

Race, Equity and Books: How reading can be an entry point for essential conversations

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Shannon McNeice



Tim Salem, Principal
Janine Johnson, Library Media Specialist
Tom Broderick, Gr. 8 Social Studies Teacher
Scotts Ridge Middle School, Ridgefield, CT

PRESENTATION GOALS

- Share examples of our bottom-up approach (more than a one month celebration!)
- Provide equity resources for administrators and teachers
- Provide K-12 recommended book list

Prairie Lotus author Linda Sue Park: “Who else was there?”



BOOKMADNESSES



#BookMadness 2020



As we shifted to all remote learning, participation tripled. We felt proud of our students and excited to see their choices.

Finalists were [#OwnVoices](#) authors





SRMS Library
@SRMSLLC



#srmstc Ss are overcoming adversity in the LAST DANCE of #BookMadness! These #books are about diverse characters written by diverse authors. Vote by end of today on our website!! #WENEEDDIVERSEBOOKS #kidlit #YALit #srmstreads @RidgefieldPS @angiecthomas @JasonReynolds83



11:17 AM · Apr 8, 2020 · Twitter Web App



SRMS Library
@SRMSLLC



The 2020 #BookMadness winner is #TheHateUGive! #books of resistance and diversity offer Ss an important window into different experiences. Clearly #srmstc Ss WANT to read about them. #WENEEDDIVERSEBOOKS #kidlit #YALit #srmstreads @RidgefieldPS @angiecthomas



2:58 PM · Apr 13, 2020 · Twitter Web App

Teachers are confident they are supported, even when

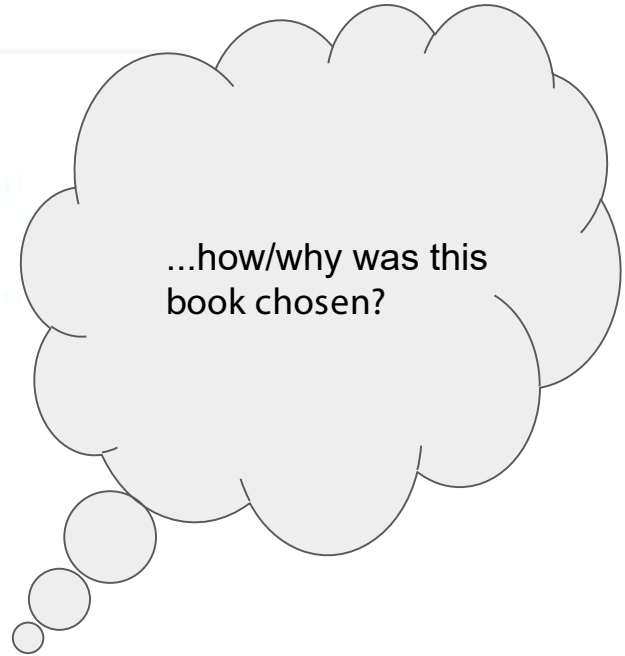
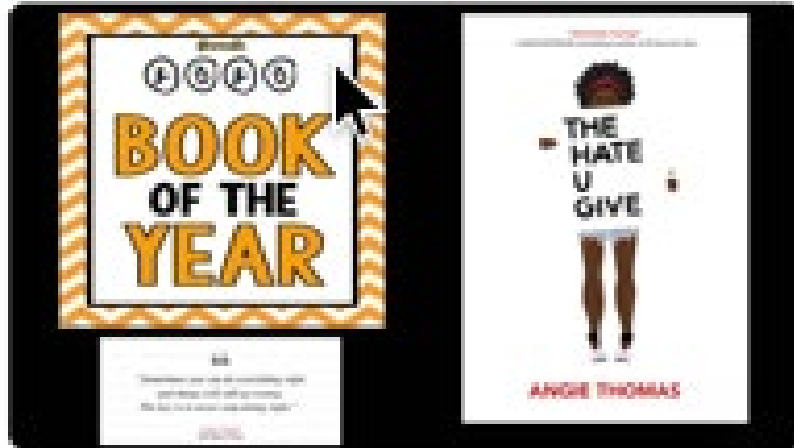


