

Welcoming Library: Cart Collection: Grant Material

Dear Mighty Grant Writer,

We have done my best to anticipate items that will be useful in preparing a grant proposal to acquire a **Welcoming Library: Cart Collection**. Every grant application, however, is different and we welcome the opportunity to provide you with additional information. Please reach out to [Director of Development Melia Coletta](#) if you need anything additional.

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I'M YOUR NEIGHBOR BOOKS

I'm Your Neighbor Books (IYNB) is committed to building communities where immigrants are welcomed and where they and their new generations truly belong.

IYNB's programs use the high-impact stories embedded in the illustrations and narratives of children's books to represent, explore, and honor the immigrant experience.

By providing curated book collections and discussion materials to schools, libraries, and community groups,

- IYNB facilitates sharing and discussing books about Immigrant and New Generation families with *children and adults in the long-term community*. These stories and conversations build both cultural competency and empathy—two factors key to developing **welcoming** behaviors.
- IYNB facilitates sharing and discussing these books with *children and adults in the Immigrant and New Generation community* to build **belonging**. For new arrivals, seeing representations of their former home and community can reduce the trauma and isolation of resettlement. As time passes, books can help new generations negotiate personal and cultural identities in a sometimes unwelcoming U.S. environment.

I'M YOUR NEIGHBOR BOOKS: OUR STORY & PROJECTS

Ten years ago, it was rare to find children's books representing the modern refugee, immigrant, or first-to-third generation experience. Immigrant children's literature (and the classroom lessons built around this literature) almost exclusively featured White European historical migration through Ellis Island.

With our schools, neighborhoods, and towns diversifying with immigrants from across the globe and their new generations, it was long past time to diversify representation in books.

I'm Your Neighbor Books (IYNB), a group of authors, educators, and immigrant leaders in a refugee resettlement city, started tracking the books representing modern, non-European Immigrant and New Generation communities that started to slowly emerge in 2012.

Galvanized by the 2017 Muslim Ban to combat anti-immigrant rhetoric, IYNB envisioned the [Welcoming Library: Traveling Collection \(WL:TC\)](#) as a counter-narrative. To introduce the stories of immigrant families, the WL:TC tours 30 picture books as a shared resource. To facilitate conversations about immigration, each book in the WL:TC includes a set of discussion questions created by IYNB and immigrant community educators and affixed to the book's endpapers. Packed in a bright red crate, the books are accompanied by a pop-up book display with multilingual signage.

This project was [officially commended by the American Association of School Librarians](#) in 2020 for creating a “building a stronger culture of welcoming and belonging” in schools.

The adoption of the WL:TC across the country led to IYNB formally organizing as a nonprofit in 2019.

Exposure to the power of the WL:TC has led schools and libraries to ask IYNB for help in building permanent Immigrant and New Generation children's book collections.

In 2021, IYNB started offering the [Welcoming Library: Stack Collection](#). It adds to pre-existing library collections with IYNB book recommendations, discussion questions, book processing materials, and signage to create a featured section that centers the immigration conversation.

“It was a joy to see our students' eyes light up as they saw the stories of themselves and their classmates reflected in the pages of these books. Having a prominent and permanent ‘Welcoming Library’ [Stack Collection] in our library sends a message of welcoming and belonging for our students and families. It inspires curiosity in adults and children alike. Our teachers are reading these books to their students and kids are bringing these home to read with their families.”

—**Jennifer Stanbro, Maine School Librarian of the Year**

In 2023, IYNB started offering the [Welcoming Library: Cart Collection](#). It is designed to move books between classrooms on a custom library cart. Sixty

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grade-level picture books, graphic novels, and novels deepen our understanding of the Immigrant and New Generation experience.

In addition to the Welcoming Library projects, IYNB promotes immigrant welcoming and belonging with

- [Book Database](#) that centers Immigrant and New Generation identities and the cross-cultural themes that unite us all.
- [Curriculum](#) that uses acclaimed titles to explore conversations about race, culture, and [Engagement Tool: I'm Your Neighbor Books Created](#) identity.
- [New Arrival Book Project](#) that gives books to refugee children to build belonging and reduce trauma.
- [Rapid Response Book Boxes](#) that provide supportive narratives when immigrant communities are under duress.
- [StoryWalk](#)© that brings welcoming and belonging conversations into public settings.
- [Book Awards](#) that celebrate the books that best celebrate the immigrant experience.
- [Giveaways](#) that lift and gift crucial community-building book titles.
- [Beautiful Blackbird Children's Festival](#) that holds book giveaways and events in Maine to honor the children's books and creators of the African Diaspora.

