



WRITING INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

# CULTURE DAY MAY 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2023



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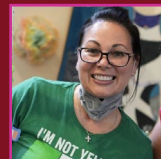
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# Ms. Rashid Reflects on Culture Day

by Sofia Rashid

Our second Annual Cultural Day celebration was a huge success. As we aimed to create a memorable event for our school community at Ditmas, a team of amazing and innovative teachers came together to plan the event. As we reflected on last year's event, we came up with several things we wanted to enhance and focus on. Our team included Mrs. Cataldo, Ms. Osbourne, Ms. Silverman, Ms. Michel, Ms. Munoz, and myself.

I believe in creating a team that can work to make things happen. Our team represents teachers from both different grades and cultural backgrounds so that input can vary and ideas can be more culturally sensitive to our diverse population. The key to having a successful school event is to include teachers that will encourage other teachers to participate and embrace this wonderful celebration. Having teacher involvement ultimately increases student participation. It is also important to have a team that believes in your vision and truly embraces school diversity.

As a team leader, I was faced with many challenges but ultimately focused on the end goal, which was to engage both students and teachers in celebrating and embracing their differences. We had teacher volunteers who played an integral part in this dynamic event. They met with performers and maintained continuous communication through google classroom. In the last 2 weeks before the show, they met almost every day to practice the performance. Our teacher dance leads were able to help the students with their performances as they were from the same background being highlighted and embraced. The relationships that the students and teachers built was incredible. They were able to form a

relationship outside the teacher/student one and build new relationships as mentors. Students also formed relationships with students from other grades and they embraced the new friendships.



We had an overwhelming number of students who wanted to participate in this year's event. Every student who participated last year joined this year. The number of students that participated this year in the fashion show was over 200 compared to last year which was about 90. We had over 40 countries represented and the auditorium became a cultural melting pot. A fusion of nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities infused our auditorium as everyone learned to embrace and respect our diversity.

This year students were able to enjoy the show with a DJ that displayed everyone's ethnic music. Students also had an amazing time using the 360 Booth as part of the cultural day celebration. Describing the vibe of the building during this special day can only be felt in person. Students were walking around with pride as they wore their beautiful and vibrant outfits and were willing to explain the meaning behind the colors and the outfits worn. Students felt empowered and respected as they showcased their ethnic values. Students' outfits showed their joy, self-worth, and honor. All classes had international food celebration as well. The building exploded with cultural pride and embrace. As I reflect on this year's celebration, I keep remembering the true key to our successful event, which is that teamwork makes the most impossible tasks easily manageable.

# FASHION SHOW



## MERENGUE DANCE

YOSIBEL D, JESSICA A, BRISEIDA G, JISELLE M, FATIMA S, LEILA D, YADIRA R, NAYLANIE R  
SPONSORED BY MRS. BORTLE

## IRISH POEM

MS. FINLEY



## BENGALI/INDIAN DANCE

RUBAIA S, NADIRAH I, TASNIM S, UMME E, ISRAT C, JANNATUL M, NAFIZA S, HUMAYRA B  
ARIFIN Z  
SPONSORED BY MS. SPARLING-MUÑOZ

## REGGAE BAND

SYMPHONY S & MRS. CHARLES  
SPONSORED BY MRS. CHARLES



## UZBEK DANCE

JASURBEK A, DALER T, AFZAL K, JONATHAN S, ETHAN C, MUHAMMASALI N, ZUHRA I,  
DIANA E, AFSONA I  
SPONSORED BY MRS. CELEBI

## JUGGLER

IBROKHIM K

SPONSORED BY MS. OSBOURNE



## HAITIAN DANCE

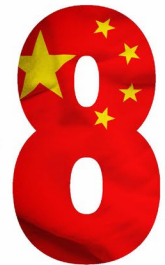
MELIRA P, CHLOE N, ALIYAH A, MARLIE M, AMYLEE R, INGRID B, FAITH ALISHA G,  
ROLDIANNA G