Tweet



SPMS Library
@SPMSLLC

The 2020 #BookMadness winner is #TheHateUGive! #books of resistance and diversity offer Ss an important window into different experiences. Clearly #smsct Ss WANT to read about them. #WENEEDDIVERSEBOOKS #kidlit #YA! #smsctreads @RidgefieldPS @angiecthomas



Tweet your reply



CT Association of School Librarians

COLLABORATING TO ADVANCE STUDENT LEARNING

CASL is a tremendous resource!



[Ridgefield
podcast:
Middle school
LLC](#)

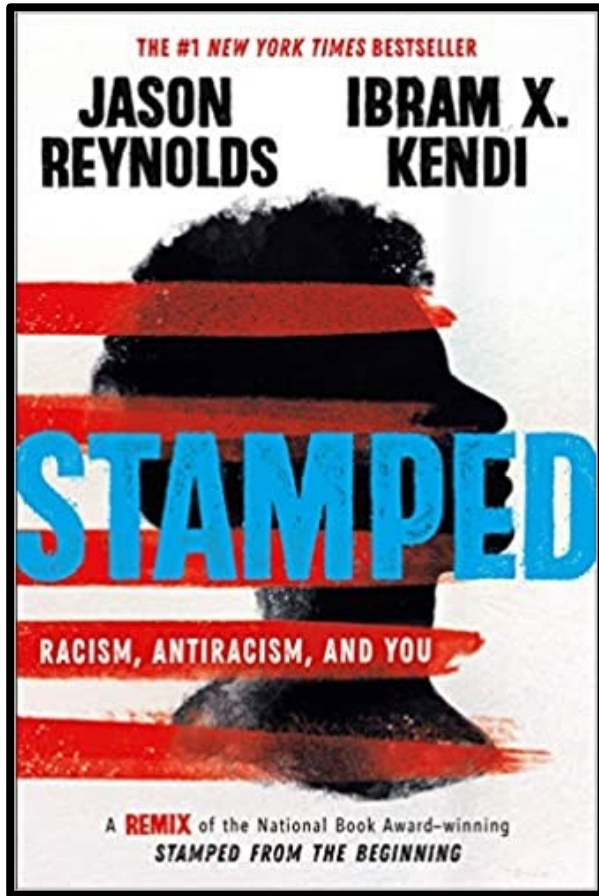
Phi Delta
Kappan

*Why school librarians matter:
What years of research tell us*

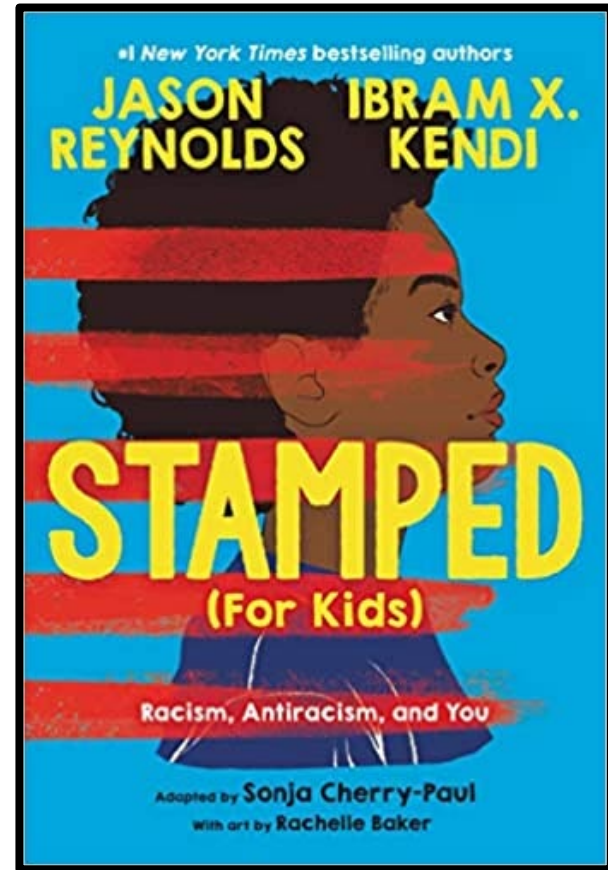
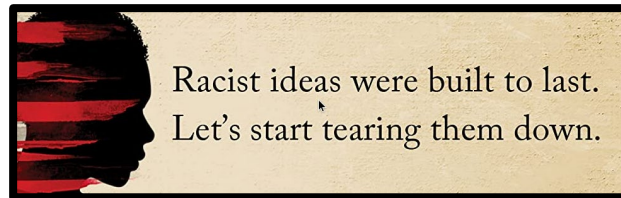
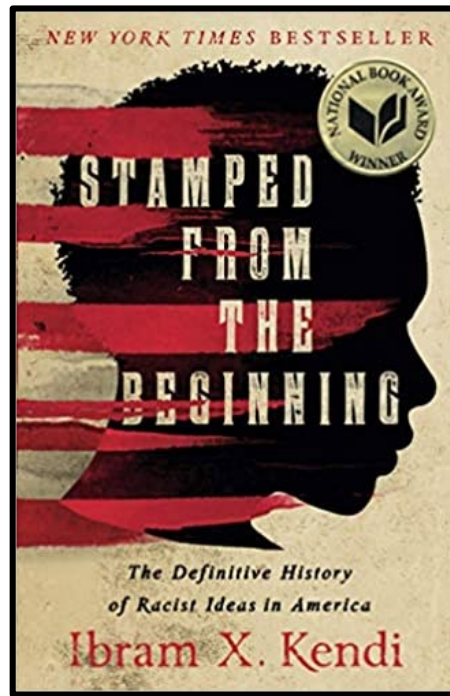
“Providing equitable and adequate school library services and instruction has become an issue of social justice, especially when we see that schools in the poorest and most racially diverse communities have the least access to library services” (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011).

In its 2018 National School Library [Standards](#) for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries, the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) recognizes and defines 5 roles of school librarians that are crucial to the development and significance of effective school library programs:

Teacher, Leader, Instructional Partner, Information Specialist, Program Administrator



YA
(available now)



Chapter Book
(due out 5/21/21)



14d

Stamped: Discussion Board

Use the prompts to help get your thoughts flowing before book club. This is not mandatory, just for those who wish to use it.

The first chapter defines segregationists, assimilationists, and antiracists. Were you familiar with these terms before you read *Stamped*? Did your understanding of these words change by the end?

Honestly, my mom talks all the time about how important it was to her

As seen with movies like *Tarzan*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Rocky*, pop culture and media have played a large role in reinforcing racist ideas, whether their stories are overtly racist or are a bit sneakier in their propagation of racist ideas. What current movies, TV shows, and stories promote racist ideas, and how?

Abraham Lincoln, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington are remembered as defenders of Black liberation. How did these figures propel antiracist thought and enforce racist ideas? Can a person have racist, segregationist, and antiracist ideas all at once? How?

Research interviews with Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. How do they speak to the book? Why is it such an important work to them?

In listening to the Kojo Nnamdi podcast

Jason Reynolds talks about the importance of giving kids history and context. He answered questions from kids who are scared

What surprised you in this book? What angered you or made you sad? What other emotions did you experience while reading?

I didn't know who Angela Davis was. Though I'd heard of Malcolm X before, what I'd heard was totally one-sided. Though I'm remembering a fiction book where Black Panthers I think were in it



To play, click on the book covers to read, listen and explore online
You can scan the QR code to open up **BOOKFLIX** too.