WELCOMING LIBRARY: CART COLLECTION: IMAGES

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1M8h-ks2dO88okZcf--ByHpMoVZss0Djf?usp=sharing>

WELCOMING LIBRARY: CART COLLECTION: GRANT COPY

With 26 percent of U.S. students being the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves [and/or insert local demographics], [your organization/school] is committed to exploring the Immigrant and New Generation experience through literature.

“Immigration is no longer a single story of European migration through Ellis Island,” says Kirsten Cappy, Executive Director of I’m Your Neighbor Books. “To tell *today’s* immigration story, we must turn to multiracial and multicultural book collections. Those collections will change our perceptions of immigration and ourselves.”

Welcoming Library: Cart Collection: Grant Material

The **Welcoming Library: Cart Collection** was designed by the nonprofit I'm Your Neighbor Books to curate and feature books that represent a community's particular immigrant demographics. Displayed and moved on a custom-made book cart, the project offers 30 grade-level novels and graphic novels featuring stories of resettlement and new generations from 1970 to the present.

The collection also provides 30 all-ages picture books with I'm Your Neighbor Books' acclaimed discussion materials affixed to the books' inside back covers. These picture books, with their companion conversation starters, were given an [official commendation by the American Association of School Librarians](#) for "building a stronger culture of welcoming and belonging" in schools and broader communities.

[Consider inserting a discussion question from the section below.]

All 60 books and conversation starters are housed on a Maine-made wooden book cart. Engraved on one side is the invitation to "Read to Welcome" and on the other side, "Read to Belong." The end panels of the cart are engraved with the phrase, "I'm your neighbor" in 10 languages. The three phrases and the nod to multilingualism reinforce the cart's mission to build [student/community] welcoming skills and to instill a crucial sense of belonging for Immigrant and New Generation [students/community members.]

The Welcoming Library: Cart Collection not only offers 60 new books, but also highlights books in our pre-existing collection. As part of our partnership with I'm Your Neighbor Books, they will provide an inventory list to help us identify what books in this cultural genre we already own. With their provided book processing materials, we will be able to integrate our books and build a larger "Welcoming Library."

Some of the books the Welcoming Library: Cart Collection offers are titles I could obtain through my book supplier(s). However, as a nonprofit focused exclusively on Immigrant and New Generation children's literature, I'm Your Neighbor Books has unique data on the identities that the books represent and can curate and provide a book collection for us that best aligns with our demographics. Purchasing a Cart

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Collection also subscribes us to their annotated book list, which allows us to build our collection over time.

No one else in the country is doing this literature-based work that lifts the immigrant story. By collaborating with I'm Your Neighbor Books, we will be able to tell our diverse immigrant community that we honor their journeys and their stories. We look forward, as well, to growing the cultural competency of our long-term community members as they explore these acclaimed books.

SAMPLE WELCOMING LIBRARY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are some examples of the unique discussion questions created by I'm Your Neighbor Books that are affixed to the books' endpapers:

From the Vietnamese American picture book [A Different Pond](#):

The kids at school say that the father's English sounds like a "thick, dirty river." The boy thinks his father's English sounds like "gentle rain." Why do the boy and his fellow students see the father differently?

From the Muslim picture book [In My Mosque](#):

Many Muslim women wear head scarves. They cover themselves for many reasons, including love for their religion, community, family, and themselves. Those scarves go by many names and vary in style by the women's beliefs, where they were raised, and even by what colors they like. Islam is not the only religion or culture where people cover their hair. Do you know someone who wears clothing or jewelry that is a symbol of what they love and respect? Does something you wear tell a story of where you were born or where your ancestors were born?

From the Haitian American picture books [Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings](#):

In the illustrations, we see the bright colors of Haitian clothing, tap tap buses, and houses. There is so much joy and celebration in those colors. We know that there is also much sadness in Haiti's history and Haiti's poverty. What do the bright colors say to you about the strength and resiliency of the Haitian people?

LIST OF ITEMS IN A WELCOMING LIBRARY: CART COLLECTION:

1) Wooden Book Cart designed specifically for I'm Your Neighbor Books to hold both picture books and novels. It can be rolled between classrooms or displayed within a library or community space. One side of the cart invites readers to, "Read to Welcome" and the other side invites them to, "Read to Belong." To celebrate

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multilingualism, each end of the cart shares the phrase, “I’m Your Neighbor” in 10 languages.

