
- Develop an **anticipated plan**, including a timeline and designated roles for carrying out this inquiry process. (One step should be devoted to analyzing your data and drawing conclusions together.)
- Here are suggested actions to support your school library equity project. Staying organized and planful will help all involved; enjoy a meaningful learning journey.
 - Conduct book talks with kids before they make selections.
 - Facilitate a reader identity reflection activity.
 - Promote online discussions with book trailers to promote background knowledge.
 - Design book presentations with limited choice, more balance, and attractive displays.
 - Step back and take pictures, document student conversations while they are selecting books.
 - Follow up with another student survey and interviews. Organize/analyze data.

More to Know: Data Suggestions

What kind of data might you collect to support your inquiry project?

- **Field Notes** Written observations that document action from the classroom
- **Student Work and Artifacts** What kids produce in the classroom, including the context
- **Interviews** Captured conversations with individual students about their perspective of school (can also interview family members, administrators, colleagues, staff)
- **Focus Groups** Collecting information from whole group or small group student discussion
- **Images** Taking pictures to monitor progress over time, or to prompt interviews or focus groups
- **Video and Audio Recordings** Capture entire segments of action in the classroom; provides teachers with an opportunity to view/hear experience at a later time
- **Reflective Journals or Blogs** Documenting what is happening in the classroom during the day; can incorporate a variety of other data (images, field notes) in one space.
- **Surveys** A space for students to share their thoughts and opinions about a teaching approach
- **Quantitative Measures of Student Achievement** Test scores, interim assessments
- **Feedback from Professional Learning Community** For example, common writing assessment protocol and analysis with team
- **Literature** Books written by practitioners, professional journal articles, peer reviewed studies/research

References

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