Exploring Diversity, Inclusion & Racism @srmsllc

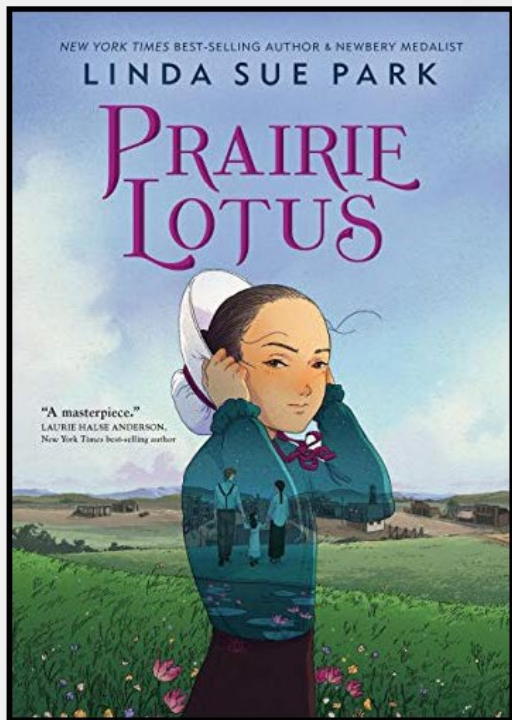


I Can Do This! Stories of Resilience & Redemption @srmsllc



The Struggle Is Real! (I Can Do This Pt. 2) @srmsllc

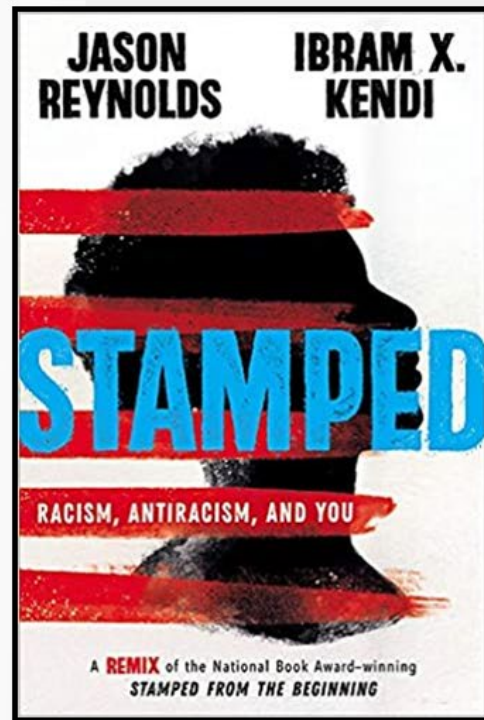




GLOBAL

READ ALOUD

One Book
TO CONNECT THE
World



@srmsllc

For more about these initiatives follow us [@SRMSLLC](https://www.instagram.com/srmsllc)



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Global Read Aloud
Reading About Race

Anti-racism begins with action @SRMS!

In the context of the disturbing divisiveness that is occurring in the world today and what we can do, however small, to make a difference, Scotts Ridge Middle School is participating in [Global Read Aloud](#), a 10-year global reading initiative created by teacher/author/speaker [Pernille Ripp](#) that began October 5th. Traditionally, teachers read aloud from chosen books (below) [over a six week period](#) and connect with other classrooms worldwide however they'd like.

[Why are we doing this?](#) Students need to see how we can come together as a community and the importance of our reading lives. Students will learn from the YA and middle grade books chosen for this year's event, centering on the history of marginalized communities, especially Asian and African Americans. Anti-racist initiatives begin with action. This is one small step.

