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Are Davis County School District Students Represented in Their Schools’ Literary Choices?

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Introduction

Feeling represented in high school can have an effect on academic performance. Does the literature taught in high schools represent the students who are reading them? By analyzing the supplemental book list (DCABL) approved by Davis County High School and coding the literary works into categories based on ethnicity and gender, these questions were answered:

- Does literature taught in high schools represent the students who are reading it in terms of ethnicity and gender?
- Does literature include selections written by authors from countries other than the USA or selections with a variety of racially diverse protagonists?
- Does the ratio of male to female authors/protagonists correlate with the ratio of male to female students?

Methods

The DCABL includes novels, novellas, plays and memoirs. These works can be taught in Davis County’s nine high schools. To study this data, I:

- Coded works based on author ethnicity, gender and the protagonists’ ethnicity and gender.
- Calculated the percentage of prevalence of both ethnicity and gender in the reading list.
- Calculated the percentages of each school’s demographics and then all together as a group.
- Compared the percentages.

Comparison of Racial Demographics Represented

Results & Recommendations

The results showed representation except for:

- 1 Chicana (Hispanic) Protagonist for every 214 students (1:24). White ratio is 1:92.
- 1:257 for Chicana Authors
- 1:234 for Two or More Race Authors
- 1:205 for Female Authors, Male ratio is 1:61
- 1:211 for Female Protagonists

Results support my recommendation that schools and teachers should consider literature that is more inclusive.

Gender Ratios in All Categories

Though this graph looks skewed, it actually shows that the literature being taught in Davis County is relatively accurate to the student population.

Study conducted in English 3470, in fall 2017, with thanks to Sari Sparks, Dr. Joyce Kinkead and my classmates.