SPONSORED BY MRS. MICHEL

## CHINESE DANCE

CHARLENE W

SPONSORED BY MS. OSBOURNE



## LATIN DANCE

MAGALI L, LIAM C, VALERIE K, JOSE G, ALEXANDER R, ASHLEY M, CHRISTOPHER N, SAMUEL A, BENNY  
G, YEREMY D, TIFFANY M, NYLEESE A, INGRID R, ISABELLA B, MELISSA P, MIGUEL B, RICHY T, KEVIN T,  
SERENITY H, JASHLIE R, ADRIANNA C, BRYANNA G, MARISOL T, KAITLYN G, DYLAN M, EESHA S, SHAKIRA  
V, KIMBERLY L

SPONSORED BY MRS. FERNANDEZ & MS. VARGAS

## BENGALI PIANO

THEHEREEM C

SPONSORED BY MR. KASS



## MONTENEGRO DANCE

ZUMA S, DIANA E, AFSONA I, FARZONA M, FARSONA H

SPONSORED BY MS. SPARLING-MUÑOZ

**PERUVIAN SINGER**

SILVANA Y & TEREZA M  
SPONSORED BY MRS. CATALDO



**13 SOCA DANCE**

ELIJAH C, JASMINE M, DAYAIS O, LEA S, CHLOE L, MAKENZIE Y, ESTELA T, CARLOS D,  
ARNELLA A, KAYLYN C,  
SPONSORED BY MS. FRANZESE

**MEXICAN DUET**

DYLAN M & SARAH M  
SPONSORED BY MRS. RASHID



**15 PAKISTAN DANCE**

FAIZAN A, ESHA B, ZAKARIYA Q, AROUSH A,  
SPONSORED BY MS. AKHTER & MRS. ANNA





# THANK YOU



Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this a special and eventful day for our students. Thank you to Mrs. Santiago for your support throughout this process.

## **Cultural Day Committee:**

Mrs. Rashid  
Mrs. Cataldo  
Ms. Sparling-Muñoz  
Ms. Silverman  
Ms. Osbourne  
Ms. Michel

## **Teacher Sponsors:**

Mrs. Charles  
Mrs. Akhter  
Mrs. Fernandez  
Ms. Vargas  
Ms. Bortle  
Mr. Kass  
Ms. Franzese  
Mrs. Celebi  
Mrs. Anna

## **Sponsor:**

Dr. Rose  
Simi foundation

## **Administration:**

Mrs. Santiago  
Mrs. Buitrago  
Ms. Lynch  
Ms. Macintosh  
Mrs. Bortle

## **Audio/Visual Team:**

Mr. Sefardi  
Mr. Mcleod  
Mr. Feuerstein  
Hudson Audio Visual Events  
Montes Rentals

## **Production Crew:**

Ms. Sparling-Muñoz & students  
Mr. Brunson  
Custodial Staff

# **E Pluribus Unum**

## **Many Cultures - One Community**

by **Dr. Rose Reissman**

Imagine - a Kensington, Brooklyn, and District 20 Middle School, filled with students costumed in over 60 different ethnic celebrating garments. The adult staff are also costumed, carrying national flags proclaiming their backgrounds or religions. The school auditorium is awash in multiple ethnic flags representing the range of countries school students represent. The stage stands empty of performers, but as the audience walks in, a PowerPoint of international flags is shown with applause and cheers going up. Each of the three aisles of the auditorium has a red vinyl carpet and students and teachers strut proudly on it using it as a cakewalk to showcase their cultural costumes. Staff strut as well. The auditorium period then unfolds as a set of IS 62 Got Talent performances in English and in varied native languages of songs, dances, teacher/student shared stage performances and even a juggling act. Student audience members proudly poke one another as their "culture" is performed or seen. "My country" . . . becomes a repeated catchphrase that is frequently heard throughout the assembly. Performers, there are almost 100 of them outpace Broadway professionals by doing 3 assemblies-one for each grade.