GLOBAL READ ALOUD
One Book to Connect the World

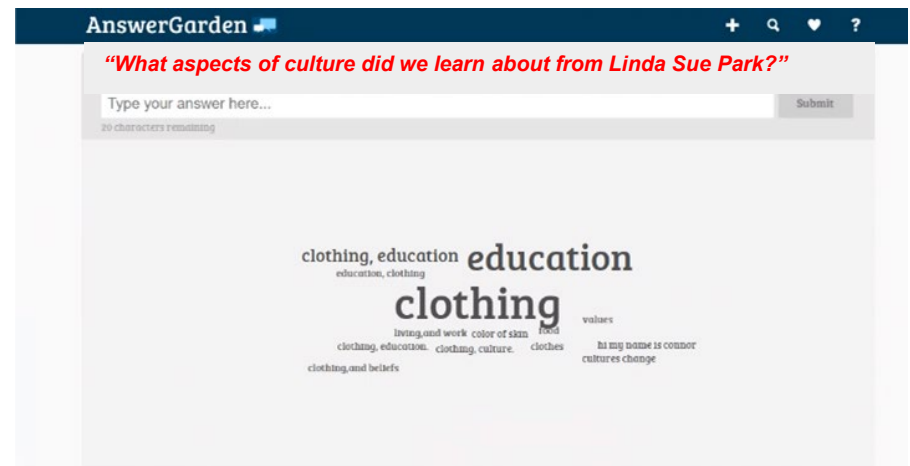
INDA SUE PARK
PRAIRIE LOTUS

JACOB REYNOLDS IRVAN KENI
STAMPED
RACISM, ANTIRACISM, AND YOU

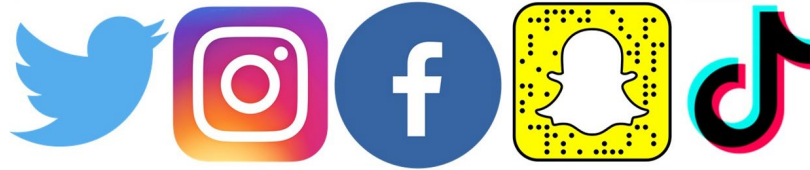
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SRMS 6th/7th graders are reading "Prairie Lotus" and SRMS 8th graders are reading "Stamped: Racism, Antiracism & You"

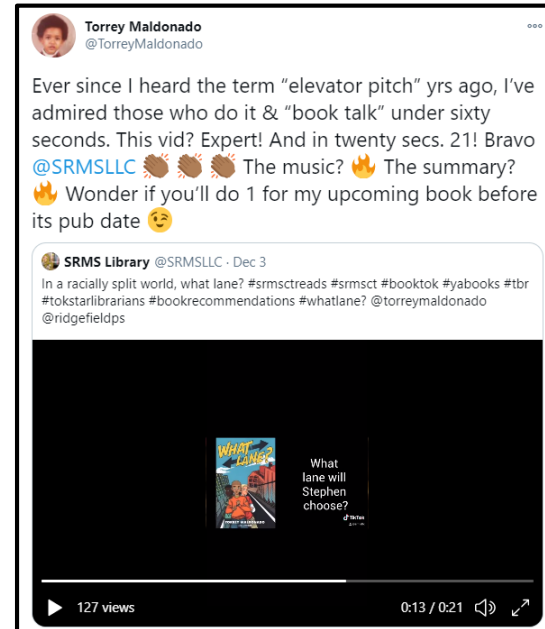
Linda Sue Park, author of “Prairie Lotus”, discussing the setting and asking our students, “Who was there?”



For more about these initiatives follow us [@SRMSLLC](https://www.instagram.com/SRMSLLC)



bit.ly/srms-llc





- “Books hated me; I wrote my way out”
- “Hip Hop led me to writing”
- “Be An Everyday Ally”
- “*In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends*” (MLK)
- #OwnVoices
- Students want the space to discuss this
- Racism isn't going anywhere



RPS News

Ridgefield Public Schools Newsletter | Ridgefield, CT | February 19, 2021

Black History Month at ERMS and SRMS

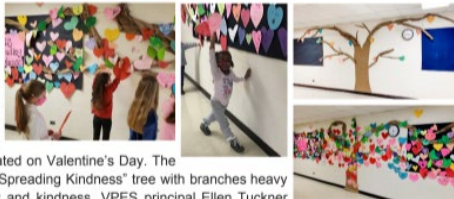
East Ridge Middle School sixth-grade social studies teacher Maureen Tyra created a Hallway of Fame in the sixth-grade corridor to commemorate inspirational African Americans (photo far right). Photos and brief biographies of well-known Black Americans such as Cicely Tyson (near right) but also lesser-known historical figures, including the jockey Willie Simms and the opera singer Marian Anderson, line the lockers. For most of the entries, students recorded short videos accessible by QR codes. Ms. Tyra is also hosting a series of weekly after-school discussions for all grade levels about Black history in the United States. The conversations are focusing on important moments in history, The Civil Rights Movement, and contributions of African Americans to all parts of our culture.



