

Janine M. Schall, University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, TX

## **Production Editors**

Rebecca K. Ballenger and Richard Clift, Worlds of Words

## **Introduction: Exploring the Diversity that Surrounds Us**

When we think of helping students create intercultural connections exploring cultures from around the world often comes to mind. Yet, we also need to facilitate connections with cultures closer to home that are different from our own. In this issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* we share seven vignettes showing students using literature to explore diversity in our communities.

In the first vignette, Judi Moreillon describes her experience as a librarian facilitating explorations of race and racism through online literature discussions of Jacqueline Woodson novels. Next, Susanna Steeg shares how her fourth graders worked to understand and respect physical difference. In the third vignette I discuss three engagements that helped first through third graders explore their own families and cultures. Finally, Wenyun Lin shares how Taiwanese third graders respond to a story with Chinese characters written by a cultural outsider.

In the second part of this issue, three authors describe different ways that one preschool is promoting respect towards and understanding of home cultures and languages within their school community. Lead Teacher Sabina Mosso-Taylor shares the underlying principles of the school and ways that home cultures are supported. Classroom teacher Tammy Spann Frierson describes a classroom engagement that helped the young girls in her classroom confront stereotypical images of what it means to be beautiful. Finally, parent volunteer Julia López-Robertson describes how she uses literature to help her son and his classmates celebrate the Spanish language and Latino heritage.

As you read these vignettes, think about how you connect children and adolescents with literature in ways that promote intercultural understandings. Consider sharing your innovative practices by [submitting a vignette to \*WOW Stories\*](#). We are interested in descriptions of interactions with literature in classrooms and libraries at preschool through secondary levels.

See our call for manuscripts and author guidelines for more information.

Janine M. Schall

Editor, *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*