Note: The cart arrives flat, but because of its unique design, assembly requires only a screwdriver to insert and tighten two screws.

2) Thirty Core Picture Books with I’m Your Neighbor Books acclaimed discussion questions affixed to the endpapers.

3) Thirty Grade-Level Novels and Graphic Novels that open deeper conversations about immigration, welcoming, and belonging.

Note: All 60 titles will be hand-selected to reflect our demographics. Each book will be labeled (spine label, multilingual cover sticker, and custom bookplate) to highlight and visually unite the collection. Additionally, each book will be covered with library-quality mylar.

4) Inventory Sheet to allow us to see what books we already own in this Immigrant and New Generation genre of books. And, to allow us to unite books from our own collection on the cart or a special shelf, we will receive 100 sets of multilingual stickers and custom bookplates.

5) Biannual Updates will be sent as a spreadsheet on 11/1 and 5/1 each year, listing new titles listed and highlighting recommended books.

6) Shipping at no cost.

COST OF WELCOMING LIBRARY: \$3500

AGES / GRADES/ TARGET AUDIENCE FOR WELCOMING LIBRARY: CART COLLECTION:

IYNB curates the Welcoming Library: Cart Collection by grade level. Knowing how illustrated books communicate regardless of a reader’s English proficiency or age, every Cart Collection includes picture books and graphic novels.

These titles are not just for our multilingual or immigrant students; they are for all students. Every member of the community gains social-emotional health and learning when we explore these stories of resilient families.

TESTIMONIAL FROM SCHOOLS & LIBRARIES

School Librarian Testimonial: Predominant Long-Term Student Body:

"The Welcoming Library is a fantastic addition to our school's library. Due to the economics and geography of my school, many of my students have limited opportunity to engage with our global communities and people. This isolation makes people 'from away' seem different, weird, or scary. As a collection, these books show that while people might have different cultures or experiences from what my students have, we all have the same types of hopes, loves, and joys. This binds us in our shared humanity.

I particularly appreciate the broad scope of the Welcoming Library collection. The beautifully crafted cart shows these books are as special, worthy, and delightful as my students. I predict that many of the books will be checked out by students who just want a good book. A global understanding of the world through a good story will be a delightful added bonus. Many of the books will be used by me or other teachers as starting points for class discussions. I'm Your Neighbor Books has included discussion questions for many of the books. This will make it easier, and far more likely, that teachers will feel confident in their ability to bring connections between books and students. Connections then between our native-born students and immigrant students and community members will be stronger."

—Andrea Sprague, Bangor, Maine Librarian

SEL Framework

"The Welcoming Library collection of books migrates, much like the immigrant children it is in the service of depicting and including. When it arrived at our school, it gave our educators the tools to raise awareness about our immigrant, refugee, and New American families through the lens of children's literature. The collection of books invites students to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This condition, in which children are able to relate to one another, is one of the five core competencies of the SEL Framework. A student at Amanda C. Rowe School said, 'It helps change stereotypes, whatever they are, which makes you feel like you belong.' Another child reported that her father was a refugee and that these books could inspire children who were born here to feel proud of the countries that their parents came from and maybe even write their own books someday. Educators understand that using books where children see themselves as characters creates opportunities for children to feel less alone. Feelings of loneliness affect children's behavior and learning skills, and their ability to build resilience. This library provides a bridge through literature to

establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups while it helps encourage positive self-awareness. The books are engaging, well written, and include illustrations that are pleasing to both the senses and the mind. We love the Welcoming Library in Portland, Maine." —Michelle Amato, Portland Public Schools

Muslim Student Reads Aloud and Fellow Students Cheer

<https://www.welcominglibrary.org/new-arrival-student-reads-aloud-and-fellow-students-cheer>

Comments from Educators & Librarians

"I used the Welcoming Library as part of an immigration/refugee unit in 7th Grade ELA. Great resource!"

"Appreciated the range of titles. One could be as broad or specific as one wanted to be, based on the age group. The provided talking points were very helpful and thoughtful."

"Reading in various classrooms was the best part of the experience for me. I was able to share that students in most every class I visited had family members or close friends who were immigrants. We had some great discussions!"

"We talked at length about the different customs that our families had and how they interrelated with those of other cultures. How, when a person comes into a new community, they bring with them traditions from their heritage. Those are great things to share. We talked about the things that we have benefitted from that were brought here."

