



Diversity in NYC Elementary School Curriculum: Data Snapshot

In one of the most diverse cities in the world, the curriculum that students are taught should be as diverse as they are. Research shows that when students see themselves and their experiences reflected in their curriculum, they are more likely to achieve at higher levels, be academically engaged, and motivated.

However, many New York City schools are not providing students with a diverse curriculum. The NYC Coalition for Educational Justice conducted an analysis of racial/ethnic diversity in two elementary school English Language Arts (ELA) curricula that are commonly used in NYC public schools – [Teachers College Reading and Writing Project curriculum](#) (promoted by the previous administration and widely used) and the [Pearson ReadyGen K-6 curriculum](#) ([recommended](#) for schools by the NYC DOE) – as well as in the Scholastic [Pre-K](#) and [K-6 booklist](#), which is widely used to stock classroom libraries, school libraries, and book fairs. We looked at the authors of the stories and books in these curricula, as well as the characters on the covers, and documented their racial/ethnic identity.¹ These curricula represent just a slice of the materials that NYC elementary schools use, but a meaningful one. The results of that analysis are below.

Story Authors

	NYC Students	Scholastic Elementary Booklist	Teachers College Reading & Writing	Pearson ReadyGen
White	15%	85%	94%	83%
Black	26%	4%	4%	6%
Latinx	41%	2%	0	5%
Asian	16%	2%	1%	7%

It is obvious from this chart that too many of the books NYC K-5 students are reading do not reflect their diversity. The fourth grade curriculum is especially extreme:

- In the ReadyGen 4th grade curriculum, there are 10 White authors and 1 Black author
- In the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) 4th grade curriculum, there are 11 White authors and no authors of color

While TCRWP and ReadyGen don't have Pre-K curricula, the Pre-K texts from the Core Knowledge curriculum [recommended by the DOE](#) are also severely lacking in diversity:

- Out of 10 stories in the recommended *Classic Tales* text, 8 are of European origin, 1 Cherokee origin and 1 African origin
- There are no Black or Latinx authors in the Scholastic Pre-K booklist

Story Cover Characters

	NYC Students	Scholastic Elementary Booklist	Teachers College Reading & Writing	Pearson ReadyGen
White	15%	59%	73%	46%
Black	26%	26%	22%	21%
Latinx	41%	4%	2%	12%
Asian	16%	4%	2%	9%

¹ We counted only human characters for the analysis. There were only two cover characters with ambiguous racial/ethnic identity, both on the Scholastic elementary booklist.

² Five authors are of an indeterminate racial/ethnic identity and are therefore not included.

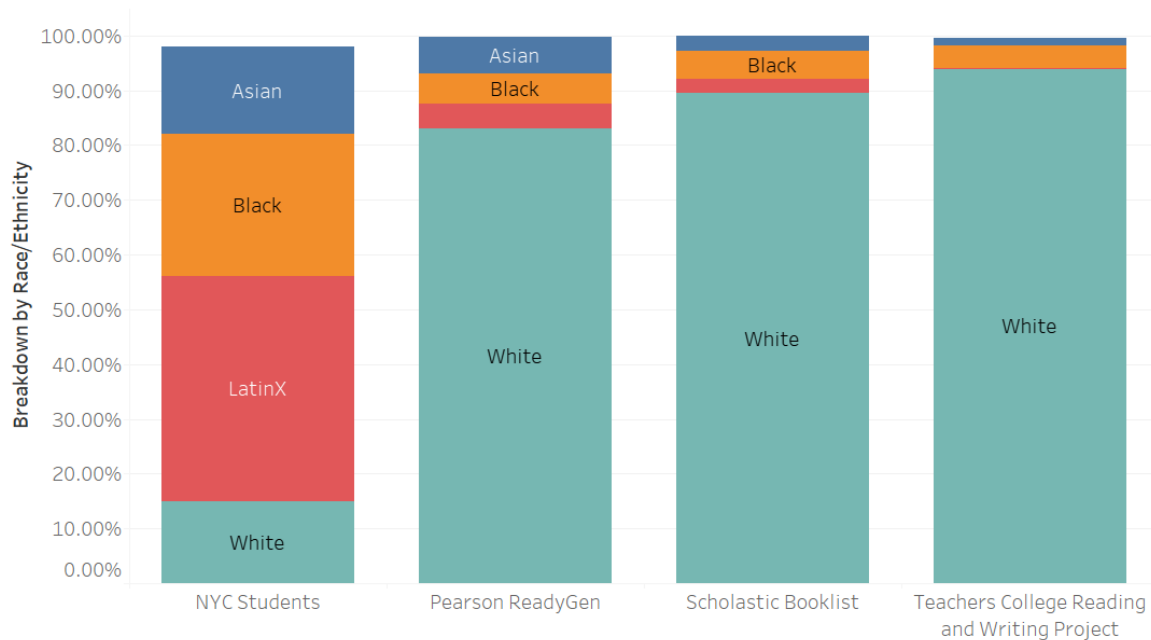
While images on the cover of the books – often depicting the main character of the story – include more Black characters, there are still extremely few Latinx and Asian characters.

This lack of representation extends to other identities as well. Of the 123 books in the Pearson ReadyGen curriculum, only one depicted indigenous Americans; none of the Teachers College or Scholastic books did. Of the nearly 200 books in the TCWRP and Pearson ReadyGen curriculum, and the Scholastic elementary booklist, only one cover depicted a differently abled person. Of the 42 books on the Scholastic elementary booklist, only 3 were written by women of color authors. On Scholastic's [middle school booklist](#), there are no books written by women of color.

Even the characters of color in these books are mostly written by White authors:

- 8 out of 10 characters of color in the ReadyGen curriculum were written by White authors
- 8 of 11 characters of color in the TCWRP curriculum were written by White authors
- All the characters of color in the Pre-K Scholastic booklist are written by White authors

NYC Students and Story Authors by Race/Ethnicity



Among the authors of the curriculum itself (apart from the stories within it):

- 4 out of 5 of the [Pearson ReadyGen curriculum authors](#) were white; 1 was Latina
- 88% of the [TCRWP curriculum authors](#) were White, 3% Black, 5% Latinx and 3% Asian

This analysis gives a snapshot of the lack of diversity in NYC curriculum. While White students are immersed in positive and varied depictions of children, adults and families that look like them throughout their elementary school learning, students of color are denied this same experience. This is extremely damaging to students' academic and social development. CEJ calls on the NYC Department of Education to act immediately to ensure that all NYC students see themselves reflected and respected in their curriculum – in every class, every grade, every day.

For more information, contact ncapers@nyccej.org or 347.610.2754