If the above reality isn't school-wide culturally responsive education inaction, how else would that almost universal current goal be defined? Too often the education field is poised on specific hard data measurable objectives worked on every class period, relentlessly. With this hard data, standard test measured skills initiatives are indeed sorely needed, implementing them given the media spotlight on them often results in expenditures for materials, training, and consultants which are unnecessary. Case in point, the current and crucial headlining of the cultural responsiveness movement. As this article is being read, school systems are providing sets of books with this label for purchase, training and implementation by staff and of course use in classrooms with students. Consultants with proven teaching, research and/or professional development expertise are being booked.

Are these warranted expenses to eventually roll out a fully developed texts, trained teachers/support staff and empowered leaders program? Yes. Their impact will be apparent and assessable over time. What about a minimal costing, under 400 dollars, event that can thrust, excite, inform and immerse the entire school building in cultural responsiveness, on a single day? How about an event that can immediately on that day in time make cultural responsiveness alive and "my country" for students, staff and administration plus parents and families? This came to be with digital artifacts of a video documentary, students' written and art reflections, student developed logos, and a publication, ready to serve as student authentic body of digital and print blueprint for Culture Day 2024.

An event called Culture Day, held on May 26 2023, described at the start of this article, immediately engaged an entire building of more than 1000 students plus over 120 Ditmas



IS 62 staff and administrators in really “representing” and the diverse cultures in the Brooklyn building. The cost of this event was minimal for the school, but its impact priceless for the cultural personal “id”ing of students and adults. The joy and spirit of cultural pride were ineffable, although yes they could be qualitatively and quantifiably measured.



Culture Day in 2022 unfolded as follows:

1. The ENL coordinator and veteran ESL educator, Sofia Rashid, brainstormed and her teacher team- involved the entire school without an expense of cash or paid stipends. They came up with designating a day after exams as Culture Day and inviting all students to dress in a costume or bring accessories/props that “represented” their international, ethnic, or religious backgrounds and participate in performances.
2. Students were invited to sign on to rehearse performances for that day, reflecting linguistic, cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Signups and rehearsal times, during lunch, were spread over a two week period. A videographer filmed the rehearsals, with the help of the students scored the film with actual authentic cultural music and the Deans on each floor rehearsed the performers. All as one excited to be on this shared mission.
3. Students created flyers advertising the event all over the building. In the second iteration of Rashid’s vision, students sent in logos for culture day to be used in Culture Day 2024.
4. Students on the Student Leadership Council, helped the school videographer document the ongoing preparation for the event as they moderated the video.
5. Students and staff introduced and reported all three assemblies with students and the school videographer documented it.
6. A qualitative survey about the student response emotionally and intellectually to the event was conducted with a 140 student sample.

Can almost any school implement these steps for a one day event? Will such an event visually, emotionally and intellectually impact positively on building culture? As we await the results of new culturally responsive materials plus best practices, why not make cultural responsiveness, costume, performance and self “ID” real?

*“Imagine all the people. Sharing all the world.”*

Culture Day makes the imagination of community together as one, cultural reality truth. With so many school calendar mandated events, can we not make this mandate for cultural affirmation happen to heal and to connect us as *E Pluribus Unum*?

# Ditmas Students Reflect On Culture Day

## Ibrahim Adam

For my first Culture Day it was amazing. I really loved the way everyone dressed and how well the performances were. Amir and I were ranking how well the Culture Day performances were because of how great it was. My personal favorite was the Jamaican Duel. Culture Day is a place where all cultures can be in the same room and enjoy what's happening.

## Brianna Garcia

Cultural Day was really fun. The show was amazing and I loved the dancing. It was really nice and also the people that sang were good. Also I liked the food. It was good and it was nice trying different foods. Also the clothes were really nice. They were so pretty and also some people had their flags and it was nice because people were dressed up and all. Overall the day was really nice and enjoyable.

## Abdul Anjun

I feel like I'm in a place where it brings back some of my old memories while I was watching the show. How we wore our traditional clothes made me feel a part of something. The party was very cool as I got to try something new that I never tried before and in a different culture. Bringing something from your culture as well to show it. I think maybe next time, to make it better, we can have different rooms of different cultures.

