

THE LEARNING LENS

Perspectives That Shape Practice

MPACTFUL READ • PERSPECTIVE NO. 02

Learner Luggage Series

Identity & Positionality: A Curated Collection

Scholarship on identity, positionality, reflexivity, and belonging, alongside diverse literature that lets characters define themselves on their own terms.

The goal is not simply to read about different identities.

It is to practice seeing people as more complex than the categories used to describe them.

SECTION 1

Professional Scholarship

Research on identity, positionality, reflexivity, and belonging, anchoring the Research LENS of this Perspective.

DiCerbo, P. A., & Baker, L. L. (2021). Teacher positioning in rural spaces: The role of autobiography in culturally sustaining pedagogy. *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*, 11(2), 95–111.

<https://doi.org/10.3776/tpre.2021.v11n2p95-111>

A cultural autobiography study of 40 rural educators of English learners, examining how their own histories shaped the way they positioned themselves toward students.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, 36(7), 388–400.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309471>

The foundational framework for researcher and educator positionality and reflexivity referenced throughout this Perspective.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3), 159–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675>

Introduces culturally relevant pedagogy, the foundation for recognizing and affirming the identities learners bring into the classroom.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

A comprehensive account of how culturally responsive teaching affirms identity as part of instruction, not separate from it.

Allen, K.-A., & Boyle, C. (2022). School belonging and student engagement: The critical overlaps, similarities, and implications for student outcomes. In A. L. Reschly & S. L. Christenson (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*. Springer, Cham.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07853-8_7

Connects belonging directly to engagement, motivation, persistence, and achievement.

SECTION 2

Diverse Literature

Books where characters define themselves on their own terms, rather than being defined by the categories others assign them.

Eyes That Kiss in the Corners Joanna Ho, illus. Dung Ho (HarperCollins, 2021, ages 4–8)

A young Asian girl moves from noticing her eyes look different to recognizing them as a thread connecting her to her mother, grandmother, and sister.

I Am Enough Grace Byers, illus. Keturah A. Bobo (Balzer + Bray, 2018, ages 4–8)

A lyrical affirmation of self-worth and belonging, written by an author who has spoken about being bullied as a biracial child.

The Skin I'm In Sharon G. Flake (Hyperion, 1998, grades 6–9)

Seventh-grader Maleeka Madison confronts colorism and self-doubt with the help of a teacher who has her own visible difference to navigate. Coretta Scott King / John Steptoe Award winner.

American Born Chinese Gene Luen Yang (First Second, 2006, grades 7+)

Three interwoven stories, a Chinese American student, the Monkey King, and a caricatured cousin, converge around questions of belonging and self-definition. First graphic novel to be a National Book Award finalist.

The Poet X Elizabeth Acevedo (HarperTeen, 2018, ages 12+)

Dominican American teenager Xiomara Batista claims her own voice through poetry against her mother's expectations. National Book Award and Michael L. Printz Award winner.

*Thanks for reading The Learning LENS. The way we see changes the way we serve.
Because perspective shapes practice.*

Dr. Shana Middleton

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The Learning LENS: Perspectives That Shape Practice

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