

*“A Children’s Book Collection: To reach the children I will teach”*

Alison Keller

Before I could read or even pick up a book, my family started this collection on my behalf. Before I began school, I was included in making of this collection, picking out the ones with the brightest covers. It started as a collection of books for me, to help me learn to read, to instill a love of reading. Now, as my collection grows, I hope it will help other children, my future students, learn to read and instill a love of reading in them.

The books that were in my collection early were mostly favorite authors, books that were gifts, and other popular children’s books. In third grade, my favorite teacher read my class the BFG. I then went out and rapidly bought Roald Dahl books one after another until I had read all that I could get my hands on. I loved books, pawing through them, seeing them lining my shelves. I always kept my few favorite picture books in my room, even as I entered high school. Throughout the year I would rotate them from shelf to attic box and back again.

Since I decided to become a teacher, having a beautiful and exciting collection of books for myself and the students in my future classes has been a priority. I allocate a part of each paycheck to put towards buying books for this growing collection. It is not just my interests I have in mind now, but also the possible interests of hundreds of children. Now, when I buy books it is creating a diverse library, in subject matter, reading level, cultures, and experiences that is a priority when I choose I keep a running wish list, and try to keep up on new books that come out. It is important to me to include books in my library that act as cultural “windows” and “mirrors” for readers. They should be able to find themselves in my collection, as well as learn about others. For this reason, I am making a continued effort to include books by and about people from different ethnicities, abilities and orientations. I also want meaningful, high quality literature that I can use as part of a future curriculum, books that teach. I have bought several biographies, historical fiction, and sports. Issues such as the holocaust and civil rights, are taught most meaningfully by the voices that experienced it, and literature is one way to provide those voices. One of my interests is art and I also try to have a variety of art related children’s books.

Pawing through my collection now, showing it off to friends or family, I here myself saying, "This is such a great book," "Oh, my, I love this one," etc. again and again. I am proud of the collection I have created, and am happy to say that it is growing even as we speak (Several poetry books from a diverse group of authors, *And Tango Makes Three*, a highly contested picture book, and a group of books based in the Caribbean are on their way from B&N). Winning this competition would be such an honor, and with a little extra funding, an opportunity for me to cross some more off the wish list.