**Gholdy Muhammad:** "...naming and demand for culturally relevant education spoken by youth."

## Liseth Hernandez-Perez

To be honest I was surprised and shocked at how it all came together. I really thought it was going to be decent and boring, but damn, I have been proven wrong. The whole decoration in the auditorium was great. Except for the fact I couldn't find an El Salvador flag, just a Mexico flag. Everyone dressed up great. When people did the fashion show, I was mesmerized and regretted the fact I didn't join. I wanted to join so badly, and regretted that I didn't. The show and performance though was really nice and put together good. My favorite part was when the Hispanics and Latinas/Latinos started dancing. I loved the music, Bad Bunny, Prince Royce, and more. I saw some of my friends performing too, so I recorded all of it. (I was shocked when no one cared that we started taking our phones out). The party was nice. I got to try out new food I never tasted before. The empanadas were delicious. The rice cake thing was delicious too. I ate so much but was still hungry. That day was really great in my opinion.

## Sunnat Urinbaev

My first experience in Ditmas with the Cultural Day was the best. I loved the new types of food I got to taste and the beauty of seeing people's talents such as singing a solo for their country. One thing I would want them to add would be everyone should give a poem or a brief summary of their beloved country.

**Gholdy Muhammad (2020):** "Students have the potential for success when they see themselves in the curriculum and when their cultural... identities are affirmed."

## Raiyan Rain

For my first Culture Day experience at Ditmas, it was really fun! The show was amazing, the dances and performances were super smooth and looked very cool. Their traditional outfits and clothing looked incredible. The party was really fun too, we got to eat our and other cultural and traditional foods from our classmates that are different or maybe the same, we talked, laughed, and ate together. I'm very excited for next year's Culture Day and what traditions await us!

**Geneva Gay (definition of Culturally Responsive Education):** *"...using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively."*

## Abdullah Saqab

In Ditmas Culture Day, 2023 a lot of things that were pretty awesome were that in the show there were a lot of people being able to show their own colors from the country. All of the outfits were very cool as well and it looked like people were filled with joy being able to represent their country on stage with their own cultural clothes. The party was good too and there were a lot of different foods from different countries and everybody got to try them. In my opinion, each class could have a tally and the most people with the same culture, the whole class would be able to wear a color that represented it and the whole class could be focused on that and the whole school could have different representation of different countries and in the auditorium every class would sit together and form a lot of classes representing different cultures for Culture Day.

## Halle St. Hilaire

During my first cultural day at Ditmas the traditional outfits were both beautiful and unique. People in the cultural show were amazing because of all the talented people who did the culture dance. At our 8th period party trying different cultural foods were amazing and found some foods I found amazing and full of flavor. There is just 1 minor change I would like to see happen differently is for people to perform cultural folktales.

## Mashiat Anisha

My first Ditmas Culture Day was very colorful and pretty amazing. By this I mean once I went into school it was very colorful. Very unique. The outfits everyone was wearing were so pretty as well, very intricate designing and bright. The food was delicious as well, everyone brought something that tasted fabulous. Did I mention the show? I saw my friends up there Amy, Dildora and more. I was amazed that they went up with bravery, I could never do that. My favorite part was when Sarah went up to sing. I never knew she could sing. So this is my review for Culture Day. Pretty, colorful and intricate were many of the words to describe it.

**Gholdy Muhammad (2020):** *"...make our students feel whole and loved through their own identities, skills, intellect and criticality."*

## Yaqin Ajwad

When we went to class, we immediately went to the auditorium to watch plays and it was great, everyone did so well doing their part. I couldn't wait for the end of the day for the party. We had free time most of the day. It was a great way to end off Friday. I hope we have this day again soon!

# Ditmas Students Reflect On Culture Day

## Shaklina

Culture Day for me was wonderful because of the clothes. Everyone wore clothes from their countries and danced dances from their countries. The juggling was so cool. It was also wonderful to listen to Chinese and Latino songs. Hearing a girl play piano also added to the mood of the day.