Please see page 2 of *RPS News* for a report on Black History Month at Scotts Ridge including their all-school read-aloud of the novel *What Lane?* by Torrey Maldonado.

Veterans Park Spreads Kindness

A tree grows at Veterans Park Elementary. The photo top right shows the bare tree installed at the end of January. Throughout February, the VPES community added heart-shaped leaves of love with messages of hope and inspiration. The project culminated on Valentine's Day. The photo bottom right shows the "Spreading Kindness" tree with branches heavy with heartfelt messages of joy and kindness. VPES principal Ellen Tuckner says this project is one way the school has kept spirits high and reinforced their motto: "Work Hard, Be Kind."



Calendar

February 22
BOE Vote on 2021-22 Budget
[Full RPS Calendar](#)

February 26
Early Dismissal/Asynchronous
Professional Development
[Other Asynchronous Days](#)

June 14
Tentative Last Day of School
[Emergency Closing Calendar](#)

Black History Month (Cont.)



Scotts Ridge Middle School Library Media Specialist Janine Johnson prepared [this brief report](#) of the wide variety of activities at SRMS around Black History Month. She leads her report with a quote from [CELEBRATING BLACK AMERICA](#): "It is our responsibility to allow all students, not just Black students, the opportunity to continuously learn about Black history more than what is allotted to Black History Month, slavery, and the civil rights movement in textbooks." RPS vigorously agrees and aims to teach a robust multicultural curriculum all year. Ms. Johnson and SRMS Principal Tim Salem will be working with The Connecticut Association of Public Schools to offer a webinar related to Ms. Johnson's work in sharing titles with students and staff around the themes of equity and social justice.

Spot Scotty?



Scotland Elementary PTA set up a photo scavenger hunt around Ridgefield—all clues leading families to places to spot and photograph the SES Scotty mascot. Click [here](#) to see fun photos from their searches.

Read Aloud!



Elementary schools across the District celebrated World Read Aloud Day with teacher, student, and guest-led read alouds throughout the day. The photo above shows Ridgebury Elementary coming together both at school and at home for a virtual read aloud led by Alison Carmody, Elementary Supervisor.

RHS Letters to Writers

RHS English Teachers Kimberly Benson and Katherine Gabbay report that their freshman classes entered the state's Letters About Literature competition sponsored by UCONN and the CT Writing Project. Each student wrote to an author to explain why their book is meaningful to them. Congratulations to the 15 students in the top 10 percent who will move to the second round including Kate H. who wrote to V.C. Andrews (photo right), Charlotte B., Michael C., Elizabeth C., Lauren F., Steven H., Katherine I., Isabella K., Chloe M., Jane P., Donnelly R., Alexis S., Ava T., Madeline W., and Petru Z. The state's winners will move on to the national competition this spring.



Keep up with Ridgefield Public Schools News on our website [news page](#) and [calendar](#). We would love to hear from you, [contact us](#) with questions and feedback.



Black History Month at SRMS

"It is our responsibility to allow all students, not just Black students, the opportunity to continuously learn about Black history more than what is allotted to Black History Month, slavery, and the civil rights movement in textbooks" (from [CELEBRATING BLACK AMERICA](#), NEWSELA'S *Black Students Matter* Resources for anti-racist teaching and instruction.)

In addition to ongoing historical and contemporary analysis of discrimination such as is bulleted below, Scotts Ridge Middle School librarians, teachers and students are conducting a third Community Read-Aloud centered around racism, injustice, and stereotypes. Teachers, and now students as well, are reading chapters aloud from the book [What Lane?](#) Written by award-winning author and Brooklyn middle school teacher, Torrey Maldonado, *What Lane?* tells the story of a biracial middle schooler who is navigating choices in a racially split world. Maldonado will visit with SRMS students virtually this spring.



Each week new chapters and discussion questions are posted by the school librarians. The books read as a SRMS community this year include:

- [Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You](#) by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X Kendi
- [Prairie Lotus](#) by Linda Sue Park
Sharing the experiences of these characters and [entering into conversations](#) with SRMS students opens their eyes to racial inequality as it has existed historically and for teens today.

Embedding historical and contemporary analysis of discrimination is an ongoing process unreserved for just one month of the year, as in these recent examples:

- Researching, depicting, and explaining the historical and social context of protagonist Starr Carter's struggles in the book [The Hate U Give](#).
- Analysis of the context, similarities, and differences between Amanda Gorman's Inauguration Day poem and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.
- Virtual author visits linked to cultural units, such as *Prairie Lotus* author Linda Sue Park's examination of historical discrimination and ["Who else was there?"](#)
- The ["danger of a single story"](#) relative to the European colonization of Africa, connections to the world today and the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Traditionally marginalized voices are systemically woven into each quarter in 8th grade American history, included as part of daily activities, primary sources, and inquiry projects.

Equity Resources For Teachers And Administrators



Recommended Equity Titles, Book Lists & Book Resources

Contact Information

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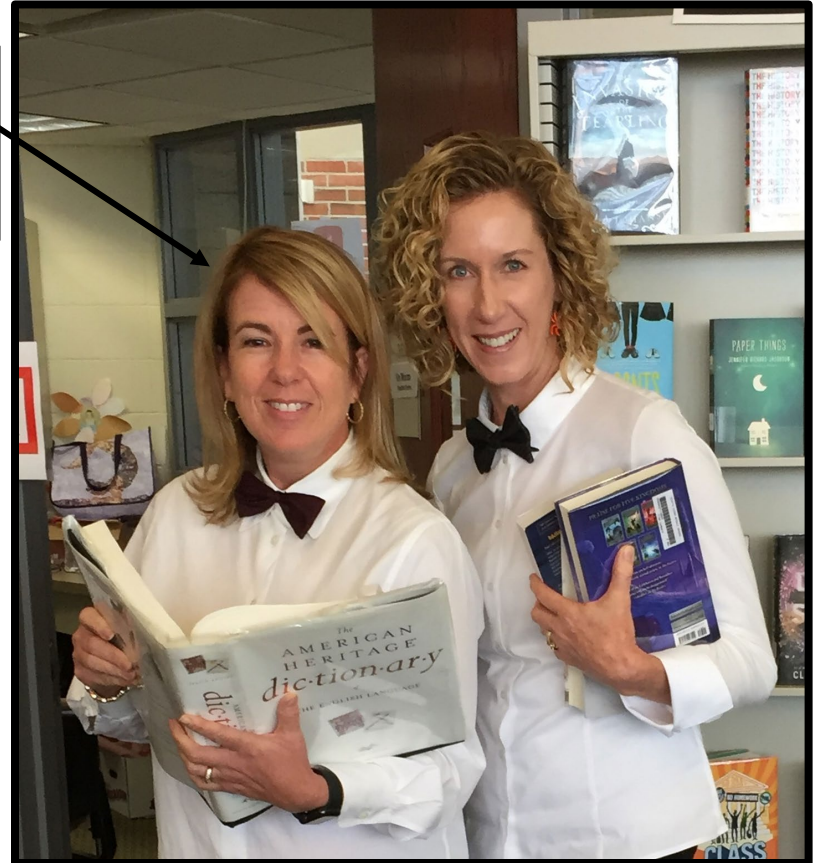
That's Emily
Shiller, library
assistant
extraordinaire!!

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Social media:
[@SRMSLLC](https://www.instagram.com/SRMSLLC)



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