"I heard lots of discussion about what immigration is, personal stories, and 'Wow, I never thought of that. . . .' Teachers liked the discussion questions very much."

"The kids loved the variety of books, and so did I!"

"I appreciate the awareness that this collection brought to our school."

"I book-talked the collection to all my classes and it sparked discussions about welcoming people, how to be kind, how to be a good neighbor, how to celebrate differences, etc."

RELATED RESEARCH

What evidence is there that a project like the Welcoming Library can make a difference?

On Welcoming

Reading Immigration-Themed Books Builds Empathy for Refugees

“Over half of refugees are school-aged children. In host communities, children’s attitudes and behaviours are important for the integration of refugee children. This study examines the empathy-attitudes-action model in middle childhood (N = 94, 8 to 11 years old). In both the experimental and control conditions, children were introduced to a (fictional) refugee and told that he or she would be moving to their school. The experimental condition also listened to a storybook about the child’s refugee experience. Empathy, outgroup attitudes, and prosocial behaviour toward the incoming child, and refugees as a group, were measured. Although mediation was not supported, the storybook condition reported more empathy and helping intentions, and attitudes predicted helping intentions but not giving to refugees. Results highlight how host-society children can welcome refugees.”

Source: Taylor, Laura K., and Catherine Glen. 2019. “[From empathy to action: Can enhancing host-society children’s empathy promote positive attitudes and prosocial behaviour toward refugees?](https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2438)” *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 30 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2438>.

Research Shows Comfort in Connecting Across Culture After Reading Across Culture

“Research, led by psychologists Lindsey Cameron in England, Cristina Stefanile in Italy, and Krista Aronson in the United States, has indicated that the inclusion of these cross-group images [in picture books] encourages cross-group play. In a study investigating how kids respond to cross-racial depictions in picture books, Aronson and her colleagues randomly assigned children to two groups. The first group was read books that depicted children from different races playing together and having fun. The second group was read similar books, but with children from only one racial group. After six weeks, they found that children in the first group reported greater comfort and interest in playing across difference than children in the second group. Perhaps even more importantly, the first group reported that these positive attitudes remained three months after the study was completed.”

Source: Aronson, Krista Maywalt, and Anne Sibley O’Brien. “[How Cross-Racial Scenes in Picture Books Build Acceptance](https://www.slj.com/story/how-cross-racial-scenes-in-picture-books-build-acceptance).” *School Library Journal*, Accessed December 20, 2023. <https://www.slj.com/story/how-cross-racial-scenes-in-picture-books-build-acceptance>.

Source: Cameron, Lindsey, Adam Rutland, and Rupert Brown. 2007. “[Promoting children’s positive intergroup attitudes towards stigmatized groups: Extended](#)

[contact and multiple classification skills training](#)” *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 31 (5): 454–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025407081474>.

On Belonging

Building Positive Cultural Identity Builds Psychological Well-Being

In a theoretical model put forward by Esther Usborne and Roxane de la Sablonnière, “a clear and confident understanding of one's cultural identity is important for psychological well-being, as it clarifies one's understanding of personal identity. We propose that a clear cultural identity clarifies one's personal existence, by providing a clear normative template, reducing personal uncertainty, providing an individual with a sense of continuity, and buffering an individual against the fear of death.”

Note: The Welcoming Library tiles provide culturally specific books to help build a “normative template” for cultural identity to support Immigrant and New Generation immigrant family psychological well-being.

Source: Usborne, Esther, and Roxane de la Sablonnière. 2014. “[Understanding My Culture Means Understanding Myself: The Function of Cultural Identity Clarity for Personal Identity Clarity and Personal Psychological Well-Being](#).” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 44 (4): 436–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12061>.

Using Culturally Relevant Materials to Impart Knowledge Motivates Students of Color

While specific research has not been done on how New Arrival and New Generation student performance improves with cultural content included in the classroom, research has been done on how Black children respond to the inclusion of Black cultural material in the classroom. Black children, for instance, are better able to retain and recall plot and character information after reading books featuring other Black children, compared to books featuring White children or animal characters (Smith & Lewis, 1985). Consequently, teachers who use cultural materials to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes are more successful in motivating and empowering their students of color to be literacy learners (Drucker, 2003; Myers, 2014).

Source: Smith, Rita R., and Ronald Lewis. 1985. “[Race as a Self-Schema Affecting Recall in Black Children](#).” *Journal of Black Psychology* 12 (1): 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009579848501200102>.

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