For me, the school providing a day to celebrate culture was so right. Our school has students from so many cultures and talents. The Uzbek dancers were to me the best part of the day. They were so happy. Their dance was so powerful. In my eyes, their dance was beautiful. Clothes, dance, music, all of these made Culture Day a wonderful day at Ditmas.

## Mayleen Riascos

This year's second Culture Day Celebration was my favorite day of the school year. Among the many events of the day, one of the best was the fashion show. The reason I so enjoyed the fashion show was that I saw many different, unique styles, which are worn around the world by my classmates. I, of course, especially liked my culture's fashion.

For me, I took pride in the fact that we students from various cultures were able to show everyone in our school, including students, staff and principals, what we wear in our countries. This fashion show displayed the unique beauty of students' cultures. Because our students are from so many diverse countries, the clothes shown were from around the world. We all enjoyed seeing the different designs.

Another part of the 2023 Culture Day celebration I really enjoyed were the performers. I so loved seeing the dancers dance and hearing various unfamiliar music. I was amazed by how close to professional the performances were. I watched them and I was just in awe as I watched. The entire day was just an amazing one to experience!

## Zahen Abedin

Culture Day was an experience for us all! All the tricks and performances were amazing. If I were asked to choose one performance which is my favorite, I would choose the songs. I suspect most of the audience does not agree with me but this is my choice.

Among the singers, I loved the Mexican duo. It was my favorite because of how nice the song sounded in Spanish. It had a romantic vibe. Next, I enjoyed the Jamaicans who as far as I was concerned, were a close second among the singers. In this group, the duo was able to give their song an energetic, fun tone which gave it a happy mood. The student guitar player in that group really stood out to me. The lyrics told a story. I liked following that story in song.

As a Ditmas student, going into seventh grade in September 2023, I hope that there will be more Culture Day events like this one. I could tell from the reaction of the students in the auditorium, how all of them enjoyed the day and the performances.

## Rubaia Sneha

I enjoyed Culture Day very much. First, I would like to talk about the fashion show, because it was the first event that happened on Culture Day. As it turned out, I was the first person on the fashion show's line who carried a sign representing my country, Bangladesh. Before walking the line in the fashion show, I must admit I was a bit nervous. But as I and other students started our walk, the teachers and students watching the show, started cheering us. They clapped for us.

The thing I liked about the fashion show was that all the participants wore different dresses and costumes that represented their unique cultural attire. Our auditorium was truly a diversity on display location.

I also enjoyed the dancers and their dances. It was very entertaining to watch them. All the dances were mind blowing. A Bengali girl played piano. A boy named Ibrahim juggled cones without dropping them! Both performances were so great.

I was excited to learn about the teachers who sponsored each team of dancers. The teachers involved had really supported the dancers. They had given up their lunchtime to help them learn their steps. It was important as I watched the performance to realize that before these dancers took the auditorium stage, a great deal of hard work practicing had gone in. Some dancers danced with the flag of their country. That added touch was so good to see. It emphasized that the dance represented their country.

The Uzbek boys stole the show. Their performance was even more valuable because they had a very short time to practice and to master their steps. But, when I watched the performance I would never have known that. The Soga dancers were also excellent. When their music signaled "Clap and Wave," everyone in the audience started clapping and waving their arms. Those who had flags in the audience waved their flags. This participation by the audience as the performance took place added a nice layer to it. We, the audience, were also part of the show.

Every performer, including me, worked very hard to truly represent self and culture. I was part of a dance ensemble that did a Bengali dance. I felt pride in doing a Bengali dance in front of an audience who did not know Bengali culture. In addition as a class, we also made cultural decorations and flags which represented our cultures to decorate the auditorium. I want to as a single student say "Thank you" to all the teachers and the staff who organized this program. A special thanks to my very own teacher, Ms. Michel who inspired our class to be part of this event. Ms. Munoz helped our Bengali team to dance. Other teachers gave us the opportunity to showcase our culture on this special day.

Our generation should have the chance to celebrate themselves and learn about their cultures. In this way, we can also come to respect and to honor everyone's culture.

# Ditmas Students Reflect On Culture Day

## Rushona Olimova

This year's Culture Day was exciting. My favorite part of it was the fashion show we got to see in the auditorium. I liked this show because it was so nice to see all the different clothes. In addition to the clothes, I liked the dances in the show. They were so entertaining to watch. The student dancers had nice moves. They were in step as they danced. They moved rapidly. I was most impressed that the dancers had learned and mastered all of these moves in such a short (less than two weeks) time. The dances represented many different cultural groups. The Uzbek dance was really nice because it was unique. The dances also included singing by the dancers. They sang well. I noticed that they had enough confidence to sing in front of the audience.

Another part of the auditorium performance that impressed me was the juggling act. I found seeing a young person juggle was so special. The juggler, Ibrahim, was really good at what he did.

As for me, I did not take part in this year's Cultural Day celebration. I may be a part of it next year. I feel I want to participate in the fashion show by representing my country to show other people. In participating next year in the fashion show and performances, I would be showing how proud I am of my culture.

## Shahzaib Saeed

The first part of the celebration that I truly enjoyed was the Uzbekistan dance. What I particularly liked in this dance routine was the two persons going on each other's side to dance. I liked how the boys took turns to dance. The last part of this dance routine had them throwing up their hats in the air. The dancers then caught the hats they had thrown up. This was so much to watch.

During the second part of the celebration, I listened to the song that Ms. Symphony played on her guitar. She sang the song "Pass the Money to the Left-hand Side," with her teacher, Mrs. Charles. I enjoyed the part where they both said "It's your turn," and everyone sang along out loud.

The last part of the celebration that stood out was when a student named "Ibrahim" presented. He turned out to be my favorite performer. He was just so good at juggling, throwing balls up in the air, and catching them before they fell to the ground. Another fun part of his act came when he got a basketball and spun it on his finger. He used a single finger and the basketball spun on it! It was very exciting to watch.

This culture day was just so much fun that I cannot wait until next year for the 2024 one.



## Mia Palma

Have you ever held or had a Culture day in your school? If not, let me share my culture day experience with you.

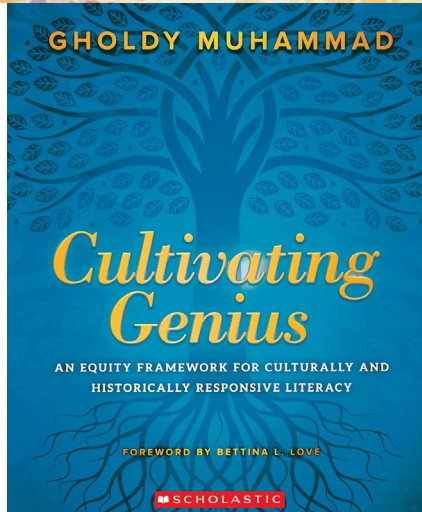
As part of this experience I came to school with students who were costumed or carried signs celebrating their cultures. But beyond wearing the clothes and singing the songs, many also performed to show their strong connection to their countries. Part of this experience was not only sharing about native countries, but also learning about countries other students who attend Ditmas, represent. So many different cultures were on display at Ditmas.

My favorite part of the day was the fashion show. The fashion show was an opportunity for many people to show off their traditional clothing. Students were dressed differently and beautifully. Each of them wore a costume with the colors of their country. As I looked around the auditorium and even at the students in my class, there were just so many colors and costumes. This day was a fun day in which students from different countries and cultures could share or identify something which they had in common. Students had many chances to be a part of culture day. They could be in the fashion show, perform in the auditorium performances, or create the decorations that filled the auditorium, the hallway and the building. Culture day was a day to celebrate all cultures

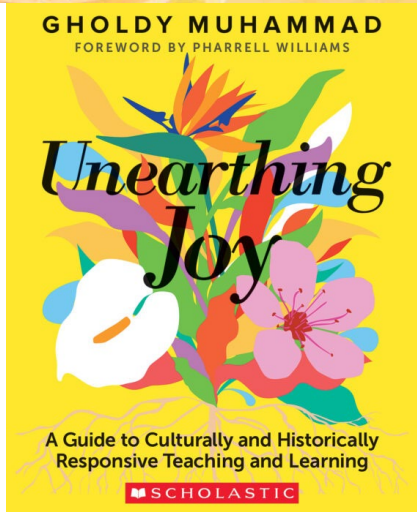
## Ashley Carvajal

Our Culture Day at Ditmas was incredible. I watched the fashion show. The clothes were so nice. They were clothes that were worn in the students' countries. The music I heard was from many countries, but for my ears, the best music was Latino music. Listening to the music made me feel very happy. For me, the power of the Uzbek dancers was so strong. They were also very funny.

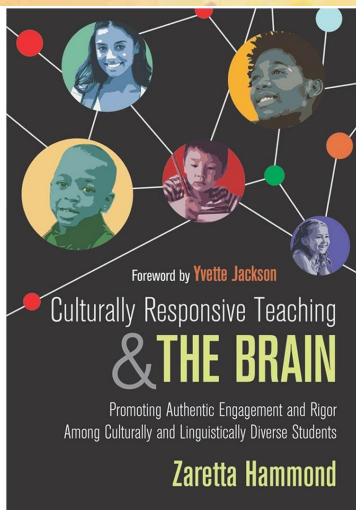
# Resources



**Cultivating Genius**  
by Gholdy Muhammad



**Unearthing Joy**  
by Gholdy Muhammad



**Culturally Responsive Teaching**  
by Zaretta Hammond



**Celebrating Your School's Cultural Diversity**





The Immigrant and Refugee Experience in Children's Books

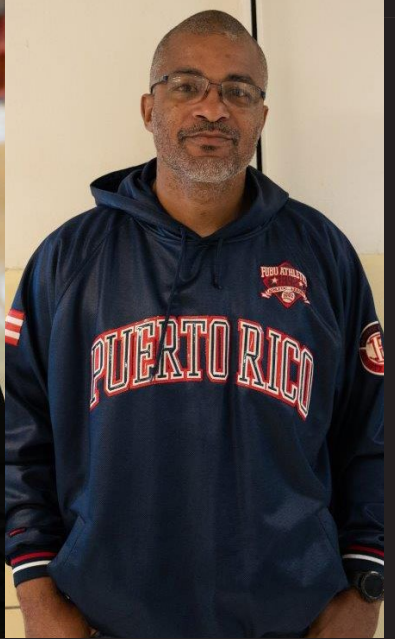


60 Children's Books About Immigration, Migration, & Refugees



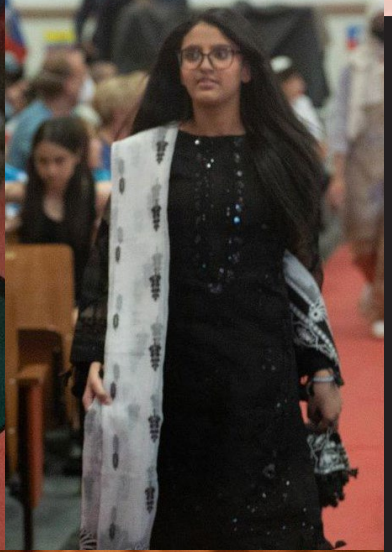
# Culture Day Photos





# Culture Day Photos





# Culture Day Photos





# Culture Day Photos







# Culture Day Photos





# Culture Day Photos





# CULTURE DAY 2024

Marielena Santiago,  
Principal



Celebrate, Perform, Communicate, Connect!



Kira Andriishyna



Maimuna Hasan



Tamerlan Karimov



Eder Suazo

WRITING INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Rose Reissman,  
Creator of